

Abstract No. 5.1

Wednesday 6th September 2017 at 14:15-15:00

Title: From Sensory to Symbolic

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Main focus: Mainly practice/Congenital deafblindness

Abstract: Early intervention with the children with complex developmental needs can be very challenging for both families and professionals. The complexity of the needs makes it harder to detect, observe, engage, and support the unconventional communicative expressions i.e. support communication development.

This development leads the child from resonance, neonatal imitation to the development of reciprocation starting at 2 months of age. By two months infants already appear to transcend basic mirroring processes by manifesting first signs of reciprocation in face-to-face exchanges (primary intersubjectivity). They soon engage in triadic intentional communication with others about objects (secondary intersubjectivity, starting approximately 9 months) and eventually begin to negotiate with others about the values of things, including the self as shared representations (tertiary intersubjectivity, starting approximately 20 months). The notion of tertiary intersubjectivity was proposed by Trevarthen (2006). In Trevarthen's conception, the tertiary level is the first- and second-person reflective and recursive intersubjectivity, in the sense of communicative understanding mediated by meta-representations, and symbolic references to actual and fictional worlds of imagination or joint presence.

The role of Mirror Neurons is currently sets in the heart of the education/ habilitation process, especially because - as a neurological system - is not necessarily depends on the cognitive component, in the same context, mirror neurons system can be considered as the neurological base of social interaction, it is deeply rooted in the Limbic Brain –in terms of Paul MacLean's Triune Brain model- which makes it less vulnerable unlike the cortical functions including language, MacLean PD (1993). That should enable the caregivers to apply the mirror neurons inspired techniques on a wide range of children with various educational needs despite of the severity of disability.

Within the same context, there are three “natures” of communication models:

1. Sensory.
2. Emotional.
3. Symbolic.

The vast majority of the children with congenitally deafblindness tend to rely more at the first two communicative models before being able to reach cross the symbolic model.

In this presentation, the author will review the pre-symbolic models of communication, highlighting the earliest steps of communication which are mainly “bodily-based” form of interaction that reflects the biological roots of communication development, and how near



sensory modalities (touch - vestibular - proprioception) plays the principle role in establishing the very first glimpses of communication. The aim is also to highlight the connection between non-symbolic forms communication and symbolic communication despite their differences in qualitative nature, based on the dialectical law of transformation “small quantitative changes at a certain point give rise to a qualitative leap”

Within the presentation, there will be a new term to be used i.e. “Non-Cognitive Communication” which refers to the all forms of communication that doesn't actually need “Well-developed Cognition” to be successful i.e. bodily-based communication, and exchanging emotions as in early stages of social interaction, where no actual ideas or knowledge being shared, only affections and emotions.