



# Hands & Voices New Mexico

Fall 2015

*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*

## My First Language is Garbled

Written by Chloe Madsen Keilers

Originally Posted on [HearChloe.blogspot.com](http://HearChloe.blogspot.com), November 2013

This is the story that I mentioned last month when I was talking about foreign accents. This may have happened to you at some point. Hopefully you will laugh or smile at the similarities to your own situation.

It was crunch time for a paper and I wanted to do my best. My high school has a writing center where anyone can sign up for help with Language Arts assignments. So, I stopped by and signed up for an appointment for someone to look at my paper. The teacher who was working during the time of my appointment had a noticeable foreign accent, almost like English was her second language. Yet, despite this possible fact, she was very good at catching both sentences that did not make sense and grammatical errors. But the killer was not that I had a lot of mistakes in my paper, but when she came to talk me through the draft the first thing she asked me was, "Is English your second language?"

Now, I want to make one thing

clear before I continue. English was my first and only language up until a couple of years ago when I started learning a little bit of ASL, Spanish, and Latin, but, even today, spoken English is my primary language. So when she asked me that, I was thinking to myself, "What?! I can only speak English! What does she mean?" I thought I had relatively good English for a native English speaker.

She could probably tell that I was puzzled, because she patted my arms and said, "It's very good, but there are a few things here and there that you need to clear up. For example, most English speakers would not say this phrase, instead they would say it this way. You see what I mean?" And so she walked me through the paper, pointing out things that native English speakers would normally not do as well as mistakes that are common to all English speakers. In this way, she helped me improve not only my paper, but also my regular English.

I think that was the first time it

really struck me that my speech and writing were impacted by my hearing loss. This situation was not the first time someone asked me if I spoke another language. One time someone asked me what kind of accent I had. The truth, I realized later, was that I had a deaf accent.

Upon further reflection, I discovered what was truly my first language. It happened during a start-of-school meeting with new teachers. I was asked to explain to the teachers what I heard and the definition of a new language clicked into my head and I said "My first language is Garbled." For a lot of teachers, that explained everything. I can hear, but I am not always hearing sounds that make up coherent words, even with the use of my hearing aids and FM microphone system. Most likely it is garbled that no one understands; sometimes even I don't understand it.

*More stories like this at [hearchloe.blogspot.com](http://hearchloe.blogspot.com)*

### Stay in Touch!

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### Join us for monthly Facebook Chats!

Starting at 8:00 PM on the second Wednesday of the month, Parent Guide Nicole Vacher, hosts a one-hour Facebook chat. Feel free to join us during that time, or follow up later with questions, thoughts, ideas.

Send in topics for future chats at any time!

We'd love for you to join us!

Please renew your membership today!

## Why am I a Part of HVNM?

By Ellie Lee  
Board Member

Hi! My name is Eleanor Gallegos Lee. I go by Ellie. I've been wearing hearing aids since I was five years old. I went to a mainstream school in the North Valley in Albuquerque, NM. I was the only one in my entire school wearing something glued to my ears.

Physical Education (PE) was one of my favorite subjects because I excelled in it and I was very active. One day during my PE class, I lost my hearing aids. I was frantic because the hearing aids were my connection to communication. I couldn't hear anything so I told my teacher. Within minutes I saw my classmates standing in line and I just got up and followed them. We walked outside and I saw almost the entire school out there too. We were told by Coach Larson to line up vertically and walk slowly to look for a hearing aid. I found out later that they closed recess and were offering a reward of free popcorn and popsicles (in my days that was a big, big deal) to the person who found it. Luckily, someone found it! I have never forgotten the kindness of my Teacher and Coach. It's probably part of the reason why I became a Teacher myself.

For the past 15 years I've taught the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students with Albuquerque Public Schools. I've seen many students with a variety of communication modes. When Hands and Voices came and made a presentation, I was immediately excited. Every child is unique and parents are their first teachers. When you first find out your child has a barrier to communication, it can be quite

## 2015 Membership

Please join Hands & Voices New Mexico Chapter!

Parent/Family: \$25 per year

Professional: \$40 per year

Institutional: \$50 per year

Benefits:

- Receive *The Communicator*, a Headquarters H&V quarterly newspaper
- Receive quarterly HVNM Chapter newsletter
- Information on workshops, resources, events
- Informational support for you and your family
- Opportunities for parents and professionals working together to help children who are D/HH

**Scholarships available!**

***Thank you!***

overwhelming in a world where access to anything you want is at your fingertips. But HOW do you decipher websites, organizations, doctors, etc. for information that will be best for your child. You see, I had to go through this very same thing for my own son when we found out he had Central Auditory Processing disorder. I wish I had someone I could talk to that would just listen and give me resources and explain it and NOT tell me what to do. This is the reason why I joined Hands and Voices. They provide not just part of the information but good and solid information without being judgmental. I'm happy to be part of an organization that believes in "What works for your child is what makes the choice right."

Won't you join us?

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If you have a personal story, ideas for future articles, or if know of upcoming events that would benefit our readers, please let us know:

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