Auditory-Verbal Basics – Language Development
Cheryl L. Dickson, M.Ed., LSLS Cert. AVT

- If appropriate auditory and linguistic experience is provided to most children who are deaf or hard of hearing from an early age, then cognitive and linguistic functioning can be expected to follow the normal course of development. (Cole & Flexer, 2007)

- If the language levels of deaf children are more than 1-2 years below the language level of their peers in the regular classroom, they are virtually cut off from the entire verbal input process that is basic to educational experiences. (McConkey Robbins, 2000)

- Progress in academic subjects among hearing-impaired children under eight years of age is much less important than the development of their spoken language. (Ling, 1989)

- Assessment of a child’s functional language is critical in the planning of appropriate language goals for children with hearing loss.

- Setting long-term goals based on a developmental hierarchy

**Developmental Approach**

Children with hearing loss can achieve age appropriate oral language skills if intervention is begun early and is appropriate to the desired outcome. The differences in a deaf or hard of hearing child’s language and that of his typically hearing peers is seen as a lack of experience and exposure causing a delay rather than as a deviance. Deaf children with appropriate auditory access to spoken language can be expected to follow normal developmental stages and milestones in oral language and develop their language along the typical pathway albeit, somewhat delayed. (Cole & Flexer, 2007; Kretschmer, 2001)

The child who is deaf or hard of hearing is likely to have a lessened ability to profit from language interactions as well as a lessened ability to overhear language spoken among other people. (Ling, 2002) This highlights the importance of ensuring every child with hearing loss has ample opportunities to hear language in meaningful contexts and progress through developmental stages with informed guidance by the adults in his/her life.

**Guiding a Developmental Approach**

Heavner & Vernelson, (2012) found that professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing children in North Carolina were struggling with where to begin when a significant gap was present in the child’s language age and chronological age. They endorse collecting spontaneous language samples on students with hearing loss on a regular basis in order to analyze the structures in use. Once a child’s spontaneous language has been collected it is essential to plot the language on one of the developmental language hierarchies available.
Bloom, L. & Lahey, M., (1978), provide a developmental language chart of typical development ranging from Phase 1-8. The Cottage Acquisition Scales of Listening, Language & Speech (CASLLS) (Wilkes, E.M., 1999), provide outlines of developmental language milestones from pre-verbal through complex language structures. Both systems provide the practitioner with a comprehensive map of child language development and provide a basis for plotting current language use and future language goals. This ensures the child learns systematically and gaps in their language skills are avoided.

References

