

The development of young children with hearing loss: the importance of parent-child interaction

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Background: The early parent-child interactions are crucial for child development. Parental sensitivity, joint attention, and parental language input are related to the language outcomes of children with HL.

Aim: The aim of our research is to examine the parent-child interaction of young children with hearing loss in relation to their language, cognitive and social-emotional development and to develop interventions to promote these interactions.

Method: In our studies we examine the interactions of parents and children during a free play activity or during storybook reading. The children with hearing loss are between 6 months and 48 months of age. Parent-child interaction is reflected by measures such as parental sensitivity, attunement, intrusiveness, joint attention, and language input. Child development is reflected by measures of receptive and expressive language, executive function, and social-emotional development.

Results: The findings indicate that the interactions between children with hearing loss and their parents are characterized by briefer episodes of joint attention and more parental intrusive behavior. In addition, parents were as talkative as parents of typical hearing children, however, they used a less diverse vocabulary and less emotion words during interactions. No differences were found for parental sensitivity. All parent-child interaction measures were related to children's language outcomes.

Discussion: This study indicated the importance of parent-child interactions for the development of children with hearing loss. Interventions that promote these interactions will be beneficial for their development.