

CURRENT SITUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT AGED 3-6 YEARS IN INCLUSIVE KINDERGARTEN CLASSES

Nguyen Minh Phuong

Faculty of Special Education, Hanoi National University of Education

Abstract. This article analyzes the current situation of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with a hearing impairment aged 3-6 years in inclusive kindergarten classes. The survey was conducted on 127 teachers who have worked with those children in 15 inclusive kindergartens in 05 provinces including Hanoi, Ninh Binh, Thai Nguyen, Yen Bai, and Quang Ngai. The survey results show that: Most of the teachers are properly aware of the role and meaning of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairments in inclusive kindergarten classes. The teachers started to select and implement a number of contents and ways of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in accordance with the general contents and methods specified in the early childhood education curriculum. However, due to the lack of in-depth training on inclusive education for children with hearing impairment, the teachers had no specific methods to support children in whole-class activities as well as individualized sessions. Therefore, building guidelines and organizing professional training courses for teachers on how to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment is very essential.

Keywords: Development of listening and speaking skills, children with hearing impairment, inclusive kindergarten classes.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, thanks to scientific and technological advances, many modern technical means have been invented. The birth of hearing aids and cochlear implants is vitally important for children with hearing impairment, helping them hear sounds from the surrounding environment and the sounds of speech. However, those sensory devices only help amplify sounds, they cannot cure hearing disabilities. Without proper practice, rehabilitation, and improvement of listening and speaking skills, hearing-impaired children can neither hear nor speak. Practice and development of listening and speaking skills are therefore vitally important for the education of hearing-impaired children. This is also the basis for the development of spoken language – a major means of communication, allowing learning in an inclusive education setting [1], [2].

Early intervention for children with disabilities and particularly for children with hearing impairment is mainly practiced in the first six years of their life with two main objectives which are to support, instruct parents (0-3 years), and organize inclusive education (3-6 years). At the age of 3-6 years old, early intervention programs focus on assisting children with hearing loss to integrate into the classroom with hearing children and prepare them for grade 1 [2], [3].

Received October 11, 2021. Revised November 4, 2021. Accepted December 5, 2021.

Contact Nguyen Minh Phuong, e-mail address: phuongnm@hnue.edu.vn

Research on measures to implement language and speech development goals for deaf children, studies have confirmed: (1) Two important factors for the development of listening and speaking skills of children with hearing impairment are included audiological supports and the creation of an environment that facilitates listening and speaking skills [4], [5], [6] ; (2) There are many measures on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment, however, it is not good to use a single measure only or to teach language intentionally for children with hearing impairment, instead it is important to create an environment where children with hearing impairment can communicate naturally and plentifully so as to develop their listening and speaking skills [5], [7], [8].

So far, children with hearing impairment in Vietnam have access to modern assistive listening devices. After a period of time wearing an assistive device, they have accumulated initial listening and speaking experiences. However, the listening and speaking skills of children with a hearing impairment aged 3-6 years are still limited, therefore, they face many difficulties in inclusive kindergarten classes. Besides, inclusive teachers also face challenges while working with hearing-impaired children. Most of them have not received in-depth training on inclusive education for children with hearing impairment, so they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to support the children; they are not well prepared to organize listening and speaking skills development activities for children with hearing impairment [2], [9].

Research findings indicate the shortage of in-depth researches on measures to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in inclusive kindergarten classes. In addition, due to the shortage of instructional materials and studies on listening and speaking skills, ways to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairments in inclusive kindergarten classes, the teachers find the planning and organization of listening and speaking skills development activities for those children a challenge.

2. Content

2.1. Overview of the organization of the survey

** Objective*

Assessing the current situation of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with a hearing impairment aged 3-6 years in a number of inclusive kindergarten classes to serve as a practical basis for the proposal of measures on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with a hearing impairment aged 3-6 years.

** Research sample*

Conducting a survey on 127 teachers who have worked with children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years in 26 classes from 15 inclusive kindergartens in five sites including Hanoi (5 schools), Ninh Binh (2 schools), Thai Nguyen (3 schools), Yen Bai (2 schools), Quang Ngai (3 schools).

Some key information about the survey objects:

Table 1. Teachers' teaching experience

Time	Working seniority		Time of teaching children with hearing impairment	
	Number	%	Number	%
Under 5 years	42	33,1	73	57,5
From 5 to 10 years	58	45,7	38	29,9
Over 10 years	27	21,3	16	12,6

*** Assessment tools**

We used questionnaires in combination with interviews and observations to evaluate the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years. The evaluation is scaled at 5 levels. Then the data is synthesized to calculate the percentage and the average score. The evaluation scale by average score is quantified with points according to the 5-4-3-2-1 principle.

Table 2. The assessment scale of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years

Levels of score	Average score	Assessment levels of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years				
		Very important	Very often	Very convinient	Very difficult	Very influential
5	4.21-5.0	Very important	Very often	Very convinient	Very difficult	Very influential
4	3.41- 4.2	Important	Often	Convinient	Difficult	Influential
3	2.61 - 3.4	Relatively important	Relatively often	Relatively convinient	Relatively difficult	Relatively influential
2	1.81 – 2.6	Less important	Less often	Less convinient	Less difficult	Less influential
1	1 – 1.8	Not important	No often	Not convinient	Not difficult	Not influential

2.2. Survey results

2.2.1. Teachers’ awareness of the role and meaning of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years

100% of the teachers who were asked in the survey responded that the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment is very important and important. In addition, they made positive assessments on the meaning of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment, which could be seen as a favorable condition for the implementation of the development of listening and speaking skills.

2.2.2. Contents of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

Table 3. Levels of the implementation of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

No.	Contents	Level of the implementation					Average scores	Ranked
		Very often	Often	Relatively often	Less often	Not often		
1	Recognizing 6 Ling sounds /m/; /a/; /u/; /i/; /s/; /x/	0	0	16	21	90	1.42	11
2	Listening, understanding words indicating familiar and close persons, objects, animals, things,	41	77	9	0	0	4.25	1

Current situation of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing...

	actions, phenomenans							
3	Listening, understanding words indicating characteristics, quality, uses, and emotional expressions	38	74	15	0	0	4.18	2
4	Listening, understanding, and implementing 1-3 instructions	26	58	36	7	0	3.81	5
5	Listening, understanding stories, poems	21	46	52	8	0	3.63	8
6	Pronouncing sounds that are understandable	21	61	37	8	0	3.75	6
7	Using speech with words indicating familiar and close persons, objects, animals, things, actions, phenomenans	37	76	14	0	0	4.18	2
8	Using speech with words indicating characteristics, quality, uses and words of emotional expressions suitable with context	34	69	24	0	0	4.08	4
9	Expressing needs, emotions, awareness verbally	24	51	39	13	0	3.68	7
10	Retelling simple things	18	57	38	14	0	3.62	9
11	Retelling simple stories that have been told according to a certain order	15	41	59	12	0	3.46	10
Average score							3.64	

Thus, the development contents of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment are quite diverse and implemented quite often (with an average score of 3.64 points). In particular, the teachers often focus on the development contents of listening and speaking skills specified in the early childhood education curriculum.

For the content of “Recognizing 6 Ling sounds”, most of the teachers hardly performed with the average score of 1.42 points, ranked 11th. When conducting in-depth interviews with the teachers working in inclusive kindergarten classes, we learned that: The teachers also did not understand the importance of teaching Ling sounds for children with hearing impairment, they also did not know how to teach children the Ling sounds, so they did not implement this content. The remaining contents are prescribed in the early childhood education curriculum in the field of Language Development Education, so they regularly follow the prescribed curriculum. Observing the development activities of listening and speaking skills conducted in classrooms, we found that most of the teachers only followed the general curriculum for all children in the classes, we found no educational content specifically for children with hearing impairment.

2.2.3. Forms of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

Table 4. Forms of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

No.	Forms of the development of listening and speaking skills	Levels					Average scores	Ranked
		<i>Very often</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Relatively often</i>	<i>Less often</i>	<i>Not often</i>		
1	Developing listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in kindergarten based daily routines	48	79	0	0	0	4.38	1
2	Developing listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment through individualized supports	0	36	74	17	0	3.15	3
3	Working with families to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in home-based daily routines	15	50	44	18	0	3.49	2

The survey results show that the form of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment that the teachers often chose is Developing listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment through kindergarten-based activities (the average score of 4.38 points, ranked the 1st), in that, the activities chosen most often by teachers are reading books, poems, stories, storytelling, followed by the activities of games and daily communication. Then it is followed by the form of Working with families to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in home-based daily activities (the average score of 3.49 points, ranked the 2nd). The form that teachers used least often is Developing the listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment through individualized supports (the average score of 3.15 points, ranked the 3rd).

2.2.4. Development methods of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

Table 5. The development methods of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

No.	Development methods of listening and speaking skills	Levels of use					Average scores	Ranked
		Very often	Often	Relatively often	Less often	Not often		
1. Approaches according to natural methods							3.78	
1.1	Oral approaches	42	76	9	0	0	4.26	1
1.2	Visualized, modeling approaches	31	78	18	0	0	4.10	2
1.3	Practice, experience approaches	30	78	19	0	0	4.09	3
1.4	Emotional, encouragement approaches	24	41	62	0	0	3.70	4
1.5	Sampling, judgement approaches	11	38	54	21	3	3.26	5
1.6	Using natural language development techniques, such as: Creating an environment that promotes language; Modelling; repetition, expansion; creating a context where communication occurs, encouraging children to interact...	9	33	65	20	0	3.24	6
2. Measures according to structural methods							2.47	
2.1	Using exercises/ listening games;	0	20	36	55	16	2.47	8
2.2.	Using special techniques to teach and correct pronunciation mistakes;	3	18	39	48	19	2.51	7
2.3	Using intervention exercises to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment	1	15	42	50	19	2.44	9
Average score							3.13	

The survey results show that the teachers have used both natural and structural development methods of listening and speaking skills, but the frequency of use is still low with the average score of 3.13 points. In which, the natural methods are used more often than the structural methods (the average score of the natural methods is 3.78 points (often), the structural methods 2.47 points (not often).

Surveying about the effectiveness of the developmental methods of listening and speaking skills, the teachers responded that the natural and structural methods can be used effectively for the development purposes of listening and speaking skills. The average score of both types of methods reached 4.07 points (efficiency) and there was no difference in efficiency between the two groups of the methods.

2.2.5. On advantages and challenges of the organization of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment

** Advantages of the organization of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment*

The survey results show that the organization of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment has some advantages as follows: Advantages from the side of hearing-impaired children ranked the 1st with the average score of 3.91 points; The attention and conditions of school administrators (3.63 points, ranked the 2nd); Psychological environment in inclusive kindergarten classes (3.28 points, ranked the 3rd). Other factors are considered to be less favorable or unfavorable in the organization of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment.

** Challenges of the organization of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment*

The survey results show that the biggest challenge of the teachers in organizing listening and speaking development activities for children with hearing impairment is due to the shortage of guidelines for the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment (the average score of 4.28 points, ranked the 1st), followed by the challenge that comes from the capacity of the teachers themselves (the average score of 3.65 points, ranked the 2nd), the challenge due to the lack of coordination between schools, teachers, and parents of children with hearing impairment (the average score of 3.51 points, ranked the 3rd). In addition, the teachers also face difficulties due to the shortage of facilities, classroom environment and equipment, utensils, and toys when developing listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment (the average score of 3.35 points and 3.06 points respectively).

2.3. Assessment of the situation

2.3.1. Advantages

- The teachers working in inclusive kindergartens have relatively full awareness of the role and significance of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment.

- The teachers started selecting and implementing certain content on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment as specified in the early childhood education curriculum. Although they indicated no specific content for their children with hearing impairment, the teachers have paid attention to and supported those children.

- The development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years is often carried out in kindergarten classes in activities such as reading books, poems; telling stories; organizing games and communicating on daily basis. In addition, the form of family coordination for the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment at home and the way of individualized support has also been paid attention to by the teachers, although not regularly implemented.

- Initially, the teachers have applied a number of measures on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment such as conversation, dialogue, games, creation of a stimulating environment, use of some natural language development techniques (e.g.: modelling, repetition) although not regularly used.

- There are some advantages in the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment, specifically: The children with hearing impairment themselves (very active, cooperative); Attention and facilitation from the school administrators; The psychological environment in the inclusive kindergartens helps the children with hearing impairment have a favorable environment for the development of listening and speaking skills. In addition, there are many factors affecting the development of listening and speaking skills for the children with hearing impairment, e.g.: characteristics of the children with hearing impairment, audiological assistance, early intervention, teachers' capacities; parents' support; peers' support; community and society's support. If those factors, especially objective factors, are the well-taken advantage of, it can contribute to improving the listening and speaking skills of children with hearing impairment.

2.3.2. Limitations

- Most of the teachers have not planned the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment. The development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment is mainly carried out in kindergarten-based daily routines according to the early childhood education curriculum, without specific contents for children with hearing impairment.

- The forms of family cooperation on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in home-based activities and the forms of development of listening and speaking skills in personal supports are still limited in quantity and poorly effective.

- Measures on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment have not been regularly and effectively implemented. The teachers mainly used language development methods for hearing preschoolers, they rarely applied specialized measures in the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment. In addition, the teachers have not taken advantage of an inclusive kindergarten class to facilitate the children's interaction and mutual support.

- The shortage of guidelines for the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment. The contents on how to organize activities for children with disabilities in the early childhood education curriculum are also far too simple, there are no contents specifically for children with hearing impairment.

- There is no cooperation among schools, teachers, and parents in the development of listening and speaking skills for hearing-impaired children.

- Insufficient facilities, classroom environment, equipment, utensils, and toys for the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment.

2.4. Discussion on the results

The survey results indicate that most of the teachers are properly aware of the role and meaning of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairments in inclusive kindergarten classes. The teachers started to select and implement different content and ways for the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in accordance with the general content and methods specified in the early childhood education curriculum. However, the teachers had no specific methods to support children in whole-class activities as well as individualized sessions.

In-depth training for teachers working in inclusive kindergartens where children with hearing impairment are placed has not been carried out regularly; there is a lack of guiding documents on the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing

impairment and there are no supports for the practice of inclusive education for children with hearing impairment in preschools. These are considered to be the main reasons resulting in the limitation of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment aged 3-6 years.

3. Conclusions

Surveying the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment shows that most of the teachers are properly aware of the role and meaning of the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in inclusive kindergarten classes. They initially selected and implemented a number of contents and ways so as to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment in accordance with the contents and methods specified in the early childhood education curriculum. However, due to the shortage of intensive training on hearing loss, the teachers have no specific methods to support children with hearing impairment in whole class as well as individualized activities.

The survey results are the basis for building guidelines, references, and organizing professional training and retraining courses for teachers on how to develop listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment. The survey results also indicate that it is urgent to integrate guiding content on the education of and the development of listening and speaking skills for children with hearing impairment into modules under teacher training programs on early children education such as inclusive education for preschool-aged children with disabilities, language development method.

REFERENCES

- [1] Kyle, F.E., 2019. Reading development in deaf children: *The fundamental role of language skills*. In *Evidence-Based Practices in Deaf Education*; Knoors, H., Marschark, M., Eds.; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA; pp. 217–235, ISBN-13: 978-0190880545.
- [2] Bui Thi Lam, 2016. *Early intervention for children with hearing impairment*, Hanoi University of Education Publishing House.
- [3] Tran Thi Thiep (chief author), 2014. *Early intervention for children with disabilities*. Hanoi University of Education Publishing House.
- [4] Marc Marschark, Harry G Lang and John A Albertini, 2002. *Educating deaf students: from research to practice*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2002. 277pp, ISBN 0195121392.
- [5] Mary, P.M., 2000. Early intervention and language development in children who are deaf and hard of hearing. *Pediatrics*, 106, 43-52.
- [6] Svirsky, M. A., Teoh, S. W., & Neuburger, H., 2004. Development of language and speech perception in congenitally, profoundly deaf children as a function of age at cochlear implantation. *Audiology & Neuro-Otology*, 9, 224-233.
- [7] Meisels, S.J., & Shonkoff, J.P., 1996. *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*, Cambridge University.
- [8] Patricia I Roberts, 1996. *How children learn language?* Intergrating language art and social studies.
- [9] Nguyen Minh Phuong and Nguyen Duy Cuong, 2021. Current situation of listening and speaking skills of children with hearing impairment aged 3 – 6 years in inclusive kindergarten classes, *Journal of Science*, Hanoi National University of Education, ISSN 2354 - 1075, Volume 66, Issue 4AB, pg 323 - 332.