

The 2014 Symposium on Sign Bilingualism and Deaf Education

Sign bilingualism in Taiwan (Part one: Taipei)

Towards the Establishment of a Multi-Sensory to Language Acquisition

Model for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Taiwan

Hsiu-wen Chang¹, Ya-Lin Hsu¹, Yu-San Ku², Yijun Chen², & Ying-Yu Huang¹

¹ Department of Speech and Hearing Disorders and Sciences, National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences, Taipei City, Taiwan

² Institute of Linguistics, National Chung Cheng University, Chiayi County, Taiwan

Since the universal newborn hearing screening program was implemented in 2012 in Taiwan, earlier identification of hearing loss has resulted in a prompt attention in the establishment of best clinical practices and appropriate early-intervention (EI) service to meet the diverse needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) and their families. A primary goal of the early intervention for the children who are D/HH is to facilitate age-appropriate language development, regardless of the communication options (e.g., listening and spoken language, sign language, or visually supported spoken language) chosen by the family. The Joint Committee on Infant Hearing has thus stated that “a system of highly qualified EI service providers must be available for all families across the spectrum of communication choices” (JCIH, 2013).

The early-intervention providers in Taiwan has mainly specialized in providing supports and resources in listening and spoken language development. There is limited opportunity for the children who are D/HH and their families to access visual communication, which may include sign language systems. The purpose of this report is to describe an experimental project for the establishment of an EI model for providing a multi-sensory language learning program focusing on both spoken language and sign languages.

The Multi-Sensory to Language Acquisition Experimental Project has two

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goals. One of the goals is to observe whether early use of sign language with D/HH children hinders or interferes with spoken language development. The other goal is to promote sign language learning in EI service and to provide unbiased and accurate information about sign language through professional training process for the audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLP). To achieve these goals, a group of five D/HH children aged 3 to 5 are provided a weekly multi-sensory language class. An experienced and certified SLP designs the lesson plans and works collaboratively with one deaf teacher with native Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) skills and one hearing teacher with TSL interpreter certification, both of whom have extensive experience in teaching TSL. The hearing teacher assists in communication between the SLP and the deaf teacher and also gives TSL instructions to families of the D/HH children in this experimental project. On the other hand, as audiologists and SLPs are the main early-intervention providers to interact with families of D/HH children, a TSL class is set up in a master's program in communication disorders to promote the importance of providing early sign language learning opportunities for D/HH children.

The Multi-Sensory to Language Acquisition Experimental Project started from March this year and a video footage will be presented to give a glimpse of the experimental project in action.

References

Joint Committee on Infant Hearing. (2013). Supplement to the JCIH 2007 Position Statement: Principles and Guidelines for Early Intervention After Confirmation That a Child Is Deaf or Hard of Hearing. *Pediatrics*, 131(4), e1324-e1349.