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Presentation: Duality of Patterning and Children with Cochlear Implants

Language is patterned at two distinct levels: one level consisting of meaningful words, organized to convey information regarding the relationships among those words (i.e., lexicosyntactic structure), and a second level consisting of meaningless, word-internal units (i.e., phonological structure). Children with normal hearing and typical language appear to acquire these two levels of structure in a relatively independent manner, with different temporal onsets of acquisition: Sensitivity to phonological structure begins to emerge later than to lexicosyntactic structure. In contrast, a longitudinal study we have conducted revealed that acquisition of sensitivity to these levels of language structure differs for children with cochlear implants, in two ways. (1) They have significantly more difficulty acquiring access to phonological structure than to lexicosyntactic structure; and (2) Acquisition of these levels of language structure are less independent for children with cochlear implants than for children with normal hearing. These two differences in acquisition introduce significant challenges for children with cochlear implants when it comes to acquiring advanced language skills, such as those used in academic settings. This presentation will discuss those challenges, and offer ideas for helping children with cochlear implants overcome them.

Biography

Susan Nittrouer received her PhD from the City University of New York in Speech and Hearing Science. After a post-doctoral fellowship at Haskins Laboratories she worked at Boys Town National Research Hospital, Utah State University, and the Ohio State University. Currently she is Professor of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at the University of Florida. Her research focuses on the intersection between auditory and language development, and on the challenges encountered by children with risk factors for developmental language delays, including hearing loss, poverty, or conditions leading to dyslexia. Susan's goal is to develop more effective interventions for these children.