

Developmental Learning Theory: A new approach to education

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Description: What can we take from the scientific study of language learning to inform teaching practice? Is it possible that the same things which help language learning would help us teach other topics as well?

Talk Outline and Key Points

- Introduction** Language is ESP: Whereas perception lets us see the world as it is, language allows us to see the world as it could be, to see patterns and connections too abstract for mere perception. In this way, language forms the basis of all expert learning and may provide the key to helping students move from novices to experts.
- Sensory-Based Learning and the Hyper-Real** Language learning begins in concrete exaggerated examples and exaggerated infant-directed speech. So too, expert learning may start with simple caricatures of reality. Cartoons, in particular, help focus on the essence of a thing, and music, sitcoms, romance novels, action movies, comic books, political propaganda, and marketing follow this hyper-real ideal.
- Survival Relevance** Language is only learned if it is relevant. Likewise big, scary, social group, food, or disgust-related items seem to resonate far beyond the classroom. This could be why Dinosaurs, Vampires, Being Cool, Having Friends, and Getting Attention are so central to children's lives.
- Theme and Variation** Language is learned through theme and variation: getting multiple examples of the same concept. Repetition is necessary, but boring, and novelty is enjoyed insofar as it is consistent with prior experience. Thus, it is important to find multiple ways to tell the same story and tap into what the child already knows.

For more information and full slides: <http://hollich.psych.purdue.edu>