

## **BEHAVIORAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN THE BLIND**

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### **Annotation**

This article analyzes the issues of language acquisition based on the behavioristic approach and its application in the language acquisition process of the visually impaired. Furthermore, the advantages, limitations, and practical application possibilities of the theory are highlighted. The views of behaviorist scholars on how the language learning process is shaped by external environmental influences, experiences, and reinforcement are presented.

**Keywords:** Behaviorism, language acquisition, visually impaired, stimulus-response, reinforcement, imitation, tactile perception.

Language is one of the most important manifestations of human consciousness. There are various theories about the nature of language acquisition, among which behaviorism studies language in relation to the external environment. This trend, which emerged in the early 20th century, explains human behavior, including the formation of speech, based on experience.

The issue of language learning is one of the most important topics in the fields of psycholinguistics and pedagogy. The theory of behaviorism (J. Watson, B. Skinner) [1] explains language acquisition in terms of conditioned reflexes based on stimulus-response. According to this approach, a person acquires language through direct experience, practice, and reward.

According to the principles of behaviorist theory:

\* Language acquisition is formed through responses to external stimuli (words, sounds, gestures).

\* Repetition and practice reinforce language material.

\* A system of rewards and punishments helps to reinforce correct speech forms.

This theory is of particular importance in studying the process of language acquisition by blind people. Behaviorism views language learning as a set of habits formed under the influence of the external environment, rather than an internal innate ability or mental process. Thus, for a blind child, the main role is played by hearing, tactile sensations, and the reactions of others.

The main tools for language acquisition in blind children are not vision, but:

\* Hearing (speech, sound, musical signals),

- \* Bodily sensations (tactile experience),
- \* Verbal repetition (verbal practice).

According to the behaviorist approach, a blind child reinforces the speech units he hears by repeating them over and over again. Attention from a teacher or parent, as well as repeated praise and recognition, stimulate speech activity. The lack of vision does not limit the behaviorist approach, as the focus is on sensory experience and external stimuli. Even in blind children, the process of learning language occurs through auditory imitation and reinforcement, especially in the early stages. This theory is useful in teaching them the functional meaning of words (what to do, how to use them).

A blind child cannot imitate visually through sight, but imitates speech through hearing. By repeating the tone of voice, words, and intonation of adults, speech habits are gradually formed. Correct pronunciation is reinforced through praise and support. The main “stimuli” of a blind child are sounds, the sound of objects, touch, and smell. For example, if a mother says “find” and gives the child a ball or round object, the child associates the word “find” with the object. This process is reinforced by repetition and reward, and word-meaning associations are gradually formed. In order for blind children to acquire language quickly and perfectly, the basic principles of Behaviorism – imitation, reinforcement and stimulus-response relationships – can be effectively applied in practical exercises.

Principles of practical application

- \* Stimulus-response-based teaching
- \* New words are associated with objects that can be heard, touched or smelled.
- \* For example: “Apple” is said, an apple is given to the child and the child is made to smell it.
- \* Word-meaning connections are formed through repeated exercises.
- \* Encouraging imitation
- \* The child is encouraged to repeat the voice, intonation and words of adults.
- \* Each successful imitation is reinforced with praise or affection.
- \* For example: “You said it right, bless you!” A positive attitude is shown, such as\*
- For example: “You said it right, bless you!” A positive attitude is shown, such as.
- \* Reinforcement.
- \* When pronouncing or answering a question correctly, the child's behavior is reinforced with positive reinforcement. Forms of reinforcement:
- \* Verbal praise.
- \* Physical support (hugging, patting on the shoulder).
- \* Allowing a favorite activity.

- \* Tactile and auditory learning
- \* Concepts such as color, shape, and location are explained using tactile materials.
- \* Each word is associated with a verbal explanation and sensory experience.
- \* For example: When teaching the word “round”, the child is given a ball or some other round-shaped object.
- \* The principle of simple to complex
- \* First, simple words (mother, water, bread) are taught.
- \* Then complex concepts (joy, yesterday, tomorrow) are gradually introduced. \* New words are taught by connecting them with the previous ones.
- \* Contextual activities
- \* Exercises are organized so that the child can use the words in real situations.
- \* For example: the words “drink”, “eat” are used during meals; the words “take”, “give”, “run” are reinforced during play.

Although behaviorism has shown the mechanical side of language learning in many studies, it has been criticized for not being able to sufficiently explain semantic and cognitive aspects [2]. Although the theory of behaviorism explains the mechanism of speech formation well, it also has its weaknesses. For example:

**\* Explaining language only through imitation and reinforcement is not sufficient to explain the acquisition of complex grammatical structures.**

**\* Behaviorism does not sufficiently explain the internal conceptual world of a blind child (for example, how he forms ideas about things he cannot see).**

**\* An approach based solely on imitation and reinforcement fails to explain how a blind child learns things they cannot see (the meaning of words related to the sun, colors, and sky).**

Conclusion. Behavioral theory plays an important role in the early stages of language acquisition by the blind – in the mechanisms of imitation of sounds, learning and reinforcement of words through hearing. However, it is limited in explaining the substantive and abstract aspects of language and is supplemented by cognitive or psycholinguistic approaches [3].

Behavioral theory plays an important role in explaining the process of language acquisition by the blind and in developing a methodological approach. Through repetition, stimulation and auditory exercises, they can effectively acquire speech. At the same time, this theory is more effective when used in conjunction with other approaches (cognitive and sociocultural).

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