

Review

A Review of “Comunicación y Lenguaje en la Infancia”

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Communication and language in the early stages of child development are phenomena that do not go unnoticed in everyday family life. Hundreds of audiovisual records of children attempting to fulfill their social purposes through the use of linguistic constructions are shared daily with the community by their families, using digital platforms. The rapid spreading of many of these records brings us closer to the process of communication and language development in children who speak different languages, who come from various sociocultural

realities, and who may present different health conditions. The brief seconds in which we can watch these videos on a screen manage to surprise or amuse us, even to move us.

Communication and language represent a heritage of the species and of individuals that is built collectively. Verónica Maggio, a speech-language pathologist from the University of El Salvador with a Ph.D. in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of the Argentine Social Museum, offers a work that invites us to learn in detail the characteristics of this heritage in its initial stages and to actively participate in this process. The invitation extended by the author is wide and this is evident in the title: "Communication and Language in Childhood: The Guide for Professionals and Families". The family ecosystem is one of the main promoters of the development of communication and language, therefore, addressing the main actors of these ecosystems, be they parents or caregivers, is undoubtedly one of the strengths of the book.

Regarding its structure, the book is organized into ten chapters that broadly outline the areas commonly attracting the interest of early childhood education and healthcare professionals. The first chapters describe the characteristics and the organization of communication and language, addressing the process of development of these phenomena, and emphasizing the determining role played by neurobiological and cognitive substrata. Although these chapters pave the path for the ones addressing evaluation and intervention, it is strange to see that the theoretical foundations adopted decades ago in Speech-Language Pathology in this field have remained unscathed in the face of the intense -and necessary- discussions between schools of thought in Linguistics. The theoretical proposals of these schools and the richness of the debate have not permeated the work of Speech-Language Pathology in the areas of education and healthcare. An

example of this is the triad form-content-use, which at this point has become sacred (Bloom y Lahey, 1978; Lahey, 1988). This explanatory model of the organization of language, described in detail in the book, relegates pragmatics to a peripheral plane, that is, it is assumed that "the principles that regulate the use of language in communication" (Escandell, 2016, p.16) do not occupy a central place in the linguistic reasoning that guides processes such as the evaluation, diagnosis, and rehabilitation of communication and language. This motivates the following question: Is it necessary to start a discussion, within the field of Speech-Language Pathology, regarding the theoretical foundations that guide linguistic reasoning? My answer is a decisive yes. Perhaps the conclusion of this conversation will be that the form-content-use model provides a theoretical basis that satisfies the needs created by the approach of Speech-Language Pathology to communication and language, and that this does not obscure the need to consider orientations like those proposed by Functional or Cognitive Linguistics. A debate of this nature would only strengthen the conceptual linguistic bases that should necessarily guide the processes in Speech-Language Pathology linked to the sphere of communication and language, both in its atypical and typical manifestations.

The weaknesses found in the first chapters of the book contrast with a sensible thematic decision reflected in the closing chapter. Here, the author offers a series of testimonials from parents and children with different communication and language difficulties who share their family, therapy, and school experiences associated with these issues. Including the testimonies was a wise decision since they allow the public to access a territory not

always addressed in books on the area: the emotional impact that communication and language difficulties have on people and their family environment. An answer like the one given by Bautista, a 13-year-old, to the question "What do you remember from when you were a kid, what things did you know at school?" sheds a light on the urgent need to promote values such as tolerance, empathy, and friendship in society. Bautista's response was, for example, 'speaking': "There was a time when I had no friends because no one understood me. So I preferred to stay in a corner so as not to waste time".

Overall, "Communication and Language in Childhood: The Guide for Professionals and Families" is a book that manages to inform both the general public and experts about communication and language in children. The author achieves the informative balance that a book aimed at a diverse audience requires, which is a considerable challenge for any writer, therefore, this work is recommended as a good read. However, as previously stated, the theoretical background that it offers regarding child communication and language does not differ from the one found in books published many decades ago.

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