

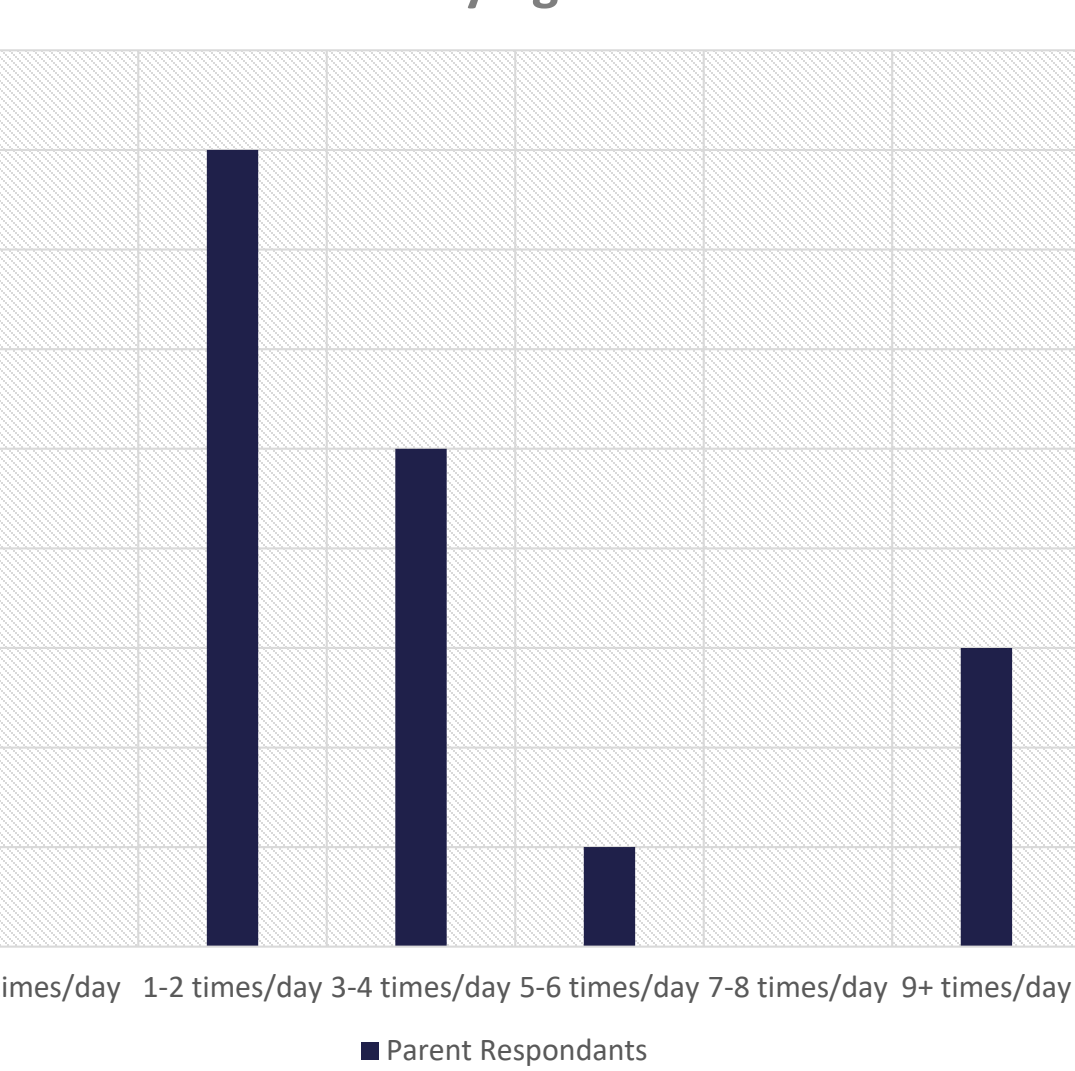
# Communication Development in Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing Through Misunderstandings in Parent Interactions

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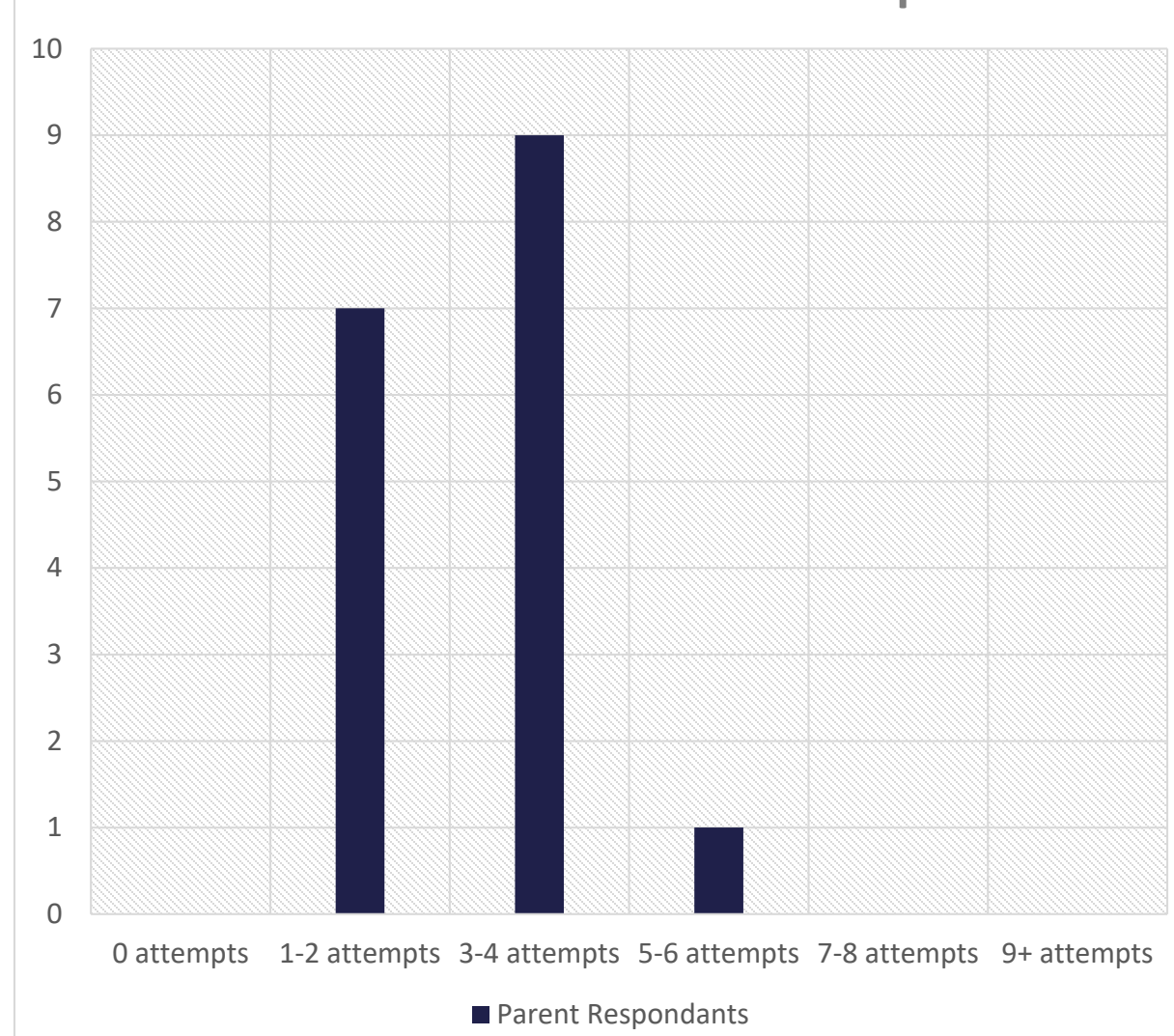
## Abstract

Communication breakdowns occur often in the general population. According to Dingemanse et al. (2015) in a study done on 12 different families of eight different languages, communication breakdowns occur every 1.4 minutes. With that in mind knowing that children who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) have language, speech and communication delays, misunderstandings happen more often in this population. Parent-child interactions allow for multiple opportunities for parents to promote communication development through misunderstandings. A parent survey was conducted with families from Heuser Hearing Language Academy, bilingual families who work with Sarah Radlinski, M.S., CCC-SLP, LSLC Cert. AVT, and Spanish-speaking families who work with Juliana Gebhardt, SLP, Teacher of the deaf, Candidate for AVT Cert. A total of 18 parents described how they handle situations when a misunderstanding occurs due to their child's lack of language skills. The survey was used to review how parents can promote communication development through these episodes of communication breakdowns and attempts to repair by the child. Due to there not being enough research on the DHH population itself, additional research on other populations was examined to hypothesize ways to enhance communication development through misunderstandings. Specific strategies need to be considered when communication breakdowns happen and how to elicit a repair from a child who is DHH. Lastly, opportunities for professionals can help parents develop techniques and specific listening and spoken language strategies to continue the development of spoken language for children who are DHH, and how to continue to grow in their communication skills and competence in discussion.

On a daily basis how often do you think you misunderstand what your child is saying?



When misunderstandings happen how long does it usually take to clarify your child's communication attempt?



## Vignettes of Experiences

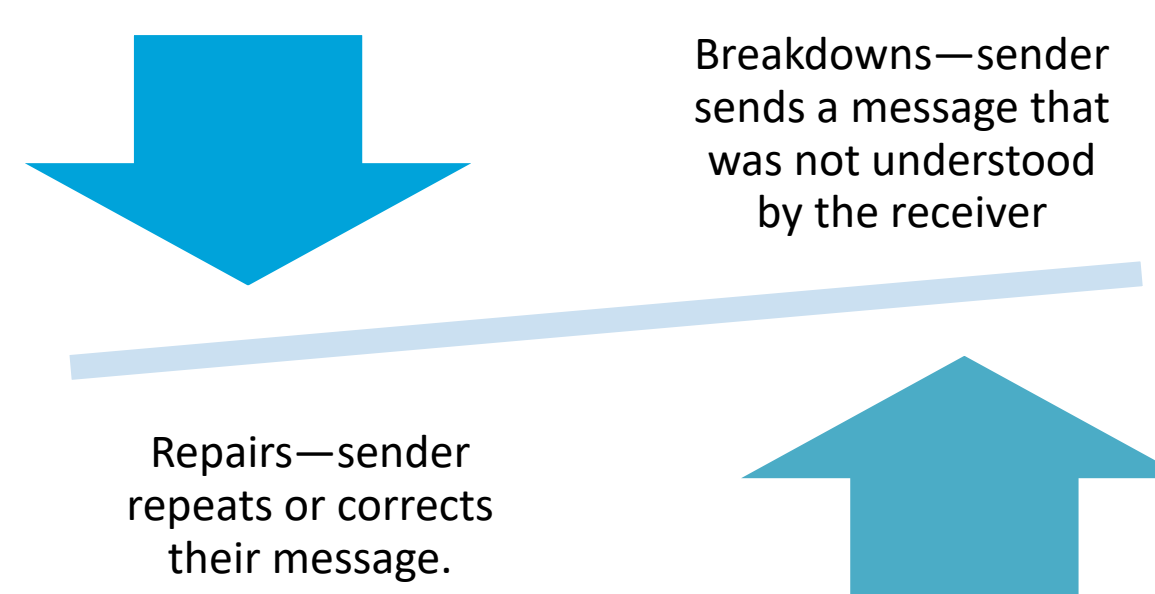
"Just the other day she was trying to tell me she wanted to play with kinetic sand that I keep put up. I couldn't figure out at all what she wanted, and she was whining for a good 5 minutes. So I told her she'd have to wait until I could figure it out. So a few minutes later I went to the area I keep the sand in and realized that's what she wanted. Took her back in there and asked her if that was it, and she said, 'Yeah mommy, good job.' I told her to say it but it wasn't coming out right, sounded more like hand!"

"Ella quería un juguete en la tienda, pero no sabía cuál. Estaba apuntando y vocalizando y yo estaba adivinando. Al final adivine correctamente pero ya empezó a llorar un poco." (She wanted a toy from the store, but I did not know which one. She was pointing and vocalizing, and I was trying to guess. Finally, I guessed right, but she had already begun to cry a little).

"Me tranquilizo y le digo a mi hijo, '¡Listo! ¿Qué quieres?' Apunto con el dedo a mi oreja para decir que estoy esperando para escuchar lo que quiere." (I calm down and I tell my son, 'Ready! What do you want?' I point to my ear with my finger to let him know I am waiting and ready to listen to what he wants).

"Siempre que no entiendo se trata de una palabra. No de una idea, porque ella se expresa de muchas maneras. Siempre hago que se expresa verbalmente, pero sino busco la manera que sea y luego lo traslado a palabras para que en su cerebro quede registro auditivo y verbal de lo que quiso decirme." (Every time I cannot understand something, it is a word usually. Not really ideas, because she can express herself well through many ways. I always try to make her express herself verbally, but if not, I find whichever way and then I put it into words, so her brain registers it through listening and spoken language what she was trying to tell me).

## Communication Breakdowns and Repairs



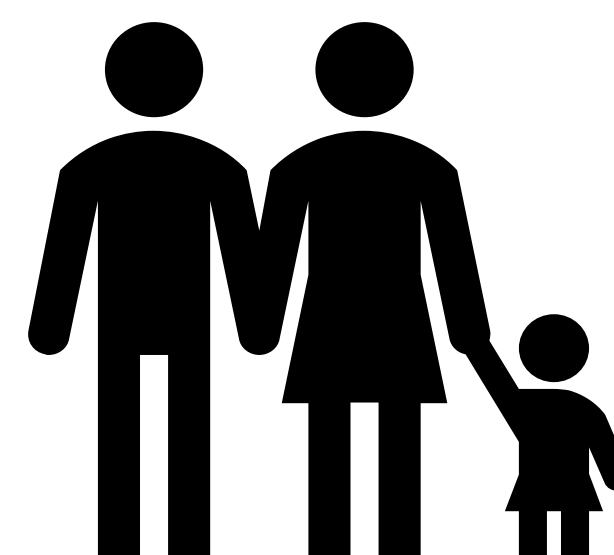
- ✦ Happens in all human communication interactions; every 1.4 minutes (Dingemanse, 2015)
- ✦ Typical developing children begin to repair communication breakdowns at 15-30 months old (Barstein, 2018). They start out with repeating, then transforming into fixing what they have said

## How Parents Handle Misunderstandings

- ✦ When parents cannot understand their children after several attempts the subject is changed
- ✦ Number one reaction from almost all parents was frustration and same for the child
- ✦ Parent levels of frustration varied—from very frustrated to little or no frustration at all

"Go-to" Phrases in Hispanic/Bilingual Families:  
"Me arrodillo y le digo: Mirame y repetime lo que estás diciendo, no entiendo." "Voy haciendo diferentes preguntas hasta llegar a entender lo que él nos dice."  
"¿Qué dijiste?"  
"¿Qué quieres?"

"Go-to" phrases in English-speaking Families:  
"What do you want/need?"  
"Do you need help?" "Is everything okay?" "What did you say?" (Kneels down to the child's auditory and eye level)  
"What?" "Show me" "Slow down and start over" "I ask again to repeat or ask her siblings"



## Supporting and Empowering Parents

- Parents have the right ideas about teaching their children how to repair communication breakdowns
  - Imitation—modeling
  - Sabotage (read the situation)
  - Repetition
  - Open-ended questions
  - Position to maximize auditory input
- ✦ What can be done to reduce the stress and frustration?
  - Making the process of understanding into a game
  - Being happy of the communication attempts
- ✦ Children need to learn how to use communication repair
  - An important pragmatic conversational skill
  - Communication competence
- ✦ Strategies after the child has repaired their communication attempt are crucial for continuous learning to listen and use spoken language
  - Extension and expansion
  - Meaningful, interactive conversation
  - Video-feedback
  - Joint attention!

## Special Thanks and References

Thank you to all the families who participated in the survey! Please stay in touch and feel free to email me any questions.

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