A practice-based approach to establishing consensus for categorizing and defining preschoolers’ speech and language impairments

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BACKGROUND

- Practice-based research can increase the relevance of research and help to close the research-to-practice gap.
- This project used practice-based research to address 2 aims:
  1. Establish researcher-clinician agreement for categories and definitions (terminology) for preschoolers’ communication impairments
  2. Determine whether SLPs can reliably categorize preschoolers’ impairments using consensus documents

METHOD

Study 1 – Develop Consensus Documents

- **Phase I** – Draft documents for (1) broadly-focused impairments, (2) language disorder sub-categories, and (3) speech sound disorder sub-categories
- **Phase II** – Modified Delphi Study
  - 38 SLPs participated in 4 rounds to review documents and give feedback
  - Documents revised between rounds to integrate research and clinical expertise
  - 90% criterion reached across documents

Study 2 – Inter-rater reliability

- Pairs of SLPs (N = 6) independently assessed and classified impairments for 28 preschoolers (Mage = 38.45 months, SD = 13.76, 55% male) using consensus documents

Community SLPSs and researchers reached consensus on terminology that defines and classifies preschoolers’ speech and language impairments and

Community SLPSs showed high inter-rater reliability in using the terminology to classify their caseloads

CONCLUSIONS

- Consensus terminology is evidence-based, stakeholder friendly, clinically meaningful, and can be reliably used in practice
- Results will support classification tool development and consistent terminology use for practice-based and population-level research

REFERENCES


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