



Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Technology



Journal homepage: <http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/IJERT/>

Teachers' Perspectives on Interpreting Services

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore teachers' perspectives on interpreting services in the salvation army school for the Deaf. The study was guided by two objectives which include finding out Teachers' views on the academic impact of interpreting services; Investigate strategies that are used to maximize interpreting services. The study employed a case study design. The semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the teachers. The sample size of the study was ten teachers within the Salvation Army School for the Deaf in the Central Region of Ghana. Most of the respondents perceived that the academic impact of interpreting services includes effective communication and access to communication. Strategies used to maximize interpreting services were modern technology, workshop training, and motivation. The study, therefore, recommends that the Government of Ghana should motivate interpreters through awards and allowances, and ICT tools that aid interpreting services should be made available and accessible. The Government should periodically organize training sessions to equip interpreters with new vocabulary.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 08 May 2023

First Revised 26 Jun 2023

Accepted 17 Aug 2023

First Available online 18 Aug 2023

Publication Date 01 Sep 2024

Keyword:

Deaf,

Deafness,

Interpreting services,

Perspective,

Sign language.

1. INTRODUCTION

A deaf person is someone who has a hearing loss that is so severe that it precludes successful processing of spoken language through audition, with or without a hearing aid (Hockenbury, 2000; Nash & Castle, 1980; Ewa *et al.*, 2018). The instructional staff aims to maximize each student's communication abilities and potential by implementing comprehensive educational programming and making use of assistive listening tools (Naylor & Nyanjom, 2021; Bañados, 2006). These interventions increase the student's educational experience and support their success by facilitating visual access, lowering communication barriers, and fostering a positive social environment. Sign language interpretation is the process of facilitating communication between individuals whose native language is spoken and those whose native language has American Sign Language or another manual communication system (i.e., Signed Exact English, Pidgin Sign Language, etc.). In a situation involving communication, an educational interpreter serves as a go-between so that hearing and deaf participants can understand one another. They facilitate social interaction, reduce linguistic barriers, offer visual access, guarantee equal access to education, and accommodate various communication styles. These abilities are essential for developing a welcoming and encouraging learning environment for all students (Naylor & Nyanjom, 2021).

In the Salvation Army School for the Deaf, it was observed that learners tend not to benefit from both academic and extra curricula activities. To confirm this situation, the researcher conducted some special extra classes for these learners where the researcher used sign language, pictures, and videos as a medium of communication. These individuals performed better in exercises and assignments given to them after this special class than they do in the normal class. This implies that the interpreting services offered to these learners in the special class were either not enough for them during the normal class or interpreters are not adequate with modern skills. Hence, I sought to investigate the teachers' perspectives on interpreting services in the school.

Meanwhile, interpreting services, (which sign language is an example), are considered vital for learners' language and knowledge acquisition (Retter *et al.*, 2019).

Sign languages are the native languages of the deaf community and provide full access to communication. Although sign languages are primarily used by people who are deaf, they are also used by others, such as people who can hear but can't speak.

The study sort to investigate Teachers' Perspectives on Interpreting Services in the Salvation Army School for the Deaf in the Central Region of Ghana

The objective of this study is to:

- (i) Find out Teachers' views on the academic impact of interpreting services.
- (ii) Investigate strategies that are used to maximize interpreting services.

The research questions are the following:

- (i) What are Teachers' views on the academic impact of interpreting services in the Salvation Army School for the Deaf?
- (ii) What strategies are used to maximize interpreting services in the Salvation Army School for the Deaf?

The study was delimited to the Salvation Army School for the Deaf, teachers, interpreting services, educational performance, deaf students, and sign language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Self-efficacy theory, developed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the role of self-beliefs in shaping individuals' motivation, behavior, and performance. In the context of interpreting services, self-efficacy theory suggests that the provision of effective interpreting services enhances deaf students' belief in their ability to succeed academically. As a result, increased self-efficacy contributes to greater effort, persistence, and ultimately, improved academic performance. Bandura's efficacy theory is a prominent psychological framework developed by Albert Bandura. This theory focuses on the belief that individuals' perceptions of their abilities to perform specific tasks influence their behavior, motivation, and overall achievement. According to Bandura, individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to approach challenging tasks, persevere in the face of obstacles, and achieve their goals compared to those with low self-efficacy.

2.2. The Academic Impact of Interpreting Services

This literature review explores the academic impact of interpreting services in various educational settings. Interpreting services are crucial for enabling effective communication between students, teachers, and administrators who speak different languages or have diverse language needs. By analyzing a range of scholarly articles and studies, this review highlights the positive effects of interpreting services on student performance, language acquisition, and overall educational outcomes.

Interpreting services bridge language gaps, enabling students, teachers, and other stakeholders to fully participate in academic activities (McGhie-Richmond *et al.*, 2013). They further contended that effective communication ensures comprehension of instructional materials, classroom discussions, and educational interactions. Institutions providing interpreting services demonstrate commitment to inclusivity and accessibility for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, enhancing their sense of belonging and academic success. Research has highlighted the positive impact of interpreting services on academic achievement for students with limited English proficiency (Ward & Sanoudaki, 2021). Interpreting services facilitate comprehension of educational content, leading to improved learning outcomes. Interpreting services foster cultural exchange and appreciation for linguistic diversity within academic environments. They enable students and educators to understand and value different cultural perspectives, creating a more inclusive learning community. Interpreters assist teachers in conveying instructions and explanations effectively to students, leading to clearer communication and increased student engagement (Allard & Mertenich, 2016). Stronger teacher-student relationships positively impact academic experiences.

2.3. Strategies to Maximize Interpreting Services

To ensure high-quality interpreting services, it is important to hire interpreters who are qualified and certified in sign language interpreting. Certification, such as through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), demonstrates a standard level of competency and adherence to professional ethics. Interpreters should receive pre-session preparation materials, such as lecture notes or presentation slides, in advance to familiarize themselves with the subject matter (Napier, 2012). This allows for better understanding and accurate interpretation during the actual session. Effective collaboration between Deaf individuals, interpreters, and stakeholders maximizes the quality of interpreting services. They argued

that communication and discussion about preferences, specialized vocabulary, and cultural considerations help ensure accurate and culturally appropriate interpretations. Interpreters should engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge. This includes attending workshops, conferences, and training courses focused on sign language interpreting techniques, ethics, and cultural competency. Advancements in technology offer various tools to maximize interpreting services for the Deaf. Video remote interpreting (VRI) and video relay services (VRS) enable remote access to qualified interpreters. These technologies can help overcome geographical barriers and provide immediate access to interpreting services. Interpreters should be sensitive to Deaf culture and its linguistic nuances (Napier, 2009). Understanding cultural differences, using appropriate sign language registers, and respecting Deaf individuals' preferences contribute to effective communication and a positive interpreting experience. Hard of hearing is a term that refers to individuals who have a hearing loss ranging from mild to severe, and who use their voice and residual hearing – and occasionally sign language – for communication (Hallad, 2016). Some individuals with hearing loss may use assistive technology to communicate, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants; others may use interpretive services or read lips.

3. METHODS

This segment describes the methods used to gather data for the study. The research approach, design, sampling, instrument, data collection procedures, and analysis are described.

3.1. Research Approach

The approach used in the study was a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach was adopted because it helped to provide a rich description of the phenomenon under study. A qualitative approach is more appropriate for this research than a quantitative design because sign language services by the deaf cannot be quantified.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopted a case study design. A case study design was adopted because it provided background data for the problem, participants, and other relevant information for the study. A case study design enables the researcher to be involved personally and have a natural feeling of the objects in their natural setting. Case study design gives time and space to build a detailed understanding of the topic, establishing a sound platform from which to explore the factors influencing the case study in greater detail.

3.3. Sample Size and Technique

The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select ten teachers. The study adopted purposive sampling because it is the easiest and most convenient sampling method for this study since teachers of deaf students at Salvation Army School for the Deaf are readily available and willing to partake in the study and the fact that these teachers had information that aid this study.

3.4. Research Instrument

This study employed a semi-structured interview guide for data collection. McNamara and Tofail (2017), the interview is a verbal conversation between two people to collect relevant information for research. McNamara and Tofail (2017) further mentioned that an interview is

initiated by the interviewer to obtain research-relevant information and focused by him or on the content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis is the process that identifies analyses and reports the occurrences of themes in the data collected from the research areas. Data was analyzed based on the criteria set by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), which follows six steps:

- (i) Familiarizing with the data through thoroughly reading the transcription.
- (ii) Generation of initial codes. Putting labels or descriptions on a list of ideas developed the transcription as already read by the researcher.
- (iii) Searching for themes. Related codes are organized under different themes.
- (iv) Reviewing the themes. The themes developed are reviewed for their relevance and legitimacy of being called themes.
- (v) Defining and naming themes developed. Defining the overall content of the themes and the message it carries in it before producing a report.
- (vi) Producing a report. We are already satisfied with the themes developed.

From the above, the interview data were presented concerning themes developed from the data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This segment presents the results and discussion of findings on the Teachers' views of interpreting services on the academic performance of learners who are deaf in Salvation Army School for the Deaf. Through the use of a semi-structured interview guide, relevant data was collected through the responses of teachers at Salvation Army School for the Deaf. The research questions were used as a guide for analyzing the collected data.

4.1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Several points are considered:

- (i) Gender. It can be deduced that out of ten teachers who were sampled for the study, 4 of them were males whereas six were females. This disparity shows that females outnumbered their male counterparts in the study.
- (ii) Age. With regards to age distribution, 4 fell within 30 – 39 years. 5 of the respondents fell within 40-49 years, whereas 1 was within the range of 50-59 years. This clearly shows that the participants sampled for this study were experienced in education for the deaf.
- (iii) Educational Background. The educational qualifications of the respondents according to the data, four of the respondents had their first degree (bachelor's degree) while the remaining six had master's degree in special education.
- (iv) Codes. Respondents were coded (named) as Verbatim Expression of Teacher (VET).

4.2. Research Question 1: What are Teachers' views on the academic impact of interpreting services in Salvation Army School for the Deaf?

Two themes emerged from the data in responding to research question one. The themes included: Communication and Access to Communication. Three interview questions were coined and analyzed to ascertain the views of the participants. Below is a verbatim expression from some respondents:

“Interpreting services provide deaf students with access to spoken language and auditory information. Interpreters convert spoken language into sign language, allowing students to understand and participate in classroom discussions, lectures, and presentations. This access ensures that deaf students receive the same information as their hearing peers, enabling them to fully engage in the learning process.” (VET 3).

“Interpreting services facilitate effective communication between deaf students and their hearing teachers, classmates, and other school personnel. Interpreters serve as bridges between deaf and hearing individuals, ensuring clear and accurate communication in various educational settings.” (VET 1).

“With interpreting services, deaf students can actively participate in classroom activities, group discussions, and extracurricular events. Interpreters enable them to express their thoughts, ask questions, and engage in interactive learning experiences.” (VET 5).

From the data, it was revealed that teachers are not oblivious to the academic impact of interpreting services for deaf students. The teachers interviewed have expertise in the use of sign language to teach deaf students. Interpreting services play a crucial role in supporting the academic performance of deaf students. By providing access to communication and information, these services contribute significantly to their educational experience. Effective interpreting services and communication ensure comprehension of instructional materials, classroom discussions, and educational interactions. Universities that offer interpreting services, according to academics, educators, and proponents of inclusive education, show a strong commitment to accessibility and inclusivity for students from different linguistic backgrounds. The feeling of belonging among students can be greatly improved by these services, which can also help them succeed academically. Institutions can create a setting where all students have an equal chance to engage, learn, and succeed by making sure that communication is effective and that language barriers are kept to a minimum.

From the data, it was also revealed that interpreting services and sign language have significant effects on the academic performance of students who are deaf. This was confirmed by teachers through their responses to the interview questions. The positive impact of interpreting services on academic achievement for students with limited English proficiency. Interpreting services facilitate comprehension of educational content, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Allard & Mertzénich (2016) posits that Interpreters play an essential role in educational settings by helping teachers effectively communicate complex instructions and explanations to students, significantly improving communication clarity and encouraging higher levels of student engagement. No matter their linguistic backgrounds, these experts ensure that students can fully understand the educational content being presented by bridging potential language barriers through their adept interpretation. This not only makes it easier for information to flow smoothly but also fosters an inclusive learning environment where each student's access to knowledge is given priority.

Additionally, the joint efforts of teachers and interpreters help to forge deeper and more meaningful bonds between them and their charges. Interpreters promote a climate of respect and understanding by ensuring that students receive instructions in a way that fits their unique learning styles and linguistic preferences. In turn, this strengthens the connections between teachers and students, enabling richer interactions that go beyond the simple exchange of knowledge. The overall academic experiences of students show the beneficial effects of these improved teacher-student relationships. Students are more likely to feel valued and supported in the educational environment when they believe that their teachers are working hard to meet their linguistic needs and encourage their participation in the

learning process. This, along with the improved clarity of communication made possible by interpreters, helps to increase academic participation, subject matter understanding, and a sense of empowerment.

4.3. Research Question 2: What are the Strategies Used to Maximize Interpreting Services?

Three themes emerged from the data in responding to research question two. The themes included: Workshop training on Sign Language Interpreting, Motivation, and Assistive Technology. Three interview questions were coined and analyzed to elicit the views of the participants. Below are verbatim expressions from some respondents:

“Practically, attending a series of workshops on sign language interpretation has helped promote the learning of students who are deaf.” (VET 9).

“As for me, the use of direct instruction and motivation has helped maximize the learning of students who are deaf.” (VET 4).

“I wish to say that engaging qualified sign language interpreters has facilitated communication between deaf students and hearing instructors, ensuring access to classroom discussions, lectures, and group activities.” (VET 10).

“To me, practical technological tools are those tools that are produced using technology. The most basic example is the computer. I can create or download videos accompanied by interpretation on the computer for learners to watch and then guide them to learn same skills.” (VET 15).

“I use computers in my everyday life. An example is my mobile phone (the smart one). Videos and pictures with captions are downloaded on them for teaching those students who are deaf. I’ve realized they enjoy watching it. And while watching, you realize they mimic and try to act alone.” (VET 17).

The above data revealed that teachers use some practical strategies that suit the teaching of students who are deaf. Some of these strategies included attending training and workshops on sign language interpreting to improve their skills, the use of rewards and awards to motivate interpreters, and the use of modern technology such as computers, and smartphones among others to maximize interpreting services.

To ensure high-quality interpreting services, it is important to hire interpreters who are qualified and certified in sign language interpreting. They maintained that certification such as through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), demonstrates a standard level of competency and adherence to professional ethics. Interpreters should engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge. This includes attending workshops, conferences, and training courses focused on sign language interpreting techniques, ethics, and cultural competency. Napier (2012) agreed that interpreters should receive pre-session preparation materials, such as lecture notes or presentation slides, in advance to familiarize themselves with the subject matter. This allows for better understanding and accurate interpretation during the actual session. Advancements in technology offer various tools to maximize interpreting services for the Deaf. Video remote interpreting (VRI) and video relay services (VRS) enable remote access to qualified interpreters. These technologies can help overcome geographical barriers and provide immediate access to interpreting services. Hallad (2016) opined that a wide range of techniques and technologies are used to facilitate effective communication for people who have hearing loss, catering to the particular needs and preferences of each person. While some people choose to use assistive technology to navigate the auditory environment, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, others gravitate toward alternative approaches, such as lip-reading or interpretive services, in their quest for natural and meaningful interaction with

the world around them. Innovative technological developments enable people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants to access sound with newfound clarity and precision. These sophisticated gadgets are made to amplify auditory stimuli so that users can participate in conversations, listen to music, and take part in other auditory activities that improve their daily lives. People with hearing loss can bridge the gap between the auditory world and their sensory perceptions by utilizing the power of these technological marvels, which promotes a greater sense of engagement and connection.

An alternative group of hearing-impaired people, however, might choose to use interpretive services or rely on the complex skill of lip-reading to make their way through social and communicative environments. For these people to actively participate in conversations and gatherings, skilled interpreters who can translate spoken language into sign language or other visual cues are a necessity. Additionally, lip-reading, an intricate dance of visual cues and contextual comprehension, enables people to interpret spoken words by deciphering the subtle facial expressions and lip movements, effectively mastering the art of communication in their special way.

4.4. Summary

In summary, the study revealed that interpreting services have an impact on the academic performance of deaf students. Access to communication and effective communication were the two main mechanisms used by interpreters and deaf students in the Salvation Army School for the Deaf.

The extensive study also delved into the complex world of carefully implemented educational institution-wide strategies, shedding light on their crucial role in maximizing the delivery of interpreting services within the educational setting. The Salvation Army School for the Deaf used a trio of effective strategies that, when combined, significantly improved their interpreting services, ushering in a new era of improved accessibility and enhanced educational opportunities. The fundamental idea of motivation, a complex web of rewards and inspirations skilfully woven to energize both interpreters and the larger school community, serves as the first tenet of this strategic paradigm. The school creates an environment where enthusiasm and dedication are valued, allowing interpreters to embrace their jobs with a passion for helping people communicate effectively. Interpreters are inspired to go above and beyond in their work by this unwavering drive, which is intricately entwined with a sincere sense of purpose. This results in a fluid and dynamic exchange of ideas between deaf students and their teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

It is plausible to assert that interpreting services (sign language) have a great significant impact on deaf students' academic performance. The use of technological tools to maximize interpreting services for students who are deaf and how to use it has been made simple. Considering the high level of technology in this recent time, the products of technology such as mobile phones and personal computers (laptops and desktops) are easy to access.

Based on the findings, interpreters should be motivated and paid well for their services. When interpreters are motivated and paid well, it would give them a high level of Vigor and love for the work to help deaf students.

Lastly, modern technological devices that aid interpreting services should be made a priority in all deaf schools across Ghana. There is a need to inculcate modern technological devices into various deaf schools for usage.

For further studies, a thorough research project can be carried out to carefully explore and analyze the profound and multifaceted implications, as well as the transformative effects, that the provision of skilled interpreting services might engender within the educational context of the Salvation Army School for the Deaf, in the Central Region of Ghana.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my research advisor and mentor, Dr. Daniel Fobi (P.h.d) for his support.

7. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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