

EMERGENT LITERACY IN CHILDREN WITH HEARING LOSS

WHAT WE KNEW

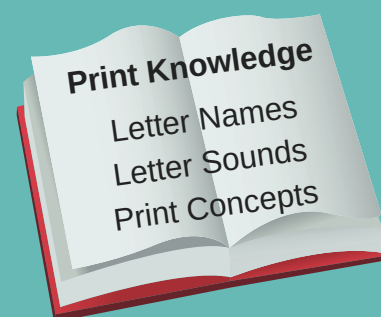
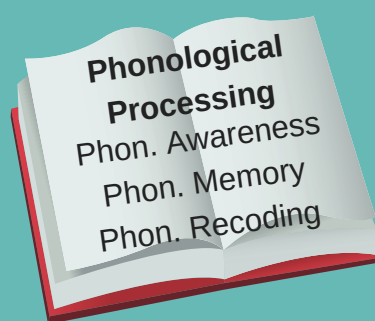
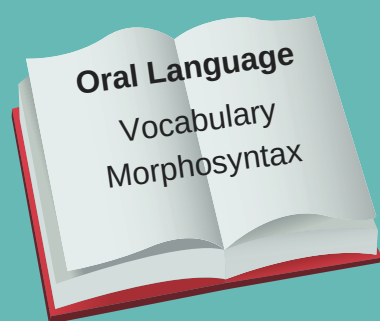
Children with hearing loss who use spoken language have poorer long-term reading and writing outcomes than children with normal hearing. These literacy deficits are seen as early as preschool in the form of emergent literacy deficits. Emergent literacy consists of three inter-related skills: oral language, phonological processing, and print knowledge. Children with hearing loss have known deficits in some skills in each of these areas, but it was less clear how these skills develop over time for this population.

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW

1. In what early literacy skills are children with hearing loss lower than their same-age peers with normal hearing?
2. In what early literacy skills do children with hearing loss make less progress than their same-age peers with normal hearing?

WHAT WE DID

Participants were 19 preschool children with hearing loss and 14 preschool children with normal hearing. All children with hearing loss used amplification and were developing spoken English. Nine used bilateral cochlear implants, five used bilateral hearing aids, two utilized bone-anchored hearing aids, and three were bimodal. All participants had nonverbal IQ within or above the average range. We measured children's skills in the three areas of emergent literacy at twice with 6 months in between:



WHAT WE FOUND

At Time 1, children with hearing loss scored lower than children with normal hearing on all oral language measures, as well as phonological memory. At Time 2, children with hearing loss scored lower than children with normal hearing on all oral language measures, phonological awareness and phonological memory, and print concepts. Slower growth was observed for children with hearing loss than children with normal hearing on two skills: **phonological awareness and print concepts**.

WHAT THIS TELLS US

1. Children with hearing loss performed lower than their peers on the majority of emergent literacy skills in preschool, and the gaps in performance were similar across the times tested. Exceptions to this pattern included phonological recoding (rapid naming) and alphabet knowledge. Intervention should target all other emergent literacy skills for preschoolers with hearing loss to help close the gap in performance.
2. Two skills were particularly difficult for children with hearing loss: phonological awareness and print concepts. Phonological awareness involves analyzing sounds of words, and print concepts involves knowledge about how spoken language is represented in print. Their growth on these skills was slower than their peers with normal hearing. Intervention should very heavily focus on these skills for preschoolers with hearing loss.

