

SBC AGM 2023 Research Update

1. University of Birmingham – Dr. Emmanouela Terlektsi, PhD, FHEA

1.1. *Journal peer review papers*

McLinden, M., Douglas, G., Terlektsi, E., & Hewett, R. (2023). Promoting positive educational outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairments through a dual approach to access. In *Overcoming Adversity in Education* (pp. 41-53). Routledge.

Lanphere, A & Terlektsi, E (2022) Communication needs of a deaf child with cerebral palsy and how to support these: A case study, *Deafness & Education International*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14643154.2022.2133386>

1.2. *Commissioned Research work*

1.2.1 ESRC IAA - User Engagement Fund - Practitioners as researchers: knowledge co-production in special education

In March 2022 we got awarded a user engagement fund by the Economic Social Research Council to produce wider impact by reducing the gap and tension between research 'done to' and 'for' school practitioners and research that matters done 'with' and 'by' school practitioners. We have successfully completed the three collaborative workshops with the teaching staff from the Birmingham School Cooperative Trust and we have collected responses 130 responses to our online questionnaire exploring teaching staff's attitudes, experience and knowledge of school based research. The funding is finished on the 30th March but this is only the beginning as we will be working with practitioners to disseminate the results in a webinar and an article will be published in a peer reviewed journal.

1.2.2 NDCS - Evaluating peripatetic Teachers' of the Deaf (ToD) impact on deaf children's outcomes: a participatory research approach using a mixed methods design

NDCS has recently funded us to evaluate the impact of peripatetic Teachers' of the Deaf (ToD) on deaf children's outcomes. The study employs a participatory research approach working with one Local Authority using a mixed methods design. The aim of this two years study is to explore: i) How parents and mainstream teachers of deaf children, Special Educational Needs coordinators (SENCOs), deaf children, and peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf themselves perceive the impact that ToDs have on deaf children's outcomes and ii) the impact that peripatetic ToDs have on children's outcomes as measured by standardized assessments, annual reports and intervention plans. Preliminary findings of the first phase of the study demonstrate that parents describe the Teachers of the Deaf not only as having an impact on academic and social outcomes on their children's life but also as someone who can trust and is part of their family. These results although preliminary are timely given the 2022 Consortium for Research into Deaf Education results showing that one in six Teachers of the Deaf have been lost since 2011. Moving forward, it is vital that funding can be accessed to sustain training of these professionals to meet the needs of all deaf CYP.

1.2.3 Foundations for Literacy- Pilot study

We are also continuing a small pilot study funded by the Leverhulme to explore the feasibility of the Foundations for Literacy intervention to adapt to the UK educational settings. <https://clad.education.gsu.edu/foundations-literacy-home/> Foundations for Literacy is an evidenced based intervention designed specifically for pre-school aged children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

For further information on any of these projects please email Emmanouela directly: m.e.terlektsi@bham.ac.uk

2. University of Cardiff – Dr. Rob Wilks, BA(Hons), LLM, PhD

2.1 *Deaf Education in Scotland and Wales*

Following the publication of the impact of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 on deaf education report in November 2021 (see Research Update 2022), Rachel O'Neill and Rob Wilks published a follow-up report in October 2022 which compared the Welsh and Scottish approaches to deaf education.

Rob Wilks has met with several Welsh Government officials with a view to implementing the recommendations in the report, and has secured the backing of the Deputy Director for Professional Learning (for teachers) to set up a BSL Partnership consisting of FE and HE institution representatives to implement the following recommendations:

- BSL courses for early years workers.
- BSL courses for families of deaf children.
- Undergraduate and postgraduate courses in BSL to allow individuals to develop fluency in BSL (allowing students to become qualified teachers in BSL, interpreters etc.). NB, for secondary education, students need a degree that has 50% subject content in subject will teach, but there are no BSL degrees in Wales. This could also be a route to qualifying as interpreters and translators in Wales, and other BSL-related jobs.
- Initial teacher education programmes incorporating BSL (particularly primary).
- Language sabbaticals for qualified teachers to learn BSL with a view to teaching (same as Welsh and Gaelic).
- Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToD) courses in Wales.

Rob Wilks is currently setting up a Steering Group consisting of teachers and BSL tutors and translators in Wales to lead this work.

Rachel O'Neill and Rob Wilks continue to work with the Scottish Government to implement proposals there, but progress has been slow compared to Wales. Our aim is to ensure that most of the recommendations are included in the new National BSL Plan. We are working on a journal article summarising both reports.

Rob Wilks is due to meet with the project leads for Modern Foreign Language Mentoring scheme which helps school learners and teachers to learn languages in June 2023, which now includes BSL due to the new Curriculum for Wales, to ensure that BSL teaching and learning is included in their suite of languages. You can keep up-to-date on the project [here](#).

2.2 *Ethics and guiding principles for ToDs*

Rachel O'Neill and Rob Wilks are currently working on an article looking at whether ToDs should have a code of ethics, because it seems at the moment, they do not, and yet they have to make unique decisions and deal with difficult dilemmas about deaf children that are not covered by general guiding principles for teachers in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

2.3 *Other projects*

- Rob is currently working on a monograph of his PhD thesis: Making equality law work for deaf people.
- Rob is very interested in the difference between *Deaf-disabled* rights and *language-minority* rights and believes that in order to achieve equality for Deaf communities, we need more *language-minority* rights. He is currently working with Filipe Venade de Sousa at the Catholic University of Portugal to develop language law as it relates to sign languages.
- Rob is looking to develop Deaf Legal Theory as a way to research the law and how it affects deaf people. The *Developing Deaf Legal Theory* project website is [here](#).
- Rob is also interested in the impact of sign language recognition and is looking for funding to do a comparative study of Brazil, New Zealand, Ireland and Scotland, all of which have sign language acts. He is also keeping an eye on developments following the BSL Act 2022, especially the work of the BSL Advisory Board.

3. Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre (DCAL) at University College London (UCL) – Dr. Fiona Kyle

3.1 *The Preschool Language and Literacy Longitudinal study (2019-2022)*

We have been continuing with our exciting longitudinal study into preschool language and literacy skills in deaf children using spoken language. This large multi-wave study has been running since 2019 and has recruited over 215 preschool deaf and hearing children into the study over a four-year period. We then follow participating children from preschool through to the end of year 2 and assess them every twelve months. All of our deaf children use spoken language and almost half have some exposure to BSL. A small number are bilingual-bimodals (BSL and spoken English) and we are particularly interested in following up these children and mapping their development.

Our main aim is to investigate the role of preschool language and emerging literacy skills in later reading ability for deaf children. In particular, we are interested in whether we can identify deaf children who are at risk for literacy difficulties from their preschool language and phonological skills. Our initial results suggest that one of our assessments is a valid and effective screener for potential literacy-related language difficulties in deaf children who use spoken language. Further analysis is in progress. In the near future, we hope to make freely available a preschool spoken language screener for practitioners that is short and easy to use and can identify deaf children who may need more support. We will update you on our findings from this exciting study in due course.

Prof Ros Herman from City is a co-investigator on this project which is run jointly across University College London and City, University of London.

4. University of Edinburgh – Rachel O'Neill & Audrey Cameron

4.1 *BSL Glossary project* <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/bsl/>

The SSC's STEM team is working on a new project – Environmental Science – funded by the Royal Society. 400 BSL signs with definitions will be launched soon.

The BSL glossary team recently won the [British Data Award](#) – *Data For Good Initiative of the Year* – for the work on developing 500 new BSL signs for computing science, data science and cyber security. We worked in partnership with Data Education at the University of Edinburgh, and we were supported by SQA and funded by Skills Development Scotland. The team was delighted to receive recognition for their work impacting deaf children's access to education.

Audrey Cameron is now conducting research with the new senior lecturer in the linguistics school, Dr Gabrielle Hodge into the discussions which take place during sign collection workshops. Dr Hodge starts at the University of Edinburgh in September 2023, as a result of our university's BSL plan.

Audrey was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the Royal Society of Chemistry in November 2022 and recently an OBE for her work linking to the BSL glossary – for services to chemical sciences and inclusion in science communication. Audrey was also commended for her leadership of the BSL Working Group which oversees [the university's BSL plan](#).

4.2 *Online Reading study*

Eileen Burns is continuing her part time PhD study at Moray House School of Education and Sport. She is analysing her data which is interviews with ToDs, and deaf signing candidates. Another part of her project is looking at how the ToDs translate the papers, involving back translation and comparing texts. SQA, the Scottish Exam body, is interested in her preliminary results. Rachel and Eileen are members of a short-life working group looking at how to improve information for signing deaf young people about exams in BSL, and also better guidance for teachers. Some centres find it difficult to provide the right interpreters and translation at the school in order to take part in the scheme. The SQA committed to translating guidance for deaf candidates, which should be on their website after the summer. This is important because some authorities have not been mentioning the rights to the pupils. The arrangement is only for students who use BSL or

SSE in the classroom. We raised the idea of a centrally signed exam, and SQA is at last interested in this [following our 2011 pilot study](#). Now there is a UK-wide BSL Act, the evidence from 18 years of this system could be useful for other exam boards round the UK.

4.3 *Exams and deaf candidates in Scotland*

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4.4 *Impact of the BSL (Scotland) Act on deaf education in Scotland*

Rob Wilks and Rachel O'Neill published a [second report in October 2022](#) showed the results of interviews with key stakeholders in deaf education in Scotland and Wales.

Having conducted a review of the impact of the Scottish national BSL plan on deaf education, in particular its issues, failures and successes, during Phase 1 of this project, the purpose of this second report was to ascertain whether there is an appetite at government or local authority level for deaf children to be educated in either BSL- medium or bilingual schools – or whether parents of deaf children expect to see such provision – within the countries of Scotland and Wales, which have Welsh- and Gaelic- medium education provision respectively. Nineteen interviews with a total of 21 participants were carried out with Scottish and Welsh Government civil servants, national public body representatives, council officials, college and university representatives, families of deaf children, Teachers of the Deaf and third sector employees.

There were marked differences in the conceptualisation of BSL as a language between top- mid- and low-level, with the top-level tending to veer towards BSL as a communication tool and having a greater awareness of language policy and the right to language. At the mid- and low-level, there was however, a tendency to frame deaf children according to their audiological status, and that even though health – more specifically audiology – is outside education, it clearly exerts a huge force over the work of ToDs which could explain their attitudes towards BSL. Gaps in early years provision for deaf children also emerged as an important theme, with recognition that it is this period that is vital for language acquisition. The final theme identified through the interview stage was the availability or scarcity of resources in both Wales and Scotland for the teaching of BSL in deaf education.

Recommendations include developing a new profession of BSL therapists to support efforts to develop BSL in deaf children in early years, the development of language pedagogies courses, the commissioning of mapping exercise of BSL teachers, the expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate courses to provide opportunities to develop fluency in BSL, initial teaching training courses that incorporate BSL, and training for qualified teachers, supplementary resources and language sabbaticals for qualified teachers and teachers of deaf children.

The Scottish Government is currently consulting with deaf communities on the content of the second national BSL plan; they have been interested to use our research findings to frame the education part of the next national BSL plan which will run from 2024 – 2030.

4.5 *Comparing views of teachers about bilingual education in Scotland and South Africa*

[Here is the project website](#). The project team completed analysis of the data and a poster for a

Bilingualism Matters conference held in 2022. The [poster is here](#). The team is now producing articles about the project, which will include one from the person who produced the multilingual multimodal survey, Irma Maré from Wits University, Johannesburg.

4.6 *NHS Lothian Audiology crisis*

Following on from last year's report, the situation in the NHS Lothian area has been serious. There are hundreds of late diagnosed children, some deaf from birth diagnosed as late as 7 or 8. These children need new kinds of support and there has been a surge in demand for services for deaf children in West Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders. The NHS Lothian has been slow to liaise with the five local authorities concerned. The authorities have also been slow to ask for additional funds or to change the type of support they had on offer. Midlothian Council has been successful in supporting families and the parents' action group, Families Failed by Lothian Audiology Action Group (FLAAG), is based in this council area. In response to the situation, which came to light in late 2021, [Rachel has produced a blog](#) to outline the issues. Rachel now has a PhD student, Hatice Yarar, working on the issues of bilingual families with late diagnosed deaf children. Some of these children have been refused CIs, because of the long period without using hearing aids. In some authorities Signalong is being used and in others the existing (unwritten) language policies of not using BSL have continued, despite the local authority BSL plans which have to be in place because of the BSL(Scotland) Act 2015.

Last week in the Scottish Parliament ([8.6.23 there was a debate](#)) which gathered cross-party support for the families and attitudes towards the family support group appear to be improving. Several of the families have gained Co-ordinated Support Plans for their children. Unlike in England, we don't have EHCP plans which give statutory rights to parents and young people in Scotland. The CSP is the nearest legal document, but it has until recently rarely been applied to deaf children. With the help of the NDCS and lawyer Iain Nisbett, more deaf children are gaining this legal protection, outlined on the [Enquire website](#). Two or more agencies must be involved, for example a service for deaf children and regular speech and language therapy. The low number of specialist SLTs in the five affected local authorities is also a concern, so FLAAG is working with RCSLT to try to find funding for more specialist training. I am using Freedom of Information requests at present to gain information from NHS Lothian about the publication of their second report on children diagnosed since 2018, not in the December 2021 report. This is an area now ready for research, though in the initial stages the families needed support and information, not being interviewed. The [Taylor review of audiology services](#) in Scotland is expected imminently, but its remit was narrowly focused on NHS systems.

4.7 *Proposed undergraduate degree in Primary Education and BSL*

This degree is still under preparation. We have had School and College approval, but unexpectedly the university disability service told us they could not support a group of signing deaf students. It is true that DSA is becoming increasingly difficult to use. We have raised this issue with the BDA as the developments from the Department for Education in England in relation to DSA are likely to affect signing deaf students the most from 2024, as they use such high levels of this grant. This degree is currently on hold as the School of Education and Sport reviews its priorities at a time of budget uncertainty. We are hoping that it will be fully approved in the next 6 months with the first applicants starting in September 2025. However, the proposal could experience further delays. Despite the existence of the University's BSL plan, in practice inclusion for deaf students is still hard to implement. I am liaising with Lord Blunkett to see if we can use the DSA more flexibly and share DSA between deaf students in groups, employing our own interpreting pool.

4.8 *Deafness & Education International and associated activities*

After her 3-year term of office was over, Rachel has now handed on the co-editorship to two new co-editors, Dr Kristin Snoddon from Toronto Metropolitan University in Canada and Dr Elizabeth Levesque from the Victorian Deaf Education Institute in Australia. Dr Jill Duncan remains as an editor too (University of Newcastle, Australia).

[The Scottish Sensory Centre \(SSC\) journal club](#) is continuing, and has proved to be a good way to recruit new reviewers for D&EI. These sessions are usually led by PhD students or post docs. A recent session on the Henner and Robinson 2023 [open access paper](#) Crip Linguistics Goes to School created a lively debate.

4.9 *BSL Toolkit*

As a result of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, Education Scotland was tasked with producing a guide for Deaf parents about the education system, and for schools about better interacting with Deaf parents. The original remit of the toolkit was expanded to offer guidance also to services for deaf children in relation to BSL use. The [online toolkit](#) can be used flexibly by parents and practitioners. Research by Dr Beverley Ferguson from Education Scotland and collaborative work with Rachel O'Neill and the Scottish British Deaf Association led to what we hope is a useful guide for Scottish local authorities and parents. Dissemination events have been online between April and June with the involvement of over 100 teachers, ToDs, parents of deaf children, deaf and hearing, and deaf young people themselves. The toolkit contains recommendations on levels of BSL for ToDs. It is not clear yet whether the Scottish COSLA group which runs local authorities and the Scottish Government will endorse these recommendations. We await Scottish Government consultation on the 2019 competencies for ToDs.

5. Heriot-Watt University – Dr. Annelies Kusters

5.1 *SIGNS@HWU*

SIGNS@HWU <https://signs.hw.ac.uk> is a group of nearly 30 signing researchers, both deaf and hearing, who focus on sign language studies and Deaf Studies. Situated in the Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies at Heriot-Watt University, the team was established as a cluster of the Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies in Scotland, with the aim of profiling the world-leading interdisciplinary research conducted at the university.

Disciplines in which we have expertise include sign linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, policy, sign language interpreting and translation, Deaf Studies, cultural studies, sociology, geography and anthropology. The team members have conducted in-depth research projects in various locales around the world, including the UK, Australia, the US, Indonesia, Finland, Kenya, India, Belgium, and Denmark.

Our research interests: The SIGNS@HWU team undertakes a wide range of projects, including on audism, brokering, the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, BSL linguistics, BSL teaching, business/employment, cochlear implants, deaf academics, deaf interpreters, deaf space, deaf students, Deaf Studies as a profession, deaf youth, demographics, gender, identity, International Sign, interpreting in different contexts (e.g., mental health, justice system, theatre, video-mediated, workplace), language attitudes/ideologies, migration/refugees, mobilities, political participation, queer communities, religion, sign language interpreting profession, sign language literature, sign language technologies, sign multilingualism, signing in the family, signing on TV, tourism, and translation. By navigating to <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/> and selecting the relevant keyword tags, you will be able to discover both current and previously completed projects that align with these themes.

5.2 *Research projects that were ongoing, started, or completed in the year 2022-2023 were:*

- Conclusion of the 6,5 year MobileDeaf project <https://mobiledeaf.org.uk> with its four subprojects. The project, funded by the European Research Council, investigated the international mobility of deaf people, focusing on how they connect and interact across borders. The research covers a spectrum of international deaf mobility, including migration, refuge-seeking, professional mobility like attending conferences, and tourism. The project is structured around four main themes: belonging, languaging, networks, and immobility,

exploring experiences of inclusion and exclusion, communication strategies, the creation of deaf spaces abroad, and barriers to mobility, respectively.

- "Interpreting for Mental Health Act Assessments" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/informhaa/>
- "Exploring interpreting services from a systemic lens" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/exploring-interpreting-services-from-a-systemic-lens/>
- "Deaf BSL users' preference for watching television" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/tv/>
- "Silent Harm: Empowering deaf women surviving domestic abuse post-Covid: An inclusive approach to resilience and recovery in rural areas" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/silentharm/>
- "Cross-signing in Japan and the UK" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/cross/>
- "Using BSL translated children's stories to introduce hearing parents with deaf children to Deaf culture and BSL" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/childrenliterature/>
- "Fostering deaf youth's identities through participatory research methods" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/identity/>
- "Deaf lesbian spaces and networks in London" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/queerdeafhomes/>
- "The gendered nature of the sign language interpreting profession" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/gender-interpreting/>
- "Exploring the possibility of a Master in Applied Deaf Studies" <https://signs.hw.ac.uk/projects/mads/>

5.3 *Our external engagement*

At SIGNS@HWU, our passion extends beyond academic engagement; it encompasses a wide array of experiences and initiatives in collaboration with diverse organizations, policymakers, NGOs, and other relevant entities. Our expertise ranges from delivering trainings for practitioners and interpreters, to offering consultancy services, commissioning targeted research, and designing research initiatives in partnership with organisations. We have undertaken these activities through a variety of engaging and impactful methods. From traditional face-to-face and online meetings and training sessions, to comprehensive reports, to innovative workshops that leverage art, visual methods and filmmaking, we strive to provide a well-rounded approach to our work. We are keenly interested in broadening the reach, range, and impact of our engagement work, as we believe that diverse methods of engagement lead to the richest insights and the most substantial outcomes.

6. City, University of London – Dr. Joanna Hoskin, PhD

6.1 *Language Disorder and BSL Therapy*

This year, the focus has been more on practical dissemination of work published in previous years.

Below is a summary of Dr. Hoskin's PhD and the DOTDeaf project to develop co-working between SLTs and their deaf colleagues who work as Deaf Language Specialists.

Hoskin, J., Herman, R., & Woll, B. (2023). Deaf Language Specialists: Delivering Language Therapy in Signed Languages. *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 28(1), 40–52. <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enac029>

7. University of Leeds – Professor Ruth Swanwick

7.1 *The early care and education of young deaf children and their caregivers in Ghana.*

Funded by the British Academy's Early Childhood Education Programme, supported through the Global Challenges Research Fund. Award ref: ECE190031.

This collaborative research project investigated early childhood care and education (ECCE) for young deaf children and their caregivers in Ghana. The aim of the work was to develop critical understandings of the social and resource contexts of young deaf children to support the

development of ECCE that can be replicated across different urban and rural contexts. We also investigated the multilingual contexts of deaf children in Ghana, the influences on caregivers' multilingual languaging and communication choices and the role of deaf leadership and mentoring in the early support infrastructure. As well as contributions to the ECCE knowledge base, the project aimed to build sustainable research and development capacity and Africentric ECCE scholarship. The project work concluded in January 2023.

Project findings

Deaf ECE Infrastructure

The development of an ECE infrastructure (screening, identification, and follow-up) requires financial resources and long-term investment and the challenges for Ghana and other LMICs for meeting international screening benchmarks are discouraging. However, looking ahead to change at the level of infrastructure for deaf children and their caregivers, there are reasons for optimism. Ghana has national legislation for universal access to early childhood education and for the development and protection of fully accessible kindergarten facilities. There is also a commitment from multiple stakeholders (including the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, the Ministry of Health, and the National Council for Persons with Disability) to the rights of children and young people with diverse learning needs to have equitable access to quality inclusive education. This legislative context suggests that there is scope and contextual readiness for the ECE for deaf children to be addressed.

Societal understandings of deafness and sign language

As well as the lack of resource, societal marginalisation and stigma also constrain early care and support. The misconceptions, fears, and prejudices that emerged from our interview data suggest limited understanding of childhood deafness (its causes, the consequences, and the communication possibilities) among the wider population and the fact that deaf people are not very visible in Ghanaian society. Caregiver feelings of grief, sadness, guilt and shame and their experience of burden is influenced by ways in which other children and adults respond to their deaf children and the experience of this stigma in the wider societal context. This experience often inhibits their coming forward to professionals to seek a confirmed diagnosis of hearing loss in the early years.

Community as a resource

The societal emphasis on community, shared responsibility, and the expectation of leadership from community and family elders also came through from the interview data. This is a social resource that could be leveraged for the benefit of deaf children and their families. When caregivers talked about their experience of support, they often referred to community leaders and organisations. Their comments revealed community interest and willingness to engage with deaf children and their caregivers and the availability of support from respected members of the community. The emphasis coming through these narratives on communal relationships and livelihoods is a departure from the discourse of the Euro-Western early intervention guidelines that emphasise the development of the individual and the provision of mainly external support focused on child-parent dyads and the nuclear family.

Faith and traditional beliefs also play an important part in caregivers' lives and strongly influence their first reactions to having a deaf child and subsequent experiences of acceptance. There is a role here for communal intergenerational support and care and for community leaders to positively influence the development environment and mediate local and national ECE initiatives. This could involve community-based intervention programmes via school, clinic or faith-based centres and the provision of shared spaces in these setting for parents to meet with each other and share their experiences.

The multilingual context of language development

The interviews revealed Ghana as a plurilingual society that tolerates the language and culture of different families and communities. Every Ghanaian community is a multilingual environment where children encounter not less than two languages as they

grow. In some contexts, some of the children grow up proficient in as many as four languages and can switch between them to facilitate their communications and interactions with others. This experience and acceptance of multilingualism could be extended to include the use of sign language in the home/community. However, caregiver decision making about communication is strongly influenced by the wide social-cultural dynamics surrounding language use and deafness where sign language is seen as separate from the multilingual culture of the society. The use of sign language is associated with minoritised individuals and communities, and this is disempowering for families and individuals. Whilst there are increasing initiatives to legitimise and valorise local languages, this does not extend to GhSL. In addition to this pressure, caregivers do not have manageable access to sign language training, they are physically and culturally disconnected from the school for the deaf, and do not benefit from supportive partnerships with deaf adult role models and mentors, and other professionals. The absence of an external infrastructure around early years support thus has far reaching consequences for individual development and family relationships as well as language and communication development.

Caregiver communication strategies

In Ghana most caregivers of deaf children are hearing and do not know Ghanaian Sign Language (GhSL). None of the caregivers that were interviewed had met a deaf person either as a role model or as a supporting mentor. Additionally, there is no support infrastructure for early identification and support, such as family coaching, individual and group training, and video modelling. Caregivers thus develop their own strategies for communicating with their deaf child: They use gestures, spoken language, facial expression, writing and drawing, demonstration, and most of them have developed their own 'home signs'. Even if they get access to sign language teaching it is on an irregular basis and is possible only once their child has started school. In this context caregiver communication choices are significantly influenced by negative societal attitudes to deafness and the lack of information about the communication possibilities of sign language.

Teacher development

Our interviews with teachers and caregivers revealed gaps in teacher preparation in relation to the different language and communication needs of children and families and the different multilingual and multimodal development contexts. Caregivers were thus exposed to over-simplified or polarised views of communication options (sign or spoken language), their (often multiple) home languages were not valorised, and they were not supported to consider a breadth of visual communication strategies.

The role of deaf adults in ECE

Through our research activities, we identified one of the main problems resulting from this lack of provision was that most caregivers do not have the opportunity to meet deaf adults in a professional capacity and are thus not exposed to the potential of sign language and visual communication until their children are of school age. For many of these children the nature of their hearing loss and the lack of access to hearing technologies at an early age also compromises their ability to develop good listening and spoken language skills. This leads to communication barriers between caregivers and their deaf children as well as impoverished experience of language and communication in general. As a result, deaf children fail to develop a strong language through which to thrive and grow socially and cognitively. This leads to further barriers to becoming literate, autonomous, empowered young people and adults, with the skills needed to contribute to community and society, thus exacerbating the inequities of marginalisation and discrimination.

Our discussion with deaf adults in this study revealed their emphasis on the use of sign language for communication with children who are deaf and an openness to other visual communication strategies (such as natural gesture) as strategies for caregivers to support the language and communication development of their children. The deaf adults

in this study used diverse resource materials to provide multimodal support to children and families including the use of web-based materials, television, radio, mobile phone applications, and social media as well as face-to-face teaching. They also served as role models and mentors for caregivers providing some assurances of their future providing a perspective from their own deaf experiences as well as culturally created solutions for effective living.

Our findings also revealed that deaf adults provided love and warmth to children and families and helped them, to make placement decisions. This aspect of their support was seen as very important in this context where there exists stigma, discrimination, and negative attitudes towards disabled and deaf people that can sometimes lead to rejection and abandonment by families.

Although deaf adults in Ghana provide these diverse services and support for families and their children, these are not systematised and structured. Most of the services and supports are provided by deaf adults on individual basis in their capacity as teachers. Therefore, there is a need for clear infrastructure on deaf leadership in early years to support caregivers and children who are deaf.

Project outcomes

Visual communication support

The project team have produced short videos in Ghanaian Sign Language (GhSL) that are captioned in written English, with English and Twi voice over. The video material designed for caregivers includes introductions from deaf people about their lives, their education, and their employment as well as some short sign language tuition excerpts and examples of interactions between deaf adults and young children.

The video materials are accompanied by a handbook for teachers and caregivers that provides introductory information about deafness, early support, assessment and educational provision. These materials have been disseminated via the six schools for the deaf in the original project to six head teachers and 60 teachers of the deaf, who work with over 200 caregivers.

This user group have reported on the positive impact of these materials in terms of communication support and have requested that the materials are further developed to cover more communication topics and produced in more than one local spoken language for all schools. If we are successful in receiving additional funding it is our plan to refine and extend these materials so that we have a portfolio of 10 short training videos in five major languages of Ghana (English, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, and Twi). This will be used to develop the participants' multimodal communication and teaching strategies that support young deaf children. Materials will be accessible to participants through the password protected project YouTube channel and on pen drives. This use of technology is sufficiently supported across the project sites and has proved successful.

Policy development

At an in-person meetings with **The Ministry of Education** we had the opportunity to make a case for early education for deaf children and their caregivers to be given a specific focus in the Ghana Inclusive Education policy because of the linguistic and cultural experiences of being deaf, and the complexities of caregiving.

We have held briefing meetings with the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD) office during the project. At our final meeting our discussions with the Executive Director of GNAD, Mr Juventus Duorinaa and his team centred on the role of deaf leadership ECE. Juventus has remarked on the way this project has changed the perspectives and the potential of the deaf community to ensure that the needs of very young deaf children and their caregivers are understood by the society at large.

Over the course of the project, we have provided regular updates to the UEW leadership team. We outlined our plan to develop training for deaf leaders, teachers of the deaf, and teacher trainers and the central role that UEW will play in this intervention. The university is very keen to see that the initiatives developed by the project are sustained

and that the development of research and practice is supported through systematic approach to capacity building.

Capacity building

An important aspect of this work has been the establishment of research and development capacity in Ghana beyond the life of the project. This has involved the development of the research team and specific training around methodologies, writing for publication, and the development of leadership and mentoring skills. The sustainability of the work is also facilitated by the growth of new networks around the project and the team's contribution to African scholarship and global conversations about early education in LMICs .

As one of the outcomes of the award we have secured a book contract with Oxford University Press: *The Early Care and Education of Deaf Children in Ghana* to be published in the OUP Perspectives on Deafness series. This is a collaborative writing endeavour across all team members that is intended to support the development of scholarship in this area and through which we are also providing mentorship and bespoke support for early career female academics on the project team.

Project Publications

Swanwick, R., Fobi, D., Fobi, J., & Appau, O. (2022). Shaping the early care and education of young deaf children in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 91, 102594.

Fobi D, Swanwick R, Fobi J and Doku R (2022). Promoting deaf adults' participation in the early care and education of deaf children in Ghana. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*.

Swanwick R, Fobi D, Fobi J and Appau O (2022). Shaping the early care and education of young deaf children in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 91,102594. Swanwick R, Fobi J and Appau O (2022). The multilingual context of early support for deaf children and their caregivers in Ghana. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*.

Swanwick R, Oppong A, Offei Y, Fobi D, Appau O, Fobi J and Frempomaa F (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on deaf adults, children, and their families in Ghana. *Journal of the British Academy*, 8, 141–165.

Web site <https://deafed.leeds.ac.uk/>

Case study - <https://medium.com/university-of-leeds/the-power-of-visual-communication-119edc88fd9e>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/UniLeedsGlobal/status/1485620396271575044>

Related grant applications pending

British Academy International Writing Workshop: Dynamics of knowledge in deaf education: Developing southern theory in writing workshops for emerging scholars in Africa (£30K)

AHRC/DFG Challenging Multilingual Research Methodologies: Communicative Repertoires and Practices of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and their Families in Multilingual Contexts (£400K)

7.2 *Communication for Children with Hearing Impairment to optimise Language Development (Comm4CHILD)*

Funded by Horizon 2020 Call: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Networks Comm4CHILD is a consortium implementing an innovative approach for optimising the communicative skills and social inclusion of children with hearing impairment.

Comm4CHILD addresses the large inter-individual heterogeneity in brain plasticity, cognitive resources, and linguistic abilities, and takes full advantage of this heterogeneity to support efficient communicative skills in children with hearing impairment. A group of 15 early stage researchers (ESRs) will be trained in research and intervention in a cross-sectoral way. ESRs individual research projects are conceptualized within three work packages: biology (i.e. anatomical variations of the cochlea and cerebral functional

reorganisation), cognition (i.e. working memory, multimodal integration in communication), and language (i.e. inter-individual differences in speech intelligibility and spelling ability). The specific ESR project taking place at Leeds centre on the multilingual language and communication development of deaf children and multimodal communication repertoires of children and families:

7.2.1 *The Acquisition of Multiple Spoken Languages in deaf children with Cochlear Implants who grow up in Plurilingual Contexts - Elettra Casellato*

The research focuses on the context for spoken language development in deaf children who wear Cochlear Implants and come from plurilingual and multicultural families. To this day, scientific literature about children who are d/Deaf and hard of hearing has focused on estimating their linguistic development quantitatively, in order to compare them to their hearing, *'typically developed'* peers. This has been done by assessing d/DHH children with tests created for and standardised on a hearing (and often) monolingual population. Few researchers have posed their attention on the role of context and amount of exposure to each language as significant for these children's language development. This study aims to bring attention to these aspects as we believe they are crucial to understanding their language and communication development. This study will focus on young deaf children who have been fitted with cochlear implants and grow up in plurilingual and multicultural families. A specifically created questionnaire will be used to gather data about the family linguistic background and habits, and will be paired with parental semi-structured interviews. SOLOM will be used to gain a general understanding of the child's linguistic skills in both English and in the other language(s) used in the child's environment. LENA technology will also be used to record the exposure the child has to each language during two typical days, to see if and how these data relate to the child's linguistic abilities reported by both professionals and parents.

7.2.2 *Multimodal Communication in the Presence of Sensory and Communicative Asymmetries – Nathalie Czeke*

In a social-constructivist approach, we investigate how individuals with different experiences and resources of language and communication draw on multimodal communication strategies in order to accommodate sensory and communicative needs. We focus on episodes of joint attention in early parent-child interactions in the time prior to cochlear implantation when access to auditory input and/or sign language is often not (yet) available to children with severe to profound hearing loss. Moving away from predominantly language-driven approaches of the past, the current project picks up on the multimodal nature of communication and, in a more holistic approach, goes beyond the bimodal distinction of spoken and/or sign language(s) when looking at early interactions. The aim of the project is (1) to reveal the potential of multimodal communication strategies in making communication accessible to children who are deaf or hard of hearing while facilitating interactions with their hearing family members and peers; and (2) to understand how multimodal communication strategies are influenced by individual affordances, context and the interactional situation. Video-recorded data of unstructured play sessions between parents and children (9-18 months of age) with severe to profound hearing loss will be collected in collaboration with the Yorkshire Auditory Implant Service (YAIS) at Bradford Teaching Hospitals, NHS Foundation Trust (UK). Detailed multimodal analysis with ELAN, an annotation tool for audio and video recordings, will be used to identify and understand multimodal communication strategies involved in initiating and sustaining episodes of joint attention while offering a more systematic approach to multimodal analysis of early interactions. The application of findings, emphasizing individual resources rather than deficits, will be relevant to early intervention with families and will provide parents with informed guidance on how to make communication more accessible to their child, especially within the critical period of the first year/s of life that form the building blocks for later (language) development.

Collaborators: Bradford Teaching Hospitals (BRAD) Laboratoire de Psychologie et NeuroCognition (CNRS LPNC) Grenoble Images Parole Signal Automatique (CNRS GIPSA-lab) Centre Comprendre et Parler (CCP) Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

7.3 *BSL Pedagogy in UK Schools*

We are applying for new funding in collaboration with Dr Dai O'Brien at University of York St John around the development of school based BSL pedagogy. This project aims to strengthen existing and develop new BSL pedagogy in UK schools for deaf and hearing students and identify priorities for deaf teacher preparation. In seeking to describe and shape school-based BSL pedagogy this work will engage with and challenge understandings of modern language learning in the school context and will be approached from a socio-linguistic perspective that recognises the different language learning contexts and experiences of deaf and hearing learners and professional development considerations for deaf BSL teachers.

8. University of Manchester – Professor Alys Young, PhD, FAcSS, CQSW, and Dr. Katherine Rogers, PhD, FHEA

8.1 *Social Research with Deaf people (SORD) website*

Our bilingual website contains a vast amount of material on over 13 years of research project work, downloadable publications and access to a range of validated assessment tools in BSL. It can be reached at: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/sord> A large proportion of the work has summaries or extended documents published in BSL as well. It is intended for a professional and academic audience but we have ensured there is a lot of material available also for lay audiences. The remit of our research group includes some projects of educational interest but is more extensive. The following is a summary of only those projects/publications that seem to fall within the interest of the sign bilingual consortium and that are current or recently completed. Our work extends into health and social care and a range of work in interpreting/translation. The archive of previous and wider interest projects and publications can be accessed on the website.

8.2 *The READY Project (Researching Emerging Adulthood in Deaf Youth)*

This is a prospective longitudinal research study of deaf young people aged 16 to 19 at first point of entry into the study (funded by NDCS). We are no longer looking for participants and we are now in our last year of this study project. We have also completed 48 interviews with deaf young people, over half completed by our young deaf co-inquirer group. We have completed a full third wave of data collection.

The study website is: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/thereadystudy/>

The formal academic article introducing the cohort of 163 deaf young people with focus on self-determination and well-being only have been published in the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education. It is free to access:

Young, A., Espinoza, F., Dodds, C., Squires, G., Rogers, K., Chilton, H., and O'Neill, R. (2023). Introducing the READY Study: DHH Young people's Well-Being and Self-Determination. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, enad002, <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enad002>

The READY study is a partnership project between University of Manchester (SORD; Manchester Centre for Audiology and Deafness; School of Environment, Education and Development) and the University of Edinburgh (Scottish Sensory Centre; Department of Deaf Education).

8.3 *Effectiveness and cost effectiveness of home based early intervention in South Africa*

Funded by the MRC core research budget, this project investigates the effectiveness of the HI HOPES early intervention programme for deaf children and their families in South Africa; it validates for use with deaf children (regardless of language/modality) the SA

national ELOM (Early Learning Outcome Measure) enabling benchmarking of deaf children against the SA Early Childhood Development Standards developed in partnership with UNICEF. The project began in April 2022 and runs for two years as a partnership between SORD University of Manchester and the Centre for Deaf Studies, University of the Witwatersrand.

8.4 *Inspiring Young Deaf People into Research (IYDPIR)*

Funded by the University of Manchester Widening Participation (WP) programme, IYDPIR specifically aims to address underrepresentation in higher education. We would like to emphasise that this project focuses on engagement rather than research. As part of this initiative, three Deaf post-doctoral SORD team members visited deaf schools, colleges, and youth clubs. Our primary objective was to educate and empower Deaf young people by sharing our personal experiences as Deaf academics. We discussed our journeys in becoming and being Deaf academics, as well as how we navigated our way into working as researchers and provided insights into the research process.

We are pleased to report that the feedback we have received thus far has been incredibly positive. Meeting Deaf academics has been highly valued, and it has inspired some individuals to consider attending university. Furthermore, the young people we engaged with now have a clearer understanding of the requirements for pursuing higher education.

8.5 *Completed PhD - Jane Russell*

Funded by the ESRC, Jane's work explores parent perspectives on good outcomes for deaf children. For publications and extended profile see:

[https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/jane-russell\(00cbaf78-a1da-4efd-a20c-7b4dfda27730\)/publications.html](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/jane-russell(00cbaf78-a1da-4efd-a20c-7b4dfda27730)/publications.html)

8.6 *PhD students*

SORD has a vibrant sign bilingual doctoral student community with all students being proficient in BSL and English. The following only refers to those current/recent student projects that have a deaf child/family/educational focus. Further details of other doctoral student projects past and present can be found on our website.

8.6.1 *Claire Dodds*

Funded through the READY study, Claire's PhD focusses on social networks (their constitution and function) for young deaf people in transition to adulthood. For publications and extended profile see:

[https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/claire-dodds\(86ffdf2e-d98e-4c5a-b49d-c26792d36de2\)/publications.html](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers/claire-dodds(86ffdf2e-d98e-4c5a-b49d-c26792d36de2)/publications.html)

8.6.2 *Rosemary Oram*

Funded by the ESRC, Rosemary's work concerns parenting assessments in relation to safeguarding in instances when one or more parent is a Deaf BSL (British Sign Language) user. For publications and extended profile see:

<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/persons/rosemary.oram-postgrad/publications/>

The first paper from this study is now in press: Oram, R., Young, A. and Cartney, P. (2023, in press). Now you see them, now you don't: Professional recognition of specialist professionals working with Deaf British Sign Language parents in child safeguarding. *Qualitative Social Work*.

www.signbilingual.org