

Using children's drawings to listen to how children feel about their speech

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The *International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health* (ICF) (World Health Organization, 2001) includes consideration of Body Structure, Body Function, Activity and Participation, Personal and Environmental Factors in order to understand the complexity of health and wellness. Frequently, speech pathologists focus on Body Structure and Body Function and do not focus as much attention on Activity and Participation, Personal and Environmental Factors (McLeod, 2004; McLeod & Baker, 2004). There are numerous speech pathology intervention techniques, and different techniques are appropriate for different children (Baker, in press). It is important for speech pathologists to listen to children regarding their unique personal and environmental factors as well as the impact of speech impairment on their lives.

Listening to children is considered to be important in today's society (Daniel & McLeod, 2005) and the rights of children to participate and be heard are included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Often children with communication impairments cannot adequately use speech and language to fully participate in society and to indicate how they feel about aspects of their lives. Asking children to draw is another communication tool for children to use. Inclusion of drawing is one part of a multi-method framework for creatively listening to children called the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001; McLeod & Daniel, 2005). Children's drawings have been used in both qualitative and quantitative research (Brookes, 2005; Cox, 2005; Fury et al., 1997). In qualitative research, children's drawings are assistive in verifying (triangulating) spoken information. Five children with a communication impairment were asked to draw an image of themselves talking to someone, themselves with their family, and themselves doing something that they enjoyed. These images are presented alongside their spoken responses, and insights provided by their parents (see below). When the children were asked to verbally respond to the question about how they felt about their talking, their responses were unintelligible, non-verbal, or their brother responded for them. However, their drawings demonstrated powerful messages about the impact of having a speech impairment on their lives. For example, James* indicated that he needed to talk to someone with listening ears. Luke*, who was the most unintelligible of the children, provided two extremely contrastive images between himself talking and doing something that he enjoyed (which was a non-verbal task). Joshua*, Paul* and Victor* all drew someone who they felt comfortable talking with (as verified in conversations with family members). Speech pathologists may consider requesting drawings in their clinical practice to listen to the children and to incorporate identified aspects of Activity and Participation, Personal and Environmental Factors into their interventions.

How I feel about my talking

James*



Interviewer: "OK, so the first question is, how do you feel about the way you talk?"
James*: (unintelligible response)

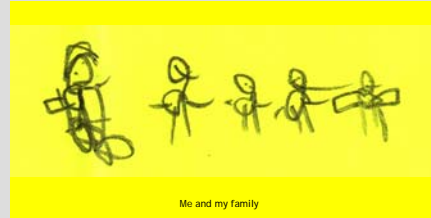
Mum: "Yes, he is different with different people. People he knows well he's much more confident, happy around. People he doesn't know so well he's very shy. It's very hard to introduce him to someone, to get him to look someone in the eye, say hello, how are you? He sort of says hello, then runs off."

Talking to someone



Talking to someone with listening ears

My family



Me and my family

Doing something I like



Me and my friend going on a walk (drawn by James' friend)

Joshua*

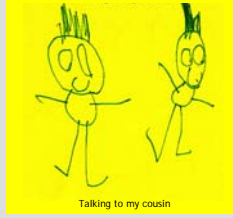


Interviewer: "How do you feel about the way you talk?"
Joshua*: (no verbal response, coloured ☺ face)

Dad: "...probably up until he was four, and maybe even a little bit later, he could be trapped in his own world a fair bit...and, and was happy to be that way..."

Mum: "Yeah...because he had his sister, I think, as such a close friend, and they are very close. She's sorta like the cavalry on the hill I say [laughs]...She comes and rescues him a lot and will explain things and he relies on her heavily..."

Dad: "Yeah, he'd always, like, he'd talk about this cousin and wanted to play with him and all that sort of stuff. But then, yeah, when they'd get together, I think that was good enough for Joshua*, you know, just seeing him."



Talking to my cousin



My family is watching me play Nintendo



Me play Nintendo

Luke*



Interviewer: "How do you feel about the way you talk?"
Luke*: (no verbal response, coloured ☹ face)

Interviewer: "So what's the biggest impact of his speech impairment at home and school?..."

Mum: "...Just frustration, really. You know, the interaction with people and getting frustrated"



How I feel about my talking



Dad, Mum, my bird, me, my sister and my Nan



I am happy doing anything like art

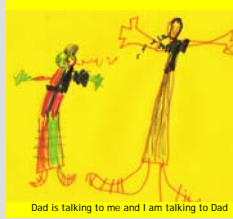
Paul*



Interviewer: "How do you feel about the way you talk? OK well you just [circle] which ever you feel. So ... what feeling are you doing?"
Paul*: "Middle" (laughs)

Mum: "Oh, I'd say he gets embarrassed about it but he's sort of accepted that that's the way he is I think, which is kind of sad in a way."

Mum: Paul* is...he's getting better. When he first started school he was quite delicate. He was very easily upset sort of stuff...He's...bit of an independent sort of soul..."
Dad: "He's basically my shadow (laughs)".



Dad is talking to me and I am talking to Dad



Dad and me working inside the shed (Note: He did not draw his mother or older brother, despite being reminded that he was drawing a picture of his family)



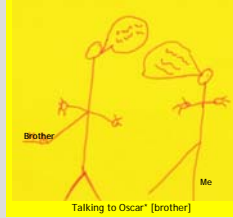
I am in my bedroom playing the computer

Victor*



Interviewer: "How do you feel about the way you talk?"
Victor*: (no verbal response, coloured ☹ face)
Victor's brother Oscar*: "Don't know"

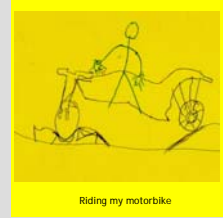
Interviewer: "How ...frustrated or embarrassed is he about his speech?"
Mum: "Nine out of ten at school...Very frustrated. And even, even sometimes when he wants to talk to me, I can see he's, he'll go, and I can see his mouth trying to move and get it out."



Talking to Oscar* [brother]



My family



Riding my motorbike

* = Pseudonyms

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