

SOUND AND COMMUNICATION
IN CLASSROOMS:
ISSUES FOR HARD OF HEARING
LEARNERS – AND EVERYONE!

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GOALS FOR THIS MORNING

Classroom Acoustics

- **What are they?**
- **Why are they important?**
- **What do we know about them?**

Social interaction of hard of hearing children in elementary schools

- **What is the impact of hearing loss on informal interactions with peers?**
- **What is the impact of hearing loss on classroom communication?**
- **How do classroom teachers understand hearing loss?**
- **How do children cope with the challenge of progressive hearing losses?**

Recommendations

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the patterns of interaction among hard of hearing children and their peers?

- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Classroom and extracurricular activities**
- **Communication difficulties and strategies**

PARTICIPANTS

11 children (5 boys, 6 girls, K – Grade 6)

11 parents (10 mothers, 1 father)

11 classroom teachers and 3 SEAs

3 hearing resource teachers

IMPACT OF HEARING LOSS:

BY AGE

K – Grade 2

For all children:

- **Close bond with teacher**
- **Teachers involved in resolution of social difficulties**

For hard of hearing children:

- **Most important relationship is between child and teacher**

Grades 2 – 4

For all children:

- **Gradual increasing peer affiliation**

For hard of hearing children:

- **Difficulties with social skills when adults not present, like social entry**

Grades 5 – 7

For all children:

- **Want to be like peers**

For hard of hearing children:

- **Rejection of outward signs that set them apart from hearing peers**

IMPACT OF HEARING LOSS:

BY GENDER

BOYS:

- **Group membership achieved largely through sports**
- **Importance of early entry**
- **Danger of solitary activities**

GIRLS:

- **Group membership achieved largely through verbal means**
- **Often do not hear social information or cues**

IN THE CLASSROOM: WHEN IS
COMMUNICATION EASIEST?

- **Structured, predictable**
- **Clear directions**
- **One-on-one**
- **Small groups**
- **Away from the ventilation system**

IN THE CLASSROOM: WHEN IS
COMMUNICATION MOST DIFFICULT?

- **New activity**
- **Unclear directions**
- **Large groups**
- **Transitions**
- **Which subject areas?**

HOW DO CLASSROOM TEACHERS
UNDERSTAND THEIR STUDENTS'
HEARING LOSS?

- **Context of the entire class**
- **Behaviour due to individual characteristics of the child**
- **Unclear about what it means to be hard of hearing**
- **Unclear about the role of supporting professionals**
- **Developmental expectations**

THE UNIQUE CHALLENGE OF
PROGRESSIVE HEARING LOSSES
IN CHILDHOOD

From the child's perspective:

- The shifting rules
- The possible sense of loss

The need for assistance:

- Implications for teachers
- Implications for organizational support

THOSE CHILDREN WHO APPEARED

TO BE BEST EQUIPPED FOR THE

CHALLENGES OF LATE

ELEMENTARY:

- **Were often members of a team or group activity**
- **Had joined early, prior to the end of Grade 2**
- **Had parental involvement in extracurricular activities**
- **Had sensitive and understanding teachers**
- **Had socially outgoing natures**
- **Often had interacted with hard of hearing adults**

2. Provide in-depth in-service training for classroom teachers and SEAs about the nature of childhood hearing loss.

3. Important areas for future research:

- Acceptance / rejection of assistive listening devices by hard of hearing children**
- Children with progressive hearing losses**

