

Listening and Spoken Language Strategy:

Acoustic Highlighting

Definition: Acoustic Highlighting is an added vocal emphasis on an identified target. A target can be important sounds, words, parts of phrases, or grammatical structures in a sentence.

How is this strategy done?

Acoustic Highlighting can be done in several ways:

- speak the target with more emphasis, increase the intensity
- pause slightly before saying the target
- whisper the target, decrease the intensity
- increase the duration of a target
- change vocal intonation or pitch

Why is this strategy important?

When a child with hearing loss learns to listen, they often benefit from extra emphasis on new sounds, words, phrases and/or grammatical structures. The added emphasis, *acoustic highlighting*, draws the child's attention to the new word, phrase, or structure (Simser, <http://firstyears.org/c4/u6/acoushigh.htm>).

This Auditory Verbal strategy helps build the following Listening and Spoken Language skills:

- ✓ attention to auditory signal and/or speaker
- ✓ responses from child
- ✓ turn-taking skills
- ✓ expressive language

Discussion

In the early stages of listening, *acoustic highlighting* is used to highlight a new or important word that has been said. In later stages of listening, *acoustic highlighting* can be used to correct a sound or word that is omitted or said incorrectly (Simsler, 1993).

Once the child can hear and identify the targeted word, it is important for the adult to say the sentence with natural rhythm and intonation (prosody). Sometimes, *acoustic highlighting* can lead to a pattern of speech that does not always sound natural. Therefore, it is important to remember to repeat the sentence with normal prosody once the child has picked up the target word (Luterman, 1999).

Highlighting differences between the child's production and the correct production draws the child's attention to the error. Then, the child can attempt to repeat the model with greater accuracy.

Example

A parent works on the child's receptive understanding of the color "red" while playing ball:

Parent: May I have the red ball? (no acoustic highlighting at first)

Child: Hands parent the yellow ball.

Parent: Giving child back the yellow ball: Oh, I wanted the (pause) **RED** (spoken with extra stress)

Child: Extra emphasis on the word "red" was enough input and child hands parent the red ball.

While reading a book, a child is encouraged to talk about what is seen:

Child: dog cat run.

Parent: The Dog *and* the cat are *running*.

In the sentence above, that parent *acoustically highlights* the words "and" and "running".

Acoustic Highlighting

References

Luterman, D., Kurtzer-White, E., & Seewald, R. C. (1999). *The young deaf child*. York Press.

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<http://firstyears.org/c4/u6/acoushigh.htm>

Simser, J.I. (1993). Auditory-verbal intervention: Infants and toddlers. *Volta Review*, 95(3): 217-229.