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USING SIGHT WORD INSTRUCTION TO ENHANCE SPEECH INTELLIGIBILITY IN CHILDREN WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DELAY

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ABSTRACT: *Speech intelligibility is a major concern among children with speech and language delay, often affecting academic achievement, social interaction, and functional communication. Traditional speech intervention primarily focuses on articulation and phonological correction, with limited emphasis on integrating literacy-based strategies to support speech clarity. The present study examines the effectiveness of a structured sight word instruction program in enhancing speech intelligibility among children with speech and language delay. A pre-test-post-test experimental design was used with children aged 6–10 years diagnosed with mild to moderate speech and language delay. Functional sight words were introduced through a multisensory approach involving visual recognition, auditory modelling, repetition, and contextual use over eight weeks. Speech intelligibility and word production accuracy were measured before and after the intervention. Results indicated noticeable improvement in speech clarity, articulation accuracy, and functional communication. The findings suggest that sight word instruction, when integrated with structured pronunciation practice, supports both language and speech development. The study highlights the importance of combining literacy and speech-based approaches for holistic communication improvement. Implications for special educators, speech-language pathologists, and inclusive classroom practitioners are discussed.*

KEYWORDS: *Sight Word Instruction, Speech Intelligibility, Speech and Language Delay, Multisensory Learning, Functional Communication, Special Education.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Speech and language development is essential for effective communication, academic learning, and social participation. Speech intelligibility, defined as the degree to which a listener understands spoken language, is often reduced in children with speech and language delay. Poor speech clarity can result in limited classroom participation, communication frustration, reduced peer interaction, and low self-confidence. Therefore, early and effective intervention is crucial to support communication development in such children. Traditional speech therapy approaches primarily emphasize articulation training, phonological awareness, and oral motor exercises. Although these approaches improve sound production, they often focus on isolated sound practice rather than meaningful language use. Many children continue to struggle with speech clarity in everyday communication contexts. This limitation highlights the need for integrated instructional approaches that combine speech practice with language and literacy development. Sight word instruction, commonly used in early literacy programs, involves teaching children to recognize and produce frequently used words automatically without phonetic decoding. Repeated exposure to familiar words strengthens word recognition, pronunciation, and speech fluency. Multisensory teaching—combining visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and contextual methods—further enhances learning and retention. Integrating sight word instruction with speech practice provides meaningful opportunities for repeated verbal production, potentially improving articulation accuracy and speech intelligibility.

The present study investigates whether structured sight word instruction can enhance speech intelligibility in children with speech and language delay. By combining literacy-based learning with speech practice, the study aims to support clearer word production and functional communication.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Speech intelligibility is fundamental to effective communication and is often compromised in children with speech and language delay. Research indicates that reduced intelligibility negatively affects academic and social participation. Traditional articulation-based therapy improves sound production but may not always support meaningful communication generalization.
- Sight word learning has been widely recognized in literacy research for improving automatic word recognition and language processing. Repeated exposure to familiar words strengthens phonological mapping and pronunciation accuracy. Studies on integrated language and literacy instruction suggest that combining word recognition with verbal expression improves expressive language and communication abilities.
- Multisensory instruction has also demonstrated effectiveness in supporting language and speech development. Combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic input enhances memory, engagement, and learning outcomes. Functional communication research emphasizes the importance of meaningful word use in everyday contexts to promote speech clarity and participation. Despite strong evidence in literacy and communication research, limited studies have explored the role of sight word instruction in improving speech intelligibility, highlighting the need for the present study.

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Children with speech and language delay often struggle with speech clarity, affecting communication and academic performance. Traditional speech therapy focuses on sound production but may not fully address functional communication. Sight word instruction provides repeated and meaningful opportunities for verbal practice, potentially improving speech intelligibility. However, limited research exists on its effectiveness in speech intervention. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the impact of sight word instruction on speech clarity and communication skills.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the baseline level of speech intelligibility in children with speech and language delay.

2. To implement a structured sight word instruction program.
3. To evaluate the effect of sight word instruction on speech intelligibility.
4. To examine improvement in word articulation and functional communication.

5. HYPOTHESIS

H0: There will no significant improvement in speech intelligibility of children with CwSN in learning sight word.

6. METHODOGY

- (i) Research Design: A pre-test–post-test experimental design was adopted.
- (ii) Participants: The study included 10 children aged 6–10 years diagnosed with mild to moderate speech and language delay from a special education setting. Participants were selected through purposive sampling.
- (iii) Tools Used:
 - Speech Intelligibility Rating Scale
 - Word Articulation Checklist
 - Functional Communication Observation Sheet
- (iv) Intervention Program: A structured 8-week sight word instruction program was implemented. Words included:
 - Instructional Procedure
 - Visual presentation using flashcards
 - Auditory modeling by teacher
 - Repetition and guided pronunciation
 - Contextual usage in sentences
 - Multisensory reinforcement
 - Sessions were conducted 5 days per week, 30 minutes each.
- (v) Data Collection: Pre-test conducted before intervention; post-test after completion.
- (vi) Data Analysis: Mean scores and percentage improvement used for analysis.

7. RESULTS

Results indicated clear improvement in speech intelligibility and word articulation following the intervention.

Table 1: Shows the Improvement in Speech Intelligibility, Functional Communication and Word articulation

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Improvement
Speech Intelligibility	42%	71%	Significant
Word Articulation Accuracy	45%	76%	Significant
Functional Communication	48%	79%	Improved

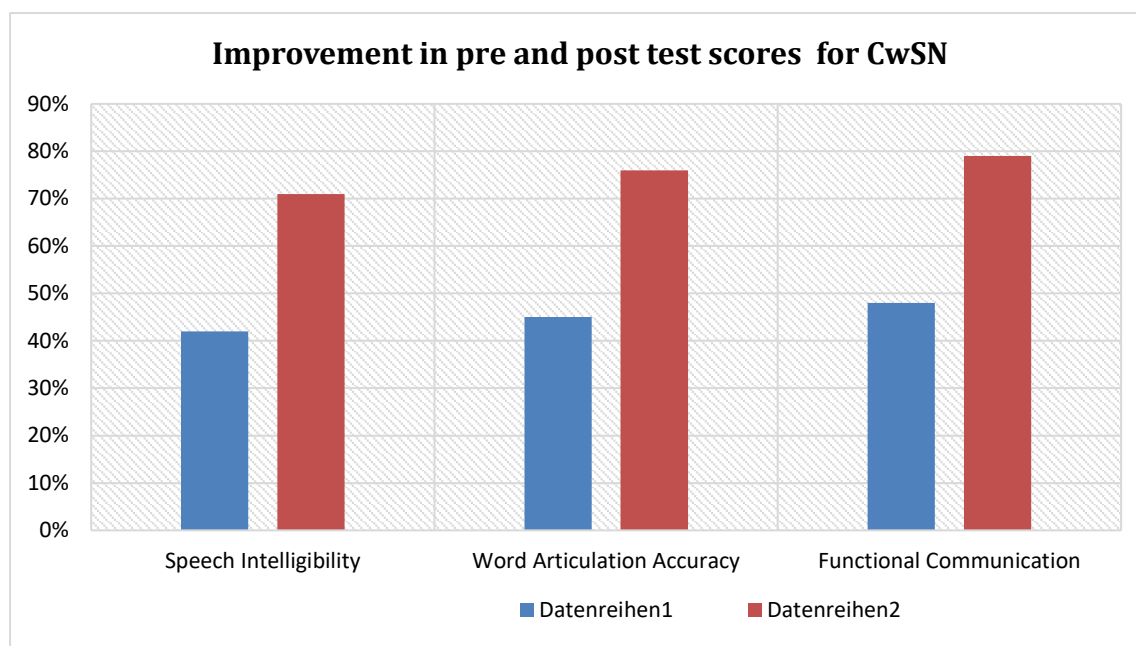


Figure 1: Improvement in Speech Intelligibility, Word Articulation and Functional Communication

7.1 Discussion

The findings indicate that sight word instruction positively influenced speech intelligibility. Repeated exposure and multisensory learning strengthen the word recognition and pronunciation accuracy. The study supports the view that integrating literacy and speech instruction promotes holistic communication development. Functional word use helped children generalize speech clarity into real-life communication contexts.

7.2 Educational Implications

- Useful for speech-language therapists and special educators
- Supports integrated literacy and speech instruction
- Enhances functional communication and participation
- Can be implemented in inclusive classrooms

7.3 Limitations

- Small sample size
- Short intervention duration
- Limited generalization data

7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

- Larger sample studies
- Long-term follow-up
- Technology-based sight word learning
- Comparison with traditional speech therapy

8. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that structured sight word instruction significantly improves speech intelligibility, articulation accuracy, and functional communication in children with speech and language delay. Integrating literacy-based strategies with speech intervention provides meaningful opportunities for repeated verbal practice, promoting clearer and more functional communication. This approach offers a practical and effective supplementary strategy for speech and language intervention programs.

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