

BSL Acquisition and Assessment of Deaf Children- Part 5: Recap

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Summary

- + The early years, including the first year of life, are crucial for the development of language, not just heard speech
- + The brain is most receptive to language acquisition during “sensitive periods” early in a child’s development
- + The deaf child awaiting CI needs language input to enable effective cognitive development to proceed
- + Acquiring a complete first language during early childhood is critical for later reading comprehension
- + A language foundation is an important factor in spoken (second) language development

Multiple Pathways to Language Learning

- + Each deaf child acquires language in his or her own unique way.
- + Level of hearing loss, cause of hearing loss, age when hearing loss occurred, the extent of benefit from hearing technologies, presence of additional disabilities, and family dynamics vary from child to child
- + A CI does not simply transform a deaf child into a hearing child, and a greater understanding of the reasons for these differences in CI outcome is needed if such difficulties are to be overcome
- + Multi-sensory approaches to language acquisition ensure that when one pathway is less effective, another pathway can be used as an avenue for language learning

Finally..

- + Delay of language acquisition can have negative consequences on cognition, academic achievement, and social and emotional health – regardless of modality!
- + A speech-only approach risks linguistic deprivation at a crucial period of development due to variability in spoken language development of CI users
- + Early sign language input provides deaf children with a *point of reference* from which they can learn English.
- + When a child knows a sign and understands its concept, it is easier for the child to understand and learn an English word.

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+ Thank you!

