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“In Whose Language?”
by Dr. Karen Williams (2003)

Part I

Norbert was an active twenty-eight-month-old with a passion for exploring his world. He had walked early at 10 months, loved to play with his fire engines and trains, enjoyed “helping” his father “cook” breakfast and supper, and was an extremely easy and happy child. His parents spent a lot of time with him, since Norbert was a cherished first child. Both parents worked at the University, and both held Ph.D.s. Norbert spent weekdays with a caring home provider, because his parents wanted an environment with few children and a family atmosphere.

One day, when Jacob (Norbert’s father) picked him up from his day care provider (Mrs. Hawkins), she asked to speak with him. “I’m very concerned about Norbert and think you should have him evaluated by your pediatrician or a psychologist. Norbert is hardly talking at all. All of the other children I’ve cared for can talk in at least two-word phrases. Norbert still “babbling”. He says things with inflection, but I can’t understand any of his words. He seems a bit baffled that I can’t understand him, and sometimes gets frustrated enough to cry. I think he may have a developmental delay that could show a learning problem, maybe even slight mental retardation.”

Jacob was stunned. “I need to talk with Alicia. We haven’t noticed any problems, but Norbert is our first child and we haven’t been around lots of other children his age. We want to do what’s best, of course.”

1. Create a chart to show what you feel is normal development for Norbert based on what we have studied so far and what you have read in the text related to cognition, learning, motor development, and language. Also list what you feel is behind the norms presented in our text.
2. What information do you think Jacob and Alicia need in order to decide what to do?
3. Do you agree with Mrs. Hawkins assessment? Why or why not? What information on Jacob and the family would you need in order to be able to make a recommendation?

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“Parents or Teachers? Who Defines Play?”
by Dr. Karen Williams (2003)

Mckenzie Hubbard skipped into the Little Learners Preschool with her mother close behind. Mrs. Jensen greeted them both as Mckenzie hung her clothes in her cubby. Mrs. Hubbard signed Mackenzie in, then went straight to the parent board to look at the day’s activities. She saw the following schedule:

8:00-9:30	Learning Centers
	<u>Science</u> : sink and float experiment; balance with items to weight, chart paper
	<u>Dramatic play</u> : doctor’s office theme center with magazines, note pads, doctor and nurse dress-ups, phone, doctor’s bags with equipment,
	<u>Housekeeping</u> : dress-ups, play food, phone, note pads
	<u>Manipulatives</u> : puzzles, parquetry blocks, animal matching game, marble maze, rubber band design board, sorting toys with trays
	<u>Writing Center</u> : note pads, blank paper, typewriters, markers, play stamps, file folders, pens, pencils, stapler
	<u>Block Area</u> : unit blocks, family plastic figures, handicapping conditions plastic figures, maple hollow blocks, road signs
	<u>Large Motor Area</u> : balance beam, mats, large balance balls, scooter boards
	<u>Art Area</u> : paint, easels, brushes, paper with holes to experiment with negative spaces
9:30-10:00	Snack and Clean-up
10:00-10:20	Concept Time - Communicable Disease Prevention Puppet Play
10:20-11:00	Outdoor Play
11:00-11:30	Group Time
	Energize: “Shake the Wiggles Out”
	Attend: <u>Dr. Desoto</u>
	Readiness: Positional Terms using items from doctor’s kit
	Dismiss: 5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed
11:30	Parents Arrive

Mackenzie gives her mom a hug and skips right to the dramatic play center. Mrs. Hubbard frowns and talks to Mrs. Jensen.

“When we signed Mackenzie up for this program, we thought it was a preschool. All I see in the schedule is play. Where are the reading, math, and kindergarten readiness activities? She can play at home or in the afternoon with her playgroup friends. She doesn’t need to be playing here, too. If you can’t show me that Mackenzie is learning, we’ll have to move her to another program.”

1. Use your text, Chapters 12, 15, and 16 to research Mrs. Hubbard’s concerns.
2. Put yourself in the role of Mrs. Jensen. How do you answer Mrs. Hubbard? Be sure to explain the rationale for the schedule above, definitions of play, teaching strategies, and cognition to demonstrate your knowledge.

“A Theory is a Theory?”
by Karen C. Williams (2003)

Janice Reynolds entered Sunshine Day Care with a sigh. She wondered what the day would bring for her. Janice had been teaching for ten years, but had never encountered a problem quite like this one. Today she decided to come in early and talk with her director, Mayetta Jordan. She knocked on the director’s door, and entered as she heard a hearty, “Come on in!”

Janice entered and closed the door. “Mayetta, I’m at my wit’s end. You know I believe in keeping children with their age groups, but I’ve just about reached the end of my patience with Li Chen. We had to change her clothing three times yesterday! She just doesn’t seem to understand how to use the toilet on her own. She doesn’t wear diapers, but has no interest in toilet training. She doesn’t seem able to put her own coat on and zip it, either. When we try to show her the other children for her to model, it doesn’t motivate her at all.”

“That is a problem,” Mayetta intoned. “Licensing code requires children who aren’t toilet trained to be in a room with a diapering station and potty chairs or very small toilets for toilet training. We don’t keep those kinds of equipment in the four-year-old room. We’ve never needed it before. It would be expensive to install now, and besides – four-year-olds should be toilet trained! We need to be consistent with the regulations. You should move Li Chen to the toddler room if she can’t be toilet trained soon.”

“But Li Chen really seems to enjoy the children and activities in our classroom. She has only been in the United States for a few weeks, but she’s already starting to understand English, and yesterday I heard her say ‘block.’ I’d hate to move her away from her friends and from me. I’ve tried talking to her mother and father, but they just smiled and nodded and didn’t seem concerned that she wasn’t toilet trained yet. I don’t know what to do.”

“Well, we gave them a policy manual. Rules are rules, and a four-year-old needs to be toilet trained. If she isn’t in another two weeks, she needs to be moved to the toddler room or asked to leave the school. You should start giving her rewards when she tells you she needs to use the bathroom, and not let her play if she has an accident. That will get her trained soon enough.” With that, Mayetta went back to her paperwork and Janice went to get her classroom ready for the day.

1. How do you define the problem shown above? What are all the factors that need to be taken into account before a solution can be found? (Use the information in Chapters 2 or 3 of Trawick-Smith’s Child Development: A Multicultural Perspective to help you think through the layers of the problem.)
2. What developmental theory would Mayetta most likely believe in, and how do you know? Janice?
3. What would a maturationist suggest to solve this problem?
4. How would Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory be applied to this issue?
5. What might Erikson say about Mayetta’s solution to the problem?
6. How do you think the problem should be solved and why? What theory supports your approach?