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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The child I observed was a three year old boy who shall be referred to synonymously as “ Kaiden”, of Vietnamese heritage living in a Vietnamese-speaking household. All of my observations took place in the family’s small rented home that Kaiden, his mom, and his teenage sister live all in. As this was my first-ever naturalistic observation, I was not sure how Kaiden might act when I appeared before him for three days just watching him, not being able to interact or play with him. I’m sure that others who are starting a new child observation would also be confused about where to start and how to initiate. I felt a bit awkward watching Kaiden for such a long period of time, and thought this could be an interference to his play space.

For example, at first, Kaiden was not acting upon anything and I initially thought that he was acting this way because I was there. Another thing was the fact that Kaiden and I belonged to the same ethnic background, making my observation a less diverse one because I was not sure whether I would get adequate learning about children in general. I did not step outside of my ethnic group when I selected a child to observe. This was not done intentionally, but rather because this is where I have formed more connections in the community. However, according to McMahon’s experience with naturalistic observations, it is completely normal to step right into one and not feel comfortable at the beginning. (McMahon, 1994)Kaiden was barely talking the first 30 minutes of observation. Just from my prior knowledge, I know three year olds are supposed to start talking by their age. About an hour later, Kaiden finally responded when his mom said “ here is your ipad”.

In excitement, Kaiden reached for it and said " iPad." After receiving the iPad, he stayed mute for the remaining time. When I asked Kaiden's mom regarding his ability to talk, she revealed that he has a delay in speech.

After that, I found it hard to grasp the situation Kaiden was going through as I had no previous knowledge on speech delay. It was my understanding that he is not able to develop speech at the same rate other kids do. I tried to relate this back to my experience and thought of my cousin who was able to speak full sentences at the age of two. However, Sheridan states " There are wide variations among normal children in the rate of language acquisition" (Sheridan, 1997). What is considered " normal" and how it can measure a child's ability to develop language is interpreted differently for everyone.

I remembered a child development lecture we have had before, and I recalled one of the principles of child development from a powerpoint: " Children are active participants in their own development, reflecting the intrinsic human drive to explore and master one's environment," (Talukdar, 2018). In my other child development and learning class, EDPSY 302, I learned more about the theories of child development, such as how behaviourism targets the process of language development and it implies that children learn through observation and reinforcement. For instance, when a caregiver encourages a child to say ' Mama' and the child responds, the parent becomes excited and tells the child to say it again. Based on the satisfactory reaction that the caregiver gave the child, it is likely that the child will try to say it again. Behaviorist B. F.

Skinner suggested that child development is a dynamic process that can be changed or altered by any means such as by the environment that they are growing up in. Recognizably, Kaiden used words to label objects of interest to him. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to witness him distinguishing shapes and colors. For example, I heard him saying 'red' and 'blue'. He was also able to recognize and label complex shapes such as 'pentagon' and 'octagon'. When I explored how Kaiden learned these objects, I was told he uses the ipad at home a lot. However, Kaiden demonstrated difficulty with simple instructions such as 'put your socks on' or 'take your jacket off' and he found it difficult to continuously follow basic instructions, but he was able to repeat phrases such as 'go' and 'stop'. Hence, he demonstrated the core standard of behaviourism, which was learning through imitation and reinforcement as he was able to repeat what he saw on the ipad and what he heard from others.

A theory that stood out to me is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which proposes that children's social interactions with influential people such as parents can have a positive impact on their development. He claimed that children learn by example and are prone to copy what they hear and see. Vygotsky's theory explains that a child's development has a lot to do with the social interactions they make. He further explains that children's parents, teachers and peers are pertinent to their cognitive thinking.

Based on what I have observed about Kaiden, I thought that speech therapy would benefit him most because the mind is always ready for learning at his age. During my third visit for observation, I found a few factors that I thought were relevant in child development. Kaiden was playing with his similarly-

aged cousin, Michael, and this gave me an opportunity to observe him in a more naturalistic setting.

Regardless of his inability to speak fluidly, his ability to play was just like other kids. He was able to play by himself and with Michael. They were also clearly learning from each other as Michael picked up a ball, and so did Kaiden. Kaiden's behavior was exactly how Vygotsky's sociocultural theory depicted based on the social interactions Kaiden and Michael made with one another. During my observation, I noticed that while Kaiden was not able to create his own speech, he was able to say or do something after someone else does it first. I was pleasantly surprised by the way he was able to play with Michael so well.

He couldn't communicate with words well, but he can communicate with his actions perfectly fine. Despite Kaiden's adverse disadvantage, it doesn't stop him from developing like other kids do. Understanding theories of language development can help us identify how children such as Kaiden develop their own language and communication skills. Thus, it is important that everyone understands the course of human growth and how children such as Kaiden acquire learning abilities. In conclusion, my perspective on child behavior has changed due to the eye-opening aspects from my naturalistic observation. Being able to clear up the misconceptions I had about a child's nature makes me much more open-minded towards children in general. My knowledge of child development grew immensely as I had little to no experience with children who had speech delay before taking upon the observations.

Being aware of my surroundings and self? reflecting post observation has allowed me to re-think and re-shape my own generalizations and preferences. I believe I can say I have achieved the basic knowledge of child development, though there is still more to learn. Additionally, I mentioned previously that the child I observed shared the same racial background as mine, and felt that I didn't get the sufficient amount of exposure to other ethnic groups. As an aspiring elementary school teacher, I know it is vital that I be exposed to other cultures in order to diversify and adapt my teaching style. Finally, I have learned that this observation boosted my understanding of child development - not all children speak and grow up at the same rate. The negative effects such as speech delay can impact 'normal' child development.