

**Title**

Augmentative signs and word learning by children with Specific Language Impairment

**Author**

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**Background**

Gestures have been shown to aid vocabulary learning in typical populations. A recent study by the author, however, showed that when there is little context typically developing (TD) children and children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) may not benefit from augmentative signs (although there was a trend toward a positive effect). The children with SLI in this study only had difficulties with language production.

**Aims**

We aim to investigate whether these results also apply for children with SLI with different types of impairments and whether linguistic skills or executive functioning (EF) are related to the (absence of a) sign effect.

**Method and procedure**

Children with SLI and a TD control group learned novel words with pictures of aliens. Half of the words was presented with a sign. Participants repeated the word (and sign). There were four sessions within one week. Receptive knowledge of the items was tested before training from Day 2 onwards. All children also completed standardized tests of EF and language skills.

**Results**

We found a positive effect of signs for the SLI children, but not for the control group. Furthermore, we expect to find a relation between EF/language scores and the sign effect.

**Conclusions and implications**

Results suggest that using augmentative signs in education and treatment of children with SLI can be beneficial for their vocabulary development. Correlations between EF/language scores and the sign effect would suggest that performance on these tasks is related to whether children benefit from signs for word learning.