

D/deaf 101

Michigan State University Regional Roundtable
Lansing, MI



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Objectives for Today

- To provide you with an overview of Deaf culture and Deaf community
- To learn about the different factors that affect student language and identity development
- To discuss the unique language needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals in the postsecondary environment

What is “Deaf Community”?

The core of Deaf community

○ Has its own language

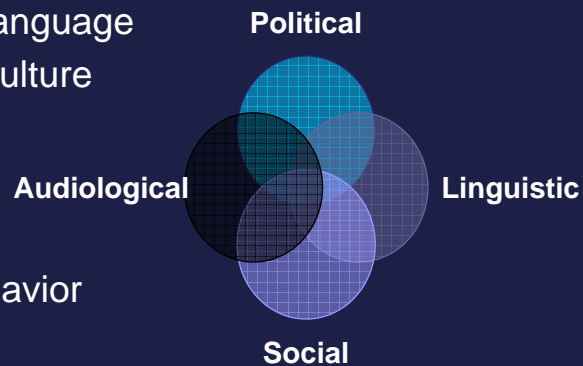
○ Has its own culture

Experience

Values

Literature

Rules of behavior



This diagram shows four potential avenues to membership in the Deaf Community
(American Sign Language: The Original Green Books by Baker & Cokely)

Misunderstandings/Misconceptions

- All deaf people can read lips
- All deaf people use sign language
- Hearing aids or cochlear implants can restore hearing
- Deaf people cannot appreciate the arts because they can't hear music, movies
- Deaf people live totally different lives from other people

Labels

- The Medical and Educational fields, along with the federal government, may not recognize Deaf people as a social/cultural group. How might they be recognized?
 - Disabled?
 - Handicapped?
 - Deaf and Dumb?
 - Deaf Mute?

Labels: Deaf vs. deaf

Deaf is used by those who identify themselves as being part of a culture, sharing a common language, values, and identity.

deaf refers to those who have a hearing loss, but do not identify themselves as part of the Deaf community.

Hearing Impaired??

- “Hearing impaired” is seen as a negative label. Deaf do not see themselves as being impaired, rather part of a language minority. This term is not accepted by either NAD or HLA.
- When referring to a group of people who have hearing loss, the label “Deaf and hard of hearing” is more generally accepted.
- Rule of Thumb: Most individuals with a hearing loss will state how they want to be labeled. Don't be afraid to ask!

Two Views of the Deaf Community

Linguistic view

- Focus is on language/culture
- Deaf are not seen as any different than others
- Emphasis on learning is through visual and kinesthetic modes
- Sign Language users are a linguistic and cultural minority
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing have a group and individual identity

Medical view

- Focus is on an inability to hear and/or speak
- Viewed by society as different, disabled, impaired
- Must be normalized or mainstreamed
- Culture does not exist, no individual or group identity

Hearing Loss and Language Development

- Continuous debate about how to educate deaf children - Placement, Method, Location
- Language development should be our primary focus but there is much debate about HOW deaf children should learn language

English vs ASL

- The plane took off.
- The little boy climbed up the tree.
- I am driving to Chicago today.
- The jeep went over the cliff.

To give you a frame of reference...

- The typical [hearing] 6-year-old understands over 20,000 words. A five-year-old [hearing] child adopted from another country would need to learn an average of 54 new words every day in order to fully catch up in language comprehension abilities by age six. If the catch up timeframe is stretched out to two years, the adopted five-year-old would still need to learn an average of 27 new words every day to fully catch up by age seven. However, while the adopted child has been playing catch-up, his six-year-old friends have also added an average of 5,000 words to their vocabulary. By age seven, the typical child understands 25,000 words. In order to fully catch up within a two-year window, the adopted five-year-old needs to learn an average of 34 words per day.

Temlock, M.A. (2004). It's a wonder anyone learns English. *Adoption for Tomorrow* 1(12) p 22-24.

And we have to remember...

The English Language is **COMPLICATED** and it is **DIFFERENT** from ASL!

- The English Language has a massive vocabulary of over 500,000 words
- Multiple meanings for one word or multiple words to convey one construct (ex. angry, bat)
- Idioms
- Time sequencing
- Grammatical structure is different

What the Research tells us.....

- When studying reading levels of D/HH students at the ages of 17 and 18, the median reading level was 4th grade.
- 30% of deaf students leave school functionally illiterate, reading at or below a second grade reading level.
- Only 10% of D/HH students at the age of 18 years had reading scores at or better than a 10th grade level.

From <http://gri.gallaudet.edu/Literacy> (all studies are posted on this website)

Factors Affecting Language Development

- Hearing loss occurring BEFORE 'auditory' language is acquired
 - also called "prelingually" deaf
 - Stronger L1 in Sign language, English is their second language, Written English is their third
- Hearing loss occurring AFTER 'auditory' language is acquired
 - also called "postlingually" deaf
 - Stronger L1 in English, Sign language is their second language (if sign language is learned at all)
 - BUT...there still may be gaps in language development

Additional Factors...

- Age of onset and degree of hearing loss
- Parents' background (Deaf or hearing? Education?)
- Home language use/communication method
- Language strengths and weaknesses
- Socioeconomic background
- Access to reading materials and books
- Early Intervention Program
- Instructional methods/education

Language Issues in Postsecondary

- School/program application AND admission requirements
- Standardized and Placement Tests
- Employment exams
- Understanding important documents and letters

Language Issues in Postsecondary

- Appropriate Accommodations
 - Exams
 - written and oral exams
 - Homework
 - essay assignments
 - Campus Affairs
 - employment language requirements/testing
 - understanding policies and procedures
 - English/Reading classes
 - grading on grammar
 - Group Presentations

Resources

- Adult Education Classes
- ESL
- 'Alternative' text
- Tutoring

What does this mean for us?

- Identity is critical
- Early access to language is important
- Transition skills need to be taught as early as primary level
- Early focus on strengths
- Accommodate as appropriate
- Expand your resource base

Contact information

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