Preoperational Thought (Piaget)

- Preoperational thought is characterized by:
- Egocentrism
- Centration
- Focus on appearance
- Static reasoning
- Irreversibility
- Lack of conservation

- **Egocentrism**: thinking about the world from their own perspective.
- **Centration**: focusing on one aspect of a situation.
- **Focus on Appearance**: focusing only on what is apparent.
- **Static Reasoning**: assuming the world is unchanging.
- **Irreversibility**: nothing can be undone.
- **Conservation**: the idea that the amount of a substance remains the same, despite changes in its appearance.

Vygotsky: Children as Learners

- **Lev Vygotsky**
  - Cognition is stimulated and directed by older and more skilled members of society.

Helping Children Learn

- **Guided participation**: process by which children learn from others who guide their experiences.
- **ZPD**: the skills a person can do with assistance, but not yet alone.

Children’s Theories

- **Theory-theory**: Children attempt to explain everything they see and hear by constructing theories!
- **Theory of mind**: a person’s theory of what other people might be thinking.

The development of theory of mind is influenced by:

- Language ability
- Siblings
- Brain maturation
- Culture

Language

- Childhood appears to be a **sensitive period** for language—a time when language learning happens most easily.

- This process is helped by **fast-mapping**.
the speedy and imprecise way in which children learn new words.

Bilingualism
■ Bilingual children by age 5 have more advanced theory of mind, but may lag in linguistic skills such as reading.
■ A good solution is for a child to become a balanced bilingual, equally fluent in two languages.

Early Childhood Education
□ Child-centered
□ Academic
□ Intervention
Child-Centered Programs
■ Inspired by Piaget and Vygotsky
■ children are free to play and explore with guidance

■ Materials are arranged for self-exploration

■ Children are encouraged to learn through play
Montessori Schools
■ Maria Montessori believed children need structured, individualized projects
■ Pretend and dramatic play is not encouraged—learning is the emphasis.
Reggio Emilia Approach
■ Reggio Emilia
□ early education is high-quality
□ funded by the city
□ value art and creative play,
□ have a low teacher-child ratio, and
□ high parent and teacher involvement.

Teacher-Directed Programs
■ stress preparation for school
□ Teach letters,
□ numbers,
□ shapes
□ how to sit and listen quietly
□ Teachers direct the events

Intervention Programs
■ Project Head Start - federal program for low-income children

■ Goals = preparing kids for school, involving parents,
□ providing nutrition
□ providing health care.
Quality Matters

- high-quality early childhood programs = high-quality outcomes for children.

**Quality measures:**
- trained staff,
- low adult-child ratio,
- positive interactions,
- safety,
- adequate space, and
- a curriculum.