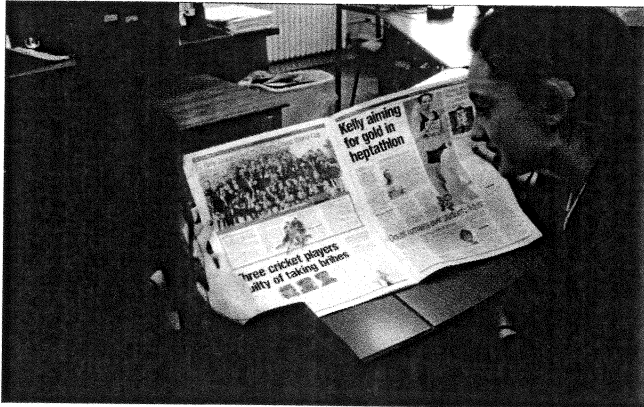


Combating reading delay

Katherine Richardson's workshop focused on her intervention programme to develop deaf pupils' reading skills at secondary level



Research has shown that reading skills in deaf children are often delayed when compared to same-aged hearing peers and that this reading delay can continue throughout secondary school. The implications are that deaf adolescents have more difficulty accessing the curriculum as well as reading and accessing exam papers.

In 2009, I introduced a programme that aimed to help develop the reading skills of deaf secondary-aged pupils at Mary Hare School. The intervention ran for one year and the outcomes were investigated in order to determine the impact it had on the pupils' reading skills. As a consequence, I went on to research the factors affecting the reading abilities of deaf adolescents in completion of my Master's degree in 2011. The original reading intervention and outcomes achieved were published in the May 2010 edition of the BATOD Magazine.

The reading intervention programme has now successfully run for the last three years focusing on Key Stage 3. While the same aims and principles apply, new activities and resources have been added to ensure that the programme remains up to date.

The programme focuses on the following aspects: exam vocabulary, developing inference skills and working on overall reading comprehension. Pupils' ability to track text visually as they read, to increase their speed and scanning skills, is also a key component as well as exposing pupils to as many different types of text as possible.

At the end of the first year of the reading intervention I was able to compare the pupils' performance on a reading test pre- and post-intervention. The results were very positive and pupils receiving the intervention made more progress than those not receiving the intervention. Furthermore, all pupils made progress in

the speed at which they could track text. Eight of the ten targeted exam words were understood by the pupils and firmly established in formal and informal activities. In addition, their attitude to reading improved. This was measured through the means of a questionnaire.

One of the areas that the deaf teenagers were struggling with most was inference skills. Inference is a tricky concept and my interest in whether we can teach deaf teenagers about inference led me to devise a five-week programme for the same pupils involved in the reading intervention. In these sessions I explicitly teach the pupils what inference is, showing many examples and developing their skills in making assumptions. Useful resources include *The New Reading and Thinking* materials, the *Into Inference* programme by Wendy Rinaldi and the *I Say!* resource by Margaret Valery.

Another initiative which has started as a result of the reading intervention programme is the development of a study skills programme aimed to help Year 9 and 10 pupils identify their learning styles and improve their revision techniques. I found that while many of the pupils knew what a spider diagram was or had heard of a flow chart, they were not actually using these revision techniques when studying for exams. Practical sessions enabled the pupils to practise these skills while consolidating the exam vocabulary they had learnt in lessons.

The outcomes of the reading intervention programme continue to be very encouraging, considering that the pupils receiving the intervention have delayed literacy skills, often with additional difficulties such as dyslexia. Reading is such a complex process and many skills are required to become a proficient reader. Many deaf pupils enter secondary school with significant reading delays and they require further reading intervention not only to develop their literacy skills up to a level that will allow them to access the curriculum but also to access what is happening in the world around them.

The success of the reading intervention programme has reinforced the fact that, through exposure to and practice in specific literacy skills, deaf secondary-aged students are able to develop their reading skills.

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