

Identification Process of Articulation and Phonemic Disorders in Children with Communication Disorders in Primary Schools, Nairobi Province, Kenya

Maneno Robert J

Abstract

Many children with speech and language disorders are silently affected academically and psychologically as they articulate words wrongly when they try to communicate verbally to their peers. Academically, they do not perform well since speech and language problems in most cases affect their reading and writing abilities. At times, they shy off as other children laugh at them. It is worth noting that, since the establishment of educational assessment centres in Kenya in September, 1984, many children with speech and language problems have been identified and placed in schools. Studies carried out in other, countries such as Finland, the United States, Canada, among others show that specific speech articulation problems have been identified and effective intervention procedures carried out in children with communication disorders. However, a study to identify speech sound disorders has never been done in Kenya. This prompted a study of this magnitude to identify speech sound disorders in children with speech and language disorders and ultimately recommend intervention measures. The research designs used were ex-post facto and ethnographic which were quantitative and qualitative. The population from which the study sample was drawn came from schoolgoing children in Nairobi Province aged between 6 to 13 years 11 months. The institutions included units, special schools, integrated special schools, and regular schools. The sample comprised children who had hearing impairments, mental handicap, stutterers, cerebral palsy and learning disabilities. The researcher in identifying the sample, used purposive sampling for piloting and for the actual study. From confirmed cases of 320 children with speech and language disorders, the researcher sampled 30% using purposive sampling. The actual sample came to 96 out of which 48 were females and the other 48 were males with ages ranging from 6 to 13 years 11 months. The data were collected using three different instruments namely: speech sound disorders assessment tool; speech mechanism observation tool and a home background information tool. When using the speech sound disorders assessment tool, the researcher listened to how the respondents pronounced targeted phonemes in the different names representing pictures displayed to them; while in speech mechanism observation instrument, the researcher looked at observable oral structures which if abnormal, would affect speech such as abnormalities as cleft palate or thick tongue. The background information tool was a questionnaire to find out the socio-economic status of the respondents, where the researcher was trying to find out whether the misarticulations were due to one being from a poor or rich family. Research questions and hypotheses were used for collecting and analyzing data. The collected data were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. To achieve this, the data were crosstabulated. The results were analysed by use of pie charts, frequencies and tables. Anova was also used in testing the hypotheses. The study revealed that, the most highly ranked speech sound disorders were omissions, distortions and substitutions. The most highly omitted speech sound was phoneme /h/, with most respondents not able to pronounce the words "hoho" and "hema." /t/ as in thin was the most highly misarticulated phoneme of all 22 phonemes tested. Phonemes /r/, /s/, /z/ and /f/ were either highly substituted or distorted. Majority of children with communication disorders were those who had mentally handicapping conditions, hearing impairment and learning disabilities. The study found that children with communication disorders were also known as speech and language disorders found in all communities regardless of socio-economic status

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