

Use of the Language Use Inventory to Assess Pragmatics In Young Children who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

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Deficits in pragmatic language abilities have been known to impact well-being, including behavioral problems, low literacy skills, self-confidence, motivation, and social adjustment. It is essential for providers to have standardized tools to assess social pragmatic communication in early intervention. While pragmatic checklists have been utilized to assess the pragmatic abilities of young children who are DHH, they often lack standardization, require background knowledge of pragmatics, and/or use clinical jargon that is difficult for family members to understand.

The Language Use Inventory (LUI) is a standardized questionnaire assessing social pragmatic communication in children 18 to 47 months of age. The LUI has three parts examining: gestures (Part 1), use of words (Part 2), and use of more complex language (Part 3). The LUI has been used worldwide with other clinical populations but there has been limited research using the LUI with children who are DHH.

As part of a larger three-year study, the LUI was administered to 85 families of children who are DHH (46 females, 39 males) between 18 and 46 months of age ($M = 30.8$ months). Approximately 67% of the children scored at or below the 7th percentile (-1.5 SD) and 53% of the children, scored at or below the 2nd percentile (-2.0 SD), demonstrating a level of communicative difficulty that was uniquely captured via the LUI.

These results support previous findings highlighting the importance of assessing the social pragmatic communicative ability of children who are DHH, and, in particular, the use of more complex social-cognitive language. The results also highlight the need for broader, standardized assessment of language use beyond pragmatic checklists or vocabulary inventories and the feasibility of using the LUI's Standardized Total Scores and subscale scores for intervention planning and education-based eligibility decisions.