

## Chapter 10

# Maximizing the Impact of Language and Early Intervention on Literacy Among Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students: A Critical Assessment and Recommendation

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### ABSTRACT

*Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children struggle to develop reading success and proficient language. The journey to reading success begins when a child is diagnosed with a hearing difference and receives early intervention services. Access to early intervention services sets the foundation for DHH students' language and reading achievement. If a child cannot achieve fluent language, their reading will follow suit. This chapter explains how DHH children's language impacts their reading development. First, the chapter describes the research related to early intervention, communication modes, and reading in the DHH population. Second, the chapter explains how language affects reading development in DHH children. Lastly, the chapter includes resources and recommendations for DHH children's parents and teachers. The resources and recommendations focus on practical strategies to grow DHH children's language and, therefore, their reading.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children lack age-appropriate language and reading skills. This chapter summarizes the background and explains the need for skilled reading among DHH children. Throughout the chapter, the author elucidates the unique set of challenges in DHH children's reading and language development to connect DHH children's language delays to their reading achievement. Second, the author explicates the prerequisites for successful reading development according to Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001). Scarborough's Reading Rope serves as the theoretical foundation for this chapter. In the last section, the author provides resources and recommendations for parents and teachers of DHH children. The resources and recommendations aim to provide strategies to grow DHH children's language and, therefore, their reading.

## **BACKGROUND: COMMUNICATION AND READING AMONG DHH CHILDREN**

Deaf and Hard of Hearing children encounter challenges in their reading and language development. In this section, the researcher argues that DHH children face a unique set of obstacles to developing skilled reading due to the lack of language access. To make this argument, the author explores three topics. First, the author provides background information on the DHH population. Second, the author explores the breadth of possible communication options for DHH children, recognizing the depth and context each faces barriers to full implementation. Third, the author explains Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) as the theoretical foundation for this chapter and within the context of DHH learners.

A hearing difference diagnosis is a low-incidence disability but still affects a considerable part of the population. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that there are 430 million people who are DHH or are diagnosed with a hearing difference (2021). The DHH population in the WHO's report includes adults and children with hearing differences. To narrow the scope, the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) tests all infants after birth to screen for possible hearing differences. The UNHS identified 61,475 babies with a hearing difference out of the 3,545,388 screened (CDC, 2021). Once the DHH child receives the official diagnosis, families begin to proceed to the next step in the process.

After a child receives a diagnosis, the family has to decide which interventions fit their family's needs. For example, audiologists can fit their child for hearing aid/s, cochlear implant/s, or a Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (Cohen, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 2004). A Teacher of the Deaf and hard of hearing (TOD) can connect the family to Deaf individuals and help the family communicate with their DHH child (Luft, 2008). In addition, there are different avenues the family of DHH children may utilize for *through the air* communication.

### **The DHH Population and the Possible Communication Options**

The DHH population uses a variety of communication modes (Tomaszewski et al., 2019). The three main communication options are oral communication, Total Communication, and American Sign Language. The first communication mode is oral communication. Oral communication, or spoken language, is when a family decides to use verbal speech as their child's primary mode of communication. When a family selects oral communication, the family must rely on hearing with assistive technology. Some examples of hearing assistance are cochlear implants, hearing aids, and the BAHA. DHH students who use oral

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