

Promoting Pragmatics Among Deaf Children: Deaf Adult, Parent, and Professional Insights and Current Research



Amy Szarkowski, Sara Kennedy, Sarah Sparks, Deborah Mood, & Karen Hopkins

EHDI Conference 2022

What is Pragmatics?

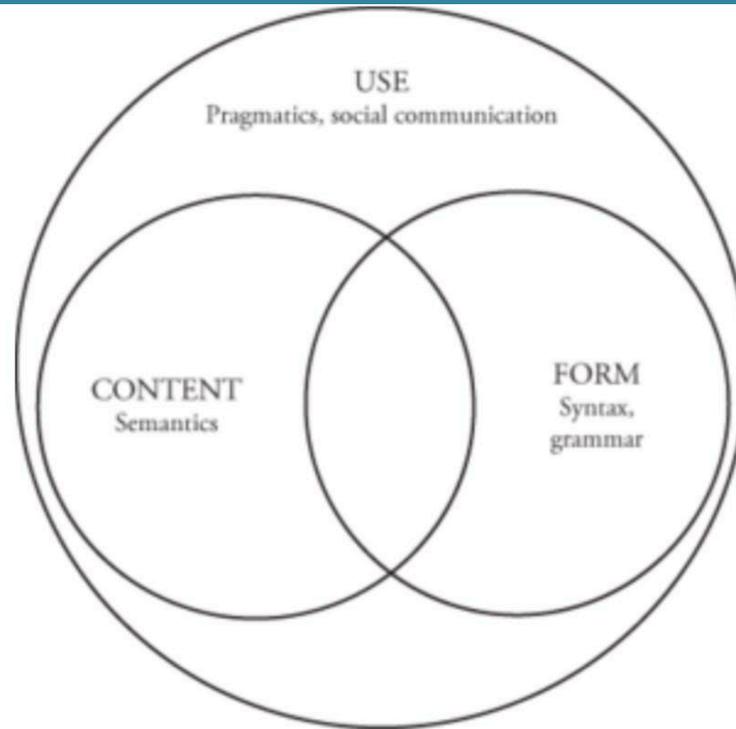


Figure 6.1 Reimagined language systems and structure diagram, adapted by the authors from the original by Bloom and Lahey (1978).

Why Pragmatics??

Even when language abilities are strong...

Clinically, seeing an area of vulnerability

DHH adults' descriptions



Very Brief Background of a Very Long Project



RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE
FOR ADVANCED STUDY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Children who are DHH may have vulnerabilities in pragmatic skill development



Reduced Formal Language
Delayed Social-Cognitive Dev
Communication Partners
Natural Conversations
Incidental Learning

Personal & Professional Perspective

Sarah Sparks, Audiologist



Navigating between worlds

(Deaf and hearing identities?)

Missing intent of message

Assumptions by others

(Not paying attention, not sleeping enough, etc.)

“If you didn’t understand, just say so! Advocate for yourself!”

Parent Perspective

Sara Kennedy – H & V, The Communicator

“Your child is doing so well”
and yet...

Getting hooked on pragmatics

Important whys:

Play/Friendship & Safety

Another family’s story

Spring Communicator 2021



Personal & Professional Perspective

Karen Hopkins, Exec. Dir., MECDHH

Shy observer - one step behind

Communication control

Or crumble

Role of my mother

“Big words” to “Morning Topics”



Developing Confidence – Trial and Error

Years later.....**we see the same** – what helps?

- Access, involvement, incidental learning opportunities ...**peers**
- Focus on theory of mind
- Spontaneous and natural play

Pragmatic challenges can influence children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing



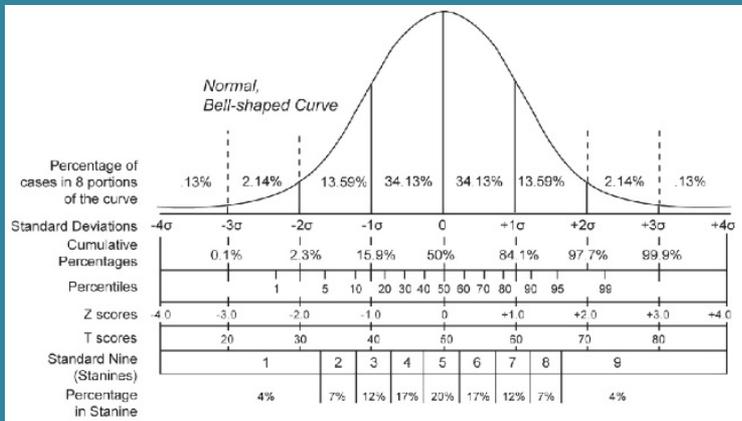
SUPPLEMENT ARTICLE | NOVEMBER 01 2020

The Lived Experience and Legacy of Pragmatics for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children **FREE**

Alys Young, PhD ; Amy Szarkowski, PhD; Emma Ferguson-Coleman, PhD; Darlene Freeman; Candace Lindow-Davies, BA; Ron Davies, PhD; Karen Hopkins, MA; Ian Noon, BA; Katherine Rogers, PhD; Jane Russell, BCom; Leeanne Seaver, MA; Kathy Vesey, MA

Professional Perspective

Deborah Mood, Psychologist



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Exiting early intervention with “average” vocabulary... but poor pragmatics

Children not qualifying for services based on vocabulary scores... but needing more support

Assess pragmatics & intervention for pragmatics



Relational Factors

Infant-Caregiver Synchronicity	Caregiver Responsiveness	Attachment
Theory of Mind	Interactive Play	Serve and Return
Mind-mindedness	Mental State Language	Joint Attention

Take-Away Messages for Families

Pragmatics begins at birth

Attachment & shared gaze are important to pragmatics

Don't wait!

Assume meaning and maintain high expectations

Parents: Ask how to support pragmatics

Importance of Safety Skills