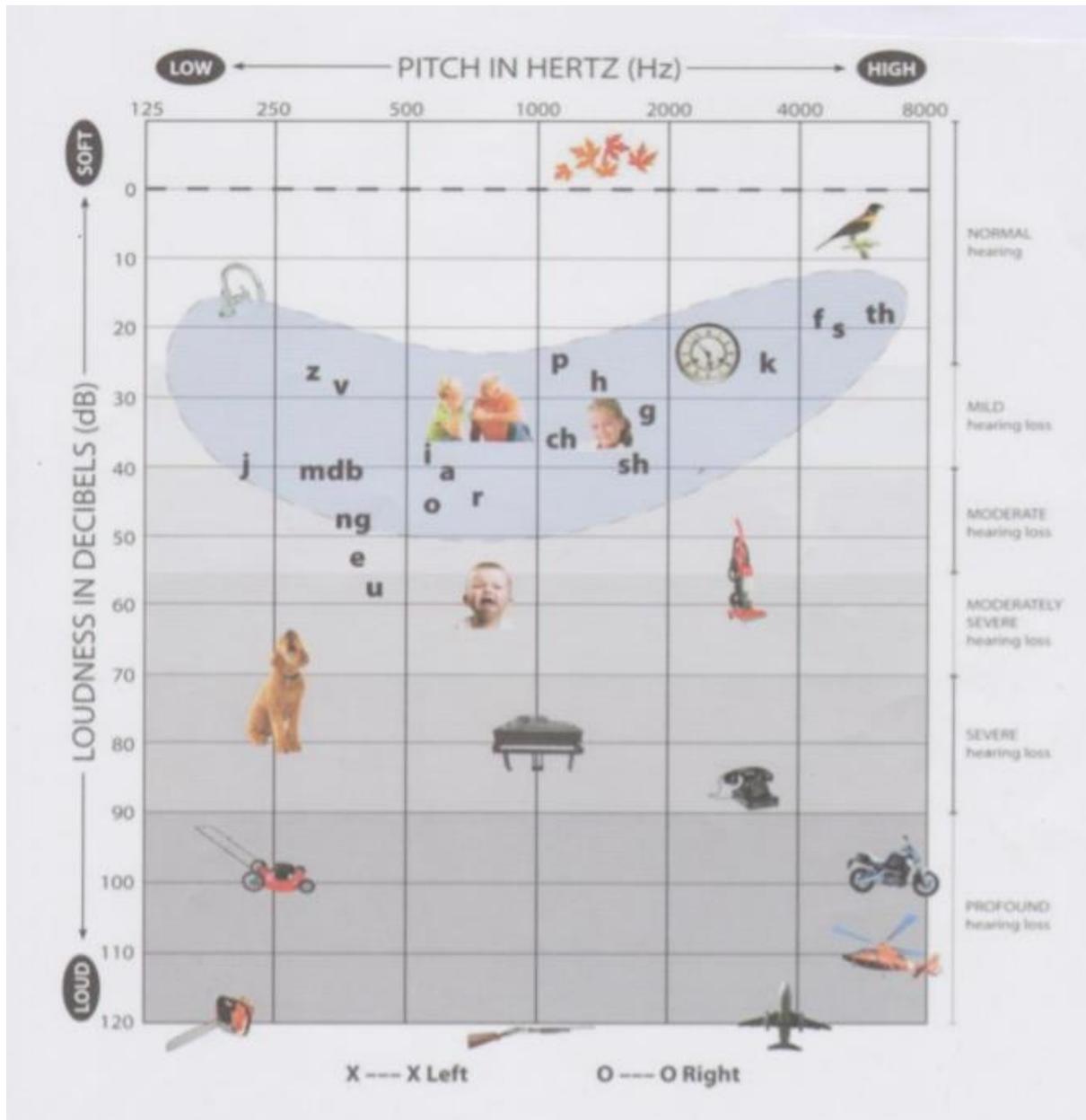


The sound of speech

Human speech consists of vowels and consonants at different loudness and frequency levels. We often represent this graphically as a shape called the 'speech banana':



Hearing is measured in decibels (dB) at the softest point where you can hear each tone. The categories of hearing loss correspond to decibel levels. As a point of reference, normal conversation occurs at about 55-60dB. A whisper occurs at about 35dB.

Normal hearing (0-25dB)

You can hear well in most situations.

Mild hearing loss (26-40dB)

You hear reasonably well in quiet one-on-one situations, but you miss some soft sounds and have trouble in group or noisy situations. A hearing aid is recommended for some of the challenging areas, such as at school and home. In the lower mild losses, the use of an aid(s) might be selective but in upper mild losses it would need to be used very frequently.

Moderate hearing loss (41-60dB)

You probably miss a lot of speech and have trouble hearing on the phone. If you can turn it up (like the TV), you will. You find yourself asking people to speak up or repeat themselves. Understanding speech when there is background noise is very hard. A hearing aid in moderate loss is crucial to language and communication benefit. Your child would wear their hearing aid(s) most of the time.

Severe hearing loss (61-80dB)

You will not hear most sounds. Understanding conversation will require great effort. Hearing aids are most important to allow your child to hear speech and speech sounds. Language and communication will be difficult and will need constant monitoring.

Profound hearing loss (81dB or greater)

Only some very loud sounds are audible. Hearing aids, cochlear implants, sign language (or a combination of those) are needed in order to communicate.