

SPECIFIC LANGUAGE DISORDERS IN TWINS DURING CHILDHOOD

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The specific problems of the language that can be observed in twins during childhood have been analyzed from a neurolinguistic and pathogenetic point of view.

In the literature, the delay in the development of the language often found in twins is usually interpreted as being strictly connected with the twinning situation and on the assumption that a model of verbal, tententially cryptophasic, communication would more easily exist between twins.

Two types of language pathology in twins, diverging from this classic framework, are presented, based on patients examined at a Center for Language Disorders.

(1) A specific language disorder (usually developmental dyslalia or developmental dysarthria) that affects one of the twins while the other twin shows no difficulty in receptive and expressive language. In these cases no abnormality could be found in the modality of verbal communication between the cotwins.

(2) A specific language disorder (in our cases, developmental dysphasia) that affects both twins in receptive and expressive language. In these cases not only no tendency toward cryptophasia was observed, but indeed the verbal communication between the twins was markedly reduced. These subjects prefer, in verbal and nonverbal communication, both adults and other children, whilst they nearly ignore each other.

These two types of language disorders, as well as the classic one, are discussed in the light of a neurolinguistic model of interpretation.

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INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF TWINS. COMPARISON WITH SINGLETONS

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Analysis of mental and motor test scores and intelligence test performance of twins born in the Collaborative Perinatal Project shows that twins perform more poorly than singletons from the same population and that the differences are greater in Negroes than in whites. The poor performance of twins relative to that of singletons is of complex etiology. It is partly due to poor prenatal environment, for twins brought up as singletons perform at the intelligence level of twins and not of singletons. It may also be partly due to the higher incidence of congenital malformations in twins, especially those of the central nervous system. But the performance of twins, relative to that of singletons, tends to improve as they get older, at least from 4 to 7 years, suggesting that prematurity is also a contributing factor, whose detrimental effects may be reversible.

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TWINS: MENTAL DEVELOPMENT DURING INFANCY AND THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

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Measures of mental development were periodically obtained from a large sample of twins that were followed longitudinally from early infancy to 6 years of age. Initially, the twins were somewhat depressed in developmental status, but eventually they