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## Speech development in selected theoretical and research concepts and the child's (family) environment

Rozwój mowy w wybranych koncepcjach teoretyczno-badawczych  
a środowisko (rodzinne) dziecka\*\*

### Abstract

**Aim.** The aim of the work is to describe speech development in selected theoretical and research concepts, and the influence of the child's family environment on this process. Speech development is a process influenced by both biological and social factors. Speech is a genetically determined skill, but its development is not possible without contact with the environment, including the immediate family. The subject of the research was speech

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The paper uses fragments of M. Kozłowska's doctoral dissertation entitled Environmental and family determinants of speech therapy problems in children with developmental disorders, written under the scientific direction of dr hab. E. M. Skorek, prof. UZ.

development in selected theoretical and research concepts and the influence of the child's (family) environment. The article presents selected development concepts. The importance of genetics was indicated, as well as the varying intensity of the influence of the environment on building language competence, and thus developing speech. The common denominator was emphasized, referring to the reflection that there is a strong relationship of mutual influence between people and their environment.

**Materials and methods.** A method of analysing selected development concepts and theoretical and research positions in which human development is described in a specific way (cognitive-developmental concept, behavioural theory, humanistic concept, symbolic interactionism, functionalism, structuralism), as well as genetics, and with varying degrees of environmental influence (including family) to build language competences and thus develop speech.

**Results and conclusion.** In the analyzed, selected theoretical and research concepts, human development was often presented in different ways. However, all of them emphasized the importance of genetic predispositions and the influence of the environment on the acquisition of communication skills. The role of the family, which is the closest environment stimulating the child's development, remains significant for speech development.

**Keywords:** symbolic interactionism, speech development, structuralism, behaviourism, cognitive-developmental concept, humanistic concept, functionalism, family environment as a factor determining the child's speech development.

### **Abstrakt**

**Cel.** Celem pracy jest opisanie rozwoju mowy w wybranych koncepcjach teoretyczno-badawczych i wpływu środowiska rodzinnego dziecka na ten proces. Rozwój mowy jest procesem, na który mają wpływ zarówno czynniki biologiczne, jak i społeczne. Mowa jest umiejętnością uwarunkowaną genetycznie, jednak jej rozwój nie jest możliwy bez kontaktu ze środowiskiem, w tym najbliższym, czyli rodzinnym. Przedmiotem badań uczyniono rozwój mowy w wybranych koncepcjach teoretyczno-badawczych i wpływ środowiska (rodzinnego) dziecka. W artykule przedstawiono wybrane koncepcje rozwoju i stanowiska teoretyczno-badawcze, w których w specyficzny sposób opisano rozwój człowieka. Omówiono koncepcję poznawczo-rozwojową, teorię behawiorystyczną, koncepcję humanistyczną, interakcjonizm symboliczny, funkcjonalizm, strukturalizm. Wskazano na wagę genetyki, a także w różnym nasileniu wpływu środowiska (w tym rodzinnego) na budowanie kompetencji językowej, a tym samym rozwijanie mowy. Podkreślono wspólny mianownik odnoszący się do refleksji, że pomiędzy człowiekiem a jego otoczeniem istnieje mocny związek wzajemnych oddziaływań.

**Materialy i metody.** Metoda analizy wybranych koncepcji rozwoju i stanowisk teoretyczno-badawczych, w których opisano rozwój człowieka (koncepcji poznawczo-rozwojowej, teorii behawiorystycznej, koncepcji humanistycznej, interakcjonizmu symbolicznego, funkcjo-

nalizmu, strukturalizmu), a także genetyki i w różnym nasileniu wpływu środowiska (w tym rodzinnego) na budowanie kompetencji językowej, a tym samym rozwijanie mowy.

**Wyniki i wnioski.** W analizowanych wybranych koncepcjach teoretyczno-badawczych często w odmienny sposób został przedstawiony rozwój człowieka. Jednak we wszystkich podkreślono znaczenie uwarunkowań genetycznych i wpływu środowiska (w tym rodzinnego) na zdobywanie umiejętności komunikacyjnych. Rola rodziny, która jest najbliższym środowiskiem stymulującym rozwój dziecka, pozostaje znacząca dla rozwoju mowy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** interakcjonizm symboliczny, rozwój mowy, behawioryzm, strukturalizm, koncepcja poznawczo-rozwojowa, koncepcja humanistyczna, funkcjonalizm, środowisko rodzinne jako czynnik determinujący rozwój mowy dziecka.

## Introduction

The development of a child's speech is an extremely interesting research topic, which has been repeatedly and thoroughly described in the literature. Speech has a communicative function and this is its primary task. Correct speech development fulfils the child's psychological needs and influences his/her intellectual development. The immediate environment, through the display of behavioural patterns, as well as the transmission of cultural achievements and tasks requiring communication, provides knowledge of language.

The article aims to describe speech development in selected theoretical and research concepts and the influence of the child's family environment on this process.

Speech development can be analysed from many perspectives, including psychology (e.g., cognitive-developmental conception, behaviourism, humanistic conception), sociology (e.g., symbolic interactionism), anthropology (e.g., functionalism) and linguistics (e.g., structuralism).

The volume framework of this publication dictates a selective, exemplary selection of human development concepts and theoretical and research positions.

## Theoretical and research concepts

The cognitive-developmental conception gives primary importance to cognitive abilities that guide behaviour and attributes a large role to biological factors. The child's behaviour is influenced by what the child knows and thinks, with this knowledge changing under the influence of maturation and experience (Słodownik-Rycaj, 2007). This concept takes a holistic view of mental development, to which speech devel-

opment is directly related. The child's development is influenced by several factors, including organic growth (including the maturity of the complex formed by the nervous system and endocrine systems), exercises and experiences acquired while performing actions on objects (a necessary factor for the formation of logical-mathematical structures), interactions and social messages. The child's mental development itself is presented as constructions, each of which is an extension of the previous one. These are the constructs of: sensory-motor schemas (an extension of organic structures during embryogenesis), semiotic relations, thoughts and interindividual relationships (a totality of concrete operations and cooperative structures is formed), semiotic relations, thoughts and interindividual relationships (based on formal operations) (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015). According to Jean Piaget (2005), development is guided by two functions: organisation and adaptation. Adaptation, in turn, consists of two processes: assimilation, i.e., the integration of incoming information into existing knowledge, and accommodation, i.e., the adaptation of this knowledge to incoming information. As the child develops, he or she builds differentiated qualitative structures that enable a better understanding of the world.

The concept of the stadial development of the individual proposed by J. Piaget has an important role in explaining the processes of language acquisition by the child and the formation of communication skills. The child's acquisition of language depends on the development of the ability to represent in words. The ability to communicate with others is the result of the development of cognitive abilities. The child moves from speech for oneself, so-called "exocentric speech," to outwardly directed, socialised speech (directed at other people). Studies of language acquisition have also used information-processing models that focus on the mental processes that process input, resulting in a variety of behaviours. Social cognitive psychology emphasises the child's knowledge of people and social processes and their influence on human development (Ligeza, 1998).

According to J. Piaget, there are two types of child speech. The first is egocentric speech (the child does not care who he or she is speaking to or whether anyone is listening – they speak to themselves or for the pleasure of involving anyone in the activity they are doing), which he divided into: repetition (the child repeats words for the pleasure of speaking, and does not care about the recipient or the meaning of the words), monologuing (the child speaks to himself or herself as if thinking aloud), and collective monologuing (the speaker associates the other with an activity or thought that he or she is occupied with at the moment, but does not care to be heard or understood). The second type is socialised speech, in which the aforementioned author distinguished: adapted information (the child shares his or her thoughts with others or informs the interlocutor of something that may interest him or her and influence his or her behaviour, or there is a real exchange of ideas – discussion), criticism (remarks about someone's

work or someone's behaviour, which are of the same nature as adapted information, these remarks are emotional rather than rational, stating the superiority of the speaker and demeaning the other person), orders, requests, threats (explicit influence of one child on another), questions (most questions asked to the other child elicit feedback), responses (answers to properly passed questions and orders) (Piaget, 2005).

The social character has directed and communicative thinking (it is directed towards goals present in the consciousness of the thinker, adapted to reality and can be communicated through speech). The antisocial character is undirected and non-communicative thinking (it is aimed at the satisfaction of desires, is strictly individual and cannot be transmitted through speech). Within these types of thinking, J. Piaget distinguished: autistic thinking (extremely antisocial, non-communicative and non-communicative), exocentric thinking (more intuitive, greatly affects the limited communication of children's speech, especially between the ages of three and seven), mythological thinking, and communicative intelligence (this is directed and communicative thinking). The child's speech reflects the uneducated or just forming processes of intelligent thinking; it plays little or no role in the child's thinking development processes (Po-rayski-Pomsta, 2015).

J. Piaget did not believe that the child who came into the world was an empty vessel waiting to be filled with experiences. It is a being equipped with a primitive mental structure that enables it to make use of any information it receives.

The basic postulates of J. Piaget's theory are as follows:

- intelligence does not begin with sophisticated mental processes, but with primitive reflex behaviour patterns that humans have from birth – these patterns can be modified by contact with the outside world;
- knowledge is constructed as a result of the interaction between the child and the environment (it arises from the child's active exploration of objects and concepts);
- the development of intelligence is a process of precise and complex adaptation to the environment;
- every time the child acquires a new experience that does not fit his/her mental structure, he/she falls into a so-called "state of equilibrium" (Schaffer, 2014).

According to Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of development, language is a means for the development of higher mental processes. In particular, social interaction and culture are factors influencing the development of speech. The development of language skills leads to the use of external signs (speech directed at others) and internal signs (inner speech) (Słodownik-Rycaj, 2007).

Stefan Szuman adopted the thesis of the interdependence of speech, thinking and action development. According to this concept, the basis of development is ac-

tion, which is the source of cognition. The child gradually becomes aware of the individual elements of his or her action, while at the same time, his or her thinking becomes increasingly detached from action. All this takes place through language, through which the child gives names to specific experiences (Ligeża, 2001).

Noam Chomsky, on the basis of his studies of human language, argued that there is a certain linguistic capacity that is part of the human mind, defining a specific group of grammars available to humans, i.e., phonetic, syntactic and semantic systems mapped in the mind to create an infinite group of possible sentences. The language learned by the child takes the form of the system of rules described earlier. The grammar of this language is the internal representation of the child's linguistic competence.

The child assimilates abstract generative rules that allow the production of an infinite variety of grammatically correct sentences. A characteristic feature of linguistic behaviour is innovation, the formation of new sentences as well as new word arrangements according to specific rules. Merely being among language users acts as a precondition, activating the mechanism of language acquisition, and does not play any role in the learning process (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015).

Proponents of behaviourist theory believe that observable and measurable changes in the behaviour of individuals at different ages are important for human development. Changes in behaviour occur in a specific relationship with the situation and the environment (Przetacznik-Gierowska, Tyszkowa, 2014). In this approach, only the external behaviour of organisms is subject to scientific study. This is the system of objective psychology created by John Watson. According to his assumptions, a human being is – like any other living being – a mechanism that operates automatically based on stimuli and reactions. If one wants to get at the psyche, the immediate object of study should not be consciousness, but external behaviour, considered as the sum of reactions to certain external and internal stimuli. For J. Watson, expressions are conditioned stimuli and objects are unconditioned stimuli (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015). In the behaviourist view, cognition should take place from the perspective of an observer external to the human being (Shevchuk, 1998).

The concept of Burrhus F. Skinner (2013) explains language behaviour through learning (instrumental conditioning): the child initially repeats sounds after an adult, then his verbal responses are randomly reinforced by an adult or arise in response to a stimulus and become fixed through reinforcement. This theory demonstrates the diversity of the child's verbal behaviour and draws attention to the child's discovery of the function of an utterance before learning its structure. The child's language is treated in this concept as a separate system, reduced concerning adult language (Ligeża, 2001). How a person speaks is determined by the practices of the verbal community of which he or she is a member. Influenced by different stimuli, the repertoire of verbal behaviour may remain at a basic level or manifest a complex

structure. Different verbal communities shape and sustain knowledge of different languages in the same speaker, who thus has a diverse repertoire of behaviours that have a similar impact on different listeners. Verbal behaviours are divided into questions, commands and permissions – depending on the listener’s reasons for responding to them. The reasons, in turn, are usually attributed to the intentions or moods of the speaker. If the energy put into a response is sometimes disproportionate to the strength of the result received, it is possible to speak of faith in the magic of words (Skinner, 2013).

In general, verbal behaviour does not require environmental support. This behaviour can occur under any circumstances, and sometimes the speaker also becomes the listener. The listener’s belief in the speaker’s words is akin to the belief underlying the probability of any response or control exercised by the stimuli. This belief is determined by prior relationships. The meaning of a response for the speaker takes into account the role of the stimulus that controls it and the potentially aversive aspects of the question from which the response is relieved. Meaning is often the same for the speaker and the listener – it becomes common to both. The speaker conveys thoughts and information and shares his or her knowledge so that the mental content of the speaker becomes the content of the listener. However, these are not independent entities. In verbal behaviour, a response elicited by a stimulus similar to the one that originally occurred is referred to as a metaphor – the response is repeated because of the similarity of the stimuli. Abstraction, meanwhile, is a characteristic of verbal behaviour that can be directly related to specific reinforcement relationships (Skinner, 2013).

The listener, not the speaker, takes action concerning the stimuli that control the verbal response. Consequently, the speaker’s behaviour may come under the control of certain properties of the stimulus to which it is practically impossible to respond. If a class of objects is defined by more than one property, its designator is called a “concept.” Sentences, meanwhile, can be defined as the sum of the individual words that comprise them. They not only refer to things but also express things. Sentences are assertions and are as elusive as meanings. The concepts of expression and communication in speech can be defined on an identical level. Speakers and listeners are responding to states that persist inside their bodies and what they refer to as feelings. What they say and what they hear is behaviour, and the felt bodily states are by-products of the dependencies associated with it. With the help of spoken sentences, the child can react to events taking place in the vicinity – events related to more than one property (object), relations between objects, and relations between the acting subject and the object of action. The child’s reactions contain components that the child does not have the opportunity to emit separately (Skinner, 2013).

When a child learns a difficult word, a pattern is created (by saying the word) and a dependency system is established in which a similar response will be reinforced. Verbal behaviour acquires independent status when it is transmitted between the speaker and the listener. Interest in the structure of verbal behaviour encourages the use of the metaphor of growth or development. The length of utterances is a function of age, and the semantic and grammatical components are observed as they develop. A program in the form of a genetic code initiates and guides early learning during language acquisition (Skinner, 2013).

Children can assimilate a repertoire of verbal behaviours at a rapid pace – they can learn new words by receiving isolated reinforcement, but they also learn non-verbal behaviours quickly. The behaviour is impressive in its own right because its form is explicit and easily recognisable and suggests the existence of hidden meanings (Skinner, 2013). Underlying this direction of thinking about humans is the belief in their externality, understood as an extreme dependence on the influence of factors external to them, which allows them to be treated primarily as objects of influence (the object nature of humans).

Behaviourism in the version of B. F. Skinner was the detector of contemporary speech research. He attempted to describe and explain the complex process of learning and using language and to show the variety of human verbal behaviour. He highlighted the role of the extra-linguistic situation in the learning process (the child discovers new words or a group of words as a result of an adult's behaviour) and drew attention to the need to analyse verbal behaviour as a result of other behaviours. This concept can be the basis for understanding how humans acquire certain verbal responses (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015).

The humanist conception is based on a human interest in the human being. It favours theory regarding the accumulation of reliable knowledge about man over methodology (it is more interested in making sense of the aspects of the human condition being studied than in the research procedure itself). The proponents of this concept are mainly looking for humanistic values, therefore they focus on the sender-message-receiver dimension (they prefer the principles of communication), and they advocate relativism. A person is more than the sum of its parts. Each person is an inseparable whole, with complex reciprocal relations taking place between his or her psyche and organism, with complex mental-emotional systems of synthesis and analysis organised in ways other than on the basis of a simple cause-and-effect principle. The human being, moreover, exists in the environment of other humans, and it is a natural feature of the human being to enter into relationships with them. This is particularly important at the beginning of human development (e.g., the acquisition of speech) for the acquisition and verification of self-knowledge and one's experience. The human being is conscious, and consciousness is a fun-



damental component of human existence. In addition, human beings have choice, which is an attribute of experience, and act intentionally by taking a particular course of action (Rzepa, 1998). The humanistic conception of human development can be presented as a direction that exposes the communicative function of language both at the level of the issues addressed and the research techniques developed. The humanistic approach rejects the behaviourist conception of man but accepts the assumption of his intrinsic controllability. Consequently, man is treated as an acting subject. A condition for the adequacy of cognition is the assumption of the subject's internal frame of reference (Paszkievicz, 1983). The basic aim of the human being is to maintain and enrich biological and psychological life and full individual development. People who have their basic needs satisfied have a chance for real development, for self-actualisation. When basic needs are not yet satisfied, all human activity is directed towards their realisation (Janowska, 1994). According to the assumptions of this concept, an important feature of upbringing is the focus on the upbringing of a child as a human being. In this way, he/she is given greater independence, trusts in his/her positive and creative abilities, and is made to understand that he/she can cope with problems on his/her own. Upbringing itself is primarily about the child's emotional development and less about intellectual and social development (Lobocki, 1994).

Representatives of symbolic interactionism emphasise a great deal on the ability of humans to create symbols and use them. Unlike other living organisms, the essence of humans and the world they create flows from the ability of humans to symbolically represent themselves and others (including objects), as well as ideas and virtually every component of their experience. People use symbols to communicate with each other, and this is effective as a result of people's ability to agree on the meaning of words and body gestures. They use more than just verbal or linguistic symbols in communicating. They also use facial gestures, tone of voice, body gestures and other symbolic gestures that have a common meaning and are understood by people. People communicate and interact as a result of reading and interpreting other people's gestures (through the symbols that other people emit). They acquire the ability to read each other's gestures, to anticipate each other's reactions and to adapt to each other (Turner, 2012).

Interaction could not take place without people's ability to read gestures as a cue to enter the position of others. Symbolic interactionism seeks to highlight human capacities such as the genesis of the mind and the self. The mind is the capacity to think – to symbolically label, compare, estimate, anticipate, plan and construct a course of action. With the capacity of the mind, it is possible to name, categorise and orient to constellations of objects in all situations and incorporate the self into these objects. The self, in turn, is a major factor in shaping the adoption of social situation defini-

tions – it determines to a large extent what people perceive, feel and do in the world around them (Turner, 2012).

This theory assumes that social reality emerges from interactions, i.e., interactions between individuals and collectivities, shaped by meaning communicated through symbols. It is based on three premises:

- human beings act towards objects (anything that humans can perceive in their world) according to the meanings these objects have;
- the meanings of such objects derive from the social interactions that link the individual to his or her environment;
- people use and modify these meanings in the interpretative processes to which they subject the objects they encounter.

Society is seen as a community of people preoccupied with life (a process of continuous activity in which participants develop action lines in a variety of situations encountered along the way). People live in a world of objects that are shaped, sustained, subject to change, and whose meaning may diminish in the interactions they have with one another. Furthermore, people approach each other differently, live in different worlds and are guided by different sets of meanings (Turner, 2012).

Symbolic interactionism is based on many core ideas (source imaginaries). These ideas relate to representations of nature, of human groups or communities, of social interaction, of objects, of human beings as acting individuals, of action, and the intersection of lines of action. The nature of society, or the group life of human beings, is seen as consisting of human beings who engage in action. It consists of a large number of activities fulfilled by individuals meeting each other and dealing with the situations they are confronted with. These individuals may act individually or as a group, or they may act on behalf of or as a representation of an organisation or group of individuals. Any empirically oriented conception of human society should take into account that, in the first and last instance, society consists of people taking action. Group life implies interactions between group members or, from another point of view, society consists of individuals interacting with each other. The actions of members occur primarily in response to the actions of others or in mutual relationships. Social interaction is a process that shapes human behaviour, rather than a means or setting in which behaviour is expressed or triggered. The actions of others become an active determinant of the individual's own behaviour: faced with the actions of another person, the individual may abandon his or her intention or goal, change it, check it, suspend it or replace it with another (Hałas, 1998).

Elisabeth Hałas, following George Herbert Mead, distinguished between two forms of interaction in human society:

- non-symbolic interaction – occurs when one person responds directly to the actions of another;
- symbolic interaction – involves interpretation of the actions of both parties.

People's group life is a process of defining to other people what to do and interpreting their definitions. Through this process, people adjust each other's actions and shape their behaviour.

According to the tenets of symbolic interactionism, everything that surrounds us and has been created for humans consists of objects, and they are products of symbolic interaction. Objects can be reclassified into categories: physical objects, social objects, and abstract objects. The nature of an object consists of the meaning it has for the person for whom it is an object. Consequently, for different people, a different picture may emerge of the environment of human beings consisting of objects they recognise and of which they know. The nature of the environment derives from the meaning that the objects that comprise it have for human beings. By the fact that people perceive them differently, they can live in different environments (people live side by side, but in different worlds). The meaning of objects should be seen as social creations, shaped by and growing out of the process of definition and interpretation that takes place in interactions between people. The meaning of any object should be shaped, learned and transmitted through a process of pointing, which is social (Noise, 1998, 2012).

Human life and action are subject to diverse and inevitable transformations along with the transformations taking place in the world of objects. Human beings need to be seen in such a way as to show their fit with the nature of symbolic interaction. Human beings are seen as organisms, responding to others on a non-symbolic level, but giving them cues and interpreting the cues coming from them (the person can become an object unto itself). The possession by human beings of the self makes it possible to interact with the self. This is social interaction – a form of communication in which one addresses oneself as another person and responds as another person. In this regard, the human being can be described as an organism that interacts with itself through the process of giving itself directions. By interacting with oneself, the human being is in an extremely different relationship with his or her environment. She or he faces the world, which she or he must interpret to act, rather than the environment, to which she or he reacts because of the way she or he is organised. Action consists of taking into account the various things the individual notices and arranging a line of action based on the way he interprets them. The things taken into account are related to desires and wants, goals, the means available to achieve them, the present and anticipated actions of others, the self-image the individual has of himself or herself, and the likely outcome of a given line of action (Blumer, 2007).

People's group life exists through the delineation of mutually matching lines of action between group members. Acting along these lines gives rise to what is known as combined action - the social organisation of the performance of a variety of actions by different people. Combined action exists in its own rights, it has a distinct character, inherent in the doing or relating as something different from what might have been done or related (Blumer, 2007).

Functionalism is essentially a search for causal relationships between diverse institutions and activities. It requires an explanation of the causal relationships themselves. There is nothing in nature that requires that the effect of one action is to modify another. The exertion of such an effect is a social fact (Flis, 1998).

Functionalism attributes the greatest importance to learned habits, which enable organisms to adapt to the environment and function effectively. This current had a major impact on research directions in developmental psychology, as it directed researchers' attention to the need to take into account the role of various factors in the study of developmental processes: sociocultural, organic and the individual's activity (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015).

Functionalism is the oldest and still dominant conceptual perspective in sociology today. The earliest theorists of functionalism emphasised the importance that socio-cultural elements had to contribute to the maintenance of the global systemic whole. The most extreme formulation of this position was Bronislaw Malinowski's conception, in which all institutional arrangements met one of several levels of needs or requirements: biological, psychological and socio-cultural. In contrast, other representatives of this concept – Emil Durkheim and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown – argued that the causes and functions of the socio-cultural element should be analysed separately, as the causes associated with the substrate of an element may be unrelated to its function in the systemic whole (Turner, 2012).

Functionalism as a conception of human development marked a break with the prevailing theoretical and methodological tradition. It involved the recognition of functional anthropology as a holistic, synchronic, empirical, nomothetic, understanding science. At the core of functional theory are the assumptions: about the peculiarity of the social system (since society is a distinct whole and not a collection of random components, it has peculiar properties that cannot be reduced to the characteristics of individual elements, such as: adaptation, internal cohesiveness, eunomia, disnomia), about its self-regulatory character (it tends to maintain itself in a state of equilibrium), about the existence of functional requirements (in order for society as a whole to be in a state of integration and equilibrium certain conditions must be fulfilled), about the functionality of the social subsystems (if the condition for the existence of society is the realisation of certain requirements, then the individual social organs must work towards their realisation, i.e., they must be functional in relation to them), the exogenous

nature of social change (if the social system is a whole in a state of equilibrium, a self-reproducing whole, then social change must be external). Such an assumption was made by the co-authors of the concept under discussion: B. Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (Flis, 1998). However, they differed on the level of concretisation. The former author referred to need-stimulus, response, motivation, institution, and behaviour. The second, on the other hand, referred to social structure, structural form and norm. In both, functionalism is a theory of the social system, referring to sociological variables *stricto sensu*. Edmund Leach distinguished an intellectual strand, called "Oxfordian." In this current, social systems were considered as the object of research as systems composed of the following elements: from social structure (a bundle of integrated and mutually adapted social relations), from culture understood normatively (as a set of customs and standards in the way of behaviour), from particular ways of thinking, consistent with standard, cultural patterns of behaviour (culture is a social subsystem functional towards social structure and ways of thinking, which in turn are functional towards culture) (Flis, 1998).

Social structure, according to Mariola Flis after A. R. Radcliff-Brown, is the permanent ordering of individuals within social relations defined or controlled by institutions (socially established norms). For Edward Evans-Pitchard, meanwhile, it is the ordering of such groups that maintains continuity, permanence and sameness despite the exchange of members. The theoretical efforts of the functionalists in social anthropology led to the development of conceptual models that were taken up by the continuators of this conception of human development. Talcott Parsons proclaimed that the social world exhibits systemic properties that structured abstract concepts can describe. The strength of functionalism, according to Robert Merton, was to understand the function of elements at different levels of social organisation and to introduce the function of dysfunction into sociology. In addition, R. Merton believed that social roles, institutional patterns, social norms and processes, cultural patterns, culturally shaped emotions, group organisation, social structure, and rules of social control were the subjects of functional analysis. Gilbert Moore and Kingsley Davis, in their version of functionalism, focused on the functional necessity and the universal presence of stratification in any society. The main functional imperative explaining the universal presence of stratification was the need to place individuals in different positions in the social structure and the need to provide those individuals with the motivation to occupy those positions (Flis, 1998).

To explain the formation of speech, the functionalist Jerom Bruner listed four processes by which the child learns. The distribution of segments of actions performed together with the mother involves the child learning in which positions these segments can occur in an agent-type sequence, i.e., action – object – recipient. The child learns to distinguish between these segments, the rules of substitution, the inversion of suc-

cessive action segments, and the complex processes that ensure common reference. This process continues from looking directly into each other's eyes to the mutual attention of sender and receiver and the joint attention to objects. The principle of grammatical array arises from joint attention to an object, either through systematic comments or by including the object to which the mother and child have paid attention in a joint action. The order of elements in the language corresponds to the order in which physical experience is given. Phonological patterns are formed through imitation. This researcher emphasises that the processes given above are the beginning of speech development (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015).

Structuralism is a view that portrays human beings as users of language; it is a view that emphasises syntactic functions.

Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, following Claude Levi-Strauss, states that human language contains everything that has already been expressed and has passed into the cultural property of mankind, as well as what can be expressed by man. Language has been conceptualised as a structure encompassing all spiritual possibilities. Objective language permeates the whole of human life, much of which is social life, marked by various symbols, and its analysis will facilitate the understanding of other symbolic functions of life. The linguistic structure reveals other, more fundamental structures, which are at the same time more comprehensible. Another representative of this trend, Ferdinand de Saussure, believed that language as an abstract system of linguistic rules and conventions was contrasted with concrete and individual acts of language use. All linguistic facts must be explained by reference to the extra-individual structure of language (Krąpiec, 2008).

Structuralism can also be presented from an ontological perspective – as the belief that the human world is systemic and that the structure of such systems constitutes a new quality that is expressed in laws that guarantee its wholeness and self-sufficiency. In yet another sense, structuralism refers to epistemological presuppositions – the understanding of particular cultural phenomena becomes possible through our knowledge of the properties of structure. The aforementioned C. Levi-Strauss assumed that there is a fundamental analogy between language and other cultural domains, as they have the same or similar structure and for this reason, can be analysed using a unified set of assumptions and research methods. This author regarded all culture as a kind of language, a structure invariably built on ordered logical relations. The products of this activity are individual structures that are meta-empirical and located at the deep level of culture. Furthermore, it presupposes the existence of isomorphic relations between the biological, psychological and cultural levels of reality, and the relationship of nature to culture is relevant here. The fundamental expression of culture is language as a symbolic system, reflecting how the mind structures the natural reality around it. The ability to think symbolically makes

man embrace the species diversity of nature. In this way, culture and nature are isomorphic wholes with each other (Burszta, Kempy, 2002).

Another representative of this direction is Roman Jakobson, who made significant contributions to the study of child speech. Among other things, he introduced the problem of the phonological system in human ontogeny. He drew attention to a phenomenon observed in children between the first and second year of life consisting of clear difficulties with the realisation of the so-called “systemic sounds,” i.e., sounds realised in syllable sequences produced during the babbling period (mainly during the echolalia period) and occurring in the language in which the child grows up. Based on this observation, R. Jakobson formulated the hypothesis that the transition from babbling to language involves sound selection. It is subordinated to the formation of linguistic sounds, whose function is distinctive and consists of distinguishing meaningful units. This selection is not subject to sounds occurring in exclamations and onomatopoeic forms (Porayski-Pomsta, 2015).

## Conclusion

Representatives of the described theoretical and research concepts often present human development in different ways. However, they all draw attention to the role of genetic conditions and environmental influences on the acquisition of communication skills (Bartkowiak, 1981; Boyd, Bee, 2008; Przetacznik-Gierowska, Tyszkowa, 2014; Szczodrak, 1988; Trempała, 2016).

They emphasise, for example, the importance of experience, culture, interaction, and social transmission, as it is a feature of human beings to exist in the environment of other people and to enter into relationships. This is particularly important at the beginning of a child’s development (e.g., during the acquisition of speech skills). In communicating, people not only use verbal or linguistic symbols but also use gestures or voice intonation. The way people speak depends on the practices of the verbal community of which the person is a member.

The role of the family, which is the closest stimulating environment for child development, remains significant for speech development.

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