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*PRESENTATION: Developing Vocabulary to Accelerate Acquisition of Spoken and/or Sign Language*

>> BETSY MOOG BROOKS: Ok. My clock says that it is time so I'm going to go ahead and start. If you have a chair next to you that's open, why don't you raise your hand in case the people in the back actually want to sit down. So there are a few chairs if anybody wants to sit down. There's space if you're willing to sit on the floor or stand. There's this alcove over here that you could come to.

Ok, I'm Betsy Moog Brooks. I'm with The Moog Center for Deaf Education in St. Louis. That is a private school that teaches children with hearing loss to talk. My presentation today is about vocabulary development. And the strategies and the things that I'm going to talk about today not only apply to spoken language acquisition but absolutely apply to using sign language. I only get 25 minutes so I'm not reading this to you. You can read about the learner objectives in the program.

Let's start by talking about what is the rationale behind explicitly teaching single word vocabulary. So what I'm going to advocate for is that we should be very conscientiously and very consciously and very systematically teaching isolated single word vocabulary. And the reason for that is here on my rationale slide.

In order for the child to have words to express the child's thoughts and ideas, they would have to have those single word vocabularies. If you think about when children are developing language when they're very young and there's a lot of jargoning and then one word comes in and then there's more jargoning, the reason that happens is because the child doesn't know all of those other words and then the child has a word that they know, so they stick the word in, but wouldn't it be great if they could stick a whole bunch more words in and we would have a much better idea of what the child is trying to convey? So what I'm advocating for is we should be teaching some of those other words systematically so the child could use them.

In order for the child to be able to express his or her thoughts and ideas or to put words together to make sentences or to put signs together to give ideas, the child has to know what those words or signs are. So we have to teach them in order for the child to have them. A lot of this doesn't happen for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, just through osmosis, just by living life. That doesn't necessarily happen.

In order to be able to read and comprehend written material, one has to have the vocabulary. We're going to talk a little bit about reading in just a minute. So understand when others are talking to you, you have to have the vocabulary. So no matter what the age of the child is, if you don't have the vocabulary, or even for us ‑‑ think about if you're in a conversation and someone uses a word that you don't know and you can't figure out the word in the context or you think you figured it out but you're actually wrong, then you could completely misinterpret a situation. So when we look at very young children, the more single word vocabulary they have, even if they strung the words together, would have a better idea of what they intend than if they could only give you one word and also to be able to understand what other people are saying.

To be able to follow directions you need to have all of that vocabulary of following directions as well as the words within the directions. And then just in general, to participate in life, to be able to understand academics, to be able to engage in social situations as children get older, for all of those reasons vocabulary is important.

Because I only have 25 minutes, I want to spend the bulk of the time talking about the actual vocabulary so we're going to go sort of very quickly through other pieces of what could be a much longer presentation.

The reason that many children with hearing loss are behind in reading is because they don't have the vocabulary ‑‑ Oh! This is so funny. I've been telling this story for days. I was giving a presentation to a room of 200 people and the lights went out. And so now they have. And somehow you don't lose the microphone. Ok. And then they come back on. All right.

So maybe it will happen again. If it does ‑‑ can the people who need the interpreters see the interpreters when the lights go out? We're good? If he moves in front of the screen. Or I can take my phone and put the light on him. Perfect.

All right. When it comes to reading, children may be able to decode ‑‑ so they can actually read out loud or sign what it is that they're read ‑‑ well, they wouldn't be able to sign it if they didn't know the vocabulary. But they could decode it but they have zero comprehension because they don't understand the words.

The easiest example for understanding this as a problem is the conjunctions that make sentences that you read complex: so, but, and, wow, so, before, after. If you don't understand those words, those words change the meaning of a sentence. So, if you were to say we will play outside if it rains, that's very different than we will play outside after it rains, which is very different than we will play outside before it rains. Ok?

So that's a high‑level example of why individual vocabulary words are so important. And for the population that we're sort of here for a much younger population but I just wanted to make sure that you understand long‑term the importance of the single word vocabulary.

Ok. So, there's research, a lot of research. I only put what fit on the slide. There is a lot of research about vocabulary development in typical developing hearing children that supports the idea of learning single word vocabulary. And there's some research ‑‑ thank you, Michael. There's some research about children who are deaf or hard of hearing also related to the importance of development of single word vocabulary.

So now just to make sure we're all on the same page and we have an understanding, vocabulary ‑‑ those people who talk about vocabulary talk about it as comes in three tiers. So, Tier 1 is basic vocabulary, Tier 2, high-frequency and multiple meaning vocabulary, and Tier three, low‑frequency and very context or academic‑specific vocabulary.

Vocabulary in Tier 1 is so basic and so common that there is no teaching that has to be done for typical developing hearing children. They just learn those words by living life. Ok? So these are words ‑‑ this very basic vocabulary, those are words we often have to explicitly teach to our children who are deaf or hard of hearing because they don't just learn them from living life. The high‑frequency Tier 2 words are words that are important for reading that also are probably going to need to be taught explicitly for life. And the low‑frequency, higher academic words are things that almost everybody has to be taught. Those are the words in your third grade, you know, science book that in the margin it says these are the vocabulary words. So everyone is actually having to be taught those words.

To give an example of a Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3, those are at the bottom of the slide. Man would be a Tier 1 word. It's common. People learn it by living life. Scientist is a word that's used, one notch above man. But our children who are deaf or hard of hearing probably need to be taught scientist but children typically developing with normal hearing hear that word and are able continue to corporate that into their vocabulary. And paleontologist is a word everybody has to be taught. It just doesn't come up.

We are here to talk about vocabulary and sources for professionals but really it's sources for professionals to help parents. Ok? So, these are some sources for professionals that I thought of. And we're not talking about them. All right? And I'll tell you in a second why.

So professionals can use commercially prepared word sets to figure out words to teach. They can go to apps. They can get images from the internet. And they might be making materials themselves to be able to teach vocabulary to children in a more clinical setting. But when we're talking about early intervention, we need to talk about what we're going to do to help the parent help their child and we're not going provide them with a stack of vocabulary cards. And we might not even want to suggest an app because we all are trying to get the children off the screen not on the screen. Ok?

So, we want these words to be words that meet the child's wants and needs, words that are found in the home or other places where the child goes, words that are in the child's daily routine, and maybe even consider the child's own name and the names of other people that are familiar to the child. So we're going to talk about each of these.

So when we talk about meeting the child's wants and needs, I would propose ‑‑ I have not counted, but my guess is there are less than a couple hundred words that a child under the age of 3 really actually needs to have their wants and needs met. And so when we're working with families, we need to observe and talk about what are the words ‑‑ if your child were talking, what are the words your child would be saying to have his or her wants or needs met? Then those are the words we should intentionally be trying to teach to the child.

So, as an early interventionist who is working with the family, we want to come up with activities that will cause the family to use those words more than just in the being activities where they come up. Because in the activities when they come up, the child ‑‑ if the child doesn't have the word, the child hasn't learned the word by just participating in the activity. Does that make sense?

So we need to be thinking of activities to make those words come up, to meet the child's wants and needs. And meeting the child's wants and needs is probably going to be a very short list. So that's your beginning.

Words that are found in the home. Typical developing hearing children learn the names of things in their home just by existing. You know, parents will say put that on the coffee table and now the child knows coffee table. But if we say put it on the coffee table to a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and we're pointing to the coffee table, the way they got to the coffee table is because we pointed. They didn't learn coffee table in that context. So I'm suggesting that you look at the child's environment, so in their home, if they spend time at grandma's house, wherever that might be, and to build the child's vocabulary you build it by using the items that can be found in the home.

And if I get through this in a timely manner, then I have ways that we're going to look at all the different things in the home that can give you ideas for vocabulary. Ok?

The words in the child's daily routine. In your work with the family, one thing to be doing is to be going through the family's daily routine and learning about what the family does with this child in the course of a day. In doing that, that then can guide you figure out where you should be guiding the family to be developing vocabulary.

So, if the family starts by getting up in the morning and they have breakfast, then you might want to talk about what happens at breakfast. What is the child eating? What are the options for what the child eats? Those are going to be words that you would want to then practice. And you might need to create a situation in which you're creating activities to do things with a box of cereal more than just eating it in the morning for breakfast so that the child can learn the name of the cereal, that it's in a box, that you use milk and you put milk in the bowl. All of those things. And I don't even have time to get into how to do those activities. I can only tell you sources for vocabulary. Ok? And the rationale for that.

Other things that might be in the child's daily routine are running errands with the primary caregiver. So, understanding about opening the door, understanding that you're sitting in a car seat, understanding that you're putting on a seat belt, all of those things, those are ways to build the vocabulary but you might have to have those things come up in other ways. And I'm going to give you a list of other ways to make the words come up when we get towards the end.

The names of family members and pets. Doesn't it break your heart when the child is, you know, giving you a visual description of a relative and you have no idea what to call that person? I would say that that's a place to practice vocabulary. And in this context, little photo albums of all the family members would be a great way to be able to practice because you just put their pictures in a book and you just flip the pages and they keep practicing their names over and over again.

So we are going to have some time because I guess I'm talking really fast.

So a way to look at the vocabulary where can we find these words that the children need to know? You could start by just thinking about categories if you're a person that that's how you file things that might be the easiest way for you to do it, to think about categories and then the subcategories.

So on this slide, which is just a small amount of what it could be, if you think about furniture, then there's the indoor furniture, there's outdoor furniture, bedroom furniture and living room furniture, and other furniture as well. It helps you understand that somehow, some way by the time children are 3 they have most of ‑‑ there we go.

>> [Inaudible; off mic]

>> BETSY MOOG BROOKS: Ok. Sorry. You took me really down.

By the time children are 3, they have most of these words. And by the time they're 5, they definitely have these words. And really until we talk about the things that are in your kitchen drawers that many of us don't know the names of or some foods in the grocery store; otherwise those words have just all been learned through osmosis, just by sort of living life those words have come up.

Clothing. When we talk about helping parents teach vocabulary, all of those words when their children are getting dressed and undressed, that's an opportunity to really practice teaching those words. And those are words that are actually important to the child. It's what they are wearing. The foods that they're eating, those are important.

When we talk about animals, you can see there, jungle animals, zoo animals, farm animals. There's so many different categories of animals that other children are just learning. They are not going to the zoo necessarily and seeing the live animals but somehow we all learned the names of those animals without ever really seeing them in it real life. And that's something that the children who are deaf or hard of hearing are missing if they are not getting exposed to these words intentionally.

When we talk about food, I think a lot of times we see children who are 3 and 4 and 5 years old who are deaf or hard of hearing who don't actually know the names of the foods that they eat. And what happens is, parents are just fixing foods and serving them. And the food doesn't actually look like the food sometimes by the time it gets on the plate of the child. So they don't actually know what that's supposed to look like. So I think as practitioners, it's important to start helping parents understand how to find times in the day to slow down what they are doing to provide an opportunity to really explain those vocabulary words and the labels for the things that they are doing with their children.

Transportation. We know car, truck, bus, train. But what about all the different kinds of aircraft? What about all the different kinds of watercraft, all the different kinds of vehicles? So eventually as the children get older, those are all really important things to be teaching. And those are just sort of looking at categories.

If we go deeper than that and we look for rooms in the house ‑‑ so, you could stand for sure in your kitchen, bathroom -- and I'm guessing there's an item that everyone in the room doesn't know. There's some item each of us does not know the actual name for. We just sort call it the doohickey or whatever. I think those are not the items we need to be teaching. But things like Q‑tips, nail clippers, tweezers, those kinds of things children by the time they are 5 and in kindergarten, they know what those things are. They may not be using them but if you sent your 5‑year‑old in the bathroom to get the tweezers, they would come back with the right item.

So it's not your initial vocabulary but as the children learn that Tier 1 vocabulary, then we need to help parents move to Tier 2. And I think there are many children who are between 3 and 5 who are in our population that are ready for that higher level vocabulary but we sometimes get stuck in the basics because it's what we know and what we're comfortable with. And we need to help parents move to that next level.

So I mentioned the grocery store. Probably all of us could walk through a grocery store and find an item we don't actually know the name for. Our children certainly don't know the name for a lot of those items, even the common items. Ok? And once your child knows that Tier 1 basic word ‑‑ cookie, apple, cracker, chip, whatever it is. Then we need to help them get to the next level, Tier 2 level, so learning an Oreo is different from a vanilla wafer, different from a chocolate chip. Those are things as the children get older that we need to be doing.

Clothing words. A shirt is a shirt but we have a lot of different names for shirts. And that's the example there. You've got a t‑shirt, long‑sleeved shirt, turtle neck, crew neck. All of those things need to be words that we're helping parents understand they should be teaching their child once the child is using the word shirt.

So here's some ways to help families incorporate practicing those kinds of vocabulary words into what they are doing. I'm not advocating at all that we sit down and ask parents to print out flash cards from the internet and then drill their children on vocabulary words. That probably wouldn't be the most effective or good use of the parents' time. But if parents establish routine ‑‑ so, they decide that every single day when their child gets dressed, maybe in the morning if they don't have to be somewhere, but maybe it's when their child is getting undressed in the evening which gives them more time to be flexible, they talk about every article of clothing very intentionally. And not just I'm going to take off your shirt but after the shirt has come off, then they talk about we need to put the shirt in the laundry basket. Drop the shirt in the laundry basket. Oh, look, the shirt's in the laundry basket. So that they've intentionally have talked about the shirt many, many times and not just I'm taking your shirt off. Does that make sense? All right. That's what I mean by intentionally.

So, all of your routines during the day, putting a diaper on, all the vocabulary that goes with diapering, it could be getting dressed, preparing a meal, eating the meal, doing the dishes, all the of those different times.

Playing vocabulary games. So, I don't mean that you would create a vocabulary game but you could play sort of homemade games. Like, you're trying to practice a certain word so you go around the house and you find that item as many times as you can and you label it. Things like that.

Reading books. It would be a great way. So if you have books that can reinforce the words you're talking about, the family's trying to teach, that you encourage the parents to read books. And you find those words in the book.

In the car, again, you just figure out what can you be talking about in the car and looking for. And you help the parent use those words over and over again.

My suggestion is that the parents work to make a list of words each week. So someone decides are we going to work on five words, work on 10 words. And you actually physically write down the list and then you put that list on the refrigerator or on the mirror in your bathroom or you have it taped to the dashboard in your car or in the child's bag so that you keep remembering anytime these words come up, I want to make sure that I'm talking about them. So when I say you, I mean you remind the parent because this is going to be the parent that is doing it. And then you ask the parent to write down words the child doesn't know during the day but if the child did know the word, they should have used it. So if the child is going, eh, eh, eh, you tell the parent jot that down and when I come next time we'll talk about activities you can do to be able to practice that word. Ok?

Am I correct I end at 11:40? So I have one minute. Ok. That's perfect. I don't have very much more to do.

So, at The Moog Center, we have lists of vocabulary words that I am more than happy to share. I did not upload them because I felt awkward just putting three pdf's of vocabulary lists. So I'll put some note pads up here. If you want me to e‑mail you that list of words, I certainly can. We have our first 100 which are very much Tier 1 words, very basic words. We have our next 150 which are probably more of the Tier 1 words. And then we have the following 300 that we use to teach the children to sort of get them going related to vocabulary.

Ok. Here it is. I'll put some pieces of paper up here. If anyone wants it, just make sure you write clearly because if you don't write clearly, then when I go to e‑mail you it's not going to come to you. It's going to kick back.

Does anyone have any questions?

[No Audible Response]

That was a lot of information in a really short period of time. Don't you feel like you're speed dating?

>> [Laughter]

>> BETSY MOOG BROOKS: I'm like, who can get anything accomplished in 25 minutes? I don't know.

All right. Thank you.

[Applause]

[Captions paused between presentations]