



# Deaf Emergent Writers in Grades 3-6

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## Topic & Purpose

Emergent writing is the process through which students express ideas in print, beginning with drawing and scribbling and progressing to writing letters, words, and phrases. In the case of multilingual students, they engage in translanguaging practices, utilizing their entire linguistic and semiotic repertoires to convey meaning. There is a scarcity of research investigating the writing characteristics of deaf emergent writers in upper elementary, particularly concerning the interconnected phenomena of emergent writing, translanguaging, and language deprivation.

This case study aimed to analyze the writing characteristics of deaf students in grades 3-6, focusing on emergent writing development, translanguaging, and the impact of language deprivation on their writing skills. Out of a sample of 385 deaf students from across the nation, 42 deaf students without additional disabilities were identified as demonstrating emergent writing skills. The researchers examined these students' pre- and post- recount writing samples for growth in emergent writing, translanguaging applications, and features unique to language deprivation.

## Study Outline

## Findings

- The findings showed that most students improved their writing skills over an academic year, but nine students did not demonstrate growth.
- A large number of students documented the corresponding written words for each signed word without adding prepositions, adjectives, and adverbs found in facial expressions and visual-spatial features in writing. Being able to add these linguistic features into print requires higher metalinguistic knowledge of both languages.
- Incomplete ideation was a common unique feature of language deprivation.
- The study suggests that language deprivation, not deafness, contributes to these writing characteristics of deaf students between eight to thirteen years old.

Recommendations include early intervention and teacher training in language access, explicit modeling and teaching of visual-centric multimodalities, translanguaging pedagogical strategies, and fostering multilingual/multimodal communities inside and outside the classroom. These systemic solutions may reinforce deaf students' language access and writing growth.

## Ideas to Consider

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