



Title Home Literacy Experiences and Shared Reading Practices: Preschoolers With Hearing Loss

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Main Points

Children with typical hearing (TH) who enter pre-school/ nursery with strong language skills demonstrate higher school achievement in later grades than children with delayed language skills. Similar patterns can be seen for preschool-age children with mild to profound sensorineural hearing loss (HL), with language skills positively relating to school readiness skills, emergent literacy abilities and later school-age outcomes.

The research looked into the home literacy experiences (HLEs) and parent and child behaviours during shared storybook reading (SBR) with pre-school children with hearing loss and with typical hearing. The relationships between these factors and children's developing language skills were examined. Home literacy experiences (HLEs) included the frequency of reading, parents' perceived ease of reading to their child and child enjoyment. Facilitative strategies by parents within SBR were open-ended questioning and re-casting and expanding children's linguistic attempts. Facilitative strategies elicited from children within SBR included talking about the characters in the book or asking questions. The contributions that both parents and children play in SBR and the inter-play between them were investigated.

Summary of results and conclusions

1. Parents of children with HL reported reading more to their children than parents of children with TH.
The frequency of book reading was significantly related to children's total language scores for both groups in this study.
2. There were no significant differences between groups in terms of ease of reading by parents to their child.
3. Significant group differences emerged for child enjoyment, with parents of children with HL reporting less child enjoyment than parents of children with TH.
Ease of reading and child enjoyment were both positively related to children's language skills for the group of children with HL.
4. Parents of children with HL and TH equated on behaviours related to parent engagement and interactive reading behaviours. Both groups of parents (TH and HL) were equally observed sustaining their child's attention (e.g., eye contact, facial expressions), providing positive feedback, maintaining proximity to their children, responding to their children's vocalizations, and allowing time for children to process new information.
These same strategies were found to increase substantially over time given a parent training program specifically to enhance shared book reading strategies in parents in their young children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
5. Significant differences emerged between groups of parents in terms of parent SBR observed behaviours related to literacy strategies and teaching techniques. Parents of preschoolers with HL provided fewer literacy strategies (e.g., points to and labels pictures in the book) and teaching techniques (e.g., relates content to prior experiences, defines new vocabulary, solicits predictions) than parents of preschool-age children with TH.
Both literacy strategies and teaching techniques were positively associated to total language skills for this population of preschool children with HL.
6. Significant differences emerged between groups of children with and without HL in terms of their interactive reading behaviours. Specifically, children with HL in this study demonstrated fewer responses to questions about the book, spontaneous ideas, and predictions compared to preschool-age children with TH. Children's own interactive behaviours played a significant role during SBR parent-child interactions. Child behaviours that include asking questions about the story, referring to characters or settings, and making predictions about what will happen next in the story all contributed significantly to children's total language skills.

- The amount of time spent reading books to children appears to be critical.
- More interactive reading per day relates to better language outcomes for preschool-age children with HL.
- Parent training programs are a positive way of demonstrating and building parents' confidence in specific strategies while reading storybooks to their preschool child with HL.
- Specific strategies modelled and intentionally taught to parents during SBR sessions are important.
- Parental interactive reading behaviours require adults to “read with their child rather than reading to their child”.
- Parental use of teaching techniques such as relating the story to the child's own experiences, identifying and defining new vocabulary, and encouraging predictions are all important strategies that facilitate an interest in reading and support new vocabulary and developing literacy skills.
- Facilitating language interaction by asking open-ended why and how questions about the storybook and actively responding to child initiatives are important to the SBR experience.
- Using video feedback sessions could provide an opportunity for professionals to highlight parents' strengths and help them to identify strategies to better support their child's engagement during SBR.
- Children with HL can play a critical role in their own language learning. Preschool children with HL need more opportunities to intentionally engage with storybooks.
- Professionals working with families will need to demonstrate ways for parents to elicit their children's linguistic attempts through explicit and intentional SBR opportunities.
- Using an observational tool such as the Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI, DeBruin-Parecki, 2007) can quantify children's attempts as children comment on pictures, ask questions, and make predictions during SBR.
- Children are more engaged, and parents provide more questions while sharing a wordless picture book as opposed to books with words.
- Results suggest that parents of preschool-aged children with HL may need further guidance on how to utilise strategies to engage children using wordless picture books
- The study highlights the importance of supporting children's own linguistic attempts during SBR.