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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO READING READINESS

AN ABSTRACT OF
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The Problem

The basic purpose of this paper was to discover how current literature describes the development of language in early childhood, and what programs are proposed for enhancing and enriching language development in the attempt to achieve reading readiness.

It was discovered that there is a dichotomy in the very term readiness. Recent trends have been toward earlier and more instruction of children in abstract learning, so that readiness takes on a special meaning. In the past readiness was conceived as being simply a genetic and developmental state of being, not necessarily to be changed radically by intervention. Today readiness is often conceived as being a state to be achieved through intervention; the importance of such intervention is stressed as being necessary in order to achieve the maximum possible cognitive development.

The problem becomes a matter of fitting the course of language development into a structure leading toward reading readiness. Is this a structure which we, as educators, can and should alter, and if so in what direction and by what means?

Conduct of the Study

This study was conducted entirely through a research of the literature. An attempt was made to delve into historical

as well as current literature on the subject of language development and programs for increasing this development. There was an attempt to develop an inclusive bibliography; most sources cited in the literature were available for usage throughout the study.

Conclusion

It was found that there is a general structure of language development upon which most authors are agreed. Piaget has done the basic work in this field, and while others may disagree with some of the fine points, his structure underlies all work in this field.

Taking this structure, we then find a basic disagreement over whether or not to intervene or educate, and to what extent and at what point to do so, in order to nurture this development. More recent writers such as Hunt, Deutsch, and Bereiter and Engelmann argue for intervention, feeling that the total growth of the individual is dependent upon early exposure. Other writers, such as the people from the Gesell Institute, Piaget, and Montessori seem to feel that development, while certainly modified by environment, is basically genetic and intervention is not justifiable in terms of the development of the whole child or in terms of the results thus far demonstrated.

No one disputes the basic relationship of reading readiness and language development. Everyone can see that a

child may have deficits in certain areas which can be minimized, or perhaps erased by education. Thus one comes to the general conclusion that whatever help is given, it might best be undertaken on an individual basis, with an eclectic approach, borrowing from each author or theoretician, that part of his or her program which best suits the needs of the individual child.