

The Development of Language Comprehension in Hellen Keller as Portrayed in the *Miracle Worker Film* (2000)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas perkembangan language comprehension yang ditunjukkan oleh karakter Helen Keller dalam film *The Miracle Worker* (2000) dari perspektif psikolinguistik. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah: (1) mendeskripsikan bagaimana perkembangan language comprehension digambarkan pada karakter Helen Keller dalam film *The Miracle Worker* (2000), dan (2) mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap perkembangan language comprehension Helen Keller dalam film tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan psikolinguistik dengan mengacu pada teori perkembangan bahasa yang dikemukakan oleh Gleason dan Bernstein Ratner (2017). Metode yang digunakan adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data penelitian diperoleh dari dialog, interaksi tactile spelling, tindakan, gestur, dan adegan yang menunjukkan proses perkembangan language comprehension Helen Keller dalam film *The Miracle Worker* (2000). Data tersebut dianalisis melalui lima tahap: identifikasi, klasifikasi, penjelasan, interpretasi, dan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) perkembangan language comprehension Helen Keller berlangsung secara bertahap, dimulai dari ketidakmampuannya memahami hubungan antara simbol bahasa dan makna, hingga mampu menghubungkan ejaan taktil dengan objek, tindakan, dan pengalaman yang bermakna; (2) terdapat empat faktor utama yang berkontribusi terhadap perkembangan language comprehension Helen Keller, yaitu cognitive development, linguistic input, social interaction, serta experience and environmental exposure. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan language comprehension merupakan hasil interaksi antara kemampuan kognitif, paparan bahasa, interaksi sosial, serta pengalaman nyata yang diperoleh selama proses pembelajaran bahasa.

Kata Kunci: Perkembangan Bahasa, Penerimaan Bahasa, Helen Keller (Film).

Abstract

This study examined the development of language comprehension portrayed in Helen Keller's character in *The Miracle Worker* (2000) from a psycholinguistic perspective. The objectives of this study were (1) to describe how the development of language

comprehension was portrayed in Helen Keller's character in *The Miracle Worker* (2000) and (2) to identify the factors that contributed to the development of Helen Keller's language comprehension in the movie. This study employed a psycholinguistic approach based on the theory of language development proposed by Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017). The research used a descriptive qualitative method. The data were obtained from dialogues, tactile spelling interactions, actions, gestures, and scenes that portrayed the process of Helen Keller's language comprehension development in *The Miracle Worker* (2000). The data were analyzed through five stages: identification, classification, explanation, interpretation, and conclusion. The findings revealed that: (1) Helen Keller's language comprehension developed gradually, beginning with her inability to understand the relationship between linguistic symbols and their meanings and progressing to her ability to associate tactile spelling with meaningful objects, actions, and experiences; (2) four major factors contributed to the development of Helen Keller's language comprehension, namely cognitive development, linguistic input, social interaction, and experience and environmental exposure. The findings indicated that the development of language comprehension resulted from the interaction of cognitive abilities, language input, social interaction, and meaningful real-life experiences throughout Helen Keller's language learning process.

Keywords : *Language Development, Language Comprehension, Helen Keller (Film).*

INTRODUCTION

Language comprehension is an essential aspect of language because it enables individuals to understand meanings conveyed through spoken, written, or signed language. Field (2003) explained that language comprehension involves a mental process of interpreting linguistic input by connecting words, sounds, or symbols with meaningful representations stored in the human mind. Similarly, Clark and Clark (1977) stated that individuals need to process linguistic information before responding appropriately in communication. Therefore, language comprehension plays an important role in successful communication and becomes a significant concern in psycholinguistic studies, particularly in understanding how individuals acquire and interpret language.

Language comprehension develops gradually through cognitive growth, linguistic experiences, and interaction with the surrounding environment. Traxler (2012) explained that comprehension involves cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and linguistic knowledge, which work together to construct meaning from language input. As individuals receive meaningful language exposure, they gradually learn to associate words, signs, or symbols with objects, actions, and abstract concepts. This process is closely related to language development, which refers to the gradual acquisition of the ability to understand and use language for communication. Owens (2016) stated that language development includes receptive language, such as listening and comprehension, and expressive language, such as speaking and writing. Receptive language generally precedes expressive language because individuals need to understand linguistic input before producing meaningful utterances.

Several factors influence language development and comprehension. Piaget (1952) emphasized the role of cognitive development in organizing experiences and constructing meaning from linguistic input. Krashen (1985) argued that comprehensible linguistic input facilitates language acquisition when learners are exposed to language slightly beyond their current competence. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance of social interaction, particularly communication with more knowledgeable individuals, in promoting linguistic and cognitive growth. Bruner (1983) also emphasized environmental exposure and adult guidance as meaningful opportunities for children to develop language through daily interactions. These factors can be observed through various forms of human communication, including film.

Film provides audiovisual representations of stories, emotions, dialogues, sounds, actions, and human experiences. Bordwell and Thompson (2019) explained that film combines narrative elements and cinematic techniques to represent social realities and human behavior. In psycholinguistic research, films can provide contextualized examples of verbal and non-verbal communication. Boggs and Petrie (2012) stated that characters can be analyzed through dialogues, facial expressions, gestures, and interactions that reflect psychological and communicative processes. Thus, film can serve as an appropriate research object for examining language comprehension and its development within meaningful social contexts.

One film that clearly portrays the development of language comprehension is *The Miracle Worker* (2000), directed by Nadia Tass. The film presents Helen Keller, a deaf-blind child who gradually develops language comprehension through the guidance of Anne Sullivan. Initially, Helen has difficulty associating words or signs with their meanings because of her severe communication limitations. Through systematic teaching, repeated language exposure, and intensive social interaction, she gradually understands that linguistic symbols represent objects, actions, and ideas. One significant scene occurs at the riverside (55:08–55:35), when Anne repeatedly spells “W-A-T-E-R” into Helen’s palm while allowing her to feel flowing water. At first, Helen only imitates the hand movements, but after repeated exposure, she realizes that the spelling represents the water she is touching. This scene demonstrates a significant development in language comprehension because Helen successfully connects a linguistic symbol with its real-world referent.

Previous studies have examined Helen Keller’s language development from different perspectives. Baig and Ahmad (2021), in *Crossing Over the Communicative Barrier: Case of Helen Keller’s Developmental Disability and Language Learnability*, discussed Helen Keller’s process of learning language despite her developmental disabilities. Wahyuningtyas (2014), in *Communicative Acts of Deaf-Blind Child in The Miracle Worker Movie*, analyzed Helen Keller’s communicative behaviors in the film. However, these studies focused on language learnability and communicative acts rather than specifically examining the development of Helen Keller’s language comprehension from a psycholinguistic perspective. Therefore, this study entitled *The Development of Language Comprehension in Helen Keller as Portrayed in The Miracle Worker Film* (2000) aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Helen Keller’s language comprehension develops through cognitive processes, linguistic input, and meaningful interaction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the development of language comprehension portrayed through Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker* (2000). According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research explores and understands meanings assigned to social or human phenomena. This approach was appropriate because the study focused on interpreting dialogues, actions, gestures, and events rather than measuring data numerically. The study also identified factors contributing to Helen Keller's language comprehension development from a psycholinguistic perspective.

The primary data source was *The Miracle Worker* (2000), directed by Nadia Tass, with a duration of approximately 1 hour, 28 minutes, and 30 seconds. The data included dialogues, tactile spelling interactions, gestures, facial expressions, physical interactions, and scenes representing Helen Keller's language learning process.

Data were collected through documentation, as the research relied on audiovisual materials. The researcher accessed the film through YouTube, watched it repeatedly, identified relevant scenes, classified verbal and non-verbal data, recorded important dialogues and actions, and gathered supporting information from books, journal articles, and credible online sources.

Data analysis followed the qualitative procedures proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), consisting of five stages: identification, classification, explanation, interpretation, and conclusion. The researcher identified relevant data, classified them into verbal and non-verbal categories, explained their relationship to language comprehension development, interpreted each scene using psycholinguistic perspectives, and drew conclusions regarding Helen Keller's language comprehension development as portrayed in the film.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This section presented the findings obtained from the analysis of *The Miracle Worker* (2000). The findings were derived from selected dialogues, tactile spelling interactions, actions, gestures, and scenes that portrayed Helen Keller's language learning process throughout the movie. The analysis focused on identifying how the development of Helen Keller's language comprehension was portrayed and the factors that contributed to its development from a psycholinguistic perspective. Each selected datum was examined using the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter II, particularly the concepts of language comprehension, the process of development of language comprehension, and the factors affecting its development. Therefore, the findings provided evidence to answer the research questions of the present study.

To present the findings systematically, the data were organized according to the chronological sequence of events in the movie. Each datum was analyzed to explain both the portrayal of Helen Keller's language comprehension development and the factors that contributed to that development. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), analysis identified four major contributing processes, namely receiving language input, processing linguistic information, constructing meaning, and understanding language. And factors,

namely cognitive development, linguistic input, social interaction, and experience and environmental exposure. Rather than discussing these factors separately, they were interpreted within the context of each selected scene to demonstrate how they collectively supported Helen Keller's gradual understanding of language. This organization enabled the findings to present a coherent account of Helen Keller's language comprehension development while simultaneously addressing both research questions.

Analysis

The analysis was conducted by interpreting the findings through the theoretical framework presented in Chapter II, particularly the theory of the development of language comprehension proposed by Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017). According to the theory, the development of language comprehension occurs gradually through several interconnected processes, namely receiving language input, processing linguistic information, constructing meaning, and understanding language, while its development is influenced by several contributing factors, including cognitive development, linguistic input, social interaction, and experience and environmental exposure. Therefore, the analysis is organized into two main sections based on the research questions of this study. The first section analyzes how the development of language comprehension is portrayed in Helen Keller's character by identifying the stages of language comprehension development presented throughout *The Miracle Worker* (2000). The second section analyzes the factors that contribute to the development of Helen Keller's language comprehension by examining how cognitive abilities, language exposure, social interaction, and meaningful experiences support her gradual understanding of language throughout the film.

The Process of the Development of Language Comprehension

According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), the development of language comprehension is a gradual process through which learners acquire the ability to understand linguistic information and construct meaning from language. Rather than occurring instantly, language comprehension develops through a series of interconnected processes that enable learners to recognize linguistic symbols, process the information they receive, associate language with meaningful concepts, and ultimately understand language in different contexts. In the present study, the development of Helen Keller's language comprehension in *The Miracle Worker* (2000) is analyzed through four main processes, namely receiving language input, processing linguistic information, constructing meaning, and understanding language. Each process represents a different stage in Helen's language learning journey, illustrating how her comprehension gradually develops from merely receiving tactile linguistic input to successfully understanding the relationship between language and meaning. These processes occur continuously throughout Helen's interactions with Anne Sullivan and are portrayed through various learning experiences involving tactile communication, repeated language exposure, and meaningful real-life situations. Therefore, this section analyzes how each stage of the language comprehension development process is portrayed through the relevant scenes, dialogues, actions, and interactions presented in *The Miracle Worker* (2000).

Datum 1**(15:30-16:15)**

At the 15:30-16:15 minute mark, Anne Sullivan first introduces tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**D-O-L-L**" into her hand while giving her a doll. At that moment, Helen gets language input through touch, even though she doesn't yet realize that the finger movements stand for the word "**doll**." Anne Sullivan keeps repeating the same tactile spelling during their lessons to get Helen familiar with the language symbols. This repeated exposure lets Helen experience language consistently before she understands what it means. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene shows the **language input stage** because Helen is being introduced to language through touch.

Datum 2**(17:35-18:05)**

At minutes 17:35-18:05, there's a scene where Anne takes a piece of cake in a cloth, which she then puts into Helen's mouth to eat. Then Anne Sullivan does tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**C-A-K-E**" into her hand. Anne Sullivan keeps repeating the same tactile spelling during their lessons to get Helen familiar with the language symbols. This repeated exposure lets Helen experience language consistently before she understands what it means. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene shows the **language input stage** because Helen is being introduced to language through touch.

Datum 3**(23:45-24:18)**

At minutes 23:45-24:18, while Anne was writing at the study table, at the same time Hellen passed by near Anne, and then Hellen accidentally bumped into the ink on Anne's study table. So, on this occasion, Anne held Hellen's hand to touch the ink, and Anne Sullivan does tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**I-N-K**" into her hand. This repeated exposure lets Helen experience language consistently before she understands what it means. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene shows the **language input stage** because Helen is being introduced to language through touch.

Datum 4**(51:21-52:38)**

At minutes 51:21-52:38, Anne interacts with one of her other students named Persy. They schemed to make Hellen jealous, with Anne doing finger spelling on Persy's hand, which then made Hellen jealous, so she pulled Anne's hand, asking for a drink and asking Anne to spell on her hand instead of Persy's. Then Anne tried to do tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**M-I-N-K**" into her hand. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this stage is called **processing linguistic information** because at this stage Hellen starts to understand that every gesture Anne gives has meaning. Therefore, the data is highly relevant because it shows how learners construct meaning by linking language with concrete experiences.

Datum 5**(56:21-57:56)**

At minutes 56:21-57:56, at this point Anne was preparing lunch for Hellen, who had just finished playing in the afternoon. Then Hellen went to meet Anne at the dining table that Anne had set up for her. Coincidentally, at that moment Anne had already prepared soup for lunch. Anne tried to do tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**S-O-U-P**" into her hand. And there, we can see Hellen being calm and already familiar with the hand spelling given by Anne. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this stage is called **processing linguistic information** because at this stage Hellen starts to understand that every gesture Anne makes has meaning. Therefore, this data is very relevant because it shows how learners construct meaning by linking language with concrete experiences.

Datum 6**(1:14:34-1:15:00)**

At 1:14:34-1:15:00, Hellen walks towards her room, then she tries to feel the door of the room, and then she pulls the key from her door. Then, Hellen meets her mother and gives her the key, at the same time, her mother tries to do tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**K-E-Y**" into her hand with a smile. This shows that there's a positive change in Hellen's language comprehension development. Because this stage is called "**processing linguistic information**" since at this stage Hellen starts to understand that every gesture

Anne makes has meaning. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this data is very relevant because it shows how learners construct meaning by linking language with concrete experiences.

Datum 7



(1:20:40-1:22:55)

At (1:20:40-1:22:55), Anne lifts Hellen's body from inside the house to the yard. In the yard, there is a water pump, and then Anne leads and pulls Hellen to stand near the water pump. Without wasting time, Anne helps Hellen pump the water, and then the water pump produces water, and as soon as possible, Anne tries to do tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling “**W-A-T-E-R**” into her hand. This moment represents the successful connection between a linguistic symbol and a real-life experience. Therefore, according to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene falls under **constructing meaning** because it is highly relevant as it shows how learners construct meaning by linking language with concrete experiences.

Datum 8



(54:50-54:58)

At (54:50-54:58), Anne took Hellen around the garden. When they stopped at a certain spot, Anne and Hellen approached a flower, and on this occasion, Anne tried to do

tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**F-L-O-W-E-R**" into her hand. This moment represents the successful connection between a linguistic symbol and a real-life experience. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene falls under **constructing meaning** because it is really relevant, as it shows how learners construct meaning by linking language with concrete experiences.

Datum 9



(58:00-58:50)

At (58:00-58:50), Anne and Hellen were sitting on a tree while holding a bird egg. Anne tried to do tactile spelling to Helen Keller by spelling "**E-G-G**" into her hand. When Anne finished spelling on Hellen's hand, the egg suddenly hatched, and they laughed as a bird came out of the egg. Then Anne tried tactile spelling to Helen Keller again by spelling "**B-I-R-D**" into her hand. This moment represents the successful connection between a linguistic symbol and a real-life experience. Therefore, according to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene falls under **constructing meaning** because it is highly relevant, as it shows how learners construct meaning by linking language with concrete experiences.

Datum 10



(1:23:38-1:24:10)

At (1:23:38-1:24:10), Anne rang the bell in front of Hellen's house because she wanted to let them know that something had happened, and right at that moment Hellen's

dad and mom came out of the house. Anne immediately grabbed Hellen's dad's and mom's hands, and Hellen tried to find out and was helped by Anne, who tried tactile spelling to Helen Keller again by spelling “**M-A-M-A**” and “**P-A-P-A**” into her hand. Hellen tried to spell it again on her mom's and dad's hands. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this data is part of the **language understanding** process. It's relevant because it shows that language comprehension develops from understanding individual words to interpreting language in broader communicative contexts.

Datum 11



(1:24:50-1:25:26)

At (1:24:50-1:25:26), Hellen meets Anne again and asks Anne to tell her using hand movements. Anne tries to do tactile spelling to Hellen Keller by spelling “**T-E-A-C-H-E-R**” into her hand, and Hellen repeats the spelling back into Anne's hand correctly. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this data is part of the **language understanding** process. It's relevant because it shows that language comprehension develops from understanding individual words to interpreting language in broader communicative contexts.

Factors Affecting the Development of Language Comprehension

According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), the development of language comprehension is not influenced by a single factor but by the interaction of several cognitive and environmental factors that support language learning. Based on the findings of this study, four major factors were identified as contributing to the development of Helen Keller's language comprehension in *The Miracle Worker* (2000), namely cognitive development, linguistic input, social interaction, and experience and environmental exposure. Each factor plays a distinct yet interconnected role throughout Helen's language learning journey, allowing her to gradually understand the relationship between tactile linguistic symbols and their meanings. The analysis presented in this section examines how these four factors are portrayed through Helen's learning experiences with Anne Sullivan and how they collectively facilitate the gradual development of her language comprehension as depicted in the film.

Datum 12**(15:02-15:30)**

At (15:02-15:30), when Anne came to meet Hellen for the first time, they were in Anne's room. Hellen was seen unpacking Anne's suitcase, and then she found a doll inside. Then, Hellen picked up the doll and held its eyes, which Anne noticed when she saw Hellen touching the doll's eyes. This indicates that Hellen's cognitive development factors are starting to work. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), this scene falls under **cognitive development** factors, and it's relevant because it shows that Hellen managed to form meaningful concepts by connecting language symbols with real experiences, which reflects an important stage in language comprehension development.

Datum 13**(17:25-17:50)**

At 17:25-17:50, Anne took out a piece of cake wrapped in cloth, which she then brought close to Helen, and immediately Helen used her sense of smell. Then Anne put the piece of cake into Helen's mouth. According to Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017), cognitive development supports important mental processes, such as attention, memory,

perception, and concept formation, all of which are necessary for understanding language. Therefore, this scene falls under the factors of **cognitive development** and is relevant because it shows that Hellen successfully formed a meaningful concept by connecting language symbols with real experiences, reflecting an important stage in language understanding development.

Datum 14



(15:30-16:15)

At 15:30-16:15, after Hellen held the doll, Anne repeatedly gave tactile spelling with the word **"D-O-L-L"** on Hellen's hand. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that language comprehension develops through continuous exposure to meaningful language input, where input or interaction is often done repeatedly. In this case, this scene falls under the factor of **linguistic input**. It's very relevant because it shows that meaningful language input, given repeatedly, supports Hellen's vocabulary acquisition while also reinforcing her language comprehension development.

Datum 15



(1:02:35-1:02:46)

At (1:02:35-1:02:46), after Hellen held the dog, Anne provided tactile spelling with the word **"D-O-G"** repeatedly on Hellen's hand. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that language comprehension develops through continuous exposure to meaningful linguistic input, where input or interaction is often repeated. Therefore, this scene falls under the factor

of **linguistic input**. It is highly relevant because it shows that meaningful language input given repeatedly supports Hellen's vocabulary acquisition while also strengthening her language comprehension development.

Datum 16



(26:50-36:15)

At (26:50-36:15), the activity starts in the morning when Hellen's family is about to have breakfast. Anne is seen just joining in to have breakfast as well. Then, it looks like a normal situation, but Anne notices something unusual. She sees that Hellen keeps disturbing others while they eat. Anne starts asking everyone to leave the dining table except herself and Hellen. After everyone leaves, it's just Anne and Hellen left, and Anne then locks the door of the room. In this scene, a lot of chaos occurs as Anne really wants to interact with Hellen, but Hellen largely doesn't understand Anne's intentions. Anne thinks this is a way for Hellen to become wiser and learn the proper way to behave in certain activities. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that language is not just spoken or written content. Behavior and actions are also key points. This scene shows a natural and relevant **social interaction** factor because it demonstrates that ongoing social interactions create meaningful learning opportunities and support the gradual development of Helen's language comprehension.

Datum 17



(54:30-55:35)

In (54:30-55:35), Anne invites Helen to explore the outside world and engages in tactile communication with her around the garden. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that interacting with individuals who have higher knowledge or skills provides opportunities to learn language through guidance, feedback, and ongoing communication. In this scene, Anne consistently encourages Helen to explore the objects around her, respond to instructions, and participate in meaningful communication. These interactions provide direct guidance and feedback, helping Helen start to understand that language is a tool for communication, not just meaningless hand movements. This data is relevant because it shows that continuous **social interaction** creates meaningful learning opportunities and supports the gradual development of Helen's language comprehension.

Datum 18



(55:07-55:35)

At (55:07-55:35), Anne and Helen are sitting by the river. In this scene, Anne tries to interact directly with the river water, and after Helen touches it, Anne repeatedly tries to spell out the word “**W-A-T-E-R**” on Helen's hand. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that language becomes meaningful when it is linked to direct experiences and real contexts, rather than learned in isolation. Through repeated interactions with people, objects, and various events in the surrounding environment, individuals gradually develop conceptual understanding and are able to interpret language more accurately. These experiences allow Helen to connect linguistic symbols with real objects that she can perceive using her remaining senses. Therefore, this data fits very well and is relevant to the factor of **experience and environmental exposure** because it shows that real experiences gained from the environment help Helen build conceptual understanding, thereby supporting the development of her language comprehension.

Datum 19**(1:00:10-1:00:35)**

At (1:00:10-1:00:35), Anne invited Hellen to be in the horse stable. With direct touch on the horse, Anne provided tactile spelling with the word **"H-O-R-S-E"** repeatedly on Hellen's hand. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that language becomes meaningful when it is linked to direct experiences and real contexts, rather than learned in isolation. Through repeated interactions with people, objects, and various events in the surrounding environment, individuals gradually develop conceptual understanding and are able to interpret language more accurately. These experiences allow Helen to connect linguistic symbols with real objects that she can perceive using her remaining senses. Therefore, this data fits very well and is relevant to the factor of **experience and environmental exposure** because it shows that real experiences gained from the environment help Helen build conceptual understanding, thereby supporting the development of her language comprehension.

Datum 20**(1:20:33-1:23:10)**

At (1:20:33-1:23:10), Anne pulls Hellen's hand outside the house. Anne and Hellen are right at the water pump in front of Hellen's house; this scene is the most phenomenal scene in the film. Because, after Hellen pumps water with Anne's help, Anne repeatedly tries

to spell out the word **"W-A-T-E-R"** on Hellen's hand. To everyone's surprise, after Hellen repeats the spelling on Anne's hand, she tries to make a sound even though it isn't clear due to her physical limitations, attempting to say **"wa... wa... terrr."** Proudly, Anne shouts to call everyone inside the house and tells them what just happened. And everyone comes out to see how happy it is. Gleason and Bernstein Ratner (2017) explain that language becomes meaningful when it is linked to direct experiences and real contexts, rather than learned in isolation. Through repeated interactions with people, objects, and various events in the surrounding environment, individuals gradually develop conceptual understanding and are able to interpret language more accurately. These experiences allow Helen to connect linguistic symbols with real objects that she can perceive using her remaining senses. Therefore, this data fits very well and is relevant to the factor of **experience and environmental exposure** because it shows that real experiences gained from the environment help Helen build conceptual understanding, thereby supporting the development of her language comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The development of language comprehension in Helen Keller was portrayed as a gradual and systematic process consisting of four interconnected stages: receiving language input, processing linguistic information, constructing meaning, and understanding language. Each stage became the foundation for the next, beginning with tactile linguistic input and culminating in meaningful language comprehension. The development was influenced by four major factors: cognitive development, linguistic input, social interaction, and experience and environmental exposure. These factors functioned integratively, with cognitive abilities supporting meaning construction, linguistic input providing consistent exposure, social interaction offering guidance and feedback, and environmental experiences strengthening the association between linguistic symbols and real-world referents.

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