

Abstract

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Title: *Using Language in Social Activities at Home A Study of Interaction between Caregivers and Children with and without Disabilities*. Author: Ulrika Ferm. Language: English. Department: Department of Linguistics, Göteborg University, Box 200, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. Series: Gothenburg Monographs in Linguistics 31.

The study examines interactions between young school age children with and without disabilities and their caregivers in social activities at home. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between activities and interaction in dyads of caregivers and children with severe restrictions in speech and motor functions, to study the dyads' use of communication aids and to reflect upon possibilities for development of the children's language, cognition and self-identity. Two focus dyads including children with severe impairments and caregivers and two comparison dyads including children without impairments and caregivers participate in the study. The material comprises 38 video recordings of focus and comparison dyads interacting in five activity types, mealtime, game, drawing, teeth brushing and story reading. Different sub-sets of data are involved in four sub-studies that explore how the dyads handle activities, communicate and fulfill different interaction goals. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used.

The communication of the focus dyads is mostly unaided and is in all respects, except concerning the fulfillment of goals relating to immediate needs and intimacy, more restricted than communication in the comparison dyads. There is cooperation and success within the focus dyads with respect to the perceptually salient, but communication rarely extends beyond the here and now. In this regard, use of Blissymbolics makes a difference. In particular, the focus dyads are disadvantaged in relation to the activities (mealtime, drawing and teeth brushing) that offer the comparison dyads the best opportunities to engage in extended discourse. The focus children function within developmental zones that do not match their cognitive capabilities. Focus caregivers guide their children concerning existing functions but offer little guidance towards more challenging communication. Focus children, in contrast to comparison children, have few means to guide their own participation. Use of Blissymbolics enables communication that may not be possible using natural communication modes only. However, in some activities it may not be relevant to use a communication aid. The present analyses suggest that apart from integrating communication aids with naturally occurring activities, dyads like the present focus dyads need to construct activities that primarily focus on communication.

Keywords: child-caregiver interaction, home, severe speech and physical impairments, disability, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), Blissymbolics, activity types, communicative content, conversational topics, person reference, interaction patterns, interaction goals