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**Internationally Adopted Children
in Communication**
A Developmental Study

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Title and subtitle

Internationally adopted children in communication. A developmental study.

Abstract

This study focuses on the communicative and linguistic development of internationally adopted children; i.e. children who are language switchers. Five children adopted from Columbia at the ages of 8 months (N=1), 1;10 years (N=3), and 4;3 years (N1) were followed for a period of two years after arrival in Sweden with special focus on the development of certain interactive behaviours such as use of communicative channels and interactive strategies, responsiveness towards one's partner, and use of different utterance functions. The two-year period was completed with tests of grammar and language comprehension and with an analysis of the children's spontaneous speech. The results were compared with the development of one non-adopted Swedish child from the age of 1;11 to 3;11.

The internationally adopted children of this study used different communicative styles immediately after arrival in Sweden: 'silent period', use of the original language, or imitation of the new language. There were no important differences between internationally adopted children and the non-adopted Swedish child or within the group of internationally adopted children in regard to communicative behaviour, apart from the initial period of 6-12 months after adoption when age and acquaintance with the communicative partner seemed to govern the use of strategies, the degree of responsiveness and the choice of utterance function.

With respect to linguistic development, a higher age on arrival and a poor linguistic command of the original language on arrival are factors which were found to foreshadow a slower development and maybe also lower level of the acquisition of Swedish at the end of the study. The children adopted at around 2 years of age or before and with an age-adequate command of the original language did after two years in Sweden reach a sometimes more than age-adequate level of Swedish. The child arriving at 4;3 and with a poor command of his original language showed a slow linguistic development. One child who continued to use his original language after arrival in Sweden and one child who had experienced traumatic events in his infancy showed an, at least to some extent, slower linguistic development

Key words

international adoptions, child language, interaction, discourse analysis, language switch, communicative development, communicative strategies, language learning strategies, response-analysis, language acquisition, nonverbal communication

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