

Plural comprehension and production by school-aged children with hearing loss.

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Children with hearing loss (HL) face difficulties in acquiring the English plural (Koehlinger et al. 2013), likely due to challenges in perceiving fricatives (Pittman and Stelmachowicz, 2003). Recent research has shown that unlike their normal hearing (NH) peers, preschoolers with both unilateral and bilateral losses struggle to comprehend the number condition of novel words (Davies et al. 2020; 2021). That is, they have difficulty determining whether a newly encountered word is singular or plural. This raises questions about their developing representations of morphosyntax, and whether problems might persist throughout school. Therefore, a two-alternative forced choice task and a *wug* task (Berko, 1958) were administered online in order to test both the comprehension and production of novel singular and plural words by school-aged children with HL.

Participants were 36 children with NH, aged 5 to 9 years of age ($M=6;11$; 17 girls) and 40 children with HL, aged 5 to 9 ($M=7;11$; 19 girls). Fifteen children with HL had a unilateral loss and were fitted with cochlear implants (CIs; 2), hearing aids (HAs; 9), or did not use a device (4). Twenty-five children with HL had a bilateral loss and were fitted with CIs (16), HAs (8) or bimodally with both (1).

Results found no differences between children with HL and those with NH, except for one difference in identifying novel singulars with voiced codas (e.g., *geb*). However, unexpectedly, the children with HL were found to be better than children with NH in this condition ($p = .02$). No differences were found between children with unilateral and bilateral HL. Overall, children with HL and NH were found to be more-or-less equally proficient at identifying and producing novel singular and plural words. This suggests that despite early delays, children with HL do eventually catch up to their NH peers, at least when it comes to their understanding of the English plural.