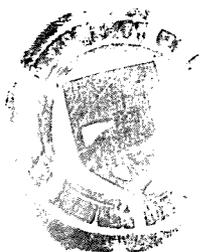


The Importance of Speech. Effects of Handicaps in Brain and Language Impairment.

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Impaired language affects all other functioning within the person as well as how other people act towards and relate to him. Impaired language means that the person cannot adequately communicate either his needs or his interests. If the person is a child, he is at an ever-increasing disadvantage with respect to his normal peer who begins to outstrip him at an exponential rate.

The retarded or language impaired person suffers socially. Others do not understand at all or they misunderstand. Often they have neither the patience nor the time to listen to what the handicapped person is trying to say.

We can get some inkling of the difficulties the language impaired encounter by listening to those who were formerly unable to communicate and now, somehow, are able to do so. A Cerebral - palsied man, reminisced that when he was young, he liked to go out -side and play with other children. They would start by asking him why he moved so peculiarly, or what was his name, but as no language followed, they started to laugh and ape him. They would sometimes throw stones at him so the unfortunate boy had to play by himself. The same person also knew why the teachers never tried to teach him any reading or spelling. They would look at his I.Q. tests and say that it would be pointless teaching him anything. This was all because he could not speak their language, and explain that he understood what they were saying.

Even when a mode of communication is available, this is no guarantee that it will be accepted by others. Deaf children prefer sign language to speech but neither parents nor the people of the community actually know the signs. Thus the deaf suffer doubly, firstly because they do not know other people's language, and secondly because others do not understand their particular language. Parental responses to their handicapped children are complex. Often there is a large element of guilt, compounded by the frustration that they cannot understand what their child is trying to say. Yet despite difficulties in understanding, parents do catch on to much of the obscure communication of their handicapped child.

Language defecits often go hand in hand with other defecits. In teaching the language-impaired and the learning-disabled, we must know their present level of receptive and expressive language, as well as their other deficiencies which may have hindered the language development.

If the person is impaired in conceptualising, then he will be linguistically deficient in areas that depend on this ability. If there are problems relating to attention span, sensory motor defecits and learning rate, we will want to know them. We need to know whether a child can respond to pictured objects. If functioning is too slow, he cannot do this and so real objects must be used for initial teaching sessions.

Knowledge will guide us in our search for more

Medi-Scope Issue 6

appropriate teaching techniques, and offer clues as to whether one should by-pass or strengthen the child's weaknesses. The autistic have difficulties in perceiving order and meaning in the stimuli which are presented to them; the aphasic show impaired auditory processing and the retarded show short-term memory defects. All have difficulties with ordinary normal language acquisition. By-passing or eliminating areas of impairment could mean successful communication by alternative means, or possibly even stimulate actual language acquisition.

Regardless of their level, the goal in teaching the language-impaired is communication; this communication, must be meaningful and applicable to other situations and useful in other contexts.

Optimising conditions for learning language.

- 1 Most of the learning-disabled will benefit by learning under non-distracting and well-structured situations.
- 2 Distractability must be reduced to a minimum to have better concentration.
- 3 The teaching must be consistently applied.
- 4 Cues should be distinct and stand out clearly.
- 5 Always start off by using very simple and familiar words.
- 6 When using coloured pictures, make sure that the picture is not confusing, i.e. if you want to teach the

word "Nurse" first present the subject "Nurse" not a nurse near a patient.

7 Always praise and reward the child for the least effort he does, to stimulate him further.

8 When writing the names of objects, use only nouns and write in *clear capital letters*.

9 Use colourful boards of *Flash Cards* of bright outstanding colours.

10 If the child is deaf use gestures accompanied by words.

11 Try to keep the child as long as possible on his tummy so that he will start crawling; consequently other brain centres will develop to make it clear that a child will be unable to reach, walk, read, and speak unless he has developed the action of crawling.

12 If the child manages to learn a few words, always allow a little time for revision so that you encourage him to memorize them and then go on to the next item.

He who possesses language can deal with many abstractions, with concepts and ideas, with things that are not physically present. He can describe past events or predict future events. The man who speaks one language can use it to learn another language.

It is for this reason that we should cherish our God-given gift of language and use it to help others who are in greater need.
