Lecture 11: Theoretical Perspectives on Human Development

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 theories and explain their importance in understanding human development.
2. Describe the major theoretical perspectives on human development.
3. Compare the contributions of psychoanalytic, behavioral, cognitive, sociocultural, ecological, and humanistic theories.
4. Explain how developmental theories contribute to Speech and Language Pathology.
5. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of different theoretical approaches.
6. Apply developmental theories to clinical assessment and intervention.

Lecture Outline

1. Introduction
2. What Is a Developmental Theory?
3. Psychoanalytic Perspectives
4. Behavioral and Social Learning Perspectives
5. Cognitive Developmental Perspectives
6. Sociocultural Perspective
7. Ecological Systems Theory
8. Humanistic Perspective
9. Biological and Evolutionary Perspectives
10. Comparison of Developmental Theories
11. Applications in Speech and Language Pathology
12. Essential Vocabulary
13. Practical Activities
14. Summary
15. Review Questions

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1. Introduction

Human development is influenced by biological, psychological, social, cultural, and environmental factors. Over the past century, psychologists have proposed different theories to explain how people develop throughout life.

No single theory explains every aspect of development. Instead, each perspective emphasizes different mechanisms and provides valuable insights for understanding communication, learning, and behavior.

For speech-language pathologists, developmental theories guide assessment, intervention, and family-centered care.

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2. What Is a Developmental Theory?

Definition

A **developmental theory** is a systematic explanation of how and why people change throughout the lifespan.

Developmental theories help professionals:

- Understand normal development.
- Explain developmental differences.
- Predict developmental outcomes.
- Design effective educational and clinical interventions.
- Interpret children's behavior and communication.

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3. Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Psychoanalytic theories emphasize unconscious processes and early childhood experiences.

A. Sigmund Freud's Psychosexual Theory

Main Ideas

Freud proposed that personality develops through five psychosexual stages.

Stage	Approximate Age	Primary Focus
Oral	Birth–1 year	Mouth and feeding
Anal	1–3 years	Toilet training
Phallic	3–6 years	Identification with parents
Latency	6–12 years	Social and academic development

Stage	Approximate Age	Primary Focus
Genital	Adolescence onward	Mature relationships

Contributions

- Highlighted the importance of early childhood.
- Emphasized emotional development.

Limitations

- Limited scientific evidence.
- Difficult to test empirically.
- Overemphasis on unconscious processes.

B. Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Erikson proposed that development continues throughout life.

Eight Psychosocial Stages

Stage	Major Conflict
Infancy	Trust vs. Mistrust
Early Childhood	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt
Preschool	Initiative vs. Guilt
School Age	Industry vs. Inferiority
Adolescence	Identity vs. Role Confusion
Young Adulthood	Intimacy vs. Isolation
Middle Adulthood	Generativity vs. Stagnation
Older Adulthood	Integrity vs. Despair

Contributions

- Lifespan perspective.
- Importance of social relationships.
- Strong influence on developmental counseling.

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4. Behavioral and Social Learning Perspectives

Behavioral theories emphasize learning through environmental experiences.

A. John B. Watson

Watson argued that behavior is learned through environmental influences.

Learning occurs through stimulus-response associations.

B. B. F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning

Main Principles

Behavior is influenced by its consequences.

- Reinforcement increases behavior.
- Punishment decreases behavior.

Application in Speech Therapy

Clinicians reinforce correct speech productions using praise, tokens, or preferred activities.

C. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory

Bandura emphasized observational learning.

Children learn by:

- Watching others.
- Imitating models.
- Receiving feedback.

Key Concept

Modeling

Children often imitate parents, teachers, and therapists.

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5. Cognitive Developmental Perspectives

A. Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

Piaget proposed that children actively construct knowledge.

Four Stages

Stage	Age	Characteristics
Sensorimotor	Birth–2 years	Learning through senses and actions
Preoperational	2–7 years	Symbolic thinking develops
Concrete Operational	7–11 years	Logical thinking about concrete objects
Formal Operational	12 years onward	Abstract reasoning

Contributions

- Active learning.
- Developmental readiness.
- Influence on educational practice.

B. Information Processing Theory

This theory compares the human mind to a computer.

Development involves improvements in:

- Attention
- Memory
- Processing speed
- Executive functioning
- Problem solving

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6. Sociocultural Perspective

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky emphasized that development occurs through social interaction.

Major Concepts

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The difference between:

- What a learner can do independently.
- What a learner can achieve with assistance.

Scaffolding

Temporary support provided by adults or more skilled peers until the learner becomes independent.

Language

Language is viewed as the primary tool for learning and cognitive development.

Clinical Application

Speech-language pathologists provide structured support that gradually decreases as communication skills improve.

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7. Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner proposed that development occurs within interacting environmental systems.

Environmental Systems

System	Description
Microsystem	Family, school, peers
Mesosystem	Relationships among microsystems
Exosystem	Indirect influences (e.g., parents' workplace)
Macrosystem	Culture, values, laws
Chronosystem	Changes over time and life events

Importance

Development is influenced by both the individual and the surrounding environment.

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8. Humanistic Perspective

Abraham Maslow

Maslow proposed the **Hierarchy of Needs**.

Individuals must satisfy basic needs before achieving personal growth.

Levels

1. Physiological needs
2. Safety
3. Love and belonging
4. Esteem
5. Self-actualization

Carl Rogers

Rogers emphasized:

- Unconditional positive regard.
- Empathy.
- Respect.
- Client-centered relationships.

Application in Speech Therapy

Clinicians create supportive environments that encourage communication without fear of criticism.

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9. Biological and Evolutionary Perspectives

Biological theories emphasize:

- Genetics
- Brain maturation
- Neurodevelopment
- Hormones
- Evolution

These theories explain why certain developmental processes occur in predictable sequences.

Modern developmental psychology recognizes that biology and environment interact continuously.

10. Comparison of Developmental Theories

Theory	Major Focus	Key Contributor
Psychoanalytic	Emotional development	Freud, Erikson
Behavioral	Learning through reinforcement	Skinner
Social Learning	Observation and imitation	Bandura
Cognitive	Thinking and reasoning	Piaget
Sociocultural	Social interaction	Vygotsky
Ecological	Environmental influences	Bronfenbrenner
Humanistic	Personal growth	Maslow, Rogers
Biological	Genetics and maturation	Contemporary neuroscience

11. Applications in Speech and Language Pathology

Developmental theories guide speech-language pathologists by helping them:

- Understand normal communication development.
- Select age-appropriate assessment tools.
- Design individualized intervention programs.
- Apply reinforcement strategies.
- Use modeling and scaffolding.
- Involve families in intervention.
- Consider cultural and environmental influences.
- Promote functional communication in natural settings.

Clinical Example

A 5-year-old child has difficulty producing complete sentences.

The clinician:

- Uses **Bandura's modeling** by demonstrating correct sentence production.
- Applies **Skinner's reinforcement** by praising successful attempts.
- Employs **Vygotsky's scaffolding** by gradually reducing assistance.
- Selects activities appropriate for the child's **Piagetian developmental stage**.

12. Essential Vocabulary

English Term	**Definition**
Developmental Theory	Explanation of developmental change
Psychosocial Development	Social and emotional growth
Reinforcement	Consequence that strengthens behavior
Modeling	Learning through observation
Cognitive Development	Development of thinking processes
Scaffolding	Temporary instructional support
Zone of Proximal Development	Difference between independent and assisted performance
Self-Actualization	Realization of one's full potential
Maturation	Biologically programmed development
Environment	External influences on development
Nature	Genetic influences
Nurture	Environmental influences
Attachment	Emotional bond between child and caregiver
Lifespan Development	Development from conception through old age
Neurodevelopment	Development of the nervous system

13. Practical Activities

Activity 1 – Match the Theorist with the Theory

Theorist **Theory**

Freud _____

Erikson _____

Piaget _____

Vygotsky _____

Theorist	Theory
Bandura	_____
Skinner	_____
Bronfenbrenner	_____
Maslow	_____

Activity 2 – Multiple Choice

1. Which theorist proposed the Zone of Proximal Development?

a) Piaget

b) Freud

c) Vygotsky

d) Skinner

2. Which theory emphasizes reinforcement?

a) Cognitive Theory

b) Behavioral Theory

c) Humanistic Theory

d) Psychoanalytic Theory

3. According to Piaget, abstract reasoning develops during the:

a) Sensorimotor stage

b) Preoperational stage

c) Concrete operational stage

d) Formal operational stage

Activity 3 – Fill in the Blanks

Use the following words:

- reinforcement
- scaffolding
- modeling

- cognition
- maturation

1. Skinner emphasized _____ in learning.
2. Vygotsky introduced the concept of _____.
3. Bandura believed children learn through _____.
4. Piaget focused on _____ development.
5. Biological theories emphasize brain _____.

Activity 4 – Case Study

A 4-year-old child with delayed expressive language learns new words more successfully when the speech-language pathologist demonstrates the words, provides verbal prompts, and gradually reduces assistance.

Questions

1. Which developmental theory best explains the use of verbal prompts and gradual support?
2. Which theory supports learning through demonstration?
3. How does positive reinforcement encourage language development?
4. Why is understanding developmental stage important when planning therapy?

Summary

Developmental theories provide complementary perspectives on how individuals grow, learn, and communicate. Psychoanalytic theories emphasize emotional development, behavioral theories focus on learning through reinforcement, cognitive theories explain changes in thinking, sociocultural theories highlight the importance of social interaction, ecological theories examine environmental influences, and humanistic theories stress personal growth. Speech-language pathologists integrate these theoretical perspectives to guide assessment, intervention, family collaboration, and evidence-based clinical practice.

Review Questions

1. Define a developmental theory.
2. Why are developmental theories important in Speech and Language Pathology?
3. Compare Freud's and Erikson's theories.
4. Explain Skinner's concept of operant conditioning.
5. What is Bandura's concept of modeling?
6. Describe Piaget's four stages of cognitive development.
7. Define the Zone of Proximal Development.
8. Explain scaffolding and its role in learning.
9. Describe Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.
10. Summarize Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
11. Compare cognitive and behavioral theories of development.
12. Explain the interaction of nature and nurture.
13. How can developmental theories improve speech-language intervention?
14. Why should clinicians consider environmental influences during assessment?
15. Which developmental theory do you think is most applicable to Speech and Language Pathology? Explain your answer.

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. Papalia, D. E., & Martorell, G. (2021). *Experience Human Development* (14th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
4. Owens, R. E. (2023). *Language Development: An Introduction* (10th ed.). Pearson.
5. Paul, R., Norbury, C. F., & Gosse, C. (2024). *Language Disorders from Infancy through Adolescence* (6th ed.). Elsevier.