

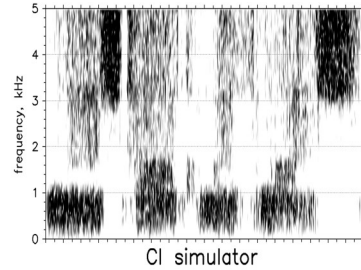
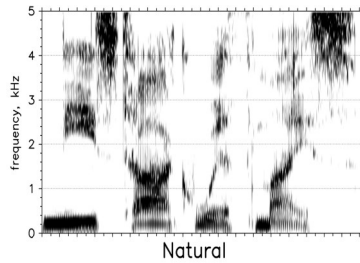
Beyond Early Intervention: Supporting Deaf Children Through Elementary School

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Why is it so hard for a deaf child to learn language?

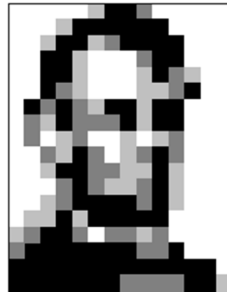
Spectral structure is degraded.



The initial unit of linguistic organization is the word, or indivisible phrase (e.g., *all gone*). Children with hearing loss—especially with CIs—can likely handle this task reasonably well.

But as their language grows, children acquire sensitivity to the internal structure of those words and phrases. That structure is phonological/phonemic in nature. Without detailed spectral representations, this is where children with hearing loss can encounter difficulty.

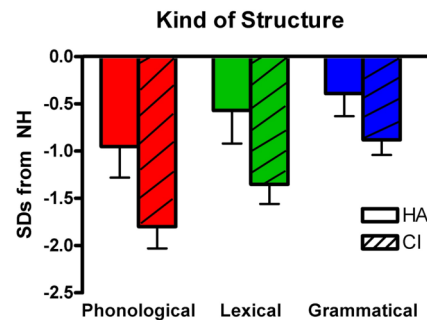
A significant amount of language acquisition happens after the traditional start of school, in both phonology and syntax. Children with hearing loss are at a disadvantage for two reasons: (1) they are starting out with a delay; and (2) they face greater challenges in acquiring the skills typically learned during this time.



What must the child learn?

What to pay attention to in the signal.
How to organize components of the signal.

Deaf children begin kindergarten behind in language abilities, and the delay is especially great where phonological skills are concerned.



Diagnostic Considerations

Select instruments that measure as purely as possible the phonological, syntactic and lexical abilities of the child.

Greatest delays would be expected for phonological skills, and can serve as the basis of IEPs.

Enriching the Signal

A major goal of IEPs should be to ensure that the signal reaching the child is as complete as possible. This means:

Acoustically treating classroom

Use of FM system, with training

Daily check of system

Good access to visible speech

Frequent mapping

Consider extending low-frequency input, with hearing aid on other ear

Principles of Effective Intervention

Begin intervention as soon as the child enters the mainstream setting. Even if the child seems to be “within normal limits” there are risk factors for challenges to be encountered later.

Phonological training

Focus on developing sensitivity to phonological (phonemic) structure. Use a phonics reading approach.

Syntax

Direct instruction should be used.

The sentence serves as the basis of instruction.

Group writing and individual narratives.

Vocabulary

Preteach vocabulary for specific units in the classroom.

Enrich vocabulary, but not to exclusion of other language skills.

Generalization works best when complex skills are targeted.

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