

# The Development of Language Communication Ability of Children Aged 3-6 on the Basis of the Learning Theory of Behaviorism

Siyuan Li, Qian Sun\*

Normal School, Hubei Polytechnic University, Huangshi 435003, P. R. China

## Abstract

As the fifth ability, language communication refers to the ability to communicate with the society through language. And childhood is the best period time to learn and develop language ability. To cultivate children's language communication ability is the basis for children to receive all kinds of education, which is conducive to children's socialization and all-round development. Through the investigation of preschool teachers and parents, in this paper, it is found that most kindergartens focus on language knowledge education but ignore language quality education, and there are also some other problems, such as an improper way mode of language communication between children's teachers and the parents, as well as the insufficiency of language environment. Therefore, this paper aims to study the language communication ability of children aged 3-6 with the help of learning theory of behaviorism, with an aim to find out the reasonable and most effective cultivation method accordingly.

## Keywords

Children's Language Communication Ability; Learning Theory of Behaviorism; S-R.

## 1. Preface

Language is an important tool for human thinking, learning and communication. In the "theory of multiple intelligences" put forward by developmental psychologist Howard Gardner, verbal intelligence, as one of the eight intellectual potentials, is the most extensive one and just ability possessed by human beings. 3-6 years old is the key period of children's speech learning and development, which belongs to the basic perfection stage of children's speech development.

In the study of the language communication ability of children aged 3-6, the application of the learning theory of behaviorism has a great impact on children's language learning ability. This theory has been widely used in preschool education in China and is one of the important theories in the field of preschool education. Its main manifestations in school education are: to adopting the principle of "small steps" in the process of language teaching; preschool children's learning goals tend to be specific and personalized. In the family education, it is mainly manifested as using the principle of behavior shaping and correction to cultivate the behavior habits of preschool children. We should practice the principle that education originates from life and make full use of language education materials in daily life to carry out the language education for children.

## 2. The Characteristics of 3-6 Years Old Children's Language Communication Ability under the Learning Theory of Behaviorism

The learning theory of behaviorism, also known as stimulus-response theory, is a school of psychology that applies behaviorism theories and methods to the study of learning. It mainly includes the classical reflexology theory of Russian physiologist and psychologist Ivan Pavlvo, the classical conditioning learning theory of American psychologist John Broadus Watson, the operational conditioning learning theory of American psychologist Burr Frederick Skinner and

the observational learning theory of contemporary American famous psychologist Albert Bandura. Through the application of the learning theory of behaviorism to the study of 3-6 years old children's language communication ability, it is found that there are three characteristics as follows:

### **2.1. An S-R Connection is Formed**

Human thinking is the result of the interaction with the external environment, namely, the formation of "stimulus-response". Learning is the connection between stimulus and responses, and its basic formula is: S-R (S for stimulus, R for response). The response to the stimulus is the response to the stimulus. Therefore, in the language education of children aged 3-6, various language teaching methods of teachers and parents are the "stimulus", while the level of language communication ability reflected by children is the "response", thus forming the S-R connection.

### **2.2. Imitation is the Means**

The language learning of children aged 3-6 years old is essentially a process of continuous imitation, trial and error until the final formulation. Generally speaking, children aged 3-6 will take the imitation as a means of language learning, observe people or things around them, and constantly try to express the world they perceive, finally forming an individually unique and fixed language system.

### **2.3. Reinforcement is the Key**

The connection between the stimulus and response is called reinforcement which is the key to learning success. The learning theory of behaviorism. Behaviorist learning theory holds that learning is a process of learning new behaviors based on existing behaviors, which is mainly manifested as "behaviors", "learning" and "habitual behaviors". Behavior learning is a habitual response to a stimulus. Any behavior can be created, designed, shaped and changed through the operation of the environment and the timely reinforcement of the behavior. Therefore, how to strengthen children's correct verbal communication behaviors at the age of 3-6 is the focus that we need to pay attention to.

## **3. The Present Situation of Language Communication Ability of Children Aged 3-6 in China**

Under the influence of the epidemic, the questionnaire was designed to measure the language communication ability of children aged 3-6, mainly with preschool teachers and parents as research objects. A total of 245 questionnaires were distributed in this study, including 143 for parents and 102 for preschool teachers. And 245 valid questionnaires were received at last. The questionnaire collected data on multiple factors affecting children's verbal communication ability, including their biological factors, age factors, gender factors, personality characteristics and other personal factors, their cognitive and emotional factors, environmental factors, educational factors and so on. Based on the SPSS analysis of the recovered data, it is found that there are two major problems in the language communication ability of children aged 3-6 in China:

### **3.1. S-R Connection in the Development of Children's Verbal Communication Ability: Poor Response to Stimulus Formation**

#### **3.1.1. The Teachers is are Related to the Children's S-R**

Through the analysis of the questionnaire results, it can be seen that in language teaching activities for children, preschool teachers often use more efficiently open-ended questions. However, these open-ended questions will produce a lot of details irrelevant to the question,

and are affected by individual' differences of children, leading to different responses of children to problem stimuli. At the same time, the communication and interaction between the preschool teachers and children in class is not limited to questions and answers, and effective communication between the teachers and students forms a positive and effective connection. It is not difficult to find from the questionnaire data that about 50% of children aged 3-6 have negative reaction behaviors to the language teaching of preschool teachers, and they do not take the initiative to answer the questions raised by their teachers. Even if the children participate in the teacher-student interaction in class, the proportion of the children who choose to refuse when the kindergarten teacher continues to communicate accounts for 50%. This data shows that the preschool teachers cannot master the language ability of all students in the class and have a single teaching method. They are unable to teach students according to their aptitude and effectively build positive bounds with the children.

**3.1.2. The S-R Connection between Parents and their Children**

As the first teacher in children's life, parents exert a subtle and profound influence on their children. Therefore, it is also very important for parents to attach importance to their children's verbal communication ability. According to Table 1, about 20% of parents believe that the training of children's verbal communication ability can be achieved through kindergarten learning, and even one parent chooses not to pay attention to the development of children's verbal communication ability.

**Table 1.** Ways for Parents to Practice Their Children's Language Communication Skills

	Frequency	The percentage	Significant percentage	Cumulative percentage
Kindergarten learning	26	18.2	18.2	18.2
Communication with your children	97	67.8	67.8	86.0
Through parent-child activities	19	13.3	13.3	99.3
Nothing	1	.7	.7	100.0

When playing mobile phones becomes a habit of life of all the people, some parents ignore the creation of the family language environment, unilaterally believing that It is the responsibility of preschool teachers to cultivate of children's language ability, and habitually reckoning that their children can learn well in kindergarten. It can be seen that there are cognitive errors in parents' orientation towards children's language ability cultivation, and the deficiency of parent-child communication is not conducive to the construction of S-R connection between the parents and their children.

**3.2. Imitation Space as an Important Means to Develop Children's Language Communication Ability is Insufficient**

Influenced by the social environment, the information age makes life intelligent, and electronic products emerge in endlessly and become increasingly abundant. Parents rely on these electronic products in their daily life -- including mobile phones, computers, televisions, etc., and tend to neglect the normal communication and exchange with their children.

**3.2.1. The Imitation Space between the Parents and their Children is Severely Shrunk**

The parent-child communication and family environment are the basic language environment for the language development of children aged 3-6, and the parents are one of the main objects

of their children's imitation. Through SPSS analysis, we found that the parent-child communication time with the children's ability of language application, as well as vocabulary and other language of expression is significantly correlated, that is, the parent-child communication as the embodiment of the quality of family life influences the development of children's language ability to communicate, and the creation of the better family environment, more conducive to promoting the development of children's language communication ability (see table 2).Therefore, the parent-child communication has great influence on children's language imitation. However, the questionnaire data showed that in daily life, 20 parents spent less than half an hour on communication with their children for every day, which account for.

**Table 2.** Correlation between Parent-child Communication and Children's Language Application

		How long do you communicate with your child everyday?	Can your child use words properly?
How long do you communicate with your child everyday?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.332**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
	N	143	143
Can your child use words properly?	Pearson Correlation	-.332**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	
	N	143	143

14% of the total; 62 parents spent no more than two hours a day with their children, accounting for 43% of the total. The daily communication time between the parents and their children is far from enough, and there is a serious shortage of space for children's language imitation.

**3.2.2. The Imitation Space between Teachers and Students is Uneven Due to Individual Differences**

The target of language imitation for children aged 3-6 is not only acquired from parents but also held from preschool teachers. On average, children between the ages of three to six receive three years of preschool education, so studies have shown that children spend more time with their teachers. According to the survey data, only 39 teachers can communicate with half of the children every day, accounting for 38% of the total number.53 teachers, or 52 %, had face-to-face emotional contact with less than 10 children.

It can be seen that there is a lack of face-to-face emotional communication between teachers and children. Even if some teachers have face-to-face communication with children, it is far from enough to take into account only a small number of children. It shows that compared with the face-to-face emotional communication, children’s teachers rely more on classroom teaching for communication. This is also a misunderstanding in children's speech education in kindergarten. In general, in the course of teaching, teachers adopt the collective teaching method. In order to avoid disordered phenomena in children's presentation process, language

guidance for children is mandatory to some extent, which limits the freedom of speech interaction between children and teachers, and greatly reduces the effectiveness of activities.

#### **4. Methods to Develop the Language Communication Ability of Children Aged 3-6 Years Old**

Behavior correction and reinforcement are important ways to cultivate children's language communication ability. By correcting the wrong language habits and behaviors of children aged 3-6, the correct stimulus-response connection between children and the outside world is strengthened to construct the children's social language system and realize their socialization. At the same time, as the "stimulus" side of the kindergarten and parents, they also need to correct the anachronistic ideas and methods, so as to effectively implement children's speech education.

##### **4.1. The School Education**

###### **4.1.1. Picture Book Teaching is a High-Quality Medium Connected by S-R**

Picture books displayed as illustrations, are a form of visual teaching, which not only enables children aged 3-6 to read, observe and imagine, but also reflects the value of their language abilities. The three elements of picture book teaching are discovery, thinking and expression, which can be summarized as "pleasing to the eye". It's defined as the expression of picture books conformed to children's interests and it also can make children's eyes shine. "Eye and eye" refers to the children who mobilize the most primitive sense system under the guidance of teachers: seeing, hearing and feeling, from reading to thinking, and then to accurate language expressions, which reflects a clear and profound philosophy of early childhood education.

Picture books are excellent media for S-R connection between writers and children. How can preschool teachers make better use of the S-R connection between drawing book builders and children? First, preschool teachers should act on the picture books teaching activities combined with the characteristics of children's thinking of class and actual language levels as well as fine interpretation of the content of the children's picture books, which fully master the art of painting the style and the author's intention, mobilize the children's auditory and visual organ in 9 picture books teaching activities and positive expression in language. Secondly, preschool teachers should fully mobilize children's vision and hearing, effectively organize children to read picture books, accurately interpret the contents of picture books, guide children's divergent thinking by using open questions, and constantly optimize the external stimulation of picture book teaching on children in picture book teaching method. Finally, based on the good stimulus of picture books for children, teachers should effectively organize children to communicate and discuss with each other, use simple auxiliary teaching aids to guide children to complete the role playing of picture books, and let children express themselves freely with the help of story situations, so that children's language abilities can be better trained and improved. Thus, good stimulus and effective responses can be achieved through picture book teaching, and an S-R connection conducive to the development of children's language abilities is constructed.

###### **4.1.2. Guide and Correct Language Behaviors and Habits of Children Aged 3-6 Years**

Teachers play a leading role in the language teaching of children and should continuously guide and correct the language behaviors and habits of children aged 3-6. Behavior is the response of learners to the stimulus of the external environment. When applied to the language education of children, it requires preschool teachers to master the methods of shaping and correcting children's speech behaviors, and to create a comfortable speech environment to maximize the reinforcement of children's reasonable language behaviors and eliminate unreasonable behaviors. Therefore, the emphasis of language teaching lies in preschool teachers' shaping and

correcting the language behaviors of children aged 3-6. Preschool teachers should try their best to understand the personal characteristics and language level of the whole class before implementing language teaching activities. Based on whole-class collective teaching, one-to-one language communication and correction are essential. In the daily teaching of kindergarten, preschool teachers should allocate time reasonably, design "one-to-one communication time", understand children's inner thoughts, guide children's language behavior, and help them overcome the difficulties of language expression. At the same time, in the process of language teaching, children should be regarded as the focus to help them correct inappropriate language habits such as interruptions, language errors and confusion.

On the premise of understanding the characteristics of children aged 3-6, we should create a relaxed and comfortable language environment, stabilize their emotions, stimulate their language thinking ability, let them actively participate in language teaching activities so as to help children to build a scientific language system, and shape good language behavior.

#### **4.1.3. Strengthen and Grasp the Behavior in the Critical Period of Language Learning in Children Aged 3-6 Years**

"Children's language skills are developed in the course of their use," the Guidelines state. Preschool teachers should actively carry out diversified speech teaching activities based on the characteristics of 3-6 year-old children, their actual language development level and the requirements of the teaching theme, and guide them to properly express their own ideas in different situations.

In Skinner's opinion, the problem of education is whether to carry out correct and proper control -- to use the operant conditioning principle for immediate and consistent positive reinforcement to individuals. 3-6 years old is the critical period of children's language development. First of all, preschool teachers should focus on grasping the critical period of children's language learning, timely strengthen and repeat the correct behavior of children's language application and expressions, so as to improve the learning efficiency of children's language during the critical period. Specifically, positive reinforcement is often used in language teaching to respond positively to children's positive behaviors in order to increase the probability of correct language behaviors. Secondly, the language learning objectives of children aged 3-6 years should be established through continuous behaviors, and correct language behaviors and habits. It also should be consolidated through intermittent reinforcement. As for the choice of reinforcement, preschool teachers can choose consumer reinforces such as candy, cookies and stickers, as well as social reinforcement such as verbal compliments, smiles and hugs, which are closer to children's daily life and less likely to produce "satiety". Finally, preschool teachers can produce simulation of daily life in a dialogue situation. They also can ask children to create the context for dialogue simulation, observe their language use and expressions, in order to timely correct speech disease. At this point, the focus is on the application of children's language in their daily life, rather than the mechanical retelling of the content, which is conducive to the influence of children's emotional color of language and promote its better socialization.

## **4.2. The Family Education**

### **4.2.1. Parents Should Cultivate Children's Correct Cognition of Social Communication**

Social communication refers to the entire social interaction process of human beings, including the exchange of information such as ideas, knowledge, emotions, thoughts and interests, as well as all the social behaviors of interacting independent individuals. Yu Yongping said that social education is the education of "being a person". The language expression of children aged 3-6 is self-centered. Parents should follow the principle of small steps to gradually bring children from the personal world to the real world and experience the happiness of social communication. There is a blood bond between parents and children that cannot be ignored.

Parents should fully communicate with children with the help of the specific environment of "family" to help them understand what is social communication step by step. What language skills are needed? Thus, it can help children aged 3-6 to adapt to the group and initially experience the fun of good interpersonal relationship. Specifically, children are required to communicate with their elders and peers at family gatherings. When receiving guests at home, they can actively guide children and strangers to communicate, gradually eliminate the fear of psychology.

Education is the shaping of behavior. Based on the physical and mental characteristics of children aged 3-6, parents should impart knowledge and skills of social communication in a targeted way. Children's pronunciation and intonation should be corrected and their clear logic of language expression should be emphasized. At the same time, parents should constantly strengthen children's discrimination ability, learn to use appropriate language in different situations, and promote children to gradually realize the correct social development, which is a long-term training process.

#### **4.2.2. Parents Should Cooperate with Kindergartens to Carry out Home Cooperation and Maintain the Consistency of Education**

Home cooperation is an important mode to maintain the consistency of education, which can create a good language environment and realize the dual effect of "home + garden" in the development of 3-6 year old children's language communication ability.

The focus of home cooperation is cooperation. First of all, parents should take the initiatives to communicate with kindergartens, understand the actual situation of children in school, cooperate with teachers to pay attention to children's language problems, and jointly find solutions to solve problems. Secondly, parents should actively participate in children's various speech activities. Finally, parents should timely strengthen children's learning outcomes in school, cooperate with children's kindergarten teaching, and jointly cultivate children's language communication ability as well as shaping good language habits. Parents and preschool teachers can work together to enhance the connection between the home, check the loopholes, guarantee 3-6 years old children's language learning. Families and kindergartens maintain a high degree of consistency in creating a good language environment and developing language education, which can provide the best conditions for children's language abilities, enhance their interest in language learning, and promote the steady development of children's language communication skills. Therefore, home cooperation is an important guarantee for children's language learning and abilities to achieve effective results.

## **References**

- [1] A.Reimann.(2018).Behaviorist Learning Theory.American Cancer Society.
- [2] MAGNI.M, PAOLINO.C, CAPPETTA.R, & PROSERPIO.L.(2013). Diving Too Deep: How Cognitive Absorption and Group Learning Behavior Affect Individual Learning.Critical Issues in Learning Theory.Academy Of Management Learning & Education, 12(1), 51-69.
- [3] Pei.L.(2016).The validity study of Language education activities in kindergarten. 000(14). 256-256. (Chiness).
- [4] X.X.Jin.(2019).A Review of behaviorist learning Theory on Language Teaching. Modern communication. (20):115-114.(Chiness).