

Foster, S. (1990). **The communicative competence of young children: A modular approach.** London and New York: Longman. xvi + 238p. (paper).

This introduction to language development is intended primarily for students in linguistics. The first chapter helps define many of the technical terms commonly used in the child language literature. The next two chapters cover early pre-linguistic communication and early lexical development. Some attention is given to topics not commonly found in textbooks of this nature, including infant perception and gestural communication. Next comes a relatively standard account of basic developments in semantics, syntax and pragmatics, with a relatively heavy focus on morphology and syntax. The final chapters review various explanatory theories including behaviorist, rationalist, cognitive, and social approaches, and offer a critique of methods used to study child language. The overall thesis of the book is that language development can be usefully characterized as consisting of modules that are similar to the traditional domains of study of theoretical linguistics, and that each module develops independently and requires different kinds of explanations.

reviewer:

(Kenji Hakuta, Stanford University)