The Building Blocks of Language: Developing a Strong Base for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Paula Crotty, Speech/Language Pathologist
Erin Schuweiler, Birth to Three Coordinator
Kansas School for the Deaf
Outreach
Speech is the **verbal** means of communicating. Speech consists of the following:

- Articulation
- Voice
- Fluency

What is speech?
“A code whereby ideas about the world are represented through a conventional system of arbitrary signals for communication.” (Bloom 1988)

- What words mean
- How to make new words
- How to put words together
- What word combinations are best in what situations

What is Language?
“Data show that 90% of children born with a profound hearing loss who obtain a CI before they are 18 months old attain intelligible speech. If a cochlear implant is obtained between 2 and 4 years of age, about 80% of the children born with profound hearing loss will attain intelligible speech.”

(Cole & Flexer, 2007)
• Born to hearing/speaking families
• Late age of detection/amplification
• Critical Language Window
• Limited access to incidental learning
• Boothroyd, Geers, and Moog (1991) found an average learning rate of .43 times the normal rate for hearing aid users aged 4-18. Another group of children aged 4-18 had an average vocabulary rate of .60.

• Many children with hearing loss start preschool with significant gaps and fewer words in their lexicons when compared to children with typical hearing. (Prezbindowski & Lederberg, 2003)
• Even children with mild hearing loss fall behind their hearing peers in definitional vocabulary. (OCHL Study)

• An average high school graduate who is hearing has an estimated vocabulary of >30,000 words by age 18 (Nagy & Herman, 1987).
• Need more ongoing explicit vocabulary instruction

• Need more repetition of vocabulary

• Language development needs to be the primary focus

• Expect 6 months of language growth in 6 months

What Does This Mean?
“The development of semantics involves two main activities:

• a constant expansion of vocabulary
• a reorganization of the semantic networks between words that constitute the semantic structure of language”

(Maureen Cutajar; The development of semantic knowledge in children)
Semantic Language Developmental Building Blocks

- Labeling
- Functions
- Associations
- Categorization
- Similarities
- Differences
- Attributes
- Synonyms
- Definitions
- Multiple Meaning Words
- Figurative Language
• Include nouns and verbs
• Teach a word in it’s most natural context
• Use meaningful situations at home
• The word to be learned must be presented or said when the object or experience is present
• Repetition – 30-40X
• Children also need to see what the word is NOT

Labeling
• Explaining the purpose of objects

• Explaining what is NOT the function

• Receptive Component

• Expressive Component

Functions
• Match things that are the same
• Describe and sort by attribute
• Sort into categories

Associations
• Teach in categorical units
• What doesn’t belong
• Sorting, receptively identifying categories, expressively naming categories, naming items belonging to categories


• Outcomes of Children with Hearing Loss: [http://www.uiowa.edu/~ochl/index.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~ochl/index.html)