

School of Education  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW  
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

TAs' perspectives of deaf children's learning experiences in mainstream secondary classrooms: Roles and responsibilities  
Dr Jackie Salter  
Dr Ruth Swanwick, Dr Susan Pearson



### Aims of the presentation

To consider the role of the Teacher of the Deaf in supporting deaf students in mainstream secondary settings

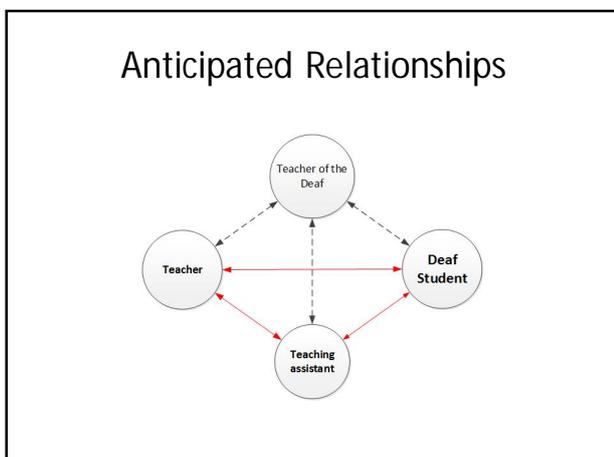
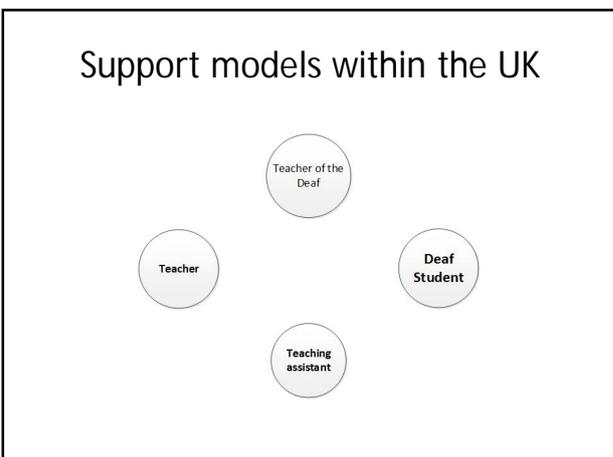
1. Current support for deaf students in UK and the involvement of TAs
2. Evidence from a larger study
3. Proposes a new model for the role of the TOD within a collaborative partnership

### What is a deaf student?

Who is/are the deaf child/children?



- Any level of hearing loss that affects the ability to hear spoken language in any setting
- In 2015 at least 49,000 in the UK
- 86% educated in mainstream settings (CRIDE 2015)
- Teacher of the deaf
- Teaching assistant support



### Why teaching assistants?

- Recent scrutiny of their role
- However limited research
  - Provides their perspective
  - They are a continuous or significant presence in the classroom for deaf students
  - Perspective that potentially lead to new understandings of the learning experiences of deaf students.

## Research Questions

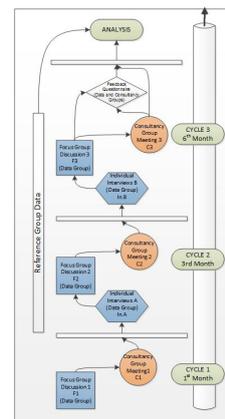
- What is the nature of the relationships between the teacher, TA, ToD and deaf student in a mainstream setting?
- How does collaboration between the mainstream teacher, TA and ToD facilitate the use of specialist knowledge to inform pedagogical practices for deaf students?

## Methodology

Data Group	Consultancy Group	Reference Group
8 TAs	4 TAs	7 deaf students
		5 mainstream teachers
		3 teachers of the deaf

The Teaching Assistants had:

- 40 + years' experience supporting deaf students in mainstream settings
- 7 schools
- 4 local authorities



## Data and analysis

Core Data		Reference Data
Data Group	Consultancy Group	Reference Group
Focus Group discussions transcripts	(Review of Focus Group transcripts)	Semi-structured interview transcripts from Teachers, Students and Teachers of the Deaf
Individual interview transcripts		
Feedback questionnaires responses		

Analysis four incremental stages

- Initial interpretation during the iterative cycles validated by the Consultancy Group
- identification of data related to learning experiences and challenges encountered by deaf students
- coding using Illeris' (2007) Comprehensive Framework Learning adapted for Deaf Learners (Salter 2015)
- thematic analysis Rabiee's (2004) framework

## The TA role

### 1. Ameliorate the deaf pupils difficulties

– *'What I find is some teachers just think oh you're deaf [the student] so Miss [the TA] will look after you'*

Confirmed by the teacher

– *'you can leave them [the deaf student]...because they've got support' (T-TA3)*

## The TA role

### 2. TAs frequently provided a mediated learning experience for deaf students

- ie presented and therefore reinterpreted lesson content to the deaf student rather than the student engaging directly with the teacher
- *"So that was ... working through with him to show that actually doubling it was completely wrong." TA5*
- *"after the lesson you'd go through everything make sure they've understood" TA2*

## Confirmed by the teachers

- *"To explain again, to reiterate what I have said in case they've not heard it the first time and just to clear up any misconceptions" T2*
- *"you can leave them [the deaf student], ... because they've got support" T4*

## The TA and the Pupil

- Difficult balances to achieve
  - *'Yes they understand you more, because they've got this relationship with you, they can ask you three times, they can't ask the teacher again and again' (TA2,F3)*
  - *'They find us more approachable than some teachers...they find it easier to talk to us' (TA6,F3)*

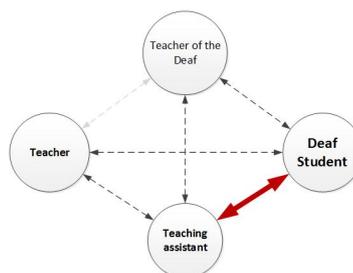
## What about the role of the ToD ?

- Limited input from a specialist Teacher of the Deaf
  - To TA practice
  - To mainstream teachers practice
  - To the culture and interaction in the classroom
- But
  - *"Without her I wouldn't be able to do some of the things that I can do" TA6*

## TODs reflections of SLTs

- *'I think schools generally...need to show that they're coping...it's almost as if they feel that, that's positive... "Don't worry the TA comes on your training, she can train the staff"' (ToD-A)*
- *'each school works completely differently...sometimes it's a nightmare, other times it works really well...it's...knowing how to manipulate senior management.'" (ToD-B)*

## Actual Relationships



## Specialist Knowledge in the Classroom

- The TAs were explicit in their belief that mainstream teachers were frequently unaware of the particular challenges deaf students encountered.
  - *'This project has given me greater insight into the deaf student, I feel this would be beneficial to mainstream teachers and SLT to give them a greater awareness, so they can address the issues that these students face daily' (TA7,FQ)*

## Specialist knowledge and understanding in the classroom

- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the impact of deafness on learning
  - Use of technology
  - *"I think some teachers are under the assumption that once the child had his hearing aids in that's it, this child can hear everything"TA4*
  - Management of the classroom environment

- Use of Humour

– "...when they [the deaf students] find out they've missed out on a joke the rest of the class has had a giggle at - and the teacher has laughed - that completely puts them that far back... "Oh Miss I missed out on that!"... that can result in bad behaviour right away... some deaf children do get offended if somebody's laughing and they don't know what they're laughing at" TA2

## Expectations and attainment

- Lower expectation of academic attainment
  - My year 11 boy he's getting Cs which is fantastic- profoundly deaf and he's on Cs for most of his subjects he is such a hard worker (TA)
  - There's no point in them [the deaf student] being in a lesson when they're not able to access English. Let alone a foreign language so they{the teachers] take them [the deaf students] out of the modern foreign (TA)

## Picture of a busy classroom

## Expectations

- Spoken language competences are indicative of linguistic competence
- Spoken language competence provides insight into cognitive
- Expectations influence the teachers behaviour and approaches to pedagogy

## Reflections on why this might be

- Shaped by their personal experiences of deafness
  - Adults with age related hearing loss
  - Very few will have met or taught a deaf student
- SEND 2015 CoP based on a deficit model of disability
  - Focused on the individual
  - Identifying barriers to learning and providing individualised support to overcome the barriers
- Focus with deaf education on the skills and competencies of the deaf child

## In the classroom

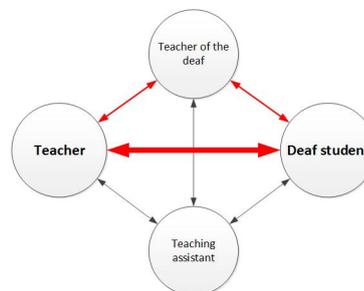
To develop clear expectations:

- you need knowledge of the pupil
  - But the TA is there...
- You need an understanding of the specialist knowledge to develop appropriate expectations
  - But the ToD is not there (very often)...

## Reflection on the role of the TOD supporting deaf students

- What is the role of the Teacher of the Deaf?
- Ensuring specialist knowledge and understanding informs pedagogical practices
- What do we need to do...
  - Audit of specialist knowledge
  - Consider the development of collaborative practices – rather than advisory practices
  - Work together with curriculum specialists
  - bring specialist of impact of deafness to the classroom
  - This requires knowledge of the student

## New model to facilitate effective collaborative practice



## References

- BLATCHFORD, P., BASSETT, P., BROWN, P., MARTIN, C., RUSSELL, A., WEBSTER, R. & HAYWOOD, N. 2006. The deployment and impact of support staff in school: report on findings from a national questionnaire survey of schools, support staff and teachers (strand 1, wave 1, 2004). London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- BLATCHFORD, P., RUSSELL, A. & WEBSTER, R. 2011. *Reassessing the Impact of Teaching Assistants How research challenges practice and policy*, London and New York, Routledge.
- CRIDE 2014. 2014 UK-wide summary, CRIDE report on 2014 survey on educational provision for deaf children Consortium for Research in Deaf Education
- ILLERIS, K. 2007. *How we Learn, Learning and nonlearning in school and beyond*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- SALTER, J.M. (2015) developing understandings of deaf students learning in mainstream secondary classrooms: teaching assistants perspectives. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds