

The Role of Language in Cognitive Development in the Hard of Hearing

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A group of twenty-six hard of hearing children in the age range 4 years. 7 months to 8 years. 6 months were studied for their performance on the "Mysore Cognitive Capabilities Test (T. Padmini, 1979). Eleven children were included in Group A (oral group), four older children in Group A (oral group) and eleven children in Group B (total communication group). History relevant to each child was collected from the parents or family members or the records. The results of the study were compared with the classical finding of Jean Piaget on normal hearing children. A comparison both qualitative and quantitative between Group A and Groups B on the three mental operational tasks of seriation, classification and conservation from the Mysore Cognitive Capabilities test was done.

The results have indicated that the performance of the hard of hearing children is similar to that of the normal children on certain tasks (especially nonverbal tasks like that of the seriation tasks) while they don't match the normal children on certain other tasks (like some of classification tasks and the conservation tasks). Such observations imply the lack of adequate verbal and/or nonverbal instructions of the kind that will expose the child to these mental operations.

Qualitative and quantitative comparison of Group A and Group B on the different mental operations revealed the following :

1. The overall performance of Group A children was better than that of Group B children.
2. 't' test for a small sample revealed a significant difference between the two groups on classification tasks but not on seriation tasks.
3. All the twenty-six children in this study failed to perform on the conservation tasks. Though this finding indicates a probable delay, it would not be possible to make a generalization based on this data. Studies over a larger population and age range is warranted.

The findings in the study like the earlier ones emphasize the need for further studies on cognitive - language development on both groups of hard of hearing children with more elaborate instructions.