
Abstract

Objective: In a previous study, children with cleft palate with hard palate closure at 12 months of age showed more typical phonological development than children with an unrepaired hard palate at 36 months of age. This finding was based on narrow transcription of word initial target consonants obtained from a simple naming test. To evaluate the relevance of this finding, we investigated how well the children’s target words were understood by 84 naive listeners.

Design: a cross-sectional study.

Participants: data obtained from twenty-eight children with UCLP, 3 years of age, who received hard palate closure at either 12 months (HPR (hard palate repaired)) or 36 months (HPU (hard palate unrepaired)), were compared to data obtained from 14 age-matched, typically developing, control children.

Methods: Video recordings of the children naming target words were shown to 84 naive listeners between 15 and 24 years of age who typed the word they heard.

Results: the findings of this study indicated that naive listeners correctly identified a larger percentage of words in the control children followed by children in the HPR group. Children in the HPU group were more difficult for the naive listeners to understand. The error of retraction/backing of alveolar target consonants to velar place of articulation occurred frequently and most often in the HPU group and was found to have a significant negative effect on intelligibility.