


Chapter 11

Developing an Inventory to Evaluate Communication Skills of Children With Normal Hearing and Hearing Loss

Esra Genc

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9229-1452>

Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University, Turkey

Yildiz Uzuner

Anadolu University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Researchers state that communication skills, which are developed before language acquisition and have very important place in language development, are 1) directing attention, 2) turn-taking, 3) imitation, 4) communicative purposes, and 5) conversation. As in all children, communication skills in children with hearing loss are very important. It is very important to identify children who have problems with their communication skills and to provide appropriate education. Standardized tests are generally used to assess children's language and communication skills in Turkey, but there are no informal tools that allow the assessment of early communication skills. Therefore, in this chapter, firstly, communication skills will be briefly defined and the disadvantages and advantages of formal and informal assessment and evaluation approaches will be discussed. Afterwards, the scope and development process of the informal communication skills inventory (ICSI) based on natural data collection in various contexts will be presented with sample items from the inventory.

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INTRODUCTION

Hearing loss refers to deficits in children's hearing that arise for a variety of reasons and to varying degrees. Thanks to newborn hearing screening, children diagnosed shortly after birth start using hearing aid technologies according to the degree and type of loss. Developing oral language skills are possible by accessing early auditory stimuli and providing appropriate educational conditions. Today, children with severe and profound sensorineural hearing loss who cannot access sound with hearing aids can hear acoustic stimuli thanks to the cochlear implant. It is very important to note that cochlear implant applications can contribute to oral language acquisition when combined with early and effective educational interventions (Paul, 2001). Regardless of hearing status, communication skills are very important in language proficiency, interpersonal interaction, and living in a community.

Moreover; language and literacy development mutually affect each other. While literacy supports language development, interactive language skills also support literacy development. Most children with hearing loss start school with insufficient language development. They also have difficulties in literacy skills built on inadequate language structure (Albertini & Schely, 2003). For this reason, it is very important to identify children who have problems with their communication skills as early as possible and to provide the necessary training. Formal (standardized tests), and informal such as observations, interviews, inventories assessment, and evaluation methods are utilized to evaluate communication skills in children.

Standardized tests are mainly used in Turkey to assess children's language and communication skills. Formal assessments are inadequate when they are used to interfere with and support children's communication skills. In the evaluations to be made when it comes to language and communication development, the product and the process in which the product is obtained gains importance. Dealing with the process is a guide for an expert or teacher on the curriculum that will be planned later. However, no informal tools in Turkey allow the assessment of early communication skills. For this reason, in this chapter after giving a brief definition of communication skills in children, we will discuss the disadvantages and advantages of both formal and informal assessment and evaluation approaches. It is important and necessary to develop informal language and communication skills inventories that allow children to evaluate their functional language in natural contexts and interactions. Therefore, it necessary to develop a valid, reliable, and convenient inventories. We have developed the Informal Communication Skills Inventory (ICSI). So, we will present its developing process, collecting natural data and the representative items derived from the content of our inventory.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Communication is everywhere in our lives and is an integral part of dail living. In its general meaning, it can be explained as the process of information exchange, in which various messages are sent and received between living things. Interpersonal communication, on the other hand, is the transfer of individuals' feelings, thoughts, wishes to other people. Language is the tool used in interpersonal communication. Language is used as a tool in interpersonal communication in almost all known societies (Sanders, 1982). Thanks to the language that symbolizes thoughts, people can perform many tasks required by social life, such as giving and receiving information and establishing social interaction.

It is known that children acquire their communication skills and language through various interaction experiences with the individuals around them in their culture, even though there is no systematic teaching

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