

Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of Communication Mode for their Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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“If I interview parents of students who are deaf or hard of hearing about factors that influenced their choice of communication mode for their child and how/if these choices changed, in what ways, if any, will the information guide professionals’ knowledge about parents’ communication choices?”

Abstract

This convergent parallel mixed methods pilot study examined factors influencing parents’ choice of communication mode for their deaf or hard of hearing child. Demographic information comprised quantitative data that provided rich context for interview responses comprising qualitative data. Shared stories emphasize simultaneously similar and diverse experiences of families.

Introduction

- A grant-funded, university-based summer literacy camp for students who are deaf has been held the past eight years on Fontbonne’s campus.
- Lack of transportation identified as a barrier for participation, so literacy activities were taken into classrooms, but students lacked requisite skills.
- *“When a child with normal hearing comes to the reading lesson with mature and sophisticated language skills, a child with hearing loss may come to the reading task with immature language and vocabulary”* (Easterbrooks & Estes, 2007, p. 106).
- All students had cochlear implants, yet instruction was delivered through ASL and families did not know or use ASL.
- *Mayer (2007) suggests that for optimal language and literacy development, a child should have minimal familiarity with a target language (signed or spoken) and cautions that the problem is that the level of familiarity is unknown.*
- Listening devices were often left at school & children returned to homes with minimal language input.
- *Geers (2006) attributes the lower literacy level of DHH children to the “discrepancy between their incomplete spoken language system and the demands of reading a speech-based system.”*

Methodology

Critical questions:

- Why were devices left at school?
- What kind of language occurred in their homes if family members did not know or use ASL?
- How could these children develop a complete or mature language when there was minimal input or limited exposure to such?
- Could these students codeswitch between different modalities?
- **What was the communication journey for these students and their families?**
- **Convergent parallel/mixed methods** approach
- **Purposeful sampling:** Parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- **Interview Guide:** 10 questions
- **Qualitative data:** Responses transcribed for emergent themes.
- **Quantitative data:** Demographics.
- **Participants:** 5 mothers

“The para they provided me with helped me tremendously with emotional support.”

“The IFSP was not written in a way a parent could understand.”

“When we first chose to use cochlear implants, we were told not to use ASL because she would become dependent on it. That was difficult for me and I didn’t agree with it.”

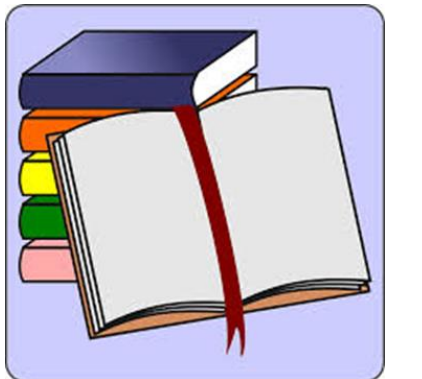
Results & Limitations

Emergent Themes

- **Importance of doctors and other professionals at time of diagnosis**
- **Family opinions**
- **Early use of listening technology**
- **Professionals’ use of educational and medical jargon**

Limitations

- **Small sample size**
- **Researcher bias**
- **Missing operational definitions**
- **One participant was an outlier**
- **Three interviews conducted through email due to schedule conflicts**



Conclusions

- All families have incredibly personal and individual experiences.
- Families made choices in the best interest of their child given knowledge they had when decisions were made.
- ***The simultaneously similar and different responses from data emphasize highly diverse needs and experiences of a population that is homogenous only by the disability category of hearing loss.***

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