The Speech, Spatial and Qualities of Hearing scale (SSQ) as a benefit measure

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Method

SITES
- Eriksholm Research Centre, Denmark
- MRC Institute of Hearing Research, Glasgow, UK

PARTICIPANTS
- Hearing-impaired, no special HL requirements
- Non-HA-users about to receive first hearing aid(s)

PROTOCOL
- SSQ pre-fitting (unaided)
- HA fitting
- Wait about 12 weeks to allow for acclimatization

HEARING AIDS
- No special requirements

Eriksholm: Interview plus computerized form
Glasgow: Siemens HAs, ITE/ITC
No special requirements

Wait about 12 weeks to allow for acclimatization

Below, the mean (unaided) SSQ ratings for each of the items are plotted to the left (for each site). The corresponding mean SSQ-B ratings are plotted to the right.

The main characteristics of the groups of participants are summarized in the table to the right.

The The SSQ-B

The SSQ-B has the same questions as the original SSQ. The test specific that the task is to report how the respondent's ability or experience is now, compared to before receiving their hearing aids (unaided). The items are plotted to the left (for each site). The corresponding mean SSQ-B ratings are plotted to the right.

The rating scale used in the SSQ-B is a visual analog scale comparable to that used in the SSQ. The SSQ-B scale ranges from -5 to 5, where -5 indicates 'much more' with hearing aids than without, while +5 indicates 'much better'. The midpoint of the scale (0) indicates that the ability or experience is 'unchanged'. The anchor terms used at the end points of the scale vary depending on the item, as they do for the original SSQ questions (see illustrations): a positive rating always indicates an improvement with hearing aids, while a negative rating always indicates worse ability or experience.

Results

The main characteristics of the groups of participants are summarized in the table to the right.

The SSQ-C

Based on our experience with the SSQ-B, an additional version ("SSQ-C", for Comparative) is in development - see example below. This version will be used for comparing different hearing aids (i.e., the hearing aid used presently with the hearing aid used previously). The first test of the SSQ-C is currently in preparation.

Conclusion

The outcome of the "road test" of the newly developed SSQ-B indicates that the concept of a differential SSQ is viable. The concept will be extended to the SSQ-C, which is intended for use in direct comparisons between hearing aids.

References