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ORIGINAL ARTICLES**Early Lexical Characteristics of Toddlers With Cleft Lip and Palate**

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Objective: To examine development of early expressive lexicons in toddlers with cleft palate to determine whether they differ from those of noncleft toddlers in terms of size and lexical selectivity.

Design: Retrospective.

Patients: A total of 37 toddlers with cleft palate and 22 noncleft toddlers.

Main Outcome Measures: The groups were compared for size of expressive lexicon reported on the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory and the percentage of words beginning with obstruents and sonorants produced in a language sample. Differences between groups in the percentage of word initial consonants correct on the language sample were also examined.

Results: Although expressive vocabulary was comparable at 13 months of age for both groups, size of the lexicon for the cleft group was significantly smaller than that for the noncleft group at 21 and 27 months of age. Toddlers with cleft palate produced significantly more words beginning with sonorants and fewer words beginning with obstruents in their spontaneous speech samples. They were also less accurate when producing word initial obstruents compared with the noncleft group.

Conclusions: Toddlers with cleft palate demonstrate a slower rate of lexical development compared with their noncleft peers. The preference that toddlers with cleft palate demonstrate for words beginning with sonorants could suggest they are selecting words that begin with consonants that are easier for them to produce. An alternative explanation might be that because these children are less accurate in the production of obstruent consonants, listeners may not always identify obstruents when they occur.

KEY WORDS: [*cleft palate*](#), [*lexical selectivity*](#), [*toddlers*](#)

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