

The Role of Sign Language in a Child's Development: Teacher's Perspectives and Practices

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Research Question

- What is the role of sign language in a child's oral language development?
- How do day care teachers perceive and explain this role?
- How do they incorporate it in the every day classroom schedule?

Background

- Found deaf babies and babies with deaf parents were signing at a younger age
Bonvillian, Orlansky, and Novack (1983)
- Found hearing babies were signing about .69 months before speaking (Goodwyn and Acredolo, 1993)

Implications

- Child turns crying and whining into signing (Thompson, 2007)
- Infants who are taught signs do better when later being tested on vocal language (Goodwyn, Acredolo, & Brown, 2000)

Methods

- Qualitative Study – observations and interviews
- Mourningville Day Care (pseudonym)
- Infant, Toddler, Preschool classrooms
- Signing was implemented 8 years ago

Thesis

- I argue that the teachers perceive that sign language does have a positive impact on oral language development of young children.
- The teachers implement signing, not only to help the child's development but also to help their classroom environments be calmer and easier to teach in.
- Signing is incorporated in each age group differently according to their developmental stages.

Evidence

- Enhancing Oral Development ~ “Saying the word and signing along with it gives the child knowledge of the word and gives the word meaning”
- Child fading out sign and fading in word
- Trying to say milk but saying “Meh”

Evidence

- Keeping the classroom organized
 - “It helps the teachers run the classroom nicely, by limiting the child’s frustration and teaching them to not freak out and throw food or scream and cry”
- Non-Verbal child at snack example
- Verbal child at group time example

Evidence

- Implementing signing differently at different age groups.
- Infant – Basic Needs
- Toddler – Behavior and Feelings (1 more minute example)
- Preschool – Introduction to reading

Conclusion

- Helped classroom control and language development
- Implemented according to child's developmental stage to increase skills
- Future Research

Research Question/Thesis

- What is the role of sign language in a child's oral language development? How do day care teachers perceive and explain this role? How do they incorporate it in the every day classroom schedule?
- I argue that the teachers perceive that sign language does have a positive impact on oral language development of young children. The teachers implement signing, not only to help the child's development but also to help their classroom environments be calmer and easier to teach in. I also argue that the teachers implement signing differently in each classroom and at each age level, depending on the developmental stage that the child is in.