

THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE ON SPEECH PERCEPTION;
WHAT ARE WE REALLY ASSESSING?

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It is a common finding that many hearing-impaired children have poorer language skills than their normally-hearing peers of the same age. It is also logical to assume that the measurement of open-set speech perception in children with cochlear implants could be affected by limited receptive vocabulary and syntactic knowledge. Therefore, we may be significantly underestimating the speech perception abilities of some hearing-impaired children. This study examined the effects of training syntactic knowledge and vocabulary on open-set speech perception scores of three children aged 9-16 years. The remediation program was chosen individually for each child based on their needs as measured by a modified version of the Test of Syntactic Abilities (TSA) and an analysis of their video-recorded spoken language. After a training period of 12 weeks, two of the three children demonstrated significant improvements on the TSA. These two children also showed significant improvements in speech perception, as measured by the AB Word test and a modified form of the BKB Sentence test. While the third child did not demonstrate significant improvements on the TSA or on speech perception measures, she did demonstrate gains in syntactical knowledge and vocabulary.

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