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**Socialization through Sign Language for Deaf
Children in Early School Years in Light of
Communication Theory**

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Socialization through Sign Language for Deaf Children in Early School Years in Light of Communication Theory

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Abstract

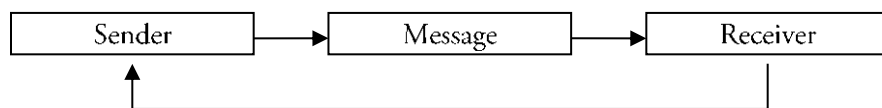
Like the impact of natural language on normal children, sign language plays an important role in the comprehensive development of deaf children. Deaf children also use sign language to think, communicate and socialize. So how do we teach deaf children sign language? Is teaching sign language to deaf children the same as teaching language for normal children? In this article, considering the situation of many deaf children in the first grade who have few language skills and limited communicative competence, we discuss the factors affecting language teaching in these environments. Furthermore, we propose games which may enhance their language skills, and to assist them to develop and improve the quality of life, and thus to integrate into larger society.

Keywords: Teaching, sign language, deaf children, socialization

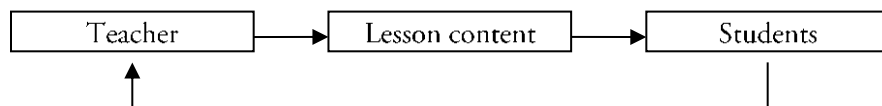
The problem

Communication Activities

Communication activities occur when there is a message sent from character A to character B, and then character B responds:



In teaching:



The *message* is the lesson content, which teachers convey to students. The content is a chain of encrypted signals. For students to comprehend content, teachers and students must share the same *code*. The code becomes the system of words, letters, symbol, as a signal system in language. In hearing classes, *code* signal systems of speech sound are conveyed through the auditory channel. Hence, under standard conditions, that teaching activity is

effective. But in specific cases of teaching deaf children, teachers use sound language. In lacking a common code, the transmission of information between teachers and students may be blocked. Teaching activities here may become ineffective as deaf children are unable to receive sounds, whereas the content of the lessons is encoded in sound language and travels through the auditory channel. Vietnamese deaf communities often use sign language as a means of communication, and in some schools, many deaf students are taught in sign language. However, the teaching quality in a majority of these centers is limited. In this study, we thus analyze pedagogical factors.

Pedagogical Factors for deaf children

The Psychology of Deaf Children when Starting School

Deaf children often feel inferior, shy and afraid of contact with others when first entering school largely owing to limited language competence. These restrictions also lead to lowered communication skills, thus negatively affecting academic performance and general development. Therefore, teaching sign language to help deaf children confidently integrate into cultural learning environment is essential.

Methods of Sign Language Teaching for Deaf Children

The stress of starting school is more noticeable for a deaf child. Confidence and the absorption of cultural knowledge should be a priority for teachers and parents. Here, we propose a number of methods to improve the effectiveness of teaching sign language for deaf children when they are in the first grade.

Flashcards

Definition

Flashcards can be used to introduce and give classroom instructions, which children use to express their awareness and understanding of the world.

Method

Divide students into 2 or 3 groups. Teachers display flashcards based on familiarity of the topics. Each pack of flashcards emphasizes one theme. Children look at each picture for 4 or 5 seconds, and then each member of the group approaches the podium individually to write the word related to the flashcard. The group with the most correct and fastest answers will win.

Effects in Sign Language Lessons

The main propensity of first graders' thinking (children at the age of 6) is usually visual. More so with deaf children, the development of visual sense is more noticeable. As such, flashcards with vivid images and attractive colors will encourage activity and will excite children, assisting teachers to effectively achieve teaching aims.

Notes to Bear in Mind in Using Flashcards

Using flashcards to motivate deaf learners becomes effective when teachers are well-prepared and flexible. Flashcards should be sorted by topics from easy to difficult; specific to general words. For example, when teaching the topic 'transportation' with the words: green light; red light; zebra crossing; planes; car; train; ship; motorbike; bicycles, etc., particularly with unfamiliar words, teachers should provide more visual and kinesthetic illustrations with body gestures and movements or using visual aids.

Teachers would benefit by selecting flashcards with bright colors and clear lines. Moreover, as pictures are used to develop sign language for deaf children, teaching must correspond with student thinking. Specifically, sign language in pre-school is mostly anonymous and anthropomorphic; therefore, flashcards must have the features to assist children to recognize the phenomena in the flashcards quickly. For example, in the vocabulary system of sign language in Vietnamese deaf communities, the symbol CAT is created by simulating two moustaches; COW symbols are expressed by simulating two short horns on the head. The detail of a cat moustache must be clearly shown in the flashcard. Likewise, when using flashcards to teach the word 'cow,' an impression with cow horn symbols must also be clearly made, so that children can quickly associate with the sign language of a cow.

Crossword Puzzle

Principles of Crossword Puzzles in Sign Language Lessons

- 1) The puzzle is built to suit the level of the child's sign language
- 2) The puzzle must appeal to children.
- 3) The rules of the puzzle should be clearly explained to the students.
- 4) Prepare enclosed items (pins, key crosswords ...).

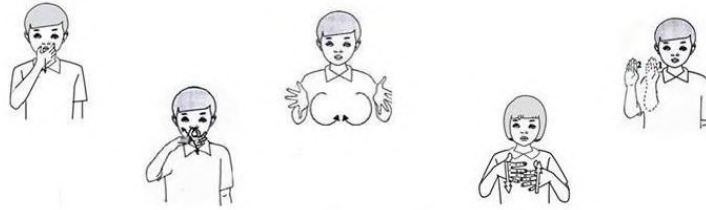
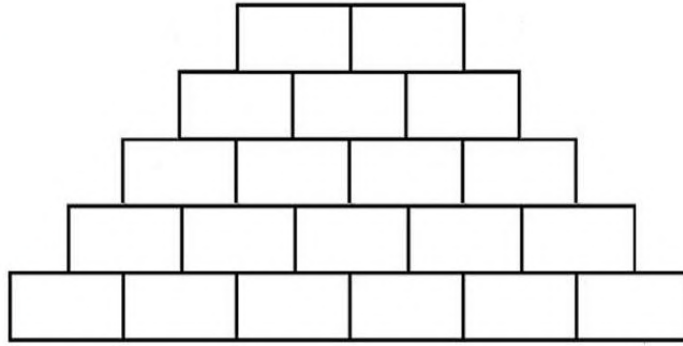
Benefits of Using Crosswords Puzzles in Teaching Sign Language

Crosswords puzzles excite children. Here, children discover and acquire knowledge independently. Moreover, the crossword becomes central in developing basic literacy and cognitive skills.

Some Basic Crosswords

- Crossword pyramids
 - + Procedures:
 - Prepare a pyramid table of blank squares which are numbered from two to six squares.
 - The puzzles must contain images.
 - + Instructions:
 - Allow students to identify puzzles of sign words. Give clear instructions.

1
2
3
4
5



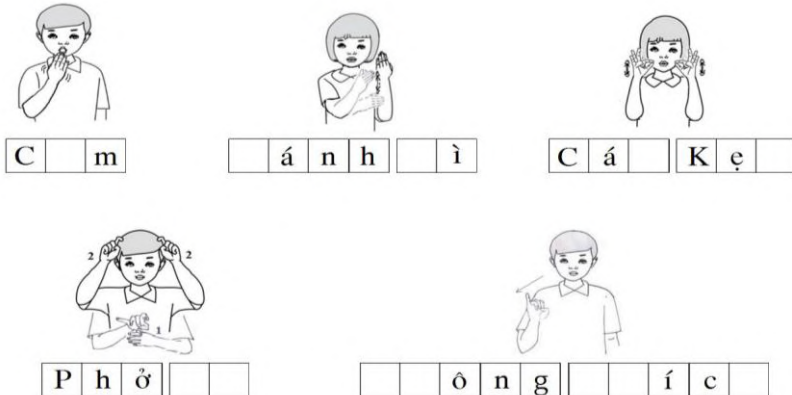
The key symbols are: BÀ (GRANDMOTHER); BẨN (DIRTY); TIVI (TELEVISION); NHIỀU (MANY); BIM BIM (SNACKS);

• Crossword gaps

+Procedures:

- Prepare images of sign words

- Instructions: Teachers introduce images of signs and first provide a model. Then, ask students to add the remaining letters to complete words.



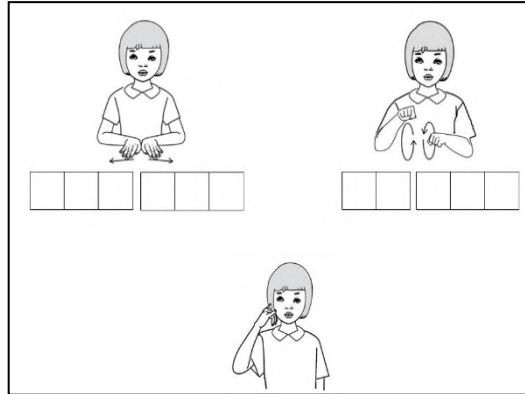
The key symbols are: COM (RICE); BÁNH MÌ (BREAD); CÁI KẸO (CANDY) PHỞ BÒ (BEEF NOODLE); KHÔNG THÍCH (DISLIKE).

• Crossword blank

Procedures:

- Prepare images of signs

- Instructions: Teachers first introduce images and blank squares with corresponding letters, then provide a model and ask students to fill in the blanks with the given letters so that each word best aligns with the meaning of that sign.



The key symbols are: CÁI BÀN (TABLE); XE ĐẠP (BIKE); CHIẾC ĐIỆN THOẠI (BIKE)

Conclusion

Deaf children's restrictions on language proficiency restrict communication skills, and reduce confidence, which may impact on their academic performance and later development. Drawing on Communication Theory, the article reaffirms the importance of teaching sign language for deaf children. In addition, the article also points out some positive measures for improving teaching quality.