

Language Acquisition Processes and Their Theoretical Conceptions from an Affective Perspective in a Family Context



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Abstract

Affective communication from the family, as a fundamental pillar in the acquisition of the language in childhood, constitutes the key to success to achieve excellent pedagogical results. Based on this postulate, this research has been conceived as a possible alternative when observing the existing difficulties in language acquisition. As theoretical bases, this research is based on the cognitive theory of Jean Piaget, among others. That is why the main objective of this research is based on describing, in broad strokes, the process of language acquisition through the recording of different oral texts and other resources that, chronologically, were obtained by observing the evolution of language. of two children from birth to pre-adolescence. As a methodology, this research has a qualitative approach and is subject to the hermeneutical paradigm, conceived as an interpretive activity to address the oral or written text, hence, the data collection instruments were interviews and field diaries applied to two children, Andrew, and Elizabeth. Among the results, it is evident, once again, that the child learns better if there is an affective context. Finally, as a conclusion, it was possible to compile all these "experiences" into an anecdotal book on the evolution of the language of my two children called The Candy Tree.

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1 Introduction

This article deals with a look at the language acquisition processes of human beings and the development of their linguistic abilities from birth to preadolescence under an affective family context. In the scientific literature it is pointed out that, in the development of language, the family and the school exert a determining influence [Bonilla \(2016\)](#).

In this sense, as an approach to the problem, the worrying educational situation that Latin America is experiencing is also evidenced by obtaining a low level of reading and writing comprehension in the Pisa report (2018). All participating Latin American countries scored below average in all three graded areas of reading, math, and science in which 15-year-olds were tested, the report notes.

Ecuador's scores are lower than the OECD average in all three areas, it is important to consider that Ecuador's economy is much smaller, and the country, therefore, has fewer resources that can be invested in education. Ecuador has a high percentage of students below the basic level of proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science. In reading, 51% of students did not reach level 2. (Pisa, 2018, p. 40).

In this sense, the Ministry of Education (2015) is considered, which states:

It is evident that 40.44% of students with disabilities have intellectual disabilities; while the next group which represents 16.29% has a motor disability and the third group is the population that has a hearing disability, which represents 13.92% of the total of this population group. (p.14)

Based on the above, in the face of this unflattering educational context, it is necessary to take concrete preventive actions. For this reason, the question arises: what would have happened if all these students with intellectual disabilities or low reading scores had been "motivated" in their families to acquire language from birth?

As an object of study, the language development of two children (Isabel and Andrés) from birth to the first ten years of age was chosen. The importance of studying from a social and educational perspective lies in the fact that a great help can be provided to the educational system if, from home, we support our children and motivate them to learn based on an affective pedagogy, a that encourages language, reading especially the value of affection through teaching ([Abbas et al., 2020](#); [Assor & Tal, 2012](#)). Based on the above, this article tries to answer the following research question: Can a child acquire greater linguistic competence if he is emotionally motivated, in the acquisition of language from birth, in his family context?.

2 Materials and Methods

The written transcription of the oral word, the video, the field diary, as well as alternative didactic materials that allowed the creation of oral narratives such as children's stories, were used for the collection of materials in the development of the research. Literary spaces such as literary sleepovers were also promoted; literary games; book fairs and museums. As a methodology, the bibliographic review method was applied to topics related to language acquisition, and then with these elements, in the light of the collected stories, to establish the results. The qualitative method was also applied, within the hermeneutic paradigm, throughout the process of interpreting the oral texts ([Van der Waal et al., 2003](#); [Warnakulasuriya, 2009](#)).

3 Results and Discussions

A search of the literature was carried out where the reference to Piaget's cognitive theory was essential, where it can be read that the most evident result of the appearance of language is to allow an exchange and permanent communication between individuals ([Piaget, 1991](#)).

To serve as a guide as a theoretical and adequate philosophy that will guide the investigation. Different postulates were taken on the acquisition of language, among them: Piaget, Chomsky, Vygotsky, Bruner, among others. This was also investigated in The Pedagogy of affection (May, 2001) and the Pedagogy of tenderness (Abreu, 2020); since both theories raise the flag in the comprehensive education of students emphasizing respect, justice, and coexistence; however, the research was based on the thought of Jean Piaget.

Piaget's cognitive theory (Sánchez, 2020) is that it is thought that makes it possible to acquire a language, which implies that the child does not have an innate language, but that it is acquired as part of cognitive development. Once the language is acquired, it will favor cognitive development. There are four stages in the development of the child according to this cognitive theory, these are shown in figure 1.

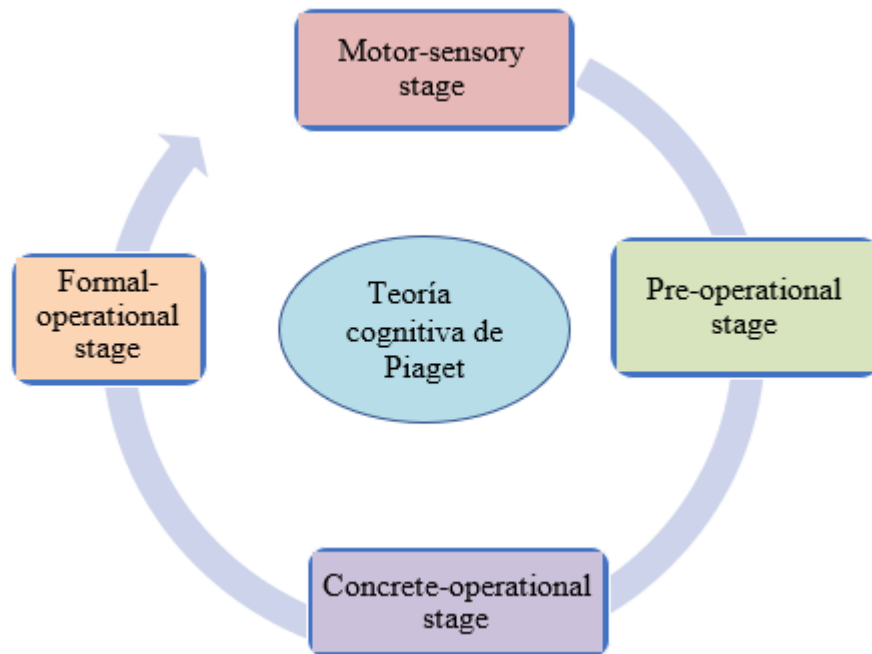


Figure 1. Stages of cognitive development according to Piaget
Source: (Sánchez, 2020)

As can be seen, the previous figure identifies each of the stages of cognitive development of the child, according to Piaget. Let's see each of them:

Motor-sensory stage. includes from birth to two years. It is the infant stage where gurgling and babbling occur as pre-language; Congo (2018) indicates that at this stage the child shows an intense curiosity about the world around him and his behavior is dominated by responses to stimuli, it is a motor behavior by essence, in which he does not think through concepts.

Preoperational stage. It includes from two to seven years and in this begins the thought as such. The child's thinking is magical and egocentric, he believes in fairy tales, in his dream world, and believes that things revolve around him, and it is difficult for him to see things from another point of view, he thinks symbolically and imitates objects. **Concrete-operational stage.** It covers from seven to twelve years. In this stage, Concrete or literal thought appears (Navarrete, 2021), where they perform basic operations such as addition and subtraction, but do not understand the abstract formulation such as that of an algebraic equation, now the child is already a complete social being.

Formal-operational stage. It goes from twelve to adolescence. It is characterized by the appearance of Abstract, formal, or deductive thought, where it is already capable of inferring, understanding the abstract formulation such as that of an equation, and taking moral concepts into consideration

Family and language acquisition

It is considered that acquiring a language is also acquiring a cultural identity since language is acquired per se, a way of seeing the environment and surviving in it. "The process of acquiring a language is considered a process of ideologization." (Beniers, 2009). In this same order of ideas, Sapir-Whorf emphasizes that: "There is a relationship between the language that a person uses, and how he perceives the world." (Ladder, 2012).

Language influences the worldview, or the way we understand our surroundings, this has been called linguistic determinism. Staircase (Op. cit., p. 83) States: "language does influence certain aspects of thought." In this understanding of the world through language, the family is of paramount importance as a primary context in the child's language learning process from his earliest years is essential and unquestionable. Among the studies that confirm this thesis, we can mention López & Yuherqui (2016).

The family influences the development of children from the very conception since the state of health of the mother during pregnancy has consequences on its development. Likewise, the economic, social, and cultural conditions, in which they develop, constitute an important source of stimuli and experiences that will influence their development in all aspects, that is, physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, psychomotor, and language (pp. 33).

Concerning language, the family has a decisive influence on its effective acquisition, however, this process of acquiring a language can reach higher levels if the child is surrounded by an "affective" family component where there is a space for communication (Ducy & Karsenty, 2000; Campbell, 2020). and the respect. It is important to clarify that the term family can be extended to that person (s), even non-consanguineous, who plays this role, unlike Brunner's theory which focuses specifically on the mother-child interaction for said acquisition. linguistics (Vera, 2019).

According to Castañeda (1999), the child, in this process of evolution, has a ductile nature that makes him susceptible to educational influence and direction. Hence, when this education is carried out in an environment of love, security, and understanding, the child will have the possibility of developing his personality in a balanced or harmonious way, feeling above all emotionally secure. This will also influence the evolution of their intelligence, in their ability to receive and understand, memorize, and integrate their verbal expression capacity. In this sense, the roots of language must be sought in the affective relationship, without this support throughout life, language does not develop to its full potential, or it atrophies" (Bernier, Op.cit, p. 36).

Among the most relevant theories on the stages of the language, we have chosen the opinion of Castañeda (1999) who has collected the contributions of the main researchers of the second half of the 20th century. Castañeda presents, in this way, two stages of language development: The prelinguistic stage and the Linguistic stage.

The prelinguistic stage includes the first year of life. According to Castañeda (1999), the child establishes contact with his family, especially with the mother, of an affective and gestural type, hence, to stimulate him linguistically, the mother must use verbal language, along with affective and gestural language. The word must always accompany the gesture and the activities of the mother with her child (Cargile et al., 1994; Jacquemet, 2005).

In the prelinguistic stage, we can identify that the newborn, up to 3 months, "recognizes his voice and if he is crying, he calms down when he hears it" (NIDCD, 2017). To carry out this analysis, the pattern shown in Table 1 was chosen, in this sense, we can observe the Narrative text "Andrés recognizes my voice" evidence of the prelinguistic stage manifested in crying and recognition of the father's voice. Data collection through stories written in the Field Diary. This pattern is applied in successive frames.

Table 1. Stories are written in the Field

July 21, 2011 (2m:57s)

Birth of Andrew. (Available in Video)

ANDRÉS RECOGNIZES MY VOICE

Andrew, my son, has just been born; he is taken to a room where, naked, a doctor injects him, drops are placed in his eyes and makes some measurements. He keeps his eyes closed, but he cries and seems to be scared. Then they dress him and prepare him to be taken into his mother's arms, however, he continues to cry as he enters, in his arms, into the room. At that moment Dad greets him:

! Hello baby! Hello God bless you, Andrew David. Andrew!!

At that moment Andrés calms down and is happily placed in his mother's arms.

Source: Field journal

In the crying of the baby, we can also find the beginnings of language acquisition. Since the end of the last century, scientific research has been carried out on the crying of the newborn, these refer that even newborns cry with an accent, since they try to imitate the voice, they heard when they were in the womb. It could be said that, in general, this accent of the newborn tends to resemble that of the voice that prevailed most at this stage.

Babies cry in their mother tongue and when they cry, they do so with the accent of the language they will speak in the future. But now for the first time, we discover that the cry melody is the beginning of language development and is not babbling as many researchers thought (Werke, 1990).

These signs of language undoubtedly form affective ties with the family and their environment in that mother tongue. In the prelinguistic stage of the newborn from 7 months to 1 year, NIDCD points out (Op.cit, p.4) the baby babbles groups of long and short sounds ("mimi", "papapa", "babababa). In this sense, we can observe in Table 2 of the Narrative text "Isa pronounces her first-word" evidence of the prelinguistic stage manifested in that, before turning one year old, the baby pronounces new words, some of them by (repetition) or imitation of sounds. Table 2 shows when Isa pronounces her first word.

Table 2. Isa pronounces her first word

August 2010 (available in Video)

ISA UTTERS HIS FIRST WORD.

In the afternoon of a nice sunny Venezuelan Saturday in visit to Metropolis, shopping center of Valencia. Isabel was disguised as Little Red Riding Hood. I pushed her brown car from where she gazed at the world with her expressive, sweet eyes. Julia (my wife) walked into the TPK store (The prince kingdom) and was looking for cute clothes for our month-old baby. I stayed with Isa in the hallway, as people came and went from the colorful venue. Suddenly Isabel, who had not uttered her first word, began to babble: "Pa, pa, papa, papa, PAPÁ, PAPÁ! Her voice was heard so much that Julia stopped queuing at the checkout and walked out excitedly to witness her first word: Dad! Julia then took the camera and began recording the historic scene. I, of course, was so excited and proud that it looked like I was going to rise like a smiling balloon and get glued to the roof of the mall.

Diary Source: Field diary

Piaget (1991), calls this stage prior to language, stage of motor sensory intelligence or practice of elementary affective regulations and the first external fixations of affectivity. This stage constitutes a very important link in the acquisition of the language, hence a family context that promotes a learning environment will be key to the success of the language.

The period from birth to language acquisition is marked by extraordinary mental development. Its importance is sometimes ignored since it is not accompanied by words that allow the progress of intelligence and feelings to be followed step by step, as will happen later. (Piaget. Ibid, p. 16).

It was possible to observe how language acquisition is combined with the process of reading acquisition, all under an affective climate, which favors and develops this process even more with learning (Pedaste et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2003). It has been proven that the cultural climate of the home is related to the maturity of the child's linguistic competence and progress. In this sense, "the child strives to imitate the words that the adult presents to him, encouraged by the presence of the first autonomous "words" in the child" (Beniers. Op. cit., p.53). In Table 3 of the Narrative text "Isa imitates new words" evidence of the child's linguistic competence manifested in his effort to imitate new words issued by adults.

Table 3. Narrative Text

<p>November 2010 (available in Video)</p> <p>ISA IMITATES NEW WORDS.</p> <p>Based on the importance of the period from lactation to language acquisition (Piaget, 1964) I designed a folder with colorful images of people, animals, and things. Under each one he wrote the name of the image, even though he knew that Isabel was not old enough to "read" her name. So, I showed him the picture of a cute yellow cat.</p> <p>_Cat, cat. Isabel says cat!</p> <p>_ She turned her attention to the drawing and said cat! while touching it with his hand Right.</p>
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Source: Field diary

Starting the linguistic stage, from one year onwards, the child uses a holophrastic language. Holophrases (from the Greek holos 'everything'; sentence) is a word that implies the meaning of an entire sentence, that is, the child builds a sentence with a single word. This stage can be named as a rudimentary approach to what will become the language as such in the coming years.

Therefore, we can observe in Table 4 of the Narrative text "Andrés and his holophrases language" evidence of this holophrastic language, as a child's linguistic competence manifested in the construction of a sentence through a word: "Eto".

Table 4. Andrés and his holophrastic language

<p>December 2012 Andrew of a year and a half</p> <p>ANDREW AND HIS HOLOPHRATIC LANGUAGE Today I try to find a movie for the kids. I take the box of the movies and I select them; they are all children's and all "we have" seen them several times. Andrés wants to help me; he comes up to me and says: –Eto, eto. "I don't understand you, Andrew. Will it be, this or this...?" "No, eto, eto..." I was already desperate not to know what Andrew wanted to say to me, until Isabel, from her room, shouted: – That you put the movie of The Secrate Kingdom!</p> <p>Author's Note: The holophrase manifests itself around the first year of the child, however, in Andrés it manifests, as in his whole process of language acquisition, a little later than stipulated by language theorists. With Andrés we were more "permissive" than with Isabel. I remember that Andrés only mentioned one syllable and we were already proceeding to fulfill "what was requested" by him. I remember a nephew of my wife saying: El baby just says anja and mom already decodes the message: She wants a cheese sandwich, crackers, water, and orange juice.</p>
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Source: Field diary

Language needs to be expressed to develop; this constitutes the main form of communication between human beings. Analyzing this sentence, Beniers (Ibid, p. 29) affirms that "without language for others between the ages of three and seven, language does not develop... as the observation of infantile psychoses has shown. This "deficiency" constitutes a great limitation that influences other aspects related to the child's evolution, not only cognitive but also affective and social. This child language researcher goes even further and states that "without language for others between the ages of three and seven, language does not develop...as observations of child psychosis have shown" in this sense, the language of Andrés and Isabel, with a difference of one year, it has evolved "socially" with a particular language in each of them. In the same way, Table 5 of the Narrative text "Children's dialogue" shows evidence of this "socialization of language" in its rudimentary stage through this particular "dialogue" between these two little brothers.

Table 5. Narrative text "Children's dialogue"

<p>December 30, 2014</p> <p>CHILDREN'S DIALOGUE</p> <p>Isa and Andres are sitting at the table eating cookies. There they talk:</p> <p>"Andrew, why do you drink teapots?" You are not a baby.</p> <p>— I baby!</p> <p>"Of course, not Andrew, babies don't talk.</p> <p>"Of course, they speak: Abu, Abú! _Dictamina Andrew.</p>
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Source: Field diary

In the development of language, in the linguistic stage, after three and four years, the child talks about what he does at school or at the house of his friends NIDCD, (Op.cit., p.4).

An example can be seen in the following table 6 called "Andrés talks about school" in which the language expresses important past events for the child.

Table 6. Andrés talks about school

<p>March 26, 2016</p> <p>ANDRÉS TALKS ABOUT HIS SCHOOL</p> <p>Julia and Andrés talk:</p> <p>"Mommy, do you lend me your nail clippers?"</p> <p>— Why Andrew?</p> <p>"To cut the teacher's nails.</p> <p>" And why do you want to do that?</p> <p>"So that he doesn't touch my head with his fingernail when I behave badly.</p>
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Source: Field diary

To the stages of development of the mental activity, motor or intellectual aspect, Piaget, (Op. cit., p.13). points out that "every action, that is, every movement, every thought or feeling responds to a need". In this sense, Piaget refers that this need is always the manifestation of a balance. "For example, hunger or fatigue will cause the search for food or rest" Piaget (Ibid, p. 15). In this same order of ideas, the child puts into operation the development of his thought, manifested in his desire to satisfy his need. In this perspective, as evidence of the above, we see the following table 7 called "Isabel, thought and need" in which the "exploratory" language expressed by her supports the Piagetian theory that every thought or feeling responds to a need.

Table 7. called "Isabel, thought and need"

<p>May, 2013</p> <p>ISABEL, THOUGHT AND NEED</p> <p>Isabel tells Mommy:</p> <p>"Mommy, my belly is full of hunger.</p>

Source: Field diary

At the beginning of the linguistic stage, once the stage of sensorimotor cognitive development is over, thought as such is established, and motivated, not by chance, but by the acquisition of language. Just as history began with the appearance of writing, I believe that thinking in children began with the acquisition of language. It is said that language is the door of thought. In this sense, Piaget (Ibid. p. 16) tells us:

According to [Saldarriaga \(2016\)](#), during early childhood, there is a transformation of intelligence that, from simply sensory-motor or practice that it was at the beginning, now extends into thought. properly speaking, under the double influence of language and socialization. Language, above all, since it allows the subject to narrate his acts, gives him at the same time the power to reconstruct the past, and therefore to evoke it in the absence of the objects to which the previous behaviors referred, and to anticipate future acts, not yet executed, to the point of replacing them sometimes with the sole word, without ever realizing them, this is the starting point of thought. In early childhood, from two to seven years old, our children surprise us with their rich language full of innocence with some manipulation, especially a great imagination. As Piaget expresses (Ibid. p. 28):

With the appearance of language, behaviors are profoundly modified, both in their affective aspect and in their intellectual aspect. In addition to all the real or material actions that he continues to be able to carry out as during the previous period, the child acquires, thanks to language, the ability to reconstruct his past actions in the form of a story and to anticipate his future actions through verbal representation.

Within this order, as evidence of the above, we observe table 8 "Isabel and her imagination" in which she manifests an abundant language, where the oneiric is confused with reality while playing with time to reconstruct her world expressed in the word.

Table 8. Isabel and her imagination

<p>December 23, 2014 Isabel 3 years, 3 months. ISABEL AND HER IMAGINATION Early morning (7:15 a.m.) Isabel tells me: "Daddy, you know I saw last night...—lower your voice and continue—bend down and I'll tell you. To Santa Claus! I saw his sled and snowflakes. But you know what? His sleigh had no gifts. "Surely he went to look for them," I reply, observing his beautiful little eyes full of joy. "Yes," he replies. "he went to the fairs. (Amusement Park).</p>
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Source: Field diary

In the same way, wishing to know how thought develops in children, Piaget sheds light on us by pointing out that through the questions that the child formulates we can envision, as through a window I dare say something about your thoughts.

"But from the age of three, and sometimes before, an essential way of asking appears that multiplies until approximately seven years of age: the famous why of the little ones." (Piaget. Ibid, p. 17). From the foregoing, we observe Table 9 "Children and they are why", in which the child, when trying to understand the world" resorts to questions, often difficult for adults to answer.

Table 9. "Children and their why?"

<p>March 02, 2016</p> <p>Isabel 7 years, 3 months</p> <p>Andres, 5 years old.</p> <p>CHILDREN AND THEIR "WHYS".</p> <p>— Why do cats fall on their feet? "Ask Andrew.</p> <p>— On what date did Santa Claus marry his girlfriend? "Isabel continues.</p> <p>— What are the footprints of horses like? —concludes Andrés</p>
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Source: Field diary

However, as Piaget mentions (Ibid, p.38), a child's questions, which are difficult for an adult to answer, are something trivial and "an easy answer for another child".

A clear example of the above can be seen in Table 10, "Response between children" in which the children explain to each other through language the entire environment that surrounds them.

Table 10. Response among children

<p>December 2017</p> <p>8-year-old Isabel</p> <p>6-year-old Andres</p> <p>ANSWERS AMONG CHILDREN</p> <p>Isa asks me:</p> <p>"Daddy, what was the name of the first person who died?"</p> <p>Why do bats sleep during the day and work at night?</p> <p>What are clouds made of?</p> <p>Andrew replies:</p> <p>Cotton... Fog...</p> <p>The child supplies logic by the mechanism of intuition (Practical intelligence (from 2 to 7 years), Intelligence motor sensorium of the preverbal period (Piaget, 1964, p. 43)</p>

Source: Field Journal

Concrete Thought

We have said previously that, according to Piaget (Ibid. p. 54), the third stage of cognitive development is the Concrete-operational stage (from seven to twelve years old) coincides with the beginning of schooling (...) and marks a decisive turn in mental development (our quotes). In this period, concrete or literal thought occurs in the child. The child tries to understand his reality and make sense of everything that happens around him based on his "experience" of the sensorimotor and preoperational stages. There is a certain analogy in this stage and The Myth of the Cave (Plato, 1992), where for the subject the Conception of the reality of the world is only limited to the shadows projected on the wall. As we can see, in these processes the development of the child's thinking allows him to understand his environment. "In them, there are three important processes:

assimilation, accommodation, and cognitive adaptation. At each stage, the child achieves a mental organization or balance that allows him to deal with reality. (Ortiz and Castanheira, 2019).

In this sense, Table 11 of the Narrative text "Somewhere in the sun" shows evidence of the concrete-operational stage manifested in the child when expressing his desire to organize and understand reality through language.

Table 11. Somewhere in the Sun

<p>4 de diciembre de 2012 Isabel de 3 años y 4 meses. EN ALGÚN LUGAR DEL SOL</p> <p>Es domingo, mamá le dice a Andrés: –Saca esos juguetes al sol. Isabel, desde la mesa pregunta: ¿En qué lugar del sol mamá?</p>
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Source: Field Journal

Piaget calls the fourth stage of the child's cognitive development "formal operations" located between 11 and 15 years of age. It is a stage in which abstract thought (Piaget, Op.cit. p. 85) is also called formal or deductive since the child takes his conclusions analyzed from the general to the particular. The child makes his hypotheses without the need to experiment. A phenomenon is understood by its general characteristics.

Therefore, we can observe in Table 12 of the Narrative text "Isabel the 9 years" evidence of this abstract thought, manifested in the decision-making product of a hypothesis imagined by him.

Table 12. of the Narrative text "Isabel, 9 years old

<p>November 2, 2018 9-year-old Isabel</p> <p>It's night. We are on the bus to a meeting of Parents at the Carlos Crespi school. Isa is next to me, in the front seat, behind the driver. In the middle is a suggestion box hanging from a plastic billboard. The driver talks to a passenger next to him, standing. "Daddy. What is that little box? –It's a suggestion box. Isabel opens her cute bag and pulls out her notebook and pen and starts writing. Already when we are going to get off the bus, I ask him: "Isa, what do you write? –A note to the mailbox where it says that the driver should not talk to that other gentleman while driving.</p>

Source: Field Journal

As a result of the analysis of the accumulated data, over a decade, more than 300 oral texts were transcribed, of which 180 stories (13,597 transcribed words) were analyzed, along with more than 50 micro-videos of the "orality" of daily life, this version is a real fieldwork evidenced by the field diary that corroborates the process of language acquisition and its theoretical conceptions from an affective vision in a family context

4 Conclusion

It was shown that affective communication from the family is a pillar fundamental in the acquisition of the language in childhood, where the child learns better if there is an affective context. The acquisition of language evolves better in the child if he is motivated through dialogues, written and oral texts, and a familiar and affective reading environment. It has been shown that the child extrapolates his linguistic competence toward written texts even without knowing how to read a text even if he does not know his alphabet. Every emotional event related to language will mark the child's linguistic ability. It has been shown in this research that when the child is taught a new word (meaning) accompanied by its image (meaning), this is of greater understanding for the child.

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