

The Power of Parents: The Significance of Parent-Child Interaction for Child Development in Down Syndrome



Infant and Child Research Lab

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OVERVIEW

Parent-child interaction provides critical infrastructure for development. Very little research has been conducted on interaction in the context of Down Syndrome (DS). This research addresses this gap and will contribute to our understanding of the factors that influence the developmental profile in children with DS.

7000 PEOPLE

Down Syndrome occurs in 1 in every 546 live births in Ireland



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does child-directed speech (CDS) differ between parents of children with DS and typically developing children?

- Is complexity and quantity of parent language input related to...

(i) Child language during parent-child interactions?

(ii) Performance on standardized assessment of expressive and receptive language?

Does parental CDS influence pragmatic language ...

(i) Observed during parent-child interactions – indexed by levels of engagement in joint attention (JA) behaviors



INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

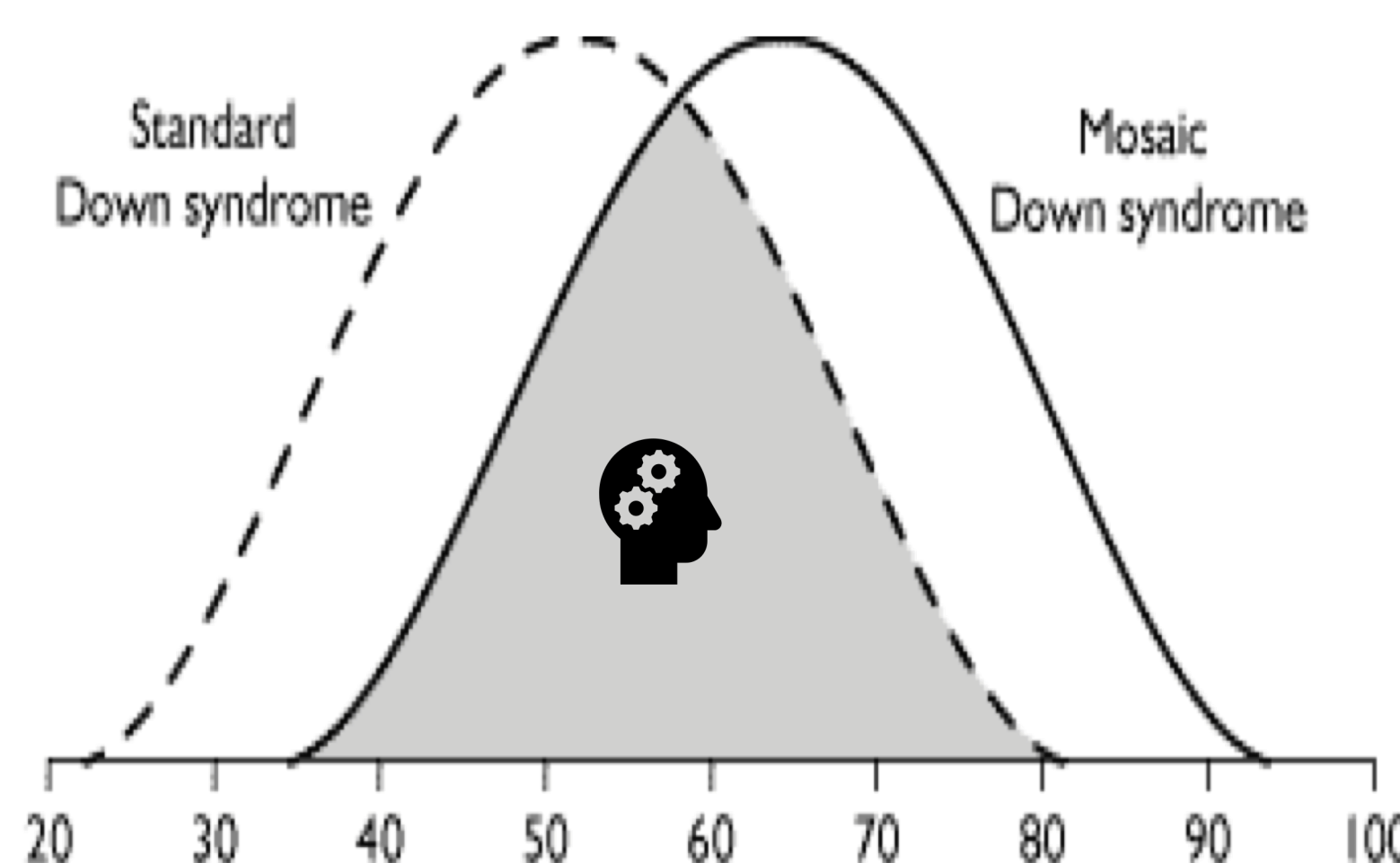


Figure 1. IQ distribution for individuals with DS. Cognitive impairment can range from severe to mild. There is significant individual variability.

METHOD

Participants. 27 infants & children with DS (9 months – 40 months; $M = 23.77$ months, $SD = 9.16$) and their parents.

Bayley Scales of Infant Development (3rd Ed.) Cognitive, Social-emotional, Adaptive behaviour, Motor (gross, fine), Language (receptive, expressive).

Communication & Symbolic Behaviour Scales. Joint attention, gaze following, non-verbal communication, symbolic play, turn-taking.

Parent-report. Sensory Profile, Child Behaviour Checklist, MCHAT/Social Responsiveness Scale, Impact on Family Scale, Perceived Stress Scale.

Parent-child interaction. 27 parent-child dyads were video recorded while engaged in play and reading tasks.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Language is considered the domain of greatest vulnerability (Karmiloff-Smith et al., 2013).

Our data suggests individual differences in language are evident throughout development, with some children performing close to typical range.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES

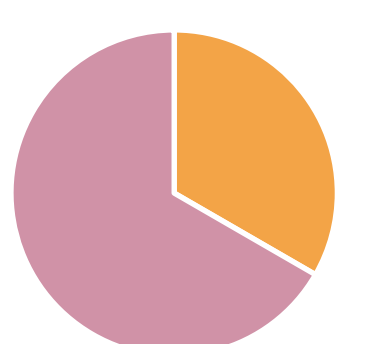
Parents often advised to "accept language will be a significant difficulty" and "simplify their own language to compensate".

Expectations impact parent-child interaction. Parents may oversimplify language, and miss opportunities to support learning (Zampini, Fasolo & D'Orico, 2011).

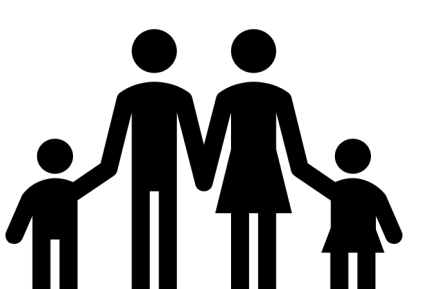


Access to services a postcode lottery?

Substantial variation in thresholds for accessing early intervention across localities, with implications for outcomes.



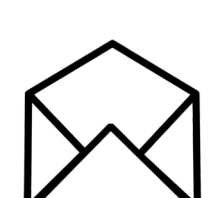
1 in 3 stated their child's disability is causing financial problems for the family



NEXT STEPS

Future analysis will assess parent language input to children with DS and expectations for their development.

For more information please contact



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#SeeTheAbility



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