

## **Separating the causes of listening difficulty in children**

*Harvey Dillon*

It is not uncommon for children to have more difficulty than their age peers understanding speech when there is background noise and/or reverberation, as occurs in many classrooms. Depending in part on the beliefs and profession of the clinician to whom the child is taken for help, the problem may be viewed as sub-clinical hearing loss, an auditory processing disorder (of different types), a phonological disorder, a receptive language disorder, or a cognitive disorder, with the latter further divided into deficits in attention or working memory. In fact, deficits in all of these domains can lead to listening difficulties, but there is no coherent test battery that can be applied to establish the domain that is causing most of the problem for a child. Within at least the auditory processing domain, there is a need for tests that can more specifically identify the underlying problem, so that the most effective remediation can be provided. A practical problem to overcome is that often, performance on tests constructed to assess one ability in one domain, are affected by abilities in entirely different domains. This talk will describe a simple model of listening difficulties around which a novel test structure aimed at disentangling the different potential causes in individuals is currently being evaluated and further developed.