

The lived experience of children with primary speech & language impairments

Primary speech and language impairment (PSLI) is a term used to describe children with a range of significant speech and language impairments, in the context of normal cognitive abilities. The aims of this research were firstly to explore identify construction in children with PSLI, and secondly to explore how these children made sense of their experiences.

Narrative inquiry was used to conduct this study. The participants were 11 children aged 9-12 years old, presenting with PSLI. The aim was to generate storied accounts of events and happenings in their lives using interviews, supplemented with visual methods. An innovative analytical framework was designed, drawing on a range of narrative analytical methods, including an analysis of verbal and nonverbal evaluation markers, cohesion markers, as well as analysis of agency and identities presented in the children's narratives.

The key findings were four interrelated themes, which were conceptualised in a working model comprising facilitators and potential barriers to well-being and belonging. The four themes which contributed to well-being and belonging included: relationships; autonomy, agency and competence; identities of belonging and difference; and hope and concern for the future. Facilitators of well-being and belonging were life events and experiences that the children evaluated in positive ways, whereas potential barriers were life events and experiences which they evaluated in negative ways. Although some children evaluated their experience in mixed and sometime contradictory ways, their evaluations were predominantly positive.

This work is presented in a PhD thesis and contributes to the field of practice in four ways. Firstly, it provides new insights into identify construction in children with PSLI. Secondly, it adds to understanding of ways in which children conceptualise communication impairment. Thirdly, it deepens understanding of the determinants of well-being and belonging in children with PSLI. Finally, the thesis highlights the value of narrative inquiry as a means for listening to the voices of children with communication impairments.

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Publications:

Lyons., R. & Roulstone, S. 2016. Labels, identity and narratives in children with primary speech and language impairments, *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, DOI: 10.1080/17549507.2016.1221455 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27631150>

Lyons, R. 2014. Identity and meaning-making in children with primary speech and language impairments. Doctoral thesis (PhD). University of the West of England.

<http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/22840/1/PhD%20Thesis%20Rena%20Lyons%20280314.pdf>