

INFORMATION FOR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Research Project: Reading and dyslexia in deaf children II: The special case of deaf children who sign

We are a research team based at City University, in the Department of Language and Communication Science and the University of Bedford. We are conducting a study, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, that is looking at reading and dyslexia in signing deaf children. We would like to invite you to take part in this study.

Background to the study

Deaf children are widely known to have difficulties in reading, but there are no tests with deaf norms that can be used by teachers to measure deaf children's reading levels. In addition, given the genetic basis of dyslexia among hearing children, it is likely that a proportion of deaf children will also be dyslexic. However, dyslexia among deaf children is under-researched and poorly understood, consequently a diagnosis of dyslexia in a deaf child is rare. This has implications for the lack of support deaf children receive, in comparison to the support provided for hearing children with dyslexia.

We have recently collected data on oral deaf children. In this phase of our research, we are collecting data on signing deaf children.

This study has 2 principle aims:

- To develop norms on selected tests reading and reading-related skills based on 70 deaf signing children which will be of use to teaching staff in schools who wish to evaluate deaf children's reading abilities according to their communication preference (oral vs sign).
- To investigate patterns of performance across the different tests in order to identify groups of children (good deaf readers, average deaf readers and poor deaf readers). We will further examine the test results of poor deaf readers in comparison with previously collected data on oral deaf and hearing dyslexic children to explore whether a dyslexic profile exists amongst poor deaf readers.

To find out more about the project and to follow its progress, please visit the project website:
<http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/~sbbg125>

What is involved in participating in the study

To take part in the study children should meet the following criteria:

- Prelingually deaf
- Currently in Year 5 or Year 6 (aged 10-11 years)
- Have attended an English speaking school from Year 1
- Use BSL as their dominant language
- No report of significant medical, neurological or other diagnosed developmental disorders (e.g. autism, cerebral palsy, visual impairment)

The assessments would be administered by our research assistant (RA) who is a trained Speech and Language Therapist with experience of working with deaf children and their parents and will be sensitive to their needs. The RA would discuss the timing of assessments with staff to create the minimum disruption for all concerned and work round school timetables. The assessments would be carried out in three-four sessions of about one hour, each within the same week, in a quiet space. We have found that children of this age cope well with sessions of this length and generally enjoy completing the tasks. However, if a child appears unwilling to continue for any reason, the session will be stopped and the child will be taken back to their classroom. If parents agree, parts of the session will be video recorded to check the children's responses later.

If you agree to take part in our study we would ask you to pass on the invitations to participate and the consent forms to parents of children that meet our inclusion criteria. If you think it would be helpful, our RA could be available to answer any questions that the parents might have about the study, either at the time you distribute the forms, or at a later date if that is more convenient.

We would also like to ask parents complete a short questionnaire containing questions about their child's development including information about hearing aid or cochlear implant use, exposure to reading in the home and a brief medical history of their child. Information about language and reading problems in the immediate and extended family, parental education, occupation, ethnicity and geographical location will also be collected.

Children's teachers will also be asked to complete a questionnaire about their assessment of children's language and reading levels and methods used to teach reading at their school. Given the frequent co-occurrence of emotional and behavioural difficulties with dyslexia (Rose Report, 2009) and attentional problems (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2009), parents and teachers will be asked to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) which taps these areas.

With parents' permission, we will provide teaching staff with a summary of each child's results. Procedures will guarantee anonymity and confidentiality of all data, which will be kept in locked filing cabinets and password protected electronic files accessible only to members of the research team. Each child will be given a number, and the list of names and contact details will be stored separately from any other data, in a password protected electronic document.

If you are willing to participate, please return the attached consent form in the stamped addressed envelope. If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for taking time to read this.

Yours sincerely,

Ros Herman, Penny Roy, Fiona Kyle & Catherine Barnett

Contact details

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All proposals for research using human subjects are reviewed by an ethics committee before they can proceed. This proposal was reviewed by the School of Community and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. If there is an aspect of the study which concerns you, you may make a complaint. City University has established a complaints procedure via the Secretary to the Research Ethics Committee. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary of the Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is 'Reading and dyslexia in deaf children.' You could also write to the Secretary at:

Anna Ramberg, Secretary to Senate Ethics Committee, CRIDO, City University, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB Email: anna.ramberg.1@city.ac.uk