

Hearing Assessments for Persons with Aphasia Being Treated with Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT)

Tonya German

Faculty: Cynthia Richburg

Department of Audiology, College of Health Professions

INTRODUCTION: Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT) is an evidence-based treatment used to help persons with aphasia regain some language abilities. It has long been realized that persons with aphasia are able to sing certain phrases in the absence of their ability to speak. Researchers believe this is because music is processed in the right hemisphere of the brain, and those with non-fluent aphasia generally have left hemisphere brain lesions. Therefore, by using music, one can tap into the preserved right hemisphere of the brain to stimulate language recovery. In MIT, clients are taught to sing phrases and then slowly translate them to regular speech through a series of steps. Each phrase is sung using two different pitches, the distance between which is known as a melodic interval.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the hearing of persons with aphasia (PWA) being treated with MIT. The impact of hearing sensitivity on MIT has not been reported in the literature but is necessary to determine effectiveness of this form of treatment.

METHODS: Participants completed basic audiometric testing including otoscopy, tympanometry, and air-conduction thresholds for both ears. Additional testing was included to determine the participant's ability to hear a clinician's vocal range and melodic intervals.

RESULTS: Of the participants tested to date, all had hearing sensitivity within normal limits and the ability to respond to all tests appropriately. However, information gathered through a brief case history and explanation of results revealed that each participant or family member had concerns about the participant's hearing.

CONCLUSION: Evaluating hearing of PWA prior to undergoing MIT therapy would help to ensure that the patient can hear the intervals that are presented as a part of therapy. Completing the evaluation can also bring peace of mind to the person with aphasia as well as family members.