

English language summary of doctoral thesis entitled
“Intelligence levels and language and communication skills in teenagers aged 13-16” written by mgr Natalia Jędrzejowska
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This thesis addresses the issue of children with below-average intelligence, and explores two complementary aspects of their functioning, namely linguistic and communication skills. It presents the results of my own research into language and communication skills in 13-to-16-year-olds diagnosed as having below-average intelligence, as compared to children with mild intellectual disability and those within the intellectual norm. The study covered 90 children divided into three groups of equal size – those with below-average intelligence, those with mild intellectual disability, and those within the intellectual norm.

This dissertation has two parts, of which one is theoretical (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4) and one is empirical (Chapters 5, 6, 7). Chapter 1 contains a discussion on previous lines of language research, with special attention to language and communication skills. The presentation of the problem starts with linguistic aspects by discussing the nature of language, the structure of linguistic systems, and functions served by language. Moreover, I focus on how language is acquired, and describe three academic approaches to language acquisition – linguistic-nativism, cognitive, and social-interaction theories. I also examine the neurophysiological mechanisms of language.

Chapter 2 describes the relationships between language and communication skills and cognitive skills, including the issue of developmental disorders within the intellectual norm with no impairment of language skills (Developmental Language Disorder, DLD), or with impaired intellectual functioning with generally normal language development (e.g. Williams syndrome).

Chapters 3 and 4 identify the characteristics of the two clinical groups – children with below-average intelligence and children with mild intellectual disability, as well as the adopted terminology, epidemiology, aetiology, pathogenesis, and – most importantly – an overview of previous research into language and communication skills in children from both these clinical groups.

The methodological part in Chapter 5 discusses the subject and purpose of the study, the applied research model, problems and hypotheses, dependent and independent variables, study area, participant selection criteria, and research methods and tools. Chapter 6 presents the results of the tests on language and communication skills among the probands with below-average intelligence, including their phonological, morphological, and syntactic skills, verbal fluency, and ability to learn and memorise verbal data. Chapter 7 is a summary with a discussion of the results.

Our knowledge of the psychosocial skills and limitations (including language and communication impediments) in children with below-average intelligence is still lacking. Information about impaired intellectual function is insufficient when one needs to start working with those “grey area” children as part of therapeutic or educational programmes. Therefore, it seems important to gain more insights into the functioning of children with below-average intelligence.

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