

Production of Stress in Hearing Impaired Children

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Learning a language includes not only the segmental aspects but also the segmental aspects but also the suprasegmental aspects. The suprasegmental features are intonation, rhythm and stress. Stress is the comparative force with which the separate syllables of a sound group are pronounced. To put it in simpler terms, stress is the increased effort.

It has been found that stress is affected among the speech disordered population like the dyspraxics, dyslalics and the hearing impaired. In the hearing impaired, suprasegmentals have a greater effect on the speech intelligibility.

This study is focussed on the production of stress in the hearing impaired children. 10 words, 10 phrases and 10 sentences with stress on syllable/word, developed by Jaya (1992) were used as material. 30 hearing impaired children, 10 each (5 males + 5 females) in the language age of 2-4, 4-6 and 6-8 years were studied.

The material was audio presented to 10 children (5 males and 5 females) each in the language age group of 2-8 years in two year age interval. The children were tested individually and were instructed to imitate the model. The written forms of the same were also presented simultaneously with the word to which stress was assigned (underlined). The children's imitation with the model was audio recorded. This audio recording of the imitation was played to two listeners who had to indicate whether the imitated version was similar to that of the model or not for stress. If it was not the same, they were asked to say how it was different (All stressed or Not stressed at all). The mean percentage of correct responses, different responses, those that were all stressed and those with no stress were calculated separately for each age group, "t" test was applied to find out the difference between the age groups in the production of stress and between males and females. The relation between the production of stress and linguistic factors was also determined. Product moment correlation was used to find out the correlation between the ratings of two judges.

The results of the product moment correlation test indicated that there was high correlation between the judges for words/phrases/sentences indicating that both the judges agreed on the imitation of stress by hearing impaired children.

The results revealed that the production of stress increased from 2 years to 8 years. The 4-6 years age group performed better than the other two groups, though there was no significant age differences. No significant difference between the performance of males and females were observed. However, it was found that males performed better than females, almost in all the age groups. The scores revealed that even at the language age of 8 years, the hearing impaired children did not achieve even 60% score. In general, when the noun was stressed, the hearing impaired children did better than in the adjective or the adverb.

It seems that the acquisition of stress is delayed in the hearing impaired children. The "all stress" pattern and the "monotony" deserves special attention in the evaluation and rehabilitation of the hearing impaired. The working clinician should develop a therapeutic protocol which includes the assessment and evaluation of prosodic features.