Literacy skills in children with cochlear implants: The importance of early oral language and joint storybook reading.

Jean L. DesJardin, Sophie E. Ambrose, Laurie S. Eisenberg


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The goal of this study was to longitudinally examine relationships between early factors (child and mother) that may influence children's phonological awareness and reading skills 3 years later in a group of young children with cochlear implants ($N = 16$). Mothers and children were videotaped during two storybook interactions, and children's oral language skills were assessed using the “Reynell Developmental Language Scales, third edition.” Three years later, phonological awareness, reading skills, and language skills were assessed using the “Phonological Awareness Test,” the “Woodcock–Johnson-III Diagnostic Reading Battery,” and the “Oral Written Language Scales.” Variables included in the data analyses were child (age, age at implant, and language skills) and mother factors (facilitative language techniques) and children's phonological awareness and reading standard scores. Results indicate that children's early expressive oral language skills and mothers’ use of a higher level facilitative language technique (open-ended question) during storybook reading, although related, each contributed uniquely to children's literacy skills. Individual analyses revealed that the children with expressive standard scores below 70 at Time 1 also performed below average (<85) on phonological awareness and total reading tasks 3 years later. Guidelines for professionals are provided to support literacy skills in young children with cochlear implants.

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