



Contemporary Secondary Writing Instruction With Deaf Students

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Topic & Purpose

For secondary deaf students transitioning to adulthood, writing is necessary for living independently, working, and participating in college. There is wide variation in writing outcomes in deaf students, in large part due to diverse experiences with language acquisition and development. There is a large gap in research identifying approaches that are effective in accelerating writing development among secondary deaf students, especially for those who have experienced language deprivation. The researchers sought to provide a broad picture of contemporary secondary writing instruction with deaf students.

- The researchers implemented a mixed-method design consisting of a nation-wide survey followed by focus groups.
- Survey results from 222 deaf education teachers across settings were analyzed quantitatively.
- Ten teachers who had responded to the survey also participated in three focus groups organized by level and setting.
- Teachers reviewed summary data from each survey topic and provided their explanations and interpretations.
- Teacher comments from the focus groups were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively.

Study Outline

Findings

Teachers spend, on average, more than three hours a week on writing instruction, grammar instruction, and writing activities. They prioritize individualized writing instruction. They do not stress argumentative writing or high stakes assessments like their general education counterparts. They felt most confident addressing concrete writing skills like punctuation and grammar, and least confident in teaching complex skills such as synthesizing information. When asked to rank writing skills by importance, most teachers reported translating ideas to text as the top priority. Spelling and punctuation were the least chosen skills. Most teachers reported benefits in using digital tools but felt untrained to make effective use of the technology. Regarding their students' writing skills, the majority reported average skill in generating ideas. Revising writing and paraphrasing were reported as students' most challenging skills. A large number of teachers felt inadequately prepared to teach writing to DHH students and agreed that there is a great need for secondary DHH writing research, especially in implementing ASL/English bilingual approaches.

This study contributed toward a foundation of understanding for writing instruction in secondary deaf classrooms. Across educational settings, teachers agreed that language deprivation was a leading cause of literacy struggles, and that bilingual strategies benefitted student writers. Teachers expressed feeling inadequately prepared to teach secondary emergent writers, especially in the skills they identified as most important to learn.

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Ideas to Consider