A longitudinal study of vocabulary development in children with cochlear implants: the role of music exposure and maternal musicality

Michela Santangelo1, Valentina Persici1, Letizia Guerzoni1, Domenico Cuda2, Reyna L. Gordon3,4,5,6, Marinella Majorano1

1Department of Human Sciences, University of Verona, Verona, Italy
2U.O. Otolaryngology, Guglielmo da Saliceto Hospital, Piacenza, Italy
3Department of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, Tennessee, USA
4Department of Psychology, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, USA
5Vanderbilt Brain Institute, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, USA
6Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, Tennessee, USA

BACKGROUND

- Children with cochlear implants (CIs) report great variability in language outcomes after implantation (Majorano et al., 2018), despite a younger age at implantation favors better language development (Boons et al., 2013).
- Music abilities and exposure support language acquisition by facilitating word segmentation and acquisition and hierarchical processing (Bernard & Gervain, 2018; Chern et al., 2018; Jusczyk, 1999).
- Engagement in musical activities could have beneficial effects for the development of speech and language skills in children with hearing impairment (Torppa & Huotilainen, 2019).
- Parents’ predisposition for music affects children’s musicality (Ullén et al., 2014).

AIM: Exploring the role of music exposure and maternal musicality in supporting vocabulary development in children with CIs.

METHODS

- Participants: 16 children with CIs
  - Mean age at T1: 16 mos. (47.7; range: 9-32)

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:
- Diagnosis: severe to profound hearing loss
- CI surgery by 36 mos. of age
- No diagnosis of sensorimotor or developmental disorders or of cognitive disabilities
- Normal hearing parents
- Italian monolinguals, no exposure to other languages including sign language
- Participation in the same rehabilitation program once a week.

Measures:
- MB-CDI (Caselli et al., 2015) at each session → receptive and expressive vocabulary
- Data loggings of children’s devices → mean daily music exposure between each session and in total
- Goldsmidh Musical Sophistication Index-Italian (Gold-MSI-IT) questionnaire (Müllensiefen et al., 2014; Santangelo, Persici et al., in prep) at T1 and T4 → maternal musicality
- Music@Home questionnaire (Politimou et al., 2018) at T1 and T4 → music engagement at home

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Vocabulary outcomes and maternal education – Spearman’s correlations
- Correlations between maternal education and receptive MB-CDI scores at T1 (r(65) = 0.65**); and T2 (r(65) = 0.61);
- Correlations between maternal education and expressive MB-CDI scores at T1 (r(65) = 0.5*), T2 (r(65) = 0.85***), and T3 (r(65) = 0.53*).

Note: P-values are corrected for multiple comparisons with the Benjamini-Hochberg correction. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- Musical sophistication predicts expressive vocabulary at three months after CI activation and daily music exposure predicts children’s expressive vocabulary between three and six months after CI activation
- Music exposure predicts children’s receptive vocabulary at three months after CI activation
- Parental predisposition for music and music exposure are able to support only the first stages of children with CIs’ vocabulary development, but not the later stages. Could this be ascribable to the type of musical activity proposed in the home environment? May more targeted and actively engaging musical stimuli support children with CIs’ vocabulary acquisition for a longer period?

REFERENCES


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