Language Learning and cognition in Children with Minor Mental Disorder: A Comparative Study

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In cognitive linguistics, language is considered a part of human cognitive abilities and any kind of linguistic analysis is accompanied with an analysis of human cognitive capacities. In the present work, we tried to compare linguistic abilities of children with minor mental disorder to that of normal children in the framework of cognitive linguistics, and to reply the question" weather speech disorders of children with specific needs is relevant to their cognitive weaknesses?": our hypothesis was that language acquisition in the former is, like the process in the later, not independent from other cognitive abilities of them, and their linguistic disorders is the consequence of their cognitive disorders. In order to evaluate the hypothesis, 20 normal children and 20 children with minor mental disorder of first and second school grade were selected from primary schools of Birjand. Then four cognitive activities including category identifying, expressing noun and action, realizing iconicity and understanding landmark were put under consideration in their language behaviour. The data were then analized in two statical fashions; discriptive and inferential. The results of both analyses indicated a remarkable difference between the two groups of subjects. Furtheremore, a meaningful inter-group difference was just fond between normal girls and boys and only in category identifying activity. According to One-way Analysis Of Variance, normal girls with higher percentage of correctly identifying the categories, could be settled in a separate class from normal boys. To conclude, the results justified our hypothesis.

Keywords: Cognition, Cognitive linguistics, Language acquisition, Normal children- Children with specific needs (minor mental disorder)

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