

DYNAMIC INTERACTIVE APPROACH IN ASSESSING AND ENHANCING COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING IN CHILDREN WITH SEVERE LANGUAGE DISORDERS

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Abstract: In 2000 the Centre for Cognitive Development of the Diego Portales University (Santiago de Chile) started with a clinical service for children and adolescents with developmental disorders. Since then we have worked with about 180 children with a diagnosis of genetic disorders (e.g. Down syndrome), children with autistic spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) varying in age range from 4-18. In many cases the etiological diagnosis is unclear and they can be described by various cognitive, affective, motivational, linguistic and motor dysfunctions. One of the reasons for consulting is certainly an increasing level of frustration/and expectations of the children's families, with regard to potential of development and learning.

The present work introduces some preliminary outcomes of current research which main goal is to analyze the relationship between quality of mediated interaction and enhancement of communication and self-regulation abilities in children with a severe language disorder, using a variety of interventions.

The perspective used in this research has been the theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability and Mediated Learning Experience developed by Reuven Feuerstein. The present study is a qualitative single case study systematizing a large group of interactions between mediators in charge of the intervention program and two children with Down syndrome and autism spectrum diagnosis.

Interventions are based on three universal criteria of mediation: intentionality and reciprocity, transcendence and meaning. We observed many significant changes in the development of communications skills and its impact on self-regulation processes, which have been prompted by these three parameters.

The results suggest the possibility of significant modifiability of development of communication systems in children with serious language and communicational disorders through a consistent mediation. However, an aspect that remains to be studied is the internalisation of the learnt communicating strategies, their autonomous using in similar contexts and transfer to other, different contexts.

Keywords: Cognitive development, language disorders, self regulation, structural cognitive modifiability, mediated learning experience, learning propensity, mediation criteria.