

ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY OF THE LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF A SAMPLE OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME

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Language is very important to one's social development and interaction with one's community. It is therefore necessary for a child to acquire language. One of the characteristics of a child with Down's Syndrome is an underdevelopment of the speech/language process due to mental retardation.

In Jamaica, many young mentally retarded children do not receive early intervention and consequently are more developmentally delayed than they need to be. This study undertook to examine the language and social development of four children with mental retardation due to Down's Syndrome. There was no other disability present. The children were registered in a Community Based Rehabilitation Programme. Two children age three years and two months old who were actively involved in the programme were used for the principal study. The other two children, three years and six months and four years and three months old respectively, although registered with the programme, were not actively involved.

Observation of these two children provided information for a parallel study. An initial and final test of the children were done using the Denver Developmental Screening Test, the Jamaica Portage Check List, the Ten Question with Probes, and the Activities for Daily Living Questionnaire. Clinic notes and the notes of the Community Rehabilitation Worker were examined. The researcher's observations during home visits were recorded and later coded and examined based on the research questions posed. Ethnographic methods were employed to analyse the information gathered.

The analysis indicated that a structured programme planned to meet the needs of the individual child does have a positive impact on the child's language and social development. However social development seems less dependent on the programme. Parents' expectations and family involvement in the child's training was also an important factor in the implementation of planned programmes and the child's progress. There was also evidence that a structured home-based programme involving the family and trained paraprofessionals can be an effective method of training for young mentally retarded children.