

# COMPREHENSIVE LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR CHILDREN (3-6 YEARS)

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## **Introduction**

Child's expression through speech serves as one of the important avenues for language testing. Cognition consists of mental activities involved in comprehension of perceived information, including acquisition, organization and storage, memory and use of knowledge. Cognition has historically been considered the base upon which the language develops. Thus, there is an intricate relationship between cognition and language, especially the cognitive processes like attention, memory and organization are important for comprehending and producing language (American Speech Language Hearing Association, 1987).

The traditional mode of language assessment has emphasized the use of norm referenced test as a means of problem identification. Although descriptive assessment methods are readily available, there continues to be a heavy emphasis on the use of norm referenced tests to assess the language functioning of language – impaired children (Craig, 1983; Muma, 1983). Standardized clinical or laboratory assessments have the advantage of being based on observable behavior. However, such assessments must be brief to be administered within the attention span of the young child and therefore are likely to prove unrepresentative of the child's abilities. Moreover, young children are likely to prove unrepresentative of the child's abilities. Moreover, young children may have difficulty cooperating for formal measures administered by strangers in unfamiliar clinical settings. Alternatively, language samples recorded in conversation with an examiner or a parent may be highly influenced by personality and social factors and are difficult and time consuming to analyze. For these reasons, parent reports of language and communication are an appealing option because parents have extensive experience with their children under a wide variety of naturalistic situations.

There are a number of sensitive English-language screening instruments, which use language milestones to identify children with language problems, Language milestones are appropriate indicators for detecting language problems (Hall, 1997; Stormswold, 2000). Hence, an attempt was made to develop and standardize an assessment tool suitable for Indian children in the age range of 3-6 years for testing their language and cognitive abilities.

## **Development of the tool**

A pool of items related to reception, expression and cognition based on current skill behavior in preschool children was constructed. Majority of the items selected were obtained from the checklist developed by Venkatesan (2004) entitled “Activity Checklist for Preschool Children with Developmental Disability”.

The initial field trial of selected items was administered to 25 parents of typically developing preschool children in the age range of 3-6 years. A total of 90 items were included, each section consisting of six items per age group. The items were arranged in the hierarchical order of difficulty. The Comprehensive Language Assessment Tool for Children (3-6 years) is given in Appendix I.

The Comprehensive Language Assessment Tool for Children was administered on 150 parents/caretakers of typically developing preschool children in the age range of 3-6 years. Five age groups were considered consisting of 30 children in each age group (3-3.6, 3.6-4, 4-4.6, 4.6-5 & 5-6 years), including both males and females. The children were tested within each age group using the informant interview approach. The response expected from the subject for each item was a binary choice (yes/no). The time taken for administration of the test ranges approximately from 30 to 60 minutes.

The results for standardization group revealed that there was a well defined correlation existing between reception, expression and cognition. Further, no significant differences were observed in performances between males and females within the group.

### **Test Administration**

The tool should be administered on parents/caregivers of children using the interview approach. The instruction for each task should be different based upon the type of ability tested such as reception, expression and cognition. Items from the corresponding age groups should be asked first and their performance on other items above their age group and below should also be evaluated under each section. The parents should be provided with appropriate examples when they do not understand the purpose of the question. A binary choice response (yes/no) should be obtained from the parent/caregiver.

### **Scoring**

The responses should be recorded in the response sheet. The responses on each item should be marked as a 'plus' (+) when they feel that the behavior of the child is established, a 'minus' (-) when it has not yet emerged and a 'plus-minus (+/-)' whenever the given language behavior are only partially exhibited or inconsistently noted (Remarks should also be noted). Responses of the child should be checked for two consecutive age group above and below that of the child's chronological age. It should be continued in the lower age groups till 3 '+' are recorded and in the higher ones till 3 '-' are obtained within the age group. The raw scores can be obtained by scoring the performance of every child on the test items. A credit of one point for a response (+) and zero for a response (-) should be given and the total scores for each child on the test within each dimension (Reception, Expression and Cognition) can be obtained.

### **Interpretation**

After the administration of the test, the child's score should be compared with the normative. This would indicate whether the child is deficient in speech, language and cognitive aspects. The normative scores for the Comprehensive Language Assessment Tool for Children (3-6 years) are given in Appendix II.

**APPENDIX I**

**Comprehensive Language Assessment Tool for Children (3-6 years)**

	<b>Reception (3-3.6 yrs)</b>	<b>Expression (3-3.6 yrs)</b>	<b>Cognition (3-3.6 yrs)</b>
1	Does your child follow three to four step verbal commands?	Does your child respond to questions related to daily activities, e.g., what did you do in the morning? etc.	Does your child listen to a 10 to 15 minutes story?
2	Does your child comprehend 'no' used to indicate non-existence?	Does your child name object when it is shown in pictures?	Does your child related recent experiences?
3	Does your child comprehend demonstrative nouns like these, those, here and there? (Ex: daddy came here to get dress for you etc)	Does your child converse in 3 to 4 words simple sentences?	Does your child build simple block structures (e.g., bridge, wall)?
4	Does your child comprehend pronouns and possessives such as them, us etc.	Does your child sing or say nursery rhymes along with the actions/movement?	Does your child show interest in how and why things work?
5	Does your child know gender vocabulary? (Points correctly to question such as "who is boy or girl among us etc.).	Does your child use pronouns like he, she etc.?	Does your child match four to six color cards?
6	Does your child comprehend quantitative adjectives (few/some, something, many/much, another, little/no, all, how far, etc.).	Does your child try to imitate adult like action or gestures?	Does he/she begin to develop interest in writing, drawing and like to look at books and may pretend to "read" to others or explain pictures?

	<b>Reception (3.6 - 4 yrs)</b>	<b>Expression (3.6 - 4 yrs)</b>	<b>Cognition (3.6 - 4 yrs)</b>
1	Does your child comprehend comparison sentences? ("She is taller than you")?	Does your child use possessive like his/hers/theirs ?	Does your child compare two weights (heavy and light)?
2	Does your child point/- identify at least five pictures depicting items in each of the lexical categories? (Ex: vehicles/-vegetables/furniture)	Does your child talk about pictures and story books by looking at them?	Can your child recall at least two out of five objects shown in pictures?
3	Does your child understand PHG (person, number and gender) markers? E.g., He/she is eating, they are singing etc.?	Does your child use verbs predominantly?	Does your child match basic shapes like square circle and triangle.
4	Does your child comprehend conjunctions like but, or because, so, in most contexts?	Does your child use terms to denote remote/proximate? (E.g. this boy, that boy)	Does your child categorize objects or pictures based on two or more attributes like color, shape, size etc?
5	Does your child comprehend case markers (prepositional phrases) containing with, to, in, on, at, from, under, next to, for, over, near, by, through, of, like, etc.?	Can your child tell names of five friends?	Does your child know concepts such as quality, quantity, and texture?
6	Does your child understand the difference between simple present, present continuous tense and past forms with feminine and masculine genders? E.g., she is sleeping; he washed his hands, etc.	Does your child use question markers like how much/many, which, when, and questions with a tag and answers to Wh Question? E.g.: "What are you doing?", "What is this?", and "Where?" dealing with familiar objects and events.	Does your child sequence events chronologically, e.g., tell the activities carried out in the morning in an order? Ex: I get up in the morning, brush my teeth, and go to school."



	<b>Reception (4 - 4.6 yrs)</b>	<b>Expression (4 - 4.6 yrs)</b>	<b>Cognition (4 - 4.6 yrs)</b>
1	Does your child understand and quotatives, e.g., mother said "Not to touch the glass piece", teacher said "read the book" etc.	Does your child describe short stories in simple and compound sentences?	Does your child identify all major colors?
2	Does your child comprehend common opposites e.g., cold x hot, fat x thin etc.?	Does your child express different subordinating conjunctions like when, then, while, so etc? E.G. I fell down so I got hurt; my mom left me in school and then went for shopping etc.	Can your child rote count from 30 to 100?
3	Does your child comprehend yes-no question types?	Does your child add new information or elaborate a conversation with 2-3 people?	Does your child understand relationships such as cow-milk, moon-night, etc?
4	Does your child understand conditional clauses (if, unless)? E.g., if you see the vendor call me, unless I call your name you should not look at me.	Does your child ask for clarification/explanation, repetition when he/she does not follow a conversation?	Does your child understand relationships such as cow-milk, moon-night, etc?
5	Does your child comprehend long stories when told and follow content related questions based on the story?	Does your child use PNG (person, number and gender) markers? E.g., the dog is barking/dogs are barking, she is/they are sleeping etc.	Does your child use deductive reasoning (using what we know to logically reason out a conclusion about what we don't know) to solve everyday problems? e.g., figures out which child is missing by looking at children who are present
6	Does your child comprehend noun/phrase with adjective modifiers (big red house)?	Does your child begin to correctly use the past tense of verbs: "Mommy closed the door" etc?	Does your child make inferences? E.g. It's raining so I took an umbrella.

	<b>Reception (4.6 – 5 yrs)</b>	<b>Expression (4.6 – 5 yrs)</b>	<b>Cognition (4.6 – 5 yrs)</b>
1	Does your child comprehend singular/plurals? E.g., birds are flying, dog is barking etc.	Does your child use negatives, such as don't, can't, won't etc? E.g: "I don't want to go".	Does your child perform double alternate sequence activities, e.g., red, red, blue, red, red, blue, (What's next?) etc.
2	Does your child have number concepts of four or more than four?	Does your child use past present and future tenses correctly? E.g: Muthu went to school; Muthu is going to school; Muthu will go to school, etc.	Does your child communicate cause and effect relationship, such as "I can't play because I'm sick"?
3	Does your child comprehend prepositions such as 'at the side of, in front of, between'?	Does your child describe his/her personal experiences? E.g. describes about his trip experiences, etc.	Does your child remember minimum of five items presented in the auditory mode?
4	Does your child relate make-believe tales?	Does your child use at least four prepositions correctly?	Does your child name which week day comes after a particular day? e.g., "what comes after Tuesday" etc.
5	Does your child distinguish between comparative/superlative degrees? Ex: "tallest," "biggest," "same," and "more"? Eg. Selects the picture that has the "most houses" or the "biggest dogs".	Can your child narrate a story on his own?	Does your child identify objects with a specified serial position: first, second, last?
6	Does your child readily follow simple commands even though the stimulus objects are not in sight?	Does your child use many descriptive words spontaneously like adjectives? E.g.: she is beautiful etc.	Does your child understand concepts such as longer, larger when a contrast is presented

	<b>Reception (5 – 6 yrs)</b>	<b>Expression (5 – 6 yrs)</b>	<b>Cognition (5 – 6 yrs)</b>
1	Is your child able to understand a connected story about a picture, seeing relationship, e.g., describing a story or action from pictures.	Does your child use quotatives, e.g., He said "she took him home". He asked "will you go in an auto or a bus?" Mother is asking "You seem to have fever."	Does your child report seasons in a year?
2	Does your child point/identify five different fingers when asked?	Does your child define words by function? E.g., A brush is to brush the teeth; a bed is to sleep in.	Does your child relate clock time to daily schedule: "Time to turn on TV when the little hand points to 5?" or what part of the day is for a certain activity?
3	Does your child understand passive sentences, e.g., "the cat was killed by the dog "etc	Does your child speak in sentences/clauses of eight or more words in length using since, in order, as soon as, until, even though, although, before, after.	Does your child recognize and identify coins; beginning to count and save money?
4	Does your child identify the alphabets and names of upper and lower case letters?	Does your child give account for short videos/TV serials, e.g., can he/she give a brief description of cartoons etc?	Does your child understand the concept of half; can say how many pieces an object has when it's been cut in half?
5	Does your child understand and appreciate humors, enjoy responsibilities, understand encouragement and criticism and privileges that they can handle?	Does your child express hints that do not mention the intention in the request, e.g., "those smell good" etc.	Does your child understand the concepts of left and right and directions?
6	Does your child understand the concept of age?	Does your child tell the names of parents, occupation of parents, own town/village, state, and give residential address?	Does your child know what a calendar is for?

## Appendix II

### NORMATIVE DATA

Table 1: The Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D) scores for different age groups (3-6 years) of the study

Age Range (in years)	Number of subjects	Reception		Expression		Cognition	
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
3 – 3.6	30	4.93	1.11	4.70	1.34	5.03	1.25
3.6 – 4	30	4.70	1.39	5.17	1.05	4.80	1.30
4 – 4.6	30	4.63	1.03	4.96	1.10	4.87	1.14
4.6 – 5	30	4.80	1.10	5.07	1.17	4.70	1.26
5 – 6	30	1.90	1.18	4.93	1.05	4.83	1.15

Note: S.D. – Standard Deviation

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation for the age group 3 – 3.6 years according to gender for three sections (Reception, Expression and Cognition)

Subjects		Number of Subjects	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Reception</b>	Males	13	5.00	0.913
	Females	17	4.88	1.27
<b>Expression</b>	Males	13	4.31	1.25
	Females	17	5.00	1.37
<b>Cognition</b>	Males	13	4.69	1.32
	Females	17	5.29	1.16

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation for the age group 3.6 – 4 years according to gender for three sections (Reception, Expression and Cognition)

Subjects		Number of Subjects	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Reception</b>	Males	15	4.53	1.46
	Females	15	4.87	1.36
<b>Expression</b>	Males	15	5.07	1.16
	Females	15	5.27	0.96
<b>Cognition</b>	Males	15	4.93	1.44
	Females	15	4.67	1.18

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation for the age group 4 – 4.6 years according to gender for three sections (Reception, Expression and Cognition)

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Number of Subjects</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Reception</b>	Males	12	4.50
	Females	18	4.72
<b>Expression</b>	Males	12	4.92
	Females	18	5.00
<b>Cognition</b>	Males	12	5.00
	Females	18	4.78

Table 5: Mean and Standard deviation for the age group 4.6 – 5 years according to gender for three sections (Reception, Expression and Cognition)

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Number of Subjects</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Reception</b>	Males	17	4.82
	Females	13	4.77
<b>Expression</b>	Males	17	4.88
	Females	13	5.31
<b>Cognition</b>	Males	17	4.82
	Females	13	4.54

Table 6: Mean and Standard deviation for the age group 5 – 6 years according to gender for three sections (Reception, Expression and Cognition)

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Number of Subjects</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Reception</b>	Males	12	4.67
	Females	18	5.06
<b>Expression</b>	Males	12	4.83
	Females	18	5.00
<b>Cognition</b>	Males	12	4.58
	Females	18	5.00

## **AIISH GENESIS AND GROWTH**

The all India institute of speech and Hearing is a premier Institute in the country imparting training in the field of speech and hearing. Established on 9th August 2965 as an automomous organization, AIISH caters to manpower generation in the field, promoting research and providing rehabilitation services in the area. The institute is located on a sprawling area of 39 acres (two campuses) in Mysore. The Institute registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 (Punjab Amendment Act, 1957) and its functioning as an autonomous body under the aegis of the Union Ministry of health and Family Welfare.

Established primarily as a training institute, it started training programs at postgraduate level in 1967 followed by B.Sc. (Speech and Hearing) in 1968. The institute now offers three Diploma programs: Diploma in Hearing Aids and Ear mould technology, Diploma in training the Young Hearing Impaired, Diploma in Language, hearing and Speech through distance mode; two graduate programs: Bachelors in Audiology, Speech and Language Pathology (B.Sc-Sp. & Hg) and B.S.Ed. (Hearing Impairment); three Master Programs (M.Sc. in Audiology, M.Sc. in Speech-Language Pathology and M.S.Ed. in Hearing Impairment); two PG Diploma courses (PG Diploma in Forensic Sciences and Technology, Clinical Linguistics for SLPs); tow doctoral programs (Ph.D in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology); and Post Doctoral Fellowships. The institute also conducts short –term training and orientation programs for professionals in allied specialties.

AIISH is recognized as a reputed organization for training manpower in the field of speech and hearing and related areas throughout the country. The institute has been recognized as a Centre for Excellence in the area of Deafness (WHO), as a Centre for Advanced Research (UGC) and as a Science and Technology Institute (DST). The institute is affiliated to the University of Mysore for the award of degree. The academic programs of the institute have the recognition of the Rehabilitation Council of India. The funding of the institute is under the directionof the Executive Council with Hon'ble Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare as the chairman and the Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka as Vice-Chairman. The other statutory bodies of the Institute are the Finance Committee and the Academic Committee.

The Dyslexia Assessment Profile for Indian Children (DAPIC) was developed as an outcome of the research project funded by the AIISH research fund. The assessment profile can be used by Speech-Language Pathologist as a tool to profile those children who show difficulties in phonological and non phonological tasks of literacy.

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