

## **The process of language acquisition and forming a language system in the autistic child. A linguistic case study.**

The dissertation's claim is to show language acquisition and the development of a language system in the autistic child. The author wants to show the specific idiolect of a young person.

The acquisition process is shown in the light of our knowledge of language acquisition. The author also describes a specific kind and the value of language competence. The author tries to answer the question which is asked by psycholinguistics whether all children acquire language the same way. She shows the specific way of acquisition in the autistic child.

The boy in this case study doesn't speak but he communicates with others by writing. Although he is only six years old he doesn't make mistakes, he answers the questions according to the texts which were read and writes stories after putting pictures in the correct order. He can also ask questions and writes sentences about his feelings and thoughts spontaneously.

The author succeeded in completing quite a lot of texts which made it possible not only to show the process of learning language but also to describe the child's idiolect.

The thesis consists of two parts. The first theoretical part shows the problems connected with language acquisition, the stages of development in the child's language and its neurobiological conditions and language functions as well. The ways how people suffering from autism communicate were also shown and the author put special interest in those people with ASD who communicate only by writing. The therapy method was also shown as it was essential for acquisition.

The second, practical, part shows the linguistic analysis of the boy's language. It was compared to his healthy coevals and those with Asperger syndrome. The level of his communication competence was compared with popular views on autism.

The author pointed out that scientists writing about ASD shouldn't generalise and at the same time emphasise the uniqueness of every case. In the thesis were presented also the boy's statements about autism.

The language acquisition had two ways. The boy was taught a language in a so called structuralised way, his language was being programmed. But also he acquired the language in natural way like other children by listening to his surroundings. Thanks to writing and reading abilities he got the tools and could communicate. He has shown us his extraordinary abilities for over a year. In contrary to what is said about people with ASD he has no problems with understanding jokes, irony, lies. He understands the meaning of idiom, proverbs, symbols and the relationship between cause and effect.

He has a theory of mind and it isn't difficult for him to write what different people can think or say in different situations. There are also many statements which show that he is able to understand and name emotions and give reasons for those emotions.

The level of his language competence is amazing as well as his knowledge.

His idiolect is like the boy itself. On the one hand he is a very smart, intelligent young person and on the other someone who has serious problems with communicating his needs and feelings. Someone who has very mature language abilities but can't speak or read out loud. His language is also a mixture of a scientific language and a colloquial one. What's more from time to time he adds some foreign expressions to statements in Polish.

The case shown in the thesis is an addendum to studies about language acquisition and development of children's language. Nowadays when we face an autism epidemic the topic is relevant. For parents this testimonial may be important as it may give them hope. To therapists it may be a valuable case study, not only as a confirmation of their everyday therapeutic work but also giving them hope that potential which is often deeply hidden, may one day show up in another patient.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Chyżyński', is located at the bottom right of the page.