

Language skills of young children in the first year after the Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Previous research has suggested that the pandemic and COVID-related restrictions significantly impacted young children's development. The main aims of this study were to explore the impact of the pandemic on children's language skills in the first year after all restrictions were lifted and to explore which individual, family and school factors were related to their language outcomes at the end of Summer 2022. Children in Reception and KS1 were assessed using the Language Screen once in Spring 2022 (N = 627) and once in Summer 2022 (N = 694). All parents/carers completed an online questionnaire. Information regarding the schools was obtained through a governmental website. Information regarding children's demographics was obtained through the National Pupil Database. Results showed that most children achieved the scores expected for children their age in the Language Screen in the Spring and Summer of 2022. A further analysis showed that gender, age, EAL status, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), ethnicity and percentage of children with SEND in a school were related to lower scores in the Language Screen in Summer 2022. These results suggest that while most children seem to be performing as expected for children their age, some children seem to be struggling more than others. Therefore, any recovery plans should take into consideration how different groups of children have been affected differently and how some of them may require more support. Children participating in this study were followed up in 2023 with data analysis underway, and will be seen again in 2024 to better understand the long-term impact of the pandemic on young children.