
EFFECT OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS WITH HEARING
IMPAIRMENT PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Acquisition of any language goes through the senses of hearing and it enhances the usage of the language and comprehension. The student with hearing impairment cannot follow this process adequately which makes learning of any language including English difficult for these groups of students. The authors of this paper tried to find out to what extent good learning environment assists the student with hearing impairment in their English language performance. In doing so, the authors identified the problem; purpose of the study as to finding out the level at which learning environment could enhance English Language performance of secondary school students with hearing impairment in an inclusive education setting. Some research questions were posed to help discover the level at which learning environment can assist the student with hearing impairment perform better in English language. Hypotheses were also stated. Data's were collected from such environment judged well by the authors as standard inclusive setting. The population of the study comprises of all the students of Ganaka International School for Inclusive Education Jos. The sample comprised of JSS 3 students who were 8 (eight) students with hearing impairment in the class. Since the research is on the hearing impaired, all the students in the class who fell under this category are selected for the study. The data's collected were analyzed and discussions made on them. Conclusion was made with some recommendations.

Introduction

Hearing impairment portrays one who has problem with hearing either because there is disturbance or damage in the ear, which prevents the child from hearing conversational, normal or loud speech, with or without amplification, and it adversely affects educational performance for the facts that most of man's learning come through the five senses and their interaction with the environment.

The acquisition of English language and literacy skills probably represents the most formidable challenge confronting educators of children with hearing impairment (Karchmer & Mitchell, 2003). The primary language for many children with hearing impairment is American Sign Language (ASL). English is learned as a second language, and they learn it via the written form. This creates a formidable, dual learning task, that is learning to read a phonetically-based writing system while simultaneously learning a second language. Inability to read and write well means that a child with hearing impairment will have difficulty communicating with hearing people both in and out of the school. It may also inhibit the child's ability to advance in academic work. People learning English as a second language often become perplexed as to what it really meant. On the other hand, American Sign Language has few idioms. It is a much more direct language, and this can inhibit learning of English Language; hence teachers need to be more committed in the task of educating students with hearing problems. McKee (2011) asserts that success or failure in either reading or knowledge of English, can dramatically affect academic outcome for children with hearing impairment. This is because all good learning hinges on the ability of a child to read, understand and comprehend what has been read. If the hearing impaired is not well groomed in English language, comprehension of any school subject becomes a problem and may lead to continuous school failure and drop out of school.

Deaf culture (2011) said that one of the greatest challenges faced by deaf people is the acquisition of language skills. People who are born with hearing problems or develop them very early do not learn spoken language the way hearing people do. Since written English is based on spoken language, deaf children have difficulty learning English and expanding their vocabularies over time. Children who first learn to communicate using sign language will have a harder time learning English, since American Sign Language is not based on spoken or written English structure. Deaf children who start with sign language must learn English as a second language. For these reasons, many deaf children are taught using oral education methods that concentrate on English.

For a child with hearing impairment to be able to learn English language and get good grades, some measures have to be put into consideration. One of the good things that assist them learn English language properly is providing them good environment to facilitate their learning. These could include early diagnosis and intervention, school environment that have facilities like interpreters, committed tutors, note takers, good home that does not inhibit them, and of course modern technologies like using computer software and projectors to educate them. This is to provide them early, a highly stimulating and enriched learning environment, that can assist them acquire language early in life. Good learning environment where all the facilities the hearing impaired need to learn better is sine quo nan for their success in school at all times coupled with good school /home relationships.

THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

Moore (2001) opines that significant academic progress is more likely to occur in settings where the curriculum and instruction are communicatively accessible, uniquely designed, and delivered by individuals who have highly specialized skills to address the needs of children with hearing impairment. This kind of academic progress can be accessed in an inclusive education setting with provision of relevant committed personnel's which are not quite available in most of our regular schools.

Buckle & Bird (2011) is of the opinion that inclusion into mainstream education results in very significant gains in speech, language development, and literacy skills for children with hearing impairment. This is because mental and social development of children is influenced by the social world in which they are growing up. Therefore inclusion practices further promote the academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment.

The aim of education for any group or persons is to provide a saturated environment to stimulate the child's native traits and interest. The fact that heredity does set the limits, the power of enriched educational effort cannot be underrated. The influence of the environment indicates that good teachers and good schools can have good effects on any group of learners as a whole and particularly on individuals' students with hearing impairment.

In this paper, the authors used Ganaka International School for inclusive education Jos, as a test case on how learning environment can influence the English language performance of students with hearing impairment. To do this, the authors provided the statement of the problem, stated the purpose of the study. Establish two research questions and two hypotheses, as well as explained the methodology of the study including the research design, population of the study, Instrument of data collection, validation of instrument, procedure of data collection in order to enhance the research efforts. There is finally discussion on the findings; conclusion and some recommendations were made.

Statement of the problem

The poor performance of the students with hearing impairment in schools is of great concern to teachers, parents and other stakeholders including the children themselves. Most of the children at this school level find it very difficult to communicate or be communicated to, due to lack of language which inhibits understanding in an individual. This has made it difficult for the child with hearing impairment to acquire language. It is from acquisition of language that an individual build upon to learn English language as a school subject and used it to acquire other school subjects. The hearing impaired come into school without the basics. English language is learnt through auditory, spoken, reading, and writing as a pattern, and the hearing impaired is found wanting in all these. The student with hearing impairment is born into a hearing family 95% of the time, and is always left alone without assistance to learn language early in life, like the hearing peers because of the family confusion and ignorance. They are never

exposed early or even at any time to the environments that can assist them in learning of English language. There is a need for resourceful, accommodating and accessible environment that is enriched to enhance and promote the learning needs of students such as it can be found in Ganaka International School for Inclusive Education, Jos.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which learning environment could improve the English language performance of secondary students with hearing impairment in Ganaka School for inclusive education Jos.

Other specific objectives are:

1. To find out the level at which learning environment could enhance English Language performance of secondary school students with hearing impairment in an inclusive education setting.
2. To document the extent to which hearing impairment affect learning of English language of the students with hearing impairment?
3. To examine the challenges students with hearing impairment faced in learning English language.

Research questions

1. Is there any effect of learning environment on the English language performance of students with hearing impairment?
2. What are the effect of hearing impairment on English language performance of students with hearing impairment?

Hypothesis

- 1 Students with hearing impairment interaction with learning environment will have no significant effect on their performance in English language.
- 2 There will be no significant effect of hearing impairment on English language performance of students with hearing impairment.

Methodology

Research design

The design adopted for this study is correlational research design. This design enables the research to discover the relationship between learning environment and good performance in English language of the students with hearing impairment through the use of correlation coefficients.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprises of all the students of Ganaka International School for Inclusive Education Jos. The sample comprised of only JSS 3 class, and it uses 8 (eight) students with hearing impairment in the class as subjects for this study.

THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

Since the research is on the hearing impaired, all the students in the class who fell under this category are purposely selected for the study.

Instrument of data collection

The instruments used for this research are:

- 1 The English language result of the subjects for first term, second term, and third term in JSS 1.
- 2 The English language result of the subjects for first term, second term, and third term in JSS 11.
- 3 The English language result of the subjects for first term, second term, and third term in JSS 111.

Validation of instrument

The instruments used were the class examination of the students which had been subjected to expert judgment before they were used.

Procedure of data collection

The researchers went to Ganaka International School for Inclusive Education Jos to collect the assessment booklets of the students from JSS1 to JSS111. It is from the assessment booklet that the results for English language were extracted for this research.

Research question 1

Is there any effect of learning environment on the English language performance of students with hearing impairment?

Table 1: Summary of the result of JSS 3 students with hearing impairment in English language from JSS1 to JSS3

S/N	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Comment
	total	Avg.	total	Avg.	total	Avg.	
1	96	32%	160	53.1%	195	65%	Very good
2	94	31.1%	141	47%	184	61.3%	Good progress
3	114	38%	178	58.2%	185	61.6%	Good progress
4	119	39.1%	154	51.1%	186	62%	Good progress
5	129	43%	164	54.2%	190	63%	Good progress
6	127	43%	179	59.2%	190	63.3%	Good progress
7	150	50%	186	62%	189	63%	Average student
8	157	52.1%	168	59%	197	65.6%	Average student

Subject 1 has progress from 32% to 53% and 65% respectively. This is a very good progress.

Subject 2 moved upwards from 31.1% to 47% and to 61.3% which is a good progress.
 Subject 3 started with 39.1% to 51.1% and to 61.1% respectively; good progress.
 Subject 4 has progressed from 39.1% to 51.2% to 62% and it good progress.
 Subject 5 has 43%, 54.2%, and 63% respectively and this shows good progress.
 Subject 6 has 43% to 59.2%, and then 63.3% this has shown a sign of good progress.
 Subject 7 started with 50% to 62%, and to 63%. This is an average student; it is discovered that the students started on the average, progressed but not much, though the student made some progress.
 Subject 8 has 52.1% to 59% to 65.6%. This is like the case of subject 7. They started with a good average percentage, made some progress but not much.

This goes to support Moores (2001) who opined that significant academic progress is more likely to occur in settings where the curriculum and instruction are communicatively accessible, uniquely designed, and delivered by individuals who have highly specialized skills to address the needs of children with hearing impairment. This kind of academic progress can be accessed in an inclusive education setting with provision of relevant committed personnel's which are not quite available in most of our regular schools but can be found in Ganaka school for inclusive education.

Looking at the good progress made by these students, one can easily accept the assertion of Oyewo (2008) who said that in classroom leanings, a teacher can change carelessness of children to carefulness, ignorance to understanding and can cause a child to love or hate school life in the midst of provided facilities and good environment.

Table 2: summary of 1st year result of JSS3 students with hearing impairment in English language

S/N	Average of the 3 terms	Comment
1	32%	Poor
2	31.1%	Poor
3	38%	Poor
4	39.1%	Poor
5	43%	Poor
6	43%	Poor
7	50%	Average
8	52.1%	Average

The first term result to third term result of the students in JSS1 indicated that only 2 students are average, 2 were fair but below average and 4 were very poor. Therefore there is the indication that hearing impairment affects their performance especially in English language when 4 subjects out of 8 subjects performed woefully and only 2 were fair and 2 were average before the influence of good environment. Subsequently, environment influenced them and they all improved in their English language results

THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

when the failures even score high marks in standardize English language test/examinations.

From the result of JSS1 English language of JSS3 hearing impaired students, what Wyatte (2005) observed is supported as he stated that hearing impairment affects many aspects of life, with many psychological ramifications and various effects on how well a person with such impairment functions in the society. It is generally common knowledge that the hearing impaired children face more adversity than their hearing peers in terms of their educational and social development. As a result of this, their psychopathologies are impacted, sometimes in negative ways.

Recommendation

Going by the findings of this study, it can then be said that good learning environment is very vital to the good performance of students with hearing impairment in English language. Based on this therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Parent should endeavor to seek for help early for their wards that are hearing impairment as early intervention can assist the students be exposed early to language acquisition which will promote their learning of English language.
- 2) Inclusive education as one of the good learning environment should be advocated for all children with hearing impairment. Government should do all in her power to enforce this in Nigerian primary and secondary schools as it will assist the pupils with hearing impairment learn better.
- 3) All schools that practice inclusive education should employ staff for supportive services and get the necessary things for the students with hearing impairment as to enable them learn better.
- 4) Teachers should endeavor to collaborate with the available mediatory facilities (interpreters ,notetakers, relevant technology) to help the students with hearing impairment in their class English language performance.

Conclusion

Children with hearing impairment can meaningfully gain from an inclusive education setting with good quality interpreting, as it increases the quality of education content exposed to children with hearing impairment (Antia, 2007).This necessitate that all inclusive schools should have enough interpreters to cater for children with hearing impairment .

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