**Language Acquisition**

            Language is an essential part of our lives and is the method of human communication that consists of structured words that are either spoken, signed, or written. Words can be used to symbolize ideas, expressions, objects, people, or places. Although words can promote communication, they can also lead to misunderstandings when an individual does not recognize or remember specific words.  Our memory systems are also crucial to our development and recollection of words. Long and short-term memory stores information that assists in the continuous learning of new information throughout our lifetime.

**Critical Periods of Learning**

            Learning during developmental stages is very important. For certain sensory functions to develop normally, a child must receive appropriate input from the environment at a particular stage in their development. This can include sounds, patterns, visual stimuli, and objects that a child can touch. Prior research has disclosed that if certain learning experiences do not occur by a certain age, the brain will not develop properly, and those skills or abilities will be impossible to acquire (Blakemore &Frith, 2005). Researchers now believe that critical periods of learning are not so invariable. On the other hand, they believe that sensitive periods that incorporate subtle changes in the brain will allow it to be shaped and changed through experiences, which can create new learning opportunities throughout an individual’s lifetime (Blakemore &Frith, 2005). Early intervention is essential for a child to regain normal function when sensory problems have been identified simply because late learning may be more difficult from the type of learning that occurs naturally during critical periods.

**Zone of Proximal Development**

            Lev Vygotsky was a psychologist who was termed the founding father of sociocultural research and eventually introduced the Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky viewed language as the mediating tool of higher-order cognitive functions and believed that conversations among family and peers produced psychological development in children. Vygotsky proposed that through meaningful interactions with artifacts, signs, and symbols, human beings assign meanings for the development of cognition, language, and learning (Kekeya, 2018). Vygotsky also believed children learned through the continuous development of hands-on and social interactive experiences. The zone of proximal development is the distance between what a child can do on their own and what they can do from assistance from a peer or an adult (Kravtsova, 2009). Since learning precedes development and learning new information enhances our developmental level, Vygotsky believed that children must be presented with tasks just outside of their present abilities. Tasks that are too simple or in the child’s current abilities do not promote learning and can produce boredom. On the other hand, functions that are too difficult can become frustrating, and no learning will also occur.

**Life-Long Learning**

            Learning is an everyday process but requires effort. Researchers who study the brain have found that it can change in size and activity as a result of usage, which discloses that there is no age limit for learning (Blakemore &Frith, 2005). The plasticity of the hippocampus in the brain also plays a vital role in the spatial memory that formulates new memories and is associated with learning and emotions. Studies have revealed that the brain's sensory and motor areas can adapt to the environment according to its usage in just five days (Blakemore &Frith, 2005). Physical exercise can also boost brain function and increase learning in adult brains. Research on adult mice who utilized a running wheel for six weeks became better at learning than the mice who did not have a wheel to exercise (Blakemore &Frith, 2005). This evidence further promotes that brain plasticity and function implicates the ability for life-long learning.

**Language Acquisition in an Educational Setting**

            Learning opportunities can be a complicated process for both the student and the teacher. Many different factors can affect a student’s learning process, such as the way they learn. Students may encounter issues in their approach to problems because of how they were previously taught in a different environment. When developing learning opportunities, teachers must be aware of the subject matter and ensure that the material falls within their zone of proximal development. Educators must design lesson plans that accommodate each student because they each have a different zone of proximal development, and this process can avoid boredom and frustration. Students can learn with teaching modifications, guidance, and encouragement.

**Personal Academic Success and Language Acquisition**

            My personal language development has affected me as a student in several ways. Initially, I was worried about entering the psychology career field because of my limited experience. When I took my first class, I was unsure if I had made the right decision because I was not familiar with the terminology, and the assignments were very challenging to complete. I forced myself to research any word that I was not familiar with so that I could become more accustomed to this field. My writing has improved, and my vocabulary has expanded, which has allowed me to become a more successful student.

            I believe I could develop more in areas of language acquisition. The military is one of the most diverse organizations in the world. There are service members from various cultures and backgrounds. I have always felt inclined to pursue a civilian career with the military because it is a culture that I have been accustomed to for over eight years. I believe it would be beneficial to become more fluent in Spanish because a considerable portion of the military utilizes it. English is a second language to some military members, and they struggle to communicate with various departments within their branch of service. I would be able to help communicate and ease some of their tensions when they are seeking assistance.

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