Teaching Resources for Chapter 7

**Links**

• [*basic*] The subfield of Linguistics devoted to the socially appropriate use of language is called sociolinguistics. This link goes to an overview of the field written by one of the leading researchers in the area.

http://www.lsadc.org/info/ling-fields-socio.cfm

• [*intermediate*]This chapter discusses the theories of cognitive development associated with Piaget and Vygotsky. For an overview of Piaget’s approach, click this link: http://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html

For an overview of Vygotsky’s approach (as well as a brief movie comparing the two theories), click this one:

http://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html

**Activities for Students**

Conversations:

In order to become competent conversationalists, children must learn to use Grice’s maxims of cooperative conversation: Quality, Quantity, Manner, and Relation. To see how these maxims are important to a good conversational interaction, have a conversation with a friend and violate one of the maxims. Observe what happens between you and your friend, and compare this to what you learned about typical children’s conversations.

Narrative:

Go to the CHILDES website and browse through transcripts of children telling narratives. Start here:

http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/browser/index.php?url=Narrative/

On the left side of the page you will see the names of several researchers who have donated their transcripts of children’s narratives. Choose any of the researchers and then keep clicking on choices from the left-hand menus until transcripts appear in the large box on the right.

Read through the narrative and discuss its features. Is the child telling a personal narrative or a fictional one? Is there an adult present who scaffolds the narrative? How doe the scaffolding happen? Evaluate the narrative: is it well formed and easy to follow or under-specified and confusing? Identify something the child does well and something he or she still needs to work on.

Register:

For this activity, you will need to find a child to watch and observe him or her in two social situations. If you know of a child (a niece or nephew, a child you babysit for, etc.) then you can observe him or her. Alternatively, you can find videos of children on YouTube. Or, you can use a fictional child from a book, a TV show, or a movie. Fictional children are a bit artificial, but if your source material is reasonably realistic, you should be fine.

Observe the child in two different social situations, for example, at school and at home; talking to another child or to an adult; at play or at the dinner table; etc. Write a brief report of your observations. How would you characterize each of the social situations? Be sure to consider who is involved, where they are, and what the topic of conversation is. In your report, discuss how your target child’s language is different in the two situations. Consider the child’s choice of words, sentence structure, body language, turn-taking, voice quality, etc.

**Online Movies**

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| Movie Name | Access | Description | Time |
| Brian Cox Masterclass with Theo | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loDMRzPiCic | Actor Brian Cox teaches his nephew to recite Hamlet’s famous soliloquy. Excellent for demonstrating the role of imitation in language development, and also for illustrating dialect differences | 2:40 |
| RSA Animate – Language as a Window into Human Nature | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-son3EJTrU | An animated depiction of part of a talk by Steven Pinker discussing the uses and purposes of polite language and euphemism. | 10:54 |
| Assignment#3 – Gender and Language | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hb\_BcM3nJns | A brief student presentation reviewing the literature on language differences between women and men. The focus is largely on the content and motivation of conversations. | 5:16 |
| Chapter 7 – Child Communication | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XO0XJHesUU | Short lecture by Deborah Tannen talking about different communication strategies and interaction styles between boys and girls. Includes short clips of boys and girls talking as well. | 8:02 |
| Grice’s Maxims | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oI9tFOcVnV4 | Description of Grice’s conversational maxims followed by examples of people flouting those maxims (And the miscommunications and irritations that ensue). | 3:31 |
| Steven Pinker on Language Pragmatics | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKbp4hEHV-s | Brief clip of Seven Pinker giving an overview of what pragmatics is. Includes animations and high concept visuals. | 3:16 |
| How English sounds to Non-English speakers | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vt4Dfa4fOEY | A short indie-style movie in which the actors speak “fake-English”. It gives an idea about how much information you can get from tone and expressions, as well as giving an idea about how it feels to listen to a language you don’t understand. Note, there is some adult language in this clip. | 4:06 |

**Movies on CD**

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| 1.2  Child at 14 months | On Existing Student CD | Rex at 14 months. Rex is a monolingual English-learning child playing with toys and his parents. Illustrates well:  • Comprehension even without clear production  • May say /k/ to represent “cookie”  • Parent-child interactions and social intentions | 1:06 |
| 1.5  Child at 5 years | On Existing Student CD | Avelina at 5;6. Avelina is a monolingual English-learning child talking with an unfamiliar adult.  Illustrates well:  • Telling of a personal narrative  • Adult scaffolding of narrative  • Appropriate level syntactic and phonological abilities | :48 |
| 3.2  Child at 14 months | On Existing Student CD | Rex at 14 months. Rex is a monolingual English-learning child playing with toys and his parents. Illustrates well:  • Requesting gesture  • Parent child interactions | :34 |
| 4.1  Child at 6 months | On Existing Student CD | Kaylana at 6 months. Kaylana is a monolingual English-learning child playing with toys. Illustrates well  • Reaching behaviors (not pointing)  • Limited social abilities with adults  • Vocalizations of various sorts – all pre-babbling sorts | 2:32 |
| 4.3  Child at 14 months | On Existing Student CD  (note – this appears to be an extended version of the same clip in 1.2) | Rex at 14 months. Rex is a monolingual English-learning child playing with toys and his parents. Illustrates well:  • Following simple directions  • May say /k/ to represent “cookie”  • Parent-child interactions and social intentions | 4:09 |
| 5.2  Child at 6 years and Child at 3 years | On Existing Student CD | Lucy is 6;7 and Mimi is 3;2; both are monolingual speakers of English. Lucy reads parts of two stories aloud from books. Mimi tells some stories as part of a conversational interaction with an adult. Illustrates well:  • Early reading abilities  • Narrative abilities in 3 year olds  • Adult scaffolding | 2:31 |
| 5.3  Frog story by a 6 year old | On Existing Student CD | Lucy is 6;7 and a monolingual speaker of English. She is telling the frog story. | 1:15 |
| 9.1  Frog story by a 5 year old | On Existing Student CD | Avelina at 5;6. Avelina is a monolingual English-learning child. She is telling the frog story. | 2:57 |

**Quicktime Movies**

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| The Frog Story as told by an 8-year-old girl and a 9-year-old boy | Quicktime movie file | The full Frog story told in alternation between an older gild and an older boy. | 2:49 |

**Sample Test Questions**

1. What is the difference between linguistic and communicative competence?
   1. There is no difference; the two terms refer to the same thing.
   2. Linguistic competence is the ability to understand and produce well formed sentences while communicative competence is the ability to engage in appropriate communicative interactions.
   3. Linguistic competence is the ability to engage in appropriate social interactions while communicative competence is the ability to understand and produce well formed sentences.
   4. Linguistic competence is the ability to speak while communicative competence is the ability to read.

1. The relationship between linguistic form and communicative function is:
   1. one-to-one: there is a separate form for each function and vice versa.
   2. one-to many: each linguistic form can go to many different functions, but there is only one way to express each function.
   3. many-to-many: a single linguistic form can be used for different functions and the same function can be expressed by different linguistic forms.
   4. there is no way to distinguish between form and function in language development.

1. A child is fussing and staring towards a favorite blanket out of her reach. Her mother notices the child’s distress and fetches the blanket of the child. This child has effectively engaged in what kind of communicative act?
   1. a perlocutionary act
   2. an illocutionary act
   3. a narrative act
   4. conversational discourse
2. Before age 2 years, while children are still in the one and two-word stages of language development, which statement best describes their communicative abilities?
   1. Prior to age 2 years, infants can communicate, but they do so without the benefit of their language.
   2. Infants are innately born with full command of all the communicative functions of language.
   3. Prior to age 2 years, children are able to engage in several kinds of speech acts and can use what language they have in an appropriately communicative manner.
   4. Prior to age 2 years, children are barely able to communicate anything at all.

1. Infants have been recorded in their cribs talking to themselves. These infants are engaged in:
   1. syntactic bootstrapping.
   2. private speech.
   3. Grice’s conversational maxim of manner.
   4. scaffolding.
2. How can we make sense of a child who responds by saying “Seventeen!” when she is asked “What time is it?”
   1. the child does not understand why the question was being asked at all.
   2. the child is likely to have a language disorder.
   3. the child does not understand how to use situationally appropriate language.
   4. the child’s understanding of how conversations about time work is more advanced than her actual ability to tell time.
3. As children develop their skill with conversational discourse over the first few years of life, they begin to:
   1. initiate more topics using speech rather than gesture.
   2. tailor their responses to the specific questions being asked.
   3. revise the way they phrase a message when a miscommunication has occurred.
   4. all of the above are ways in which children’s conversational skill develops over the first few years of life.
4. The Gricean maxim of quantity says:
   1. be as relevant as you can.
   2. be clear with brief, orderly statements.
   3. be truthful.
   4. be as informative as possible without giving too much information.
5. A child who responds by saying “I like trucks” after her mother says “Eat your peas!” has demonstrated which of the following?
   1. a non-contingent response
   2. a contingent response
   3. a violation of the maxim of quality
   4. private speech

1. When young children engage in conversations with their peers, they:
   1. show more sophisticated conversational skills than when they speak to adults because they find talking with peers more socially engaging.
   2. show less sophisticated conversational skills than when they speak to adults because their peers do not provide scaffolding as adults do.
   3. show equally sophisticated conversational skills compared to when they speak to adults, although their style of conversation is quite different.
   4. young children do not engage in conversations with their peers.

1. Children’s early narratives are said to be conversational in nature because:
   1. children tell them in a conversational context in which their parents ask questions and probe for needed information.
   2. children tell stories in which the characters have lots of conversations.
   3. children of parents who use repetitive responses have increased language complexity.
   4. children of parents who use elaboration produce longer and more complex utterances later.
2. Which of the following factors help children tell richer narratives?
   1. a parent who provides repetitive scaffolding.
   2. telling a narrative about an unfamiliar, abstract situation.
   3. a parent who provides elaborative scaffolding.
   4. telling a narrative about a fictional story.
3. When a child is asked to explain a (relatively) complicated problem to a younger child than herself, she will typically adjust her speech to be simpler. This fact is supportive of which of the following claims?
   1. Piaget’s claim that children are egocentric
   2. the claim that children understand the need to adjust their speech to be appropriate to the specific situation
   3. the claim that children require scaffolding to learn how to communicate
   4. the claim that children are born with an innate grammar learning mechanism
4. Which of the following is NOT evidence that children can use and understand situationally appropriate language?
   1. the fact that children in higher socioeconomic status households tend to have larger vocabularies than children in lower socioeconomic househoulds
   2. the fact that boys and girls speak differently in ways that reflect the different ways that men and women speak differently
   3. when acting out roles for puppets, children speak differently for different characters, such as having a doctor puppet use more imperative forms than a patient puppet
   4. the fact that children will use more polite requests (such as using indirect questions and saying the word *please*) when asked to speak “very nicely”

1. Which of the following is a factor that influences children’s developing abilities in conversational skills, narrative skills, and the use of situationally appropriate language:
   1. linguistic development, including increased vocabularies and knowledge of syntactic structures.
   2. cognitive development, including the ability to track others’ intentions and goals.
   3. parental interactions, including scaffolding, and maternal responsiveness.
   4. all of the above are factors which influence children’s development in these areas.
2. Identify Grice’s four maxims of cooperative conversation and briefly explain each one. Choose one of the maxims and give an example of it being violated. How would someone react to such a violation?
3. What is the difference between communication and language? Consider phenomena in children’s early development and identify an example of something from children’s that is communicative but does not involve language. Then, discuss how children’s developing linguistic abilities interacts with their ability to communicate effectively.
4. What is a narrative and what elements are necessary to make a narrative a good one? Discuss how parents scaffold children into producing good narratives. Be specific about what kinds of things children need help with and what parents say to provide assistance.