

Cripps, J. H. (2009). *Oral Reading and Deaf Students Who Sign*. Paper presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Education, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, HI (January 6, 2009).

Abstract

At first glance, the notion of conducting oral reading and assessment with deaf children may seem problematic, but only in terms of spoken language. Rather, utilizing a different approach with text and an alphabet developed for American Sign Language (ASL) makes oral reading and assessment a possibility. Deaf students can use their signed language knowledge in collaboration with their reading experience and be assessed accordingly. According to this new way of thinking about teaching deaf students, reading instruction and assessment need to be aligned with what they know (i.e., ASL and oral reading does not have to be limited to the print representing one spoken language or another). Thus some educators have begun to explore an option not considered in the past; that is, the development and use of a special writing system that allows for effective reading development experiences with deaf students. Additionally, these students could read text consistent with how they sign (see Adams, 1990 for further discussion on the relationship between print and speech as an analogy to this consideration) and then make a transition to reading written English materials at the same time.

Gloss is the intermediary writing system used to facilitate the process involved (see Supalla, Wix, and McKee 2001 for further discussion on the innovative reading program used in this case study). Instrumental to using gloss is how English words are capitalized and rearranged according to ASL's morpho-syntactic structure (with the use of additional conventions; e.g., DOG NOW CHASE>IX=3 CAT for 'the dog is chasing a cat'). If a student encounters CAT as an unfamiliar word while reading, he will need to look it up in The Resource Book (which functions similar to a bilingual dictionary). The student can then read the word equivalent written in ASL next to the glossed word as follows: $\forall \subset \mathcal{L} \mathfrak{N}$. Decoding the sign equivalent (as part of

deciphering the otherwise inaccessible English word) would be based on the phonological structure in the signed medium. The ASL-phabet letters represent distinctive handshapes, locations, and movements as used in individual signs. After knowing the meaning of the word CAT, the student can comprehend the sentence concerning what the dog is chasing after.

Up to now, the combination of gloss text and the use of The Resource Book allowing for oral reading with deaf students is an open question for investigation. This presentation will share the details of a study undertaken to examine how two students performed in a tutorial where the special literacy tools were used. The tutorial was conducted entirely in ASL. The focus of the study was to understand how the students and their tutor behaved in one guided reading activity and determine how well the assessment was conducted at the end of the tutorial. A necessary transcription of these interactions and ensuing analysis allowed for detailed descriptions of the teaching protocol to occur. Clay's (1993) running record was used as part of the oral reading assessment. Identification of different reading behaviors and considerations for scoring are the two critical areas subject to investigation concerning the literacy tools. The strategies specific to guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) are targeted for evaluating the quality of interaction between the students and the tutor.

According to the results, the use of gloss text and The Resource Book during the tutorial indicated a number of positive reading development experiences. The deaf students in the study behaved as if they were engaged in oral reading and the tutor teaching different strategies for reading. Phonetic skills in ASL were promoted through the use of The Resource Book, and the students were able to read and sign "word for word" with the gloss text. Discussion will be made on how scoring was done when using gloss text to conduct a running record and what needs to be done for further validation. Oral reading appears to be feasible and beneficial when deaf students' signed language knowledge is tapped for reading development purposes.

References:

Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Clay, M. M. (1993). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I. & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Supalla, S. J., Wix, T. R., & McKee, C. (2001). Print as a primary source of English for deaf learners. In J. Nicol & T. Langendoen (Eds.), *One mind, two languages: Studies in bilingual language processing* (pp. 177-190). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.