Lesson 1. General Psychology for Speech and Language Therapy

Lesson Overview

General psychology provides the foundation for understanding how people perceive, think, learn, remember, and communicate. Speech and language therapists must understand these psychological processes because communication depends not only on language abilities but also on attention, memory, motivation, emotions, and perception. This lesson introduces the main psychological concepts that influence communication and language development.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the major concepts of general psychology related to communication.
- Explain the roles of perception, attention, memory, learning, motivation, and emotion.
- Describe how these psychological processes affect speech, language, and communication.
- Apply psychological principles to speech and language therapy situations.

6.1 Perception

Definition

Perception is the psychological process through which the brain receives, organizes, and interprets sensory information to understand the environment.

Our senses constantly receive information, but perception allows us to give meaning to what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

For speech and language therapists, auditory perception is particularly important because understanding spoken language depends on correctly interpreting speech sounds.

Types of Perception

- Visual perception
- Auditory perception
- Tactile perception
- Olfactory perception
- Gustatory perception

Importance in Speech and Language Therapy

Perception helps individuals:

- Recognize speech sounds (phonemes)
- Understand spoken language
- Identify facial expressions
- Interpret gestures
- Recognize written words

Clinical Example

A child with auditory perception difficulties may hear speech normally but confuse similar sounds such as **/b/** and **/p/**, leading to language and reading difficulties.

6.2 Attention

Definition

Attention is the ability to focus mental resources on relevant information while ignoring distractions.

Without attention, learning and communication become difficult.

Types of Attention

1. Selective Attention

Focusing on one stimulus while ignoring others.

Example:
Listening to the teacher despite classroom noise.

2. Sustained Attention

Maintaining concentration over time.

Example:
Listening to a 20-minute lecture.

3. Divided Attention

Performing two tasks simultaneously.

Example:
Taking notes while listening.

4. Alternating Attention

Shifting attention between different tasks.

Example:
Reading instructions and then completing an activity.

Importance in Speech Therapy

Many children with communication disorders also experience attention difficulties.

Poor attention can affect:

- Language comprehension
- Following instructions
- Conversation skills
- Reading development
- Academic performance

6.3 Memory

Definition

Memory is the ability to encode, store, and retrieve information.

It allows us to learn language, remember vocabulary, and communicate effectively.

Stages of Memory

1. Encoding

Receiving information.

2. Storage

Keeping information over time.

3. Retrieval

Recalling stored information.

Types of Memory

Sensory Memory

Stores information for only a few seconds.

Example:
Remembering the last spoken word long enough to understand a sentence.

Short-Term Memory

Holds a limited amount of information for about 20–30 seconds.

Example:
Remembering a phone number before writing it down.

Working Memory

Temporarily stores and manipulates information.

Example:
Following multi-step instructions.

Long-Term Memory

Stores information for days, years, or a lifetime.

Examples include:

- Vocabulary
- Personal experiences
- Grammar rules
- Academic knowledge

Importance in Speech Therapy

Memory supports:

- Vocabulary learning
- Sentence comprehension
- Reading
- Storytelling
- Language acquisition

Children with working memory deficits often struggle to follow long instructions.

6.4 Learning

Definition

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior or knowledge resulting from experience or practice.

Learning occurs throughout life and is essential for language development.

Major Types of Learning

Classical Conditioning

Learning through association.

Example:
A child becomes anxious during therapy because previous sessions were unpleasant.

Operant Conditioning

Learning through consequences.

Positive behaviors are strengthened by reinforcement.

Example:
A child receives praise for producing correct speech sounds.

Observational Learning

Learning by watching others.

Example:
Children learn pronunciation by imitating adults.

Factors Affecting Learning

- Motivation
- Attention
- Practice
- Feedback
- Reinforcement
- Emotional state
- Environment

Importance in Speech Therapy

Speech-language therapy relies heavily on learning principles.

Therapists use:

- Repetition
- Positive reinforcement
- Modeling
- Practice
- Corrective feedback

6.5 Motivation

Definition

Motivation refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, guide, and maintain behavior toward achieving goals.

Motivation determines how much effort people invest in learning.

Types of Motivation

Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation that comes from personal interest or enjoyment.

Example:
A child enjoys reading because it is fun.

Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation driven by external rewards.

Example:
Receiving stickers after successful therapy tasks.

Importance in Speech Therapy

Motivated clients:

- Participate more actively
- Practice more often
- Improve faster
- Maintain therapy gains

Therapists frequently use games, praise, and engaging activities to increase motivation.

6.6 Emotion

Definition

Emotion is a complex psychological and physiological response to situations that influences thoughts, behavior, and communication.

Examples include:

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Surprise
- Disgust

How Emotions Affect Communication

Emotions influence:

- Voice quality

- Speech rate
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Body language
- Word choice

Strong emotions can either improve or interfere with communication.

Example:

A nervous speaker may:

- Speak too quickly
- Forget words
- Stutter more frequently

Emotional Factors in Speech Therapy

Children with communication disorders may experience:

- Low self-confidence
- Anxiety
- Social withdrawal
- Frustration

Speech-language therapists create supportive environments that reduce anxiety and encourage communication.

Psychological Processes and Communication

Psychological Process	Contribution to Communication
Perception	Recognizes speech sounds and visual cues
Attention	Focuses on relevant speech information
Memory	Stores vocabulary and language knowledge
Learning	Develops new communication skills
Motivation	Encourages participation and practice

Key Points

- Communication depends on multiple psychological processes working together.
- Perception allows people to interpret sensory information.
- Attention helps individuals focus on relevant communication.
- Memory stores and retrieves language information.
- Learning enables the acquisition of speech and language skills.

- Motivation increases engagement and persistence in therapy.
- Emotions influence both verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Speech-language therapists consider all these processes when assessing and treating communication disorders.

Interactive Activities

Activity 1: Memory Challenge

The instructor reads a list of 10 unrelated words. Students write down as many words as they can remember after one minute.

Discussion: Which memory strategies helped you recall more words?

Activity 2: Selective Attention Exercise

Students listen to a short audio recording with background noise and answer comprehension questions.

Discussion: How did distractions affect your understanding?

Activity 3: Reflection Exercise

Think about a time when you learned a new skill.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What motivated you?
- What helped you remember the information?
- How did your emotions affect your learning?
- Which learning strategies were most effective?

Self-Assessment Quiz

1. What is perception?

A. Remembering information
B. Interpreting sensory information
C. Solving mathematical problems
D. Sleeping

Answer: B

2. Which type of attention involves focusing on one task while ignoring distractions?

A. Divided attention
B. Sustained attention

C. Selective attention
D. Alternating attention

Answer: C

3. Which type of memory temporarily stores and manipulates information?

A. Sensory memory
B. Long-term memory
C. Working memory
D. Episodic memory

Answer: C

4. Learning through reinforcement is called:

A. Classical conditioning
B. Operant conditioning
C. Insight learning
D. Latent learning

Answer: B

5. Intrinsic motivation comes from:

A. Rewards from others
B. Fear of punishment
C. Personal interest and enjoyment
D. Competition

Answer: C

6. Which psychological process helps people recognize speech sounds?

A. Perception
B. Motivation
C. Emotion
D. Personality

Answer: A

7. Which psychological factor most directly helps students maintain concentration during a lecture?

A. Memory
B. Attention
C. Emotion
D. Personality

Answer: B

8. Why is general psychology important in speech and language therapy?

A. It explains how psychological processes influence speech, language, learning, and communication, helping therapists assess and support individuals more effectively.

Summary

General psychology provides essential knowledge for understanding human communication. Psychological processes such as perception, attention, memory, learning, motivation, and emotion work together to support language development and effective communication. Speech and language therapists use this knowledge to understand clients' communication difficulties, design appropriate interventions, and create supportive environments that promote successful learning and communication.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFuJHsBK-T8