

Factors effecting literacy development



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This essay looks at the development of Literacy from birth to school age including speaking, listening, viewing, reading and writing. It examines how hearing impairment relates to a child's overall Literacy development.

Literacy is commonly considered the ability to read and write at a designated level of proficiency. But is more precisely defined as a technical capability to decode or reproduce written or printed signs, symbols, or letters combined into words. Traditionally, literacy has been closely associated with the alphabet and its role in written communication. However, it has become increasingly common to refer to different forms of literacy, such as computer, mathematical, or graphic literacy. Many experts believe that people need a combination of many different forms of literacy in order to meet the demands of modern day life.

There are five developmental stages in a growing child's life. It all starts at birth, which is known as infancy, it lasts until age 2. Then there is early childhood which is from ages 2-6, and then comes middle childhood which is from 6-10 years old. Early adolescence is the next stage which spans from 10-14 years old and then late adolescence which is from 14-18 years old. The two stages that stand out most in development to me are middle childhood and late adolescence. From the earliest age in middle childhood to the oldest age in late adolescence, there is an eight year gap. There is so much growing done in between these two stages that the transition is truly remarkable.

Emergent Literacy begins in the very early stages of childhood, and is the beginning of Literacy development, involving such activities as 'reading' from pictures and 'writing' with scribbles. 'Reading' a book from memory

while turning the pages of the book, develops a child's understanding of books and stories, as well as giving them a sense of accomplishment and pride, and is an important step towards becoming an independent reader. From the day children are born they require a form of communication in order to function adequately in society. A pre-speech baby will use gestures and expressions and babblings to interact with others. A toddler will participate in turn taking to satisfy a need or want. The more pre-schoolers participate in the world, the more they discover that language is useful. The first six years of children's lives play a crucial part in their development. During this time, children's brains develop at a astonishing rate. Parents and other family members play a key role in early development, as their children's first and most important teachers.

Early Literacy development is not considered as teaching a child to read in a formal way, it's about helping children to make sense of their world by developing strong oral language skills. It's about valuing home language and culture as building blocks, allowing children to explore the world of literacy. It's about providing lots of positive interactions between children's older peers and parents. In addition to an environment which is rich in Literacy resources and models language and Literacy for young children to copy.

The NWT Literacy council suggests it was generally considered that literacy development belonged mostly in schools, whilst children learnt to read and write. The formal teaching of writing and reading still happens at school, but Literacy doesn't begin when children start to learn the letters of the alphabet, or write their name, or go to school. The foundation for Literacy development begins much earlier- some people say it starts in the womb.

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The development is acquired thorough children interacting with adults and older children. Also through a child's play and experiences with Literacy resources such as stories, songs, rhymes, crayons, pens and paper.

Children with a hearing impairment range from those with a mild hearing impairment to those who are profoundly deaf. They cover the whole ability range. Hearing impairment may be due to conductive or sensory-neural problems. Four categories are generally used: mild, moderate, severe and profound.

In education, pupils are considered to have a hearing impairment if they need hearing aids, adaptations to the environment or particular teaching strategies in order to access the curriculum.

“ Serious hearing lost occurs in about two per thousand of the population” pg 1 (D, Goldstein)

Briggle, S (2005, p. 69) makes the point that literacy development for children who have hearing impairment is a multifaceted issue. Within Literacy development there any many parallels to hearing children, as well as some elements which are unique to children who are hearing impaired.

It is well recognized that hearing is critical to speech and language development, communication, and learning. Children with listening difficulties due to hearing impairment or auditory processing problems continue to be an underidentified and underserved population.

The earlier hearing impairment occurs in a child's life, the more serious the effects on the child's development. Similarly, the earlier the problem is identified and intervention begun, the less serious the ultimate impact.

There are four major ways in which hearing impairment affects Literacy development in children. Firstly causing a delay in the development of receptive and expressive communication skills. Language deficit causes learning problems that often result in reduced academic achievement. Communication difficulties can often lead to social isolation, poor self-concept and may impact the child's ability to make choices.

Vocabulary also develops more slowly in children who have a hearing impairment. Children with hearing impairment are able to learn concrete words like cat, jump, five, and red more easily than abstract words like before, after, equal to, and jealous. They also have difficulty with function words like the, an, are, and a. The gap between the vocabulary of children with normal hearing and those with hearing impairment widens with age. Children with hearing impairment are not able to catch up without appropriate early intervention. Children with hearing impairment also have difficulty understanding words with multiple meanings.

It is common for children with hearing impairment to comprehend and produce shorter and simpler sentences than children with normal hearing. Children with hearing impairment often have difficulty understanding and writing complex sentences, such as those with relative clauses or passive voice. Children with hearing impairment often cannot hear word endings

such as -s or -ed. This can lead to misunderstandings and misuse of verb tense, pluralisation and possessives.

Children with hearing impairment often cannot hear quiet speech sounds such as “ s,” “ sh,” “ f,” “ t,” and “ k” and therefore do not include them in their speech. Therefore, speech may be difficult to understand. Children with hearing impairment may not hear their own voices when they speak. They may speak too loudly or not loud enough. They may have a speaking pitch that is too high. They may sound like they are mumbling because of poor stress, poor inflection, or poor rate of speaking.

Lastly, children with hearing impairment have difficulty with all areas of academic achievement, especially reading and mathematical concepts. Children with mild to moderate hearing impairments, on average, achieve one to four grade levels lower than their peers with normal hearing, unless appropriate management occurs. Children with severe to profound hearing impairment usually achieve skills no higher than Ks3/4, unless appropriate educational intervention occurs early. The gap in academic achievement between children with normal hearing and those with hearing impairment usually widens as they progress through school. The level of achievement is related to parental involvement and the quantity, quality, and timing of the support services children receive.

“ By the age of three years the average normally hearing child has a vocabulary of approximately 1, 000 words”

(Bond, D. 1981p. g 19)

Children learn this language from what they hear and by the age of three master many grammatical elements of language. The hearing impaired child may not have the advantage of comforting and reassuring sounds within their environment, unless directly directed towards them. Even with the assistance of hearing aids and recent technology advances many hearing impaired children report listening unpleasant.

Research into Children's language acquisition in recent years has provided detailed information on the way in which sentence structures and grammatical systems develop within language.

“ Language acquisition is essentially creative; that is, children deduce for themselves the rules which govern the production and comprehension of language”

Davison, M. Pg25

The second important factor is that all children learning English seem to follow a very similar pattern of development. In every child there are differences in the rate of acquisition and the precise order in which new structures are required, although there is a clear developmental trend in the way children develop and this can be used when assessing an individual child's language

In order to support the development of literacy the government have implemented both initiatives and frameworks. The department for education have introduced and implemented the National Strategy; within this is the Primary Framework for Literacy. The framework is the guideline for all

aspects of teaching and literacy development in schools. The National Strategy, which is now part of the Primary National Strategy, has been in place since 1998. In March 2006, Jim Rose released the ‘ Independent review of teaching of early reading’. This report outlined the principles of high quality work within a language rich curriculum that gives rise to high standards of reading and writing. The Rose report outlined two obvious but linked procedures involved in teaching children to read, the ability to recognise words and the comprehension of language. The Rose review had a huge impact on the teaching of literacy, influencing positively both planning and teaching significantly.