

Educational Psychology Learning Case Study

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Background

Matthew is a left-handed, six-year-old boy in first grade who lives in the city of Bismarck, North Dakota. Bismarck has a population of more than seventy-two thousand people. Matthew attends a public elementary school with about five-hundred and fifty students in total with each class ranging from twenty to twenty-five students. There are five members in his family, and Matthew is the oldest child. He has a brother and two sisters ages five, three, and four months. His father is a state employee, and his mother is a stay-at-home mom. They have an authoritative parenting style and they promote education at home. They work on math problems as a family giving questions of varying difficulty to the kids based on how much they know and encourage reading books. Matthew greatly loves his family even if he and his brother can get overly competitive at times and get annoyed with their younger sister when she takes their toys and runs without asking.

Cognitive Development

Matthew is in the preoperational stage and intuitive thought substage of Piaget's stages of cognitive development. He asks many questions about the world around him like "Why do the leaves fall?" Matthew also lacked in conservation which is the concept that a certain property about an object doesn't change even if it's appearance changes. He was presented with two short glasses of water and asked if they were equal. He agreed that they were. One glass was poured into a taller and thinner glass in front of him. Matthew was then asked if the amount in the tall, thin glass is equal to the liquid in the other cup. He responded, "No, this one (pointing to the tall one) is bigger, so it has more." In using the term "bigger", he meant taller. The amount of water in fact didn't change, but since he is in the preoperational stage, Matthew was focused on the size of the glasses as the single property for deductions.

In addition to this, Matthew also talks to himself on occasion which, according to Vygotsky's theories of development, is important to developing his own thoughts into inner speech. He also said that art is easy for him because he does it a lot, but on the other hand, learning new things in math is hard for him. This can relate to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Art would be in Matthew's lower limit of the ZPD because he is able to do it independently for the most part being that it's easy for him. However, math would be in the upper limit of the ZPD since he needs the guidance of the teacher when the content is more difficult.

Language Development

Matthew does very well in phonology for the most part which includes basic sounds and combinations. Although, when he said the word "trees," it sounded like he said "cheese" because the "tr-" sound was not distinctive. Matthew also had trouble with the "th" sounding like an "f" like in "author" which sounded like "offer". About his vocabulary, he knew a few surprising words like "imposter", "extended", and "illustrator" that he used and understood. On the other hand, he did forget what exactly an illustrator is when asked about it which carries into semantics. Matthew was able to use the term "extended" correctly when talking about extended family as getting bigger. Besides this, Matthew stutters a little, but he conveys description rather well. He spoke about how he wanted to go to Hawaii to see the volcanoes when he grew up. We then dived into conversation about going into a volcano and how one would do that. He proceeded to describe a grappling hook because he couldn't remember what it was called but said he would use a rope with hooks on the end.

Socio-Emotional Development

Matthew is greatly concerned with thoughts pertaining to Erik Erikson's fourth psychosocial stage called industry vs. inferiority. He stated it makes him feel happy when he

makes cards because he is good at it and enjoys making them for those he loves. When asked if he ever feels not good at doing something, Matthew replied that he doesn't "know what to do after the next thing" at school and that makes him feel sad or angry. He greatly enjoys being productive and doing things for others in industry and recognizes that he doesn't like not knowing what to do which could be fears about being inferior and unproductive like Erikson discusses. Matthew tries hard in math, though it comes much easier to his younger brother who is ahead of him in that regard. Nevertheless, Matthew knows that he is good at many things and is able to maintain confidence in himself towards industry rather than inferiority.

He is in the third stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral development which is about mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity. Matthew said that he listens to his teacher because "she's nice." Also, if a classmate were to take his pencil, he would tell the teacher, or he would "give three chances [to the peer] or else I'm gonna tell." This shows that there is value in caring since he notices the teacher's kindness and wants to obey in loyalty to that. About the pencil, he doesn't take the peer's pencil in return, but rather Matthew would resort to the aid of the teacher whom he trusts.

Matthew is influenced in his development by many factors in the external social aspect as well. Looking at his life in the lens of Bronfenbrenner's theory, his microsystem consists of his family, school, and church where he spends most of his time. At school, Matthew has about five or six friends from his class and plays at recess with two or three other boys. The mesosystem involves connections between these microsystems. For instance, when asked if he sees anyone from school anywhere else, Matthew sees a teacher at church and sometimes his friend there as well. His social world continues to grow larger as he explained that he also knew a librarian, his neighbors, and the babysitter from across the street. All of these have been influences on his life.

Intelligence, Attention, and Memory

Matthew likes to write, and his favorite subject is art. He also said he would like to be an author and illustrator when he's older. He also prefers to work alone rather than in groups.

Because of this, his top three strengths according to the multiple intelligences theory are visual/spatial, linguistic, and intrapersonal. He also has difficulty with math, but he likes music.

He was able to maintain great focus and attention for the first five to ten minutes of the interview, but then he went to grab a few action figures on a whim. This shows more impulsivity since he knew that he wouldn't be playing with them and didn't think about what a distraction they would be before grabbing them. His prefrontal cortex in his brain has yet to fully develop which will continue through his adolescent years. Matthew was then able to refocus for a while again but it was harder for him to stay focused toward the end getting distracted at least five more times. His memory was good overall, but he couldn't remember what certain words meant.