

Why do some students with cochlear implants request accommodations and others do not?

<http://www.pepnet.org/faq.asp>

While not all students will have the newest and the best technology, in general both hearing aids and cochlear implants (CIs) can provide great benefits for individuals with hearing loss. Students with cochlear implants run into some of the same issues in the communication-laden academic environments as students with hearing aids. *Both devices have microphones that will amplify all the sounds coming into them, not just the particular speech signal the individual wants to hear.* Depending on the age of the device, it may take advantage of technology to improve on the situation, but it is impossible to completely eliminate background noise.

In addition, room acoustics play a major role in the intelligibility of speech, especially for those who have some kind of damage to their hearing mechanism. Many other factors come into play concerning the intelligibility of speech:

- How loud is the signal?
- How clear is the speech?
- How far away is the speaker?
- How much competing noise is there?
- Is the vocabulary familiar?
- Is the speaker organized or rambling?
- Is there one speaker or many?
- How much preparation do students have on the topic?

Particular to cochlear implants, additional questions include: How long has the individual had the implant? Is it an older implant? Did the individual have exposure to spoken language before losing his or her hearing?

Even so, it is difficult to predict how well any individual's brain will learn to interpret the new speech signals (and other sounds) it is receiving with the implant. Simply put, for some students it is a matter of an exceptional response to the CI, for others it is that there are other factors in the environment that interfere with getting a clear speech signal, and for others still, it is a combination of factors relating to the sender of the message, the receiver of the message, and the environment.

Therefore, some students might require accommodations such as an interpreter, even though they have a CI. Ultimately, the service provider should check in with the student to find out what kinds of communication environments he or she does well in, and which ones are problematic. Asking about the past will be informative, but it is also important to welcome the student back after experiencing a few classes for further discussion. College classrooms and the rate at which content is presented will likely be different, especially from high school environments. The student will be able to provide a great deal of information that will help the service provider to understand the student's communication experience.

More information on these topics can be found at:

www.beyondhearingaids.com

www.hearingloss.org

www.hearinglossweb.com

<http://www.geocities.com/heartland/prairie/4727/bhframe.htm>

www.wou.edu/~davisc

<http://pdcorder.pepnet.org/media/1221Demystifying.pdf>

Visit www.pepnet.org for additional information and resources
or for a listing of outreach specialists by state/territory

PEPNet is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and Office of Special Education Programs.