

Emotional regulation and language development in deaf and hard of hearing and typically developing children

Gabrielle Sharpe & Gary Morgan

Dept. Language and Communication Science, City University of London

g.morgan@city.ac.uk

Emotion regulation (ER) is the identification, evaluation, modification and management of emotional responses (Garber & Dodge, 1991). ER is central to child development, social competence and success in educational settings (Graziano, et al 2007). The development of ER is influenced by environmental and biological factors and dysregulation can lead to internalising and externalising difficulties (Fenning, et al 2018). Previous research supports the link between language and the development of ER in young hearing children through self-regulation (Cole, et al 2010). Research suggests deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) children have difficulties with ER which can increase loneliness, and poor self-esteem (Rieffe, 2012). For DHH children, particularly of hearing parents, the missed conversations and reduced incidental learning can negatively impact ER development. Deaf parents of deaf infants can offer more successful social interaction and accessible language.

The current study consisted of $n = 108$ DHH children. Twenty-four (22%) children had deaf parents, 16 of these 24 also had a deaf sibling. In the deaf group as a whole, 31 used British Sign Language (BSL), 56 primarily used spoken English, and 15 were using Sign Supported English (SSE). Performance was compared to a carefully matched comparison group of $n = 125$ hearing peers (mean age 8;11 years; $SD = 1;5$; range = 6;5–11;11). Following previous studies we compared ER, as recorded on the BRIEF with language ability measured by the Language Proficiency Profile-2 and asked:

1. Does language correlate with ER in each group?
2. Does parent hearing status and/or sign language use correlate with ER?

Analyses is on-going. This work links to reported relationships between language and cognitive regulation and extend this link into the emotional domain. Work with DHH children and their families should reinforce the importance of language skills for explaining and understanding emotions.