Lesson One: Developmental Psychology

Course: English for Speech and Language Pathology III
Program: Third-Year Bachelor's in Speech and Language Pathology (Orthophonia)
Duration: 90 minutes

Learning Outcomes

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

1. Define developmental psychology and explain its importance in Speech and Language Pathology.
2. Describe the major domains of human development.
3. Identify the principal stages of human development from infancy to old age.
4. Explain the biological, cognitive, emotional, social, and language changes that occur across the lifespan.
5. Recognize the factors that influence human development.
6. Understand the relevance of developmental milestones in the assessment of communication disorders.
7. Apply developmental psychology concepts to clinical practice in Speech and Language Pathology.

Lecture Outline

1. Introduction
2. What Is Developmental Psychology?
3. Principles of Human Development
4. Domains of Development
5. Stages of Human Development
6. Factors Influencing Development
7. Developmental Milestones
8. Importance of Developmental Psychology in Speech and Language Pathology
9. Essential Vocabulary
10. Practical Activities
11. Summary
12. Review Questions

1. Introduction

Human development is a lifelong process involving continuous physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and language changes. Developmental psychology examines these changes from conception through old age and seeks to understand the factors that influence growth and behavior.

For speech-language pathologists, knowledge of normal development is essential because communication disorders can only be identified by comparing an individual's abilities with expected developmental milestones.

2. What Is Developmental Psychology?

Definition

Developmental psychology is the branch of psychology that studies the physical, cognitive, language, emotional, and social changes that occur throughout the human lifespan.

It examines:

- How people grow and change.
- Why development occurs.
- Factors influencing development.
- Individual differences in development.

Development is both **continuous** (gradual change over time) and **stage-related** (qualitative changes occurring at different ages).

3. Principles of Human Development

Human development follows several general principles.

A. Development Is Continuous

Development begins before birth and continues throughout life.

B. Development Is Sequential

Skills develop in a predictable order.

Example:

Babbling precedes first words.

C. Development Proceeds from Simple to Complex

Children first produce isolated sounds, then words, then sentences.

D. Development Is Multidimensional

It includes:

- Physical growth
- Cognitive development
- Language development
- Emotional development
- Social development

E. Individual Differences Exist

Children develop at different rates while following similar developmental patterns.

4. Domains of Development

A. Physical Development

Includes:

- Growth in height and weight
- Brain development
- Motor development
- Sensory development

Examples:

- Sitting
- Crawling
- Walking
- Fine motor skills

B. Cognitive Development

Refers to mental processes such as:

- Attention
- Memory
- Thinking
- Problem solving
- Reasoning
- Learning

Cognitive development supports language acquisition and academic achievement.

C. Language Development

Language development includes:

Receptive Language

Understanding spoken or written language.

Expressive Language

Producing spoken or written language.

Children progress from:

- Crying

- Cooing
- Babbling
- First words
- Two-word combinations
- Complex sentences

D. Social Development

Involves learning to interact with others.

Examples:

- Attachment
- Cooperation
- Friendship
- Social communication

E. Emotional Development

Includes:

- Emotional regulation
- Self-awareness
- Self-esteem
- Empathy

Healthy emotional development supports successful communication.

5. Stages of Human Development

A. Prenatal Period

From conception to birth.

Major developments include:

- Formation of organs
- Brain development
- Sensory development

Prenatal health strongly influences later communication development.

B. Infancy (Birth–2 Years)

Characteristics:

- Rapid brain growth
- Early communication
- Babbling
- First words

- Early walking
- Attachment formation

C. Early Childhood (2–6 Years)

Major developments:

- Vocabulary expansion
- Grammar development
- Symbolic play
- Social interaction
- Improved motor coordination

D. Middle Childhood (6–12 Years)

Characteristics:

- Reading and writing skills
- Academic learning
- Logical thinking
- Peer relationships
- Increasing independence

E. Adolescence (12–18 Years)

Major changes include:

- Puberty
- Abstract thinking
- Identity development
- Emotional maturity
- Advanced language skills

F. Adulthood

Development continues through:

- Career development
- Family life
- Social relationships
- Continued learning

G. Older Adulthood

Possible changes include:

- Reduced sensory abilities
- Slower information processing
- Changes in memory
- Increased risk of neurological disorders affecting communication

6. Factors Influencing Development

Human development results from interactions between biological and environmental influences.

Biological Factors

Examples:

- Genetics
- Brain maturation
- Prenatal health
- Nutrition
- Medical conditions

Environmental Factors

Examples:

- Family environment
- Education
- Culture
- Language exposure
- Socioeconomic status
- Healthcare

Interaction of Nature and Nurture

Development depends on the interaction between inherited characteristics (**nature**) and environmental experiences (**nurture**).

7. Developmental Milestones

Developmental milestones are expected achievements occurring within typical age ranges.

Examples

Age	**Typical Milestone**
2 months	Social smile
6 months	Babbling
12 months	First meaningful words

Age	**Typical Milestone**
24 months	Two-word combinations
3 years	Simple conversations
5 years	Understands complex sentences
School age	Reading and writing development

Milestones provide important benchmarks for identifying developmental delays.

8. Importance of Developmental Psychology in Speech and Language Pathology

Developmental psychology helps speech-language pathologists to:

- Understand normal communication development.
- Identify developmental delays.
- Differentiate typical variation from disorder.
- Select age-appropriate assessments.
- Design individualized intervention plans.
- Counsel families regarding developmental expectations.
- Monitor developmental progress over time.

Clinical Example

A 30-month-old child produces only five spoken words.

Compared with typical developmental milestones, expressive language appears delayed.

The speech-language pathologist conducts a comprehensive assessment and plans early intervention if indicated.

9. Essential Vocabulary

English Term	**Definition**
Developmental Psychology	Study of human development across the lifespan
Growth	Physical increase in size
Development	Progressive change in abilities and behavior
Milestone	Expected developmental achievement

English Term	Definition
Cognition	Mental processes involved in learning and thinking
Language Development	Acquisition of language abilities
Receptive Language	Understanding language
Expressive Language	Producing language
Attachment	Emotional bond between child and caregiver
Motor Development	Development of movement skills
Maturation	Biologically programmed growth
Nature	Genetic influences on development
Nurture	Environmental influences on development
Lifespan	Entire course of human life
Developmental Delay	Slower-than-expected acquisition of developmental skills

10. Practical Activities

Activity 1 – Match the Domains

Domain Example

Physical _____

Cognitive _____

Language _____

Social _____

Emotional _____

Activity 2 – Multiple Choice

1. Developmental psychology primarily studies:

a) Personality disorders only

b) Human development across the lifespan

c) Brain anatomy only

d) Intelligence testing only

2. Which milestone is most typical around 12 months of age?

a) Reading

b) First meaningful words

c) Abstract reasoning

d) Writing sentences

3. Which factor is considered environmental?

a) Genetics

b) Chromosomes

c) Family environment

d) Brain maturation

Activity 3 – Fill in the Blanks

Use the following words:

- development
- cognition
- milestones
- expressive
- receptive

1. _____ language refers to language production.
2. _____ language refers to language comprehension.
3. Developmental _____ help clinicians identify delays.
4. _____ includes memory, reasoning, and problem solving.
5. Human _____ continues throughout life.

Activity 4 – Case Study

A 4-year-old child has limited vocabulary, produces short sentences, and has difficulty understanding simple instructions.

Questions

1. Which developmental domain is primarily affected?
2. Which professional should evaluate the child?
3. Why are developmental milestones important in this case?
4. What additional information would you collect during the assessment?

Summary

Developmental psychology examines the physical, cognitive, language, emotional, and social changes that occur from conception through old age. Understanding normal developmental processes enables speech-language pathologists to recognize communication disorders, interpret developmental milestones, and design appropriate interventions. Knowledge of developmental psychology is fundamental to evidence-based assessment, diagnosis, and treatment across the lifespan.

Review Questions

1. Define developmental psychology.
2. Why is developmental psychology important in Speech and Language Pathology?
3. Name the five major domains of human development.
4. Explain the principle that development is continuous.
5. What is the difference between growth and development?
6. Describe the characteristics of infancy.
7. List the major stages of human development.
8. Distinguish between receptive and expressive language.
9. What are developmental milestones?
10. Give three examples of language milestones in early childhood.
11. Explain the interaction between nature and nurture.
12. Name four biological factors influencing development.
13. Name four environmental factors influencing development.
14. Why are developmental milestones useful in clinical assessment?
15. How does developmental psychology support evidence-based Speech and Language Pathology practice?

Recommended Reading

1. Berk, L. E. (2023). *Development Through the Lifespan* (8th ed.). Pearson.
2. Santrock, J. W. (2024). *Life-Span Development* (19th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
3. Owens, R. E. (2023). *Language Development: An Introduction* (10th ed.). Pearson.
4. Paul, R., Norbury, C. F., & Gosse, C. (2024). *Language Disorders from Infancy through Adolescence* (6th ed.). Elsevier.
5. Papalia, D. E., & Martorell, G. (2021). *Experience Human Development* (14th ed.).