Intelligibility in Context Scale

The Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS) (McLeod, Harrison & McCormack, 2012a, 2012b; McLeod, Crowe, & Shahaeian, 2015) is a new parent-report screening tool designed to identify young children with speech difficulties. The ICS provides an easy-to-use, cost effective method of early identification of children at risk of future communication and literacy difficulties. It is suited for use in educational, health and disability contexts, providing professionals (teachers, speech-language pathologists) with information about children's intelligibility (how well they are understood by different communication partners, including parents, family members, friends, teachers, and strangers). Early screening for speech sound disorders and childhood apraxia of speech enables families and children to access appropriate early intervention to ameliorate future risks.

The ICS was developed in 2012 by Faculty of Education and RIPPLE (Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education) Professors Sharynne McLeod and Linda Harrison, along with PhD student Jane McCormack as part of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery grant [DP0773978, 2007-2009]. Subsequently it was been translated into 60 languages as part of Professor McLeod’s ARC Future Fellowship [FT0990588, 2009-2014]. The translations of the ICS have been made available for free, enabling professionals around the world to screen children's speech. A key innovation offered by the ICS is that the child is assessed in the language spoken by their families and communities, even if the professional does not speak that language. http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics

The ICS was selected for inclusion in the American Psychological Association’s PsycTESTS database in 2014 http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t35980-000

The wide and rapid uptake of the ICS provides strong evidence of its value to, and impact on, society. It has been validated for use in Australia, Croatia, Hong Kong, Jamaica and Slovenia, and has been used in research with children and families in Cambodia, Denmark, Fiji, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Iran, Israel, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, The Netherlands, the United States and Vietnam. As a specific example, the ICS was translated into the 11 official languages of South Africa, of which 7 were trialled by 23 Speech-Language Pathologists/Speech-Language Therapists over a 3-week period:

... the tool assisted the SLTs to obtain a better understanding of the child's intelligibility in different contexts. They valued having a resource available in all official languages. It assisted them with their goals while using a holistic approach... SLTs noted that questions used in the translated versions of the ICS were understood by most families... The ICS allowed for a focused discussion of children’s difficulties and the far-reaching effects of a seemingly insignificant speech difficulty. (Dr Michelle Pascoe, University of Cape Town, South Africa)

The ICS has had an impact on public policy and services across several countries. For example, the authors have been informed that the ICS is currently being used in

- International Consortium for Health Outcomes Measurement (ICHOM) core outcomes set for Craniofacial Microsomia
- Timing of Primary Surgery for Cleft Palate (TOPS) trial with over 500 children in Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom to determine the most appropriate timing for surgery.
- hospital databases in Danderyds, Sweden
- the Table to Tablet database in Aveiro, Portugal
- screening preschool children in the USA including in San Antonio, TX and Murray, KT, USA. For example:
  I work in San Antonio, TX ... as a part of their preschool assessment team. It's a district with a total enrolment of over 68,000. Our students come from all over the world and
naturally we have a large number of Spanish speakers. We have strict guidelines regarding eligibility and I am always looking for low-cost tools that may help us narrow our focus for evaluation... I am currently using it [ICS] to help capture the parent’s perspective of their child’s intelligibility (SLP, San Antonio, TX)

Further evidence of international interest in and uptake of this instrument can be seen in figures for access (hits) to the Multilingual Children’s Speech website and the number of downloads for the Intelligibility in Context Scale.

References:


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