Villas Boas Denise Cintra * Analysis of interaction and attention processes in a child with congenital deafblindness

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Children with deafblindness need support to be able to understand the world around them and to have access to information. In many cases, they do not use speech as their main form of communication and may use non-verbal means to communicate. This study analysed the dyad between a child with congenital deafblindness and a specialized teacher by observation and description of the attention and communicative behaviours used by the child and by the teacher during turn taking. The study included participant observations and audio-visual recordings of the interaction during classroom activities.

As potential forms of nonverbal communication, the child presented vocalization, touch, body contact, body movements, facial expressions and tears. Potential turn taking appeared only when the action was initiated by the teacher, probably because the child has difficulties in initiating, maintaining or extending an interaction. The teacher’s forms of communication were verbal, touch, vibration, visual, auditory (rhythm) and Sign Language. It was concluded that a significant communication partner is essential to identify, interpret and respond to attention and communicative behaviours of the child.