

The power of language and its acquisition by children who are deaf and hard of hearing

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Children who are deaf and hard of hearing have reduced access to speech, thereby putting them at increased risk of not attaining spoken language skills within the normative range. Lower language skills can have cascading negative effects on social interactions, literacy skills, academic achievement, and occupational opportunities. Research diverges on the influence of hearing differences on general language acquisition. However, many studies converge on its differential effect on some areas of language (e.g., syntax and pragmatic judgment) more than others (e.g., antonyms). In addition to a diagnosis as deaf and hard of hearing, multiple variables also contribute to language outcomes. This presentation will discuss spoken language acquisition across a variety of studies of children who are deaf and hard of hearing to provide guidance on short- and long-term expectations – and when a change in technology or therapeutic intervention may be warranted to support a child in reaching their maximum potential.

Biography

Dr. Andrea Warner-Czyz, Ph.D., CCC-A, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences at The University of Texas at Dallas. Her research investigates communication and quality of life in children and adolescents who are deaf and hard of hearing, with a particular focus on those who use cochlear implants. Her primary professional goal centers on a whole-person approach, drawing on speech-language pathology, psychology, and audiology, to develop data-driven recommendations to improve communication and social well-being in patients who are deaf and hard of hearing.

In addition to her research program, she co-found and co-directs the Pediatric Auditory Technology and Habilitation certificate program at the university to train graduate-level audiology and speech-language pathology students to work with families of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. She has served on numerous committees and task forces of national organizations and on multiple editorial boards. Dr. Warner-Czyz currently serves as Chair of the Board of Directors for the American Cochlear Implant Alliance.