

**Critical Review:**

**Do the language skills of toddlers with nonsyndromic cleft lip and/or palate differ from their noncleft peers?**

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This critical review examines the literature on the expressive and receptive language skills of toddlers with nonsyndromic cleft lip and/or palate. A literature search yielded one informational review and four mixed design studies. Overall, the results of the review provide highly suggestive evidence that toddlers with nonsyndromic cleft lip and/or palate score significantly lower on expressive language measures than age matched peers. The results for receptive language were mixed. Recommendations for clinical practice and future research are discussed.

***Introduction***

Clefts of the lip and/or palate are congenital malformations that occur in utero during the first

### Selection Criteria

Papers selected for inclusion in this critical review were required to describe the early language skills of toddlers under the age of 30 months with NCL/P. Studies were excluded if they included participants with syndromic cleft lip and/or palate.

Studies that evaluated other factors (e.g. cognition, speech development) in toddlers with NCL/P were included, but for the purposes of the present review only information related to receptive and expressive language development will be discussed.

### Data Collection

Results of the literature search yielded five research articles. One article was an informational review of the literature and four articles employed mixed designs.

## ***Results***

### Informational Review of the Literature

An informational review of the literature provides an overview of the existing research on a specific topic. Most informational reviews do not provide information

toddlers with orofacial clefts are delayed relative to age-matched peers.

**Scherer, Williams and Proctor-Williams (2008)** implemented a mixed design in order to compare the early vocalization skills in children with NCL/P to their speech and vocabulary development at 30 months of age. By recruiting 13 participants with NCL/P and 13 noncleft toddlers, the authors were also able to investigate whether a difference existed between the two groups language abilities. Each participant was videotaped interacting with their caregivers at 6, 12 and 30 months of age. Appropriate inter- and intra-rater reliability was reported for the transcription and scoring of the language sample. Two gold standard expressive and receptive language measures were administered when the participants were 12 and 30 months of age. Appropriate statistical analyses revealed significantly lower scores for the NCL/P group than control group for babbling at 12 months and vocabulary and language at 30 months.

This study has several limitations including a small sample size, group differences in hearing at baseline and the use of one outdated language measure. Despite the limitations, this study provides compelling evidence that by 30 months of age, toddlers with NCL/P exhibit significant differences in early receptive and expressive language development when compared to noncleft peers.

Using a retrospective mixed design,



