Speech communication tools used for deaf and hard of hearing children in France

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As soon as a child is diagnosed with a hearing impairment, early and appropriate intervention should be provided, to avoid language deprivation and its consequences. In France, it is recommended that parents choose an educational project with their child as soon as the diagnosis is announced. This can be directed either towards the development of communication in spoken and written French, or towards learning French Sign Language, or a combination of the two (bimodal bilingualism). Many tools are used by professionals in clinical practice to support language development with deaf children in France. Among these, 3 communication tools can be integrated into family settings with an oral language orientation: Cued French (CF), Sign Supported French (SSF) and Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT). According to literature review, some studies show that CF and AVT have a beneficial impact on the child's language skills. But there is no evidence on the effectiveness of SSF on language development. Moreover, there is no published data on the actual use of these communication aids with deaf children in France.

Two online surveys have been conducted. The first was aimed at professionals caring for deaf children. The second was aimed at parents of deaf children.

Results from a population of 246 professionals and 220 parents who responded to the survey suggest that SSF is the most used tool by professionals and parents (78% & 40%). CF is used by 58% of professionals and 28% of parents. Finally, AVT is used by less than 15% of the two populations.

Regarding signed communication, more than 80% of the professionals use French Sign Language, whereas less than 45% of parents use it at home.

Our survey reveals that there is a mismatch between the reported proportions of usage of communication tools, both in clinical practice and within families, and the amount of available scientific data on these tools. In the future, we plan to run perception and production tests to quantitatively measure the impact of different communication aids on oral language skills in deaf children. The long-term objective will be to provide evidence-based recommendations related to speech rehabilitation and academic support for deaf children.

References

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