

Administration of the Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS)

McLeod, S., Harrison, L. J., & McCormack, J. (2012a). *Intelligibility in Context Scale*. Bathurst, NSW, Australia: Charles Sturt University.
Retrieved from <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics>

Description

The Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS, McLeod, Harrison, & McCormack, 2012a) is a subjective measure of the functional intelligibility of children with speech sound disorders (SSDs). The ICS is a parent-completed questionnaire consisting of 7 items, to rate the degree to which children's speech is understood by different communication partners on a 5-point scale (see Appendix A).

Purpose

The ICS was developed to be used by speech-language pathologists¹ (SLPs) to supplement clinical measures of intelligibility, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of SSD on children's intelligibility in daily life. The ICS considers the various people children communicate with, the environmental contexts of everyday communication, and the subsequent impact on children's intelligibility. Thus, the ICS aligns with the Environmental Factors described in the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health: Children and Youth Version* (ICF-CY, World Health Organization [WHO], 2007).

The ICS can be used within clinical practice and research contexts. The ICS may be used alongside measures of speech severity, such as percentage of consonants correct (PCC) based on single word and connected speech measures to provide additional information about children's intelligibility. The ICS can be used to assist with intervention planning and evaluate intervention outcomes (e.g., by examining real-world effects of intervention). Once the ICS has been normed, it also may be useful as a screening tool in research and clinical contexts.

Intended population

The ICS should be used to describe the speech of children. It is intended to be completed by parents of preschool and school-aged children with SSD. To date, it has been tested with 4- to 5-year-old Australian children. It can be used with monolingual children (who speak English, or another language only), as well as with multilingual children (who speak more than one language). The ICS has been translated into more than 20 different languages (see Appendix B. The most up to date list is kept at www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics).

Administration

The ICS takes approximately 5 minutes to administer and is designed to be completed by parents.

Before administering the ICS, the SLP should ask the family what language(s) are spoken by the child².

Monolingual English children: The SLP provides parents with the English version of the ICS. Parents are asked to think about their child's speech intelligibility (or ability to be understood) over the past month. They are required to identify the degree to which they (themselves) and six other types of communication partners (immediate family, extended family, friends, acquaintances, teachers, and strangers/unfamiliar people) understand the child by circling corresponding ratings on a 5-point Likert scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= usually, 5= always). Parents can read the questions on the scoresheet and circle the ratings themselves; otherwise, the ICS can be administered verbally with the SLP circling the ratings as indicated by the parent. See Figure 1 for an example of how to complete the ICS.

¹ Other terms for speech-language pathologist include: fonoaudióloga, logopeda, logopedist, logopédiste, orthophoniste, patóloga de habla y lenguaje, speech pathologist, speech-language pathologist, speech therapist, and speech and language therapist

² For multilingual children, it can be useful to differentiate between the age each language was learned (simultaneous cf. sequential bilingualism), the child's proficiency in each language, and the context(s) in which each language typically is spoken. While it is also useful to know which language(s) are *understood* by the child, and are spoken in the child's environment, the Intelligibility in Context Scale is relevant to the language(s) *spoken by the child*.

Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS)

(McLeod, Harrison, & McCormack, 2012)

Child's name: Johnny

Child's date of birth: 8/7/2007 Male/Female: Male

Language(s) spoken: English

Current date: 13/11/2012 Child's age: 5;4

Person completing the ICS: Wendy

Relationship to child: Mother

The following questions are about how much of your child's speech is understood by different people. Please think about your child's speech over the past month when answering each question. Circle one number for each question.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Do you understand your child?	5	(4)	3	2	1
2. Do immediate members of your family understand your child?	5	(4)	3	2	1
3. Do extended members of your family understand your child?	5	(4)	3	2	1
4. Do your child's friends understand your child?	5	(4)	3	2	1
5. Do other acquaintances understand your child?	5	4	(3)	2	1
6. Do your child's teachers understand your child?	5	(4)	3	2	1
7. Do strangers ¹ understand your child?	5	4	(3)	2	1
TOTAL SCORE =	26 /35				
AVERAGE TOTAL SCORE = $(\text{Total} \div 7)$ =	3.71 /5				

¹ This measure may be able to be adapted for adults' speech, by substituting child with spouse.
² The term strangers may be changed to unfamiliar people.

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Further information: McLeod, S., Harrison, L. J., & McCormack, J. (2012). The Intelligibility in Context Scale: Validity and reliability of a subjective rating measure. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 55(2), 648-656. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ssl/55.2.648>



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 Retrieved from <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics>. Published November 2012.

Figure 1. Example of how to complete the ICS

Monolingual children who speak languages other than English: The SLP provides parents with the version of the ICS in the child's (and parent's) language. An interpreter may be required to assist in explaining the instructions to parents if the SLP does not speak the language. Parents are asked to think about their child's speech intelligibility (or ability to be understood) over the past month. They are required to identify the degree to which they (themselves) and six other types of communication partners (immediate family, extended family, friends, acquaintances, teachers, and strangers/unfamiliar people) understand the child by circling corresponding ratings on a 5-point Likert scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= usually, 5= always). Parents can read the questions on the scoresheet and circle the ratings themselves; otherwise, the ICS can be administered verbally with the SLP (or interpreter) circling the ratings as indicated by the parent.

Multilingual children: SLPs can choose to administer the ICS in (a) the child's primary language, or (b) all of the child's languages (if translations are available).

(a) **Administration in the child's primary language:** The SLP provides parents with the version of the ICS that matches the language in which the child is most proficient. SLPs may prefer to use the bilingual version of the ICS (e.g., Arabic + English or Spanish + English) so that they can simultaneously read the questions. An interpreter may be required to assist in explaining the instructions to parents. Parents are asked to think about their child's speech intelligibility (or ability to be understood) over the past month. They are required to identify the degree to which they (themselves) and six other types of communication partners (immediate family, extended family, friends, acquaintances, teachers, and strangers/unfamiliar people) understand the child by circling corresponding ratings on a 5-point Likert scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= usually, 5= always). Parents can read the questions on the scoresheet in their first language and circle the ratings themselves; otherwise, the ICS can be administered verbally with the help of an interpreter and the SLP circling the ratings as indicated by the parent.

(b) *Administration in each of the child's languages*: The SLP provides parents with versions of the ICS in each language of the child (as long as these translations are available, see Appendix B). It may be appropriate to have each parent complete the form in a different language³. An interpreter may be required to assist in explaining the instructions to parents. Parents are asked to think about their child's speech intelligibility (or ability to be understood) over the past month. They are required to identify the degree to which they (themselves) and six other types of communication partners (immediate family, extended family, friends, acquaintances, teachers, and strangers/unfamiliar people) understand the child by circling corresponding ratings on a 5-point Likert scale (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= usually, 5= always). Parents can read the questions on the scoresheet in their first language and circle the ratings themselves; otherwise, the ICS can be administered verbally with the help of an interpreter and the SLP circling the ratings as indicated by the parent.

Scoring

The ICS is designed to be scored by SLPs. The total score is the average of the items completed. Scoring the ICS involves adding up all of the ratings indicated by the parent and dividing that number by seven. This creates an overall mean (average) score for the measure.

It is important to ensure that all 7 items have been completed. If parents do not complete an item (e.g., parents may not complete item 6 if their child does not attend school/preschool), then calculate the average score out of the number of completed items.

Analysis

ICS scores indicate a child's level of functional intelligibility, ranging from a score of 1.00 (low intelligibility) to a score of 5.00 (high intelligibility). If a child achieves an average score of 3.5, then it may be appropriate to indicate that the child is usually to sometimes understood.

An SLP report may read:

"John's mother completed the Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS, McLeod, Harrison & McCormack, 2012) in English and Russian. The ICS consists of 7 items, to rate the degree to which children's speech is understood by different communication partners on a 5-point scale. In English, John's average total score was 3, indicating that he was sometimes understood by others. In Russian, his average total score was 2.5, indicating that he was sometimes to rarely understood by others. He was more likely to be understood by his mother and others in his immediate family, and was less likely to be understood by his teacher (in English), acquaintances, and strangers."

Please note. Research is currently unavailable to determine the level/score at which a child's intelligibility begins to impact children's everyday communication.

Evaluation of the ICS for Australian English-speaking children

See McLeod, Harrison, and McCormack (2012b) for complete documentation.

Trial population

The ICS was trialled with parents of 120 4- to 5-year-old children from Australia who were recruited for Stage 2 of the Sound Effects Study (McLeod, Harrison, McAllister, & McCormack, in press). Of the children in the trial population, 109 had been identified by parents or teachers as having difficulty talking and making speech sounds; 11 children had not been identified with speech difficulties. There were more males ($n = 80$, 66.7%) than females ($n = 40$, 33.3%), a situation that is typical in most speech-language pathology clinics. None of the children had diagnoses of cognitive difficulties, developmental disorders, or hearing loss. All children spoke English as their first language, but 11 (9.2%) were regularly spoken to in a language other than English, 5 (4.2%) spoke another language, and 4 (3.3%) were Indigenous Australian.

³ For example, if the child speaks English, German, and Turkish, then the child's father completes the ICS in his own primary language (e.g., German), the child's mother completes the ICS in her primary language (e.g., Turkish), and either parent completes the ICS in English (if this is a language spoken by both parents).

Distribution of children's scores

The mean score for the trial population of typically developing children ($n = 11$) was 4.69 (SD = 0.51) and 3.85 (SD = 0.50) for children with parent-/teacher-identified speech difficulties ($n = 109$). The scores met a number of criteria for normal distribution.

Validity of the ICS

Construct validity: Factor analyses were undertaken and showed moderate to high intercorrelations ($p < .01$) between the 7 test items, demonstrating the construct validity of the ICS (see Table 1).

Table 1. Nonparametric inter-correlations for the 7-item Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS) (adapted from McLeod et al., 2012b, p. 652)

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Do you understand your child?	-					
2. Do immediate members of your family understand your child?	**	-				
3. Do extended members of your family understand your child?	**	**	-			
4. Do your child's friends understand your child?	**	**	**	-		
5. Do other acquaintances understand your child?	**	**	**	**	-	
6. Do your child's teachers understand your child?	**	**	**	**	**	-
7. Do strangers understand your child?	**	**	**	**	**	**

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Criterion validity: The ICS was found to correlate positively with other established and valid measures of speech severity: percentage of phonemes correct (PPC $p < .01$), percentage of consonants correct (PCC, $p < .01$), and percentage of vowels correct (PVC, $p < .01$), as determined from children's scores on the Diagnostic Evaluation of Articulation and Phonology (DEAP, Dodd, Hua, Crosbie, Holm & Ozanne, 2002). This provides evidence for a link between speech severity and parental ratings of how well their children's speech is understood by themselves and others.

Content validity: A comprehensive literature review was undertaken addressing the areas of intelligibility and measurement tools. The consideration of contextual factors when measuring intelligibility is supported by research suggesting that intelligibility differs depending on the listener (Baudonck et al., 2009; Flipsen, 1995; Kwiatkowski & Shriberg, 1992). Consideration of environmental factors is also promoted by the ICF-CY (WHO, 2007). Parental estimations of children's intelligibility have also been the focus of previous studies (Coplan & Gleason, 1988; Roulstone, Loader, Northstone, Beveridge, & The ALSPAC Team, 2002).

Reliability of the ICS

Internal reliability: The ICS achieved a high level of internal reliability ($\alpha = .93$) using Cronbach's alpha.

Specificity of the ICS

Scores on the ICS were significantly lower for the children with parent-/teacher-identified speech difficulties ($M = 3.85$) than for children without identified speech difficulties ($M = 4.69$). This suggests that the ICS is effective in discriminating

between children who have been identified as having difficulty talking and making speech sounds, and children who have not been identified as having speech difficulties.

Adaptations of the ICS

Multilingual versions: The ICS is available a wide range of languages (see Appendix B and <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics>). Translation of the concepts within the ICS was considered to be achievable since a number of the terms within the ICS are based on terminology used within the ICF-CY (World Health Organization, 2007), a document designed for international usage. Two methods have been used to translate the ICS:

1. Most of the translations have been made by researchers with expertise in childhood speech sound disorders. Each researcher (translator) was provided with a template in order to make two versions of the ICS: a monolingual version (e.g., Spanish) and a multilingual version (e.g., Spanish + English). The researchers (translators) were encouraged to discuss the translation with their colleagues and to undertake an iterative process of back translations (cf. Su & Parham, 2002; World Health Organization, 2012). The submitted monolingual versions were then sent to a professional translation company ([Australian Multi Lingual Services](#)) who provided back translations by [NAATI accredited translators](#). Any discrepancies between the original version and the back translation were considered and discussed with the original translators until final agreement was reached.
2. Some translations were undertaken by [NAATI accredited translators](#) associated with [Australian Multi Lingual Services](#) when experts in childhood speech sound disorders were not available.

Adult version: The ICS may be able to be adapted for measuring adults' speech intelligibility (e.g., for adults who have dysarthria or dyspraxia) by replacing the word *child* with *spouse* or *partner*. For example, question 1 would read: "Do you understand your partner?" Question 6 currently reads: "Do your child's teachers understand your child?". This could be omitted (and the score be calculated /30 instead of /35), or could be adapted by replacing "teacher" with someone who has regular contact with the person and is in a position of authority (see Appendix C). If the form is adapted for measuring adults' speech intelligibility, it could be administered by the person's spouse or partner, or another family member who lives with or is very familiar with the person (e.g., adult daughter).

Evaluation of the ICS

Studies are currently being planned to trial the use of the ICS in other countries including: Hong Kong (Chinese: Simplified), Scotland (UK), Slovenia, South Africa, and US. Please contact Professor Sharynne McLeod, Ph.D. if you are interested in undertaking research using the ICS in your country (smcleod@csu.edu.au).

Availability of the ICS

The ICS is freely available from <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics>. It is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. That means, "You are free to Share — to copy, distribute and transmit the work under the following conditions:

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The current document was written with support from Linda J. Harrison, Jane McCormack, and Nicole Limbrick. The ICS website has been developed by Professor Sharynne McLeod with Dan Given and Jo Masters from Charles Sturt University, Australia.

Additional information about multilingual children's speech

Multilingual children's speech website: <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech>

Multilingual children with speech sound disorders: Position paper

International Expert Panel on Multilingual Children's Speech (2012). *Multilingual children with speech sound disorders: Position paper*. Bathurst, NSW, Australia: Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE), Charles Sturt University. Retrieved from <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/position-paper>

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Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS)

(McLeod, Harrison, & McCormack, 2012)

Child's name: _____

Child's date of birth: _____ Male/Female: _____

Language(s) spoken: _____

Current date: _____ Child's age: _____

Person completing the form: _____

Relationship to child: _____

The following questions are about how much of your child's speech is understood by different people. Please think about your child's speech over the past month when answering each question. Circle one number for each question.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Do you understand your child ¹ ?	5	4	3	2	1
2. Do immediate members of your family understand your child?	5	4	3	2	1
3. Do extended members of your family understand your child?	5	4	3	2	1
4. Do your child's friends understand your child?	5	4	3	2	1
5. Do other acquaintances understand your child?	5	4	3	2	1
6. Do your child's teachers understand your child?	5	4	3	2	1
7. Do strangers ² understand your child?	5	4	3	2	1
TOTAL SCORE =	/35				
AVERAGE TOTAL SCORE =	/5				

¹This measure may be able to be adapted for adults' speech, by substituting *child* with *spouse*.

²The term *strangers* may be changed to *unfamiliar people*

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Further information: McLeod, S., Harrison, L. J., & McCormack, J. (2012). The Intelligibility in Context Scale: Validity and reliability of a subjective rating measure. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 55(2), 648-656. <http://jslhr.asha.org/cgi/content/abstract/55/2/648>



Appendix B. Translations of the Intelligibility in Context Scale freely available at www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/ics (Please check this website for updates of additional languages)

Language	Intelligibility in Context Scale	Documents	Translator
Arabic (Standard) (العربية)	مقياس وضوح العربية ضمن السياق _ الكلام	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arabic • +English 	Ghada Khattab, Ph.D., University of Newcastle, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK*
Bulgarian (Български)	Скала за разбираемост на говора в контекст: български	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulgarian • +English 	Stefka H. Marinova-Todd, Ed.D., University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada*
Chinese (Simplified) (简体中文) (China, Singapore)	语境说话清晰度量表	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese (Simplified) • +English 	Carol Kit Sum To, Ph.D., and Kaylor Ng, The University of Hong Kong, SAR China*
Chinese (Traditional) (繁體中文) (Hong Kong, Taiwan)	語境說話清晰度量表	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese (Traditional) • +English 	Carol Kit Sum To, Ph.D., and Kaylor Ng, The University of Hong Kong, SAR China*
Croatian (hrvatski)	Ljestvica razumljivosti u kontekstu: hrvatski	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatian • +English 	Vesna Mildner, Ph.D., University of Zagreb, Croatia*
English	Intelligibility in Context Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English 	-
Finnish (suomi)	Ymmärrettävyys kontekstissa -asteikko: suomi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finnish • +English 	Sari Kunnari, Ph.D., University of Oulu, Finland*
French (Français)	Échelle d'intelligibilité en context: Français	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French • +English 	Andrea A.N. MacLeod, Ph.D., École d'orthophonie et d'audiologie, Université de Montréal, Montréal, Canada*
German (Deutsch)	Skala zur Verständlichkeit im Kontext: Deutsch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German • +English 	Sandra Neumann, Ph.D., Universität zu Köln, Köln, Germany*
Greek (Standard Modern Greek) (Πρότυπο Νέας Ελληνικής)	Ελληνικά Δείκτης καταληπτότητας ομιλίας	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek • +English 	Maria Kambanaros, Ph.D., University of Cyprus, Greece*
Hebrew (עברית)	סולם דירוג מובנות הדיבור בהקשר: עברית	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hebrew • +English 	Avivit Ben David, Ph.D., Hadassah Academic College, Israel*
Hungarian (Magyar)	Érthetőség Kontextusban Skála: Magyar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hungarian • +English 	Krisztina Zajdó, Ph.D., University of West Hungary, Hungary*
Icelandic (Íslenska)	Kvarðinn Skilningur á tali í samhengi: Íslensk þýðing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icelandic • +English 	Þóra Másdóttir, Ph.D., The National Hearing and Speech Institute, University of Iceland, Iceland*
Italian (Italiano)	Scala d'intelligibilità in contesto: Italiano	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian • +English 	Paolo Nocella, for Australian Multi Lingual Services, Australia, 2012**
Japanese (日本語)	話し言葉の明瞭度の測定: 日本語	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japanese • +English 	Osamu Takai, MSc, University of British Columbia, Canada*

Intelligibility in Context Scale: Adult adaptation

(McLeod, Harrison, & McCormack, 2012)

Partner's name: _____

Partner's date of birth: _____ Male/Female: _____

Language(s) spoken: _____

Current date: _____ Partner's age: _____

Person completing the form: _____

Relationship (e.g., wife): _____

The following questions are about how much of your partner's speech is understood by different people. Please think about your partner's speech over the past month when answering each question. Circle one number for each question.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Do you understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
2. Do immediate members of your family understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
3. Do extended members of your family understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
4. Do your partner's friends understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
5. Do other acquaintances understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
6. Do people in positions of authority understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
7. Do strangers ¹ understand your partner?	5	4	3	2	1
TOTAL SCORE =	/30				
AVERAGE TOTAL SCORE =	/5				

¹The term *strangers* may be changed to *unfamiliar people*

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The original version of the ICS was created for use with children.

Further information: McLeod, S., Harrison, L. J., & McCormack, J. (2012). The Intelligibility in Context Scale: Validity and reliability of a subjective rating measure. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 55(2), 648-656. <http://jslhr.asha.org/cgi/content/abstract/55/2/648>

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