

Effects of sign language knowledge on examination results

Yohanis Kilave summarises his research study on examination results of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) learners in Tanzania

Introduction: Knowledge of language is crucial for reading comprehension skills and the academic achievement of D/HH learners. More specifically, for children whose hearing loss is significant enough to prevent their learning an oral language, sign language can provide a viable alternative method of communication (Marschark, 2007). In the Tanzanian context, D/HH learners are examined through the written language which might be one of the major reasons why these students fall behind their hearing peers in academic progress (NECTA, 2008–2011). Most of the deaf people who went to school scored lower marks, while others didn't complete their studies due to various reasons, including communication barriers and the teaching strategies used by teachers to teach deaf learners. Therefore, this study focused on examining the effects of sign language knowledge on examination results for the D/HH learners.

Purpose: The research study examined the impact of sign language knowledge on examination results of D/HH learners.

Methodology: A structured interview was conducted with 10 specialized teachers of the D/HH from two secondary schools in Njombe and Tabora. The researcher also prepared examinations in three subjects: which were History, Kiswahili and Geography. The examinations were prepared and administered in two forms, a written examination and another in sign language. Then the comparison of scores was made.

Results: The findings showed that when D/HH learners were given a written test and were required to respond in written form and then take the examination in sign language, they scored lower grades but the results were

almost the same for both exams. On the other hand, when these learners were given the same test in sign language and were required to answer it in sign language, the results from the sign language-only examination were better than for the first two tests.

Also, the researcher wanted to determine whether the knowledge of sign language affected the writing skills of D/HH learners. The findings revealed that D/HH learners transferred the structure of sign language to the written form.

Finally, the researcher aimed to find out how sign language affects the examination performance of D/HH learners. The deaf and hard of hearing students were given tests in written form and the same tests were given in sign language. These tests (written and sign language tests) were given to the same group: in the first session the D/HH learners were given written tests and were also required to respond in writing. In the second session the D/HH learners were given the same test with someone signing the questions and the students were recorded in different locations to avoid them copying from each other. The following table shows the scores of the two tests: written and in sign language.

In this case, tests in both written and sign language were administered to the same group, whereby in the first session, the D/HH learners were tested in written form and also required to respond to the questions in writing. In the second, the D/HH learners were given the same test with someone signing the same questions and the students' responses were recorded in different locations to avoid copying from each other. The results using sign language were better than the written test.

Table 4: Summary of sign language fluency on reading capability

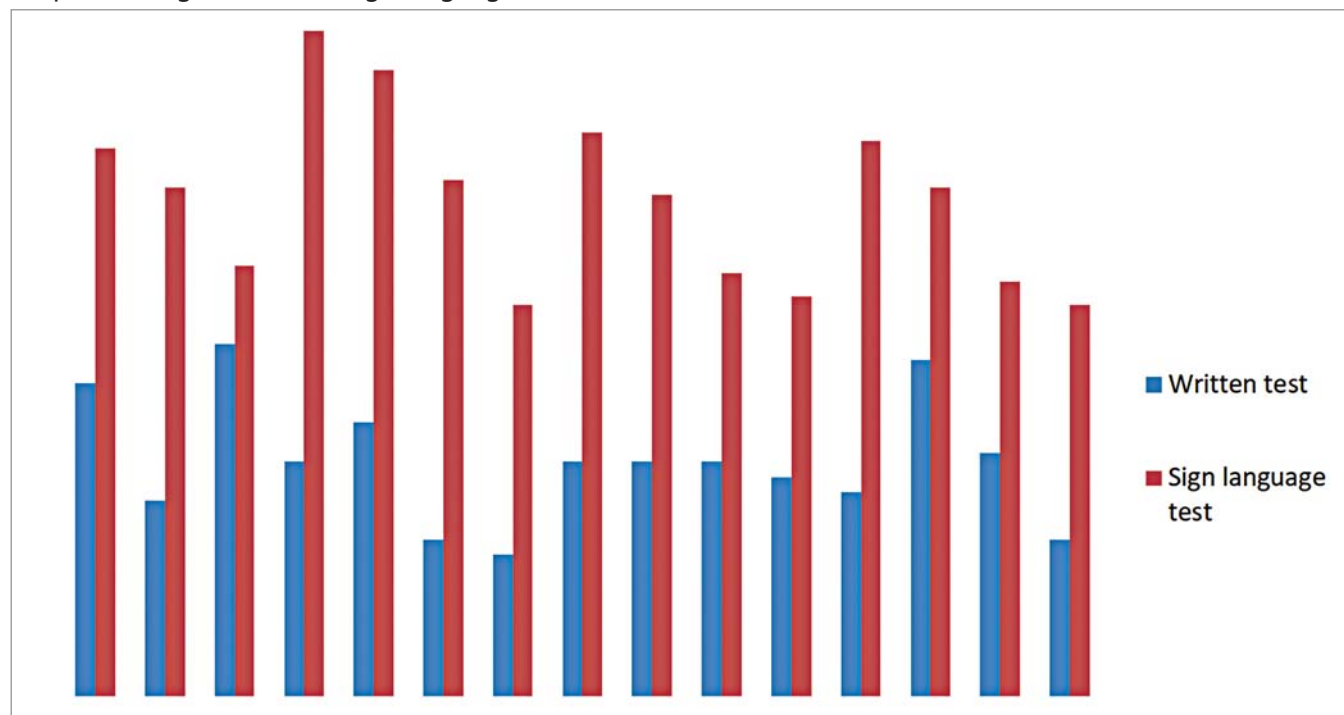
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Read and write	15	12.00	40.00	25.1333	9.80428
Read and sign	15	12.00	45.00	28.4667	9.89853
Sign and sign	15	54.00	85.00	67.3333	9.75168
Valid N (listwise)	15				

Source: Field data (2018)

Summary of written and sign language test scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Written Test	15	18.00	45.00	30.0667	8.05753
Sign Language Test	15	50.00	85.00	63.4000	11.05053

Graph showing written and sign language tests scores of D/HH learners



Conclusions: There was little difference in the scores when the D/HH learners were given a test in written form which required them to answer the questions in writing and sign language. D/HH learners tend to transfer sign language structure to written language form and this

significantly affects their performance in examinations. However, when D/HH students were tested in sign language and required to answer using sign language their scores were far better than their score in the written test.

References

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Migehe JG (2014). *An analysis of Academic Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment in Tanzania Secondary Schools*, Master Thesis, Open University of Tanzania.



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Ann Ryding – obituary

Many BATOD members will be saddened to hear of the death of Ann Ryding. Ann had battled with melanoma for many years and died in May 2020. Ann Ryding was the inspirational Head of Wolverhampton Sensory Inclusion from 1996 until her retirement in 2013. Even after retiring Ann continued to support families through her very active role in Wolverhampton and District Deaf Children’s Society.

Ann was a dedicated, professional teacher whose whole career was committed to education in Wolverhampton. She trained as a Teacher of the Deaf in 1986 and as Head of Service she worked tirelessly for all the pupils in the care of the Sensory Inclusion Service. Ann was always the first visitor to families after deafness was identified, bringing hope, encouragement and empathy.

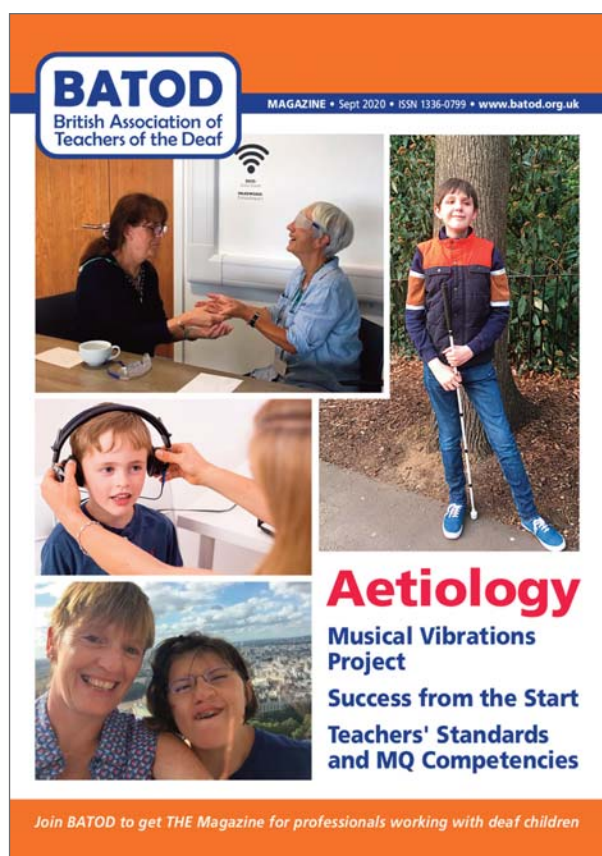
Full obituary on www.batod.org.uk/information/ann-ryding



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