



## Preface

This is the fourth edition of a book first published in 1988 that was titled *Later Language Development: Ages Nine Through Nineteen*. Originally written as a multi-authored text, it was revised in 1998 as a single-authored text, titled *Later Language Development: The School-Age and Adolescent Years*. The second edition covered a broader age range, extending downward to include young school-age children and upward to include young adults (6–20+ years). The third edition, *Later Language Development: School-Age Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults*, was published in 2007 and reflected an even broader age range (6–30+ years). The fourth and present edition emphasizes language development during the school-age years, adolescence, and early adulthood, and highlights its relationship to academic success.

Since the first edition of this book was published in 1988, a number of changes have occurred in the field, changes that impact the way in which later language development is viewed. One important change is that now there is a greater understanding of the subtle, gradual, and continuous nature of language development beyond the preschool years. This change, I believe, stems from an expansion of research into the domains of written language (reading and writing) and of spoken language beyond conversation (e.g., narrative and expository speaking) in children, adolescents, and adults with typical development.

Detailed knowledge of these topics, I believe, has encouraged greater appreciation of the role of later language development in the academic success of school-age children, adolescents, and young adults. For example, when adolescents experience difficulty comprehending what they read in their high school science, history, or social studies classes, professionals such as speech–language pathologists are now more likely to investigate the possibility of language weaknesses (e.g., in word knowledge, derivational morphology, complex syntax) in these students as key contributing factors. In the past, it was commonly assumed that language development had little to do with reading comprehension, particularly in adolescents. At the same time, there is greater appreciation of the role of the school in providing an intellectually stimulating environment that in turn can enhance later language development. In other words, professionals are more likely to recognize the existence of a two-way street, where later language development is essential for academic success but is itself enriched by a dynamic school experience.

With the fourth edition, chapters have been updated to include newer research published since the third edition was written. I have also added information on key topics, such as word knowledge, derivational morphology, word definition, figurative language, humor, sarcasm, syntax, discourse (conversational, narrative, expository), word reading, reading comprehension, spelling, and written expression. The introductory chapter includes an appendix that summarizes the highlights of early and later language development, listing the attainments of a typical 5-year-old child, 10-year-old child, 15-year-old adolescent, and 25-year-old adult. Thus, the reader will find that the book covers a wide range of topics. There is also a discussion section at the end of each chapter (“Implications for Education”) of how the information could be used to improve education for children, adolescents, and young adults. Study-guide questions are also included in each chapter to encourage meaningful reflection on the material.

This book is the result of an effort to pull together a growing body of research on later language development. My expectation is that it will continue to serve as a solid reference for students, professors, speech–language pathologists, teachers, and others who are interested in learning about language development beyond the preschool years. I also hope the book will stimulate readers to seek answers to questions yet to be asked, and that some readers will become researchers in later language development.

Although much has been learned about later language development, the story is not complete. Indeed, there will always be questions to investigate as long as individuals are intrigued by the topic and motivated to devise new methods for delving into the linguistic capabilities of school-age children, adolescents, and young adults. This perspective regarding the never-ending search for truth and knowledge is captured by the colorful and metaphorical quotation of Oregon novelist Ken Kesey:

The answer is never the answer. What’s really interesting is the mystery. If you seek the mystery instead of the answer, you’ll always be seeking. I’ve never seen anybody really find the answer—they think they have, so they stop thinking. But the job is to seek mystery, evoke mystery, plant a garden in which strange plants grow and mysteries bloom. The need for mystery is greater than the need for an answer. (Kesey, 1994, para. 8)

In future editions of this book the content will expand, with every new decade of research. I expect that fascinating plants with mysteries of their own will take root, sprouting novel ideas in language scientists.

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