

Teachers' Difficulties in Teaching Vietnamese Subjects for Grade 1 Deaf Students

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Abstract: All children including the deaf ones are eager to go to school. For those who have hearing impairments, on the other hand, find it challenging to acquire Vietnamese when they first begin studying the grade - 1 academic program in primary school. This not only lowers their academic performance in all academic topics but also has a bad psychological impact. They become self-deprecating and isolate themselves, fearful of touch. In May 2019, World Concern commissioned the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the project "Improving the quality of education for deaf children at primary school level through sign language", also known as QIPEDC. Teaching Vietnamese and Math in sign language is one of the project's objectives. However, according to our research, sign language teaching activities for deaf students in elementary schools, particularly in the Vietnamese subject, continue to provide poor outcomes. We will study about deaf children and sign language in this paper, as well as some teacher challenges, in order to increase the effectiveness of Vietnamese teaching for them!

Keywords: Teaching, Deaf children, Vietnamese.

INTRODUCTION

Deaf children are children with hearing impairments, who will face many cognitive and speech limitations (although the vocal apparatus is functioning normally). Unlike other children with language disabilities, deaf children are more disadvantaged and vulnerable. Thus, this is also an subject of interest to society and the Education sector. There have been many projects from NGOs implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Training to improve communication skills and cultural learning in sign language for deaf children. The project Intergenerational Deaf Education Outreach (IDEO) can be mentioned. The project is funded by the Japan Social Development Fund, managed by the World Bank, and jointly implemented by the World Concern organization together with the Ministry of Education and Training in 4 provinces of Hanoi, Thai Nguyen, Quang Binh and Ho Chi Minh City from 2011-2016, with the mission to help deaf children of preschool age to integrate into the social community through learning and communicating in sign language. As a result, all 255 selected children are proficient in using sign language to communicate and self-develop (<https://hcm.edu.vn/tin-tuc-su-kien>). This project has proven that sign language is their mother tongue. However, upon entering grade 1, they had to learn Vietnamese and use it as a tool to learn other cultural subjects. This is a great challenge for normal teachers who teach deaf children. To mitigate those difficulties, in April 2019, the Ministry of Education and Training, funded by the Global Partnership for Results-Based Approaches (GPRBA) through the World Bank (WB)

sponsorship, continued to realise the project: Quality Improvement of Primary Education for Deaf Children, abbreviated as QIPEDC. The project has also: developed learning materials; trained primary school teachers and education support staff for the disabled and deaf adults to teach Math and Vietnamese in sign language (<https://qipcdc.moet.gov.vn/introduce>). After the success of these two projects, many centers and schools for deaf children have had the courage to use this method of teaching Vietnamese with sign language. In Hanoi, many schools have piloted this approach and initially had positive results. Deaf students were no longer afraid to learn Vietnamese. Some notable schools can be mentioned: Hanoi People's School for Deaf Children; Faculty of Special Education, Hanoi College of Education; Xa Dan Junior High School... Many parents of deaf children from far away places still tried to bring their kids to Hanoi so that they have an opportunity to learn in sign language right from Grade 1. Nonetheless, according to our research, their academic records were still not very high.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Psychological Characteristics and Language Development Ability of Deaf Children Brain Development of Deaf Children

The brain is an important organ that controls all body processes. The brain can be divided into the cerebrum, brain stem, and cerebellum. Within the scope of the article, we will focus on understanding the functions and tasks of the parts associated with the ability to recognize and move,

which are directly related to the formation and development of sound and sign language. brand:

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the scope of the article, we shall focus on the functions and tasks of the parts involved with the ability to recognize and move, directly related to the formation and development of sound language and sign language:

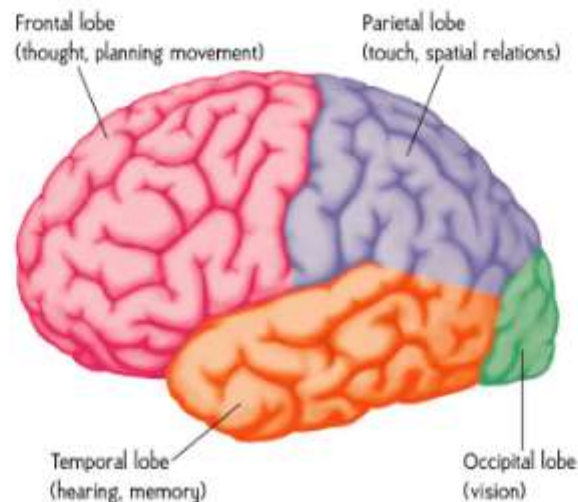


Figure 1: Cortical structure and partitions (<https://123docz.net//document>)

According to neuroscientists, the cerebral hemispheres (Figure 1) is the center of sensations and conscious movement, the center of memory, intelligence and thinking. With 6 layers of neurons, divided into 52 functional regions, each region performs a certain function. These areas can be divided into two categories: sensory and motor. The sensory area is responsible for receiving impulses from the body's receptors, in which there are a number of regions related to language development, including: the visual sensory area located in the occipital lobe, the sensory area Auditory in temporal lobes, cutaneous and somatosensory regions are located in posterior central gyrus, just behind rolando's fissure. anterior center, between the frontal and parietal lobes. The speech and writing regions are located in the temporal and occipital lobes.

Studying the nervous system, scientists in [Roy, M. *et al.*, 2009] observed that the cerebral cortex is assigned very specific functions. However, the brain has a very flexible property. Areas of the cerebral cortex, always tend to complement each other in terms of functions of the whole body. According to the balance rule, the visual sensory function and the motor one will be more dominant

in the group of deaf children [Sinhiak, V.A. *et al.*, 1999]. The exceptional development of children's visual and kinesthetic senses will aid in the formation of sign language.

Features of Language Acquisition of Deaf Children

According to the analysis results above, due to defects in the hearing organ, but compensated, deaf children have superior visual language reception ability. Therefore, like all members of the deaf community, deaf children have the same ability to receive sign language to communicate as hearing children use the sound language. Previous studies on the language development of deaf children have shown that, if deaf children are born in a family with deaf parents using sign language, the development of social skills of children as in normal children. However, not all children are fortunate enough to use sign language naturally, even many children are not exposed at all. That significantly affects the process of integrating into the community and learning culture of the children. Below, we will learn some features of language acquisition including both sound and sign language of children through the experiments of some therapeutic scientists around the world.

Studies on Language Development of Deaf Children in the World

Table 1: Language development of deaf children aged from 6 - 10 years [Liddell, S. *et al.*, 2003]

Researchers	Number children	Age (month)	Deafness		Data	Type of signing input	Comments
			Parents	Children			
Tervoort (1961)	48	84-144	School	Deaf	Series of 10-minute films of paris in conversation	None: oral only but peer communication in "gesture"	Description of how gesture becomes formalised sign as it moves from situation-bound towards 'arbitrary'
Hoemann and Lucafo (1980)	1	84	Deaf	Deaf	One 25-minute studio interview	ASL	A detailed analysis of a child model of ASL. It illustrates the richness of content and sophistication of grammar of ASL
Sorensen and Hansen (1976)	44	72-180	Mixed	Deaf	Video-recordings of communication tasks	Signed Danish	Shows the effects of sign language features such as localisation as contributor to DSL grammar. Provides a notation system
Livingston (1983)	6	72-196	Hearing	Deaf	Video-recordings of spontaneous sign language over a period of 15 months	Signed English	Shows emergence of ASL in Signed English environment without adult model. Detailed analysis of proposed developmental levels of ASL acquisition

At this stage, if both parents and people around use sign language with the child, the child's sign

language will be very rich. Like normal children, children's language at this age is expanded to

numerous fields. Children's vocabulary increases rapidly due to the development of the child's observation skill and desire to understand the world. The syntax is also flexible, children use more complex structures. Expressive nuances are also clearly shown on their faces and bodies. These are the results obtained from scientific experiments, children are observed for long periods of time in order to observe deaf children's language development in various language environments. Experiments may vary in duration and number of children but they all come to the same conclusion: deaf children's language proficiency will be severely limited if they are forced to use only the sound language. Meanwhile, the language development process and language level of deaf children who can communicate exclusively through sign language or through a combination of sign language and sound language are comparable to those of normal children of the same age.

Development of Sign Language of Deaf Children in Vietnam

Sign language has been used in Vietnam for a long time. Like all deaf communities in the world, the Vietnamese deaf community also uses sign language to communicate, think and develop. On April 1, 2011, at 10 p.m. on VTV2 channel, Vietnam Television, sign language was first broadcast, delivering significant news about the situation in the Vietnam and throughout the world. This demonstrates that the importance of sign language in the integration and development of the deaf minority is recognized by the entire society. In particular, when James C. Woodward's research reveals the existence of three sign language regions corresponding to three major cities in Vietnam, it confirms the role, scientific nature of the sign language: Hanoi Sign Language, Hai Phong Sign Language and Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language. Obviously, sign language is as important to the deaf community as Vietnamese sound language is to the hearing community

In Vietnam, the teaching of general culture, including the Vietnamese subject for deaf children with sign language, has existed for a long time (since 1886) at a school called School for Deaf and Mute Children, has now been changed to Thuan An Education Center for Disabled Children in Binh Duong Province. However, due to the limited understanding of sign language and psychophysiology of deaf children, the developing

sign language for deaf children to communicate and learn is not given due attention. This has a significant impact on the children's academic performance. It was not until 2016, when the Project: *Educating Deaf Children Before School Age* (IDEO for short), a review of the assessment of the use of sign language significantly increased the language and cognitive development of 255 deaf children participated in the project. In the research, deaf children aged 5 to 8 received a 7 out of 10 score for communication and basic knowledge, compared to an 8 for hearing challenged children of the same age.

Sign language has a significant role in the development of deaf children, as evidenced by research findings on sign language and deaf children both in the world and in Vietnam. When they go to school, however, they are required to study the cultural curriculum in the country's common language, just like all children of ethnic communities in the same region. In Vietnam, primary language is regulated as Vietnamese. Deaf children in Grade One will also learn all cultural subjects including Vietnamese.

Pedagogical Communication and Activities of Teaching Vietnamese for Deaf Children Introductions

In general, teaching activity is also a communication activity in a special context, or educators call it: pedagogical communication. Below, we explore some aspects of this concept.

The Concept of Pedagogical Communication

The author Nguyenvanle has given the definition of this activity as follows: *Pedagogical communication is the exchange contact between teachers and students, using verbal and non-verbal means to perform effectively the teaching-educational tasks.* [Nguyen, V.L, 2006]. For effective pedagogical communication, the author has drawn up *guidelines to optimize the communication process.* In which, there are some important and practical issues with Vietnamese language classes for deaf children: The code must be agreed upon by both communicating parties; the combination of visual and aural information channels makes the receptive efficiency increase many times.[Nguyen, V.L, 2006]. In the [Nguyen, V.L, 2006], in his book, author also includes six research communication methods. One of the most notable is the communication model given by the structural linguist Jacobson:

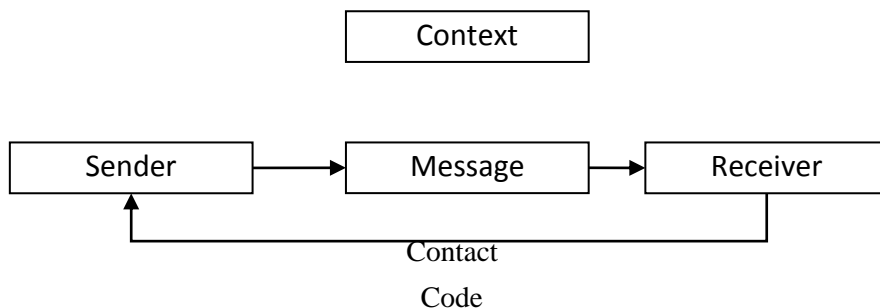


Figure 2: Communication diagram [Hien, D.T. et al., 2014]

From the perspective of a linguist, in his diagram, Jacobson emphasizes the role of message codes in communication activities. Communication is only effective when both the Sender and the Receiver use the same language code to communicate.

Vietnamese Teaching Activities for Deaf Children in First Grade Mechanism of Decoding Messages in Communication Activities in General

According to the mechanism of communication activities, no matter what language is in the communication, the receiver has to deal with the decoding of linguistic signals to form a semantic structure, then map the elements of the semantic structure onto the conceptual entities of the mental space. In [Liddell, S, 2003], Scott K. Liddell modeled semantic structure in language communication:

No matter what language the receiver interacts with, the receiver must deal with the decoding of linguistic signals to construct a semantic structure, and then map the elements of that structure, according to the mechanism of communication activities.

According to Scott K. Liddell: *The speaker creates the phonetic expression that the listener perceives*

as well as the gestural components. Assuming that the speaker and listener use the same language, the listener should have no difficulty decoding the phonetic signal. The result of this decoding is that the semantic structure is (mostly) similar to the speaker's sentence... This is true regardless of language, whether spoken language or sign language [Liddell, S, 2003]

The Decoding of the Message in the Activities of Teaching Vietnamese to Deaf Children

Basically, teaching Vietnamese to deaf children is the same as normal children. This activity is conducted when all 3 factors are present: sender; receiver and message. However, in the classroom of students using Vietnamese, the way of sending and receiving lesson content is smooth. Because, in this class, the message - content of the lesson - has the code is Vietnamese language, which is the common language for both teachers (senders) and students (receivers). In contrast, in teaching Vietnamese to deaf children, because deaf children use sign language, teachers have to convert the lesson code from Vietnamese to sign language code. It is possible to model Vietnamese language teaching activities for deaf and ordinary children through the table 2:

Table 2: Comparison of Vietnamese language teaching for deaf and ordinary children[Hien, D.T, 2021]

Activities to teach Vietnamese to children	Vietnamese language teaching activities for deaf children
The lesson code is a system of Vietnamese language signals that are transmitted directly through the auditory channel to learners	The lesson code is converted from Vietnamese audio code to character code, then continues to be converted to sign language code for deaf people and for deaf children.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within the scope of the project, several specific methodologies such as analysis, synthesis, systematization, and generalization of scientific theories have been in use to address the research problems, as well as to build the scientific basis of the research project.

First of all, descriptive methodology used to

describe the sign language and Vietnamese language units in which sign language experts and Vietnamese language teachers demonstrate the sign language and Vietnamese language units that deaf children use in their daily communication and study activities.

Secondly, methodology of discourse analysis of speech which has been carried out to analyze the

structure and semantics of teachers and learners' speeches in class.

Thirdly, with the aim to process, select and generalize the collected data and information, statistical methodology has been appropriately used when needed, followed by methodology of contrastive analysis used to compare and contrast the source, structure and formula of the sign language and non-verbal elements of the Vietnamese language.

Additional methods, which have greatly contributed to the project such as observation methodology, video recording and in-depth interviews with teachers working directly with deaf children, and groups of parents whose children are learning at school. Observing children engaging in fun learning activities could possibly make an outcome for the research project.

Last but not least, practice experience is conducted through participating in fun activities and chat with children.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Purpose, Survey Materials and Approach

We conducted a survey to describe, analyze, evaluate and make comments on the current situation of teaching Vietnamese in sign language for deaf children in first grade. From there, identify the difficulties that teachers experience and propose measures to improve the effectiveness of teaching Vietnamese for deaf children.

Survey Object and Area

The activity of teaching Vietnamese in sign language in Hanoi has only been applied in recent years (starting from 2017), so there are not many survey materials. In the scope of the article, we choose the object of the survey that is teaching Vietnamese words in reading exercises in sign language. This is because, when translating into sign language, the word type is often reduced, which distorts the content of the Vietnamese lesson.

The survey area was first grade students at some schools teaching deaf children in Hanoi: Faculty of Special Education, Central College of Education; People-founded School for deaf children Nhan Chinh Hanoi; Xa Dan Junior High School. Regarding teachers, we surveyed 4 hearable teachers from the above schools and 01 teacher from the deaf community at the Center for Teaching Deaf Children of Can Tho Province.

Survey Method

- Investigate the table selected noun phrases in the Vietnamese textbook for first grade students
+ Design and use questionnaires about students' reading comprehension; ability to look at picture cards and write names of pictures in picture cards in Vietnamese..

Survey 4 hearable teachers who directly teach the cards that contain noun phrases in different word type. Compare the results with deaf teachers doing the same work.

Survey Results

Conducting surveys in the process of teaching Vietnamese language using sign language, we have recognized those issues that affect the effectiveness of teaching Vietnamese to deaf children in sign language.

The Phenomenon of Language Standard Deviation

Teachers for deaf children are users of Vietnamese sound language, belonging to the hearing community, while Deaf children use sign language that is received by images, This hinders teaching activities because the Vietnamese sign language syntax system is different from the Vietnamese sound language syntax system [Woodward, J.C, 2015]. Although the Vietnamese reading passages were translated into sign language by the teachers, linguistic standard deviation still occurs at all language levels.

The first is the phenomenon of standard deviation expressed at the vocabulary level. when teachers make signs that are not appropriate for the deaf culture. Specifically, in Table 3:

Table 3: Classifiers in Vietnamese textbooks

No.	Words		Normal teachers		Deaf teachers	
	Classifiers	Central nouns	Signs	Finger letters	Signs	Finger letters
1	Nải/bunch	Chuối/Banana		x	x	
2	Chùm/bunch	Nho/Grapes		x	x	
3	Con/piece	Thác/Waterfall	x			x
4	Đàn/flock	Lợn/Pig		x	x	
5	Bầy/herd	Cá/fish		x	x	
6	Khúc/Piece	Nhạc/music		x	x	
7	Vạt/Patch	Cỏ/Grass		x	x	
8	Chiếc/Piece	Lá/Leaf		x	x	
9	Bầu/	Trời/sky		x	x	
10	Cuộc/joy	Vui/Joy		x	x	

Table 3 shows the expression of different types of Vietnamese words into sign language of two groups of teachers: communities of hearable teachers and communities of the deaf. In Vietnamese, Classifier is nouns indicating the categories, used to refer to discrete units, when combined with nouns with general meaning (For example: cái, con, quả, củ, tấm, bức, sợi, ngàì.....) In communication, when expressing classifier, deaf people tend to skip them because they are abstract and generic. But in Vietnamese lessons, due to the scientific nature and content of the text are not added or subtracted, these words still have to be translated. The standard deviation is shown in 2 ways of expressing 10 Classifiers, which are summarized in Table 3. Listening teachers, because they do not understand deeply the culture of the deaf, should use finger letters to express.

Deaf teachers will find sign language expressions in the deaf community.

The standard deviation is shown in 2 ways of expressing 10 types of words, which are summarized in Table 3. Hearable teachers, because they do not understand deeply the culture of deaf people, use letters formed by fingers to express meanwhile deaf teachers shall find sign language expressions in the deaf community.

Standard deviation is common in the field of grammar. For convincing proofs, we found 10 phrases in primary Vietnamese textbooks and found out how to express it in the lessons of teachers from the two communities as we mention in the previous section.

Table 4: Selected noun phrases in elementary Vietnamese textbooks

No.	Vietnamese phrases (1)	Vietnamese phrases performed by deaf teachers (2)	Vietnamese phrases expressed by listeners' teacher (3)
1	Những cuộc vui ấy -The joyful events	VUI CUỘC ẤY	CUỘC VUI ẤY
2	Buổi sáng trên cánh đồng - Morning in the field	SÁNG BUỔI CẢNH ĐỒNG	BUỔI SÁNG CẢNH ĐỒNG
3	Bầy cá heo Dolphin herd	CÁ HEO BẦY	BẦY CÁ HEO
4	Trái đất này- This Earth	ĐẤT TRÁI NÀY	TRÁI ĐẤT NÀY
5	Câu chuyện kì lạ- Strange story	CHUYỆN CÂU LẠ	CÂU CHUYỆN LẠ
6	Những chùm thảo quả đỏ- Clusters of red cardamom	THẢO QUẢ CHÙM ĐỎ	CHÙM THẢO QUẢ ĐỎ
7	Một vàng trắng tròn to- A big full moon	TRẮNG VÀNG TRÒN TO MỘT	VÀNG TRẮNG TRÒN TO MỘT
8	Trong lòng dò- In the boat compartment	ĐÒ LÒNG TRONG	LÒNG ĐÒ TRONG
9	Khúc nhạc tung bừng- Jubilant music	NHẠC KHÚC TUNG BỪNG	KHÚC NHẠC TUNG BỪNG
10	Những vạt nương màu mật- Honey-colored nuptials	NƯỞNG VẠT MÀU MẬT	NƯỞNG VẠT MÀU MẬT

The Vietnamese noun phrases in Table 4, respectively, are shown by two groups of teachers. Of the 10 selected phrases, none of them are represented by the correct syntax of the sign language. According to the syntax used by deaf people, (words in bold) come after the main nouns (2). However, the hearable teachers expressed it (3) according to the noun phrase structure of Vietnamese (1)

Actual Situation of Sign Language of Deaf Children in Grade 1 in Hanoi

In the pre-school stage, deaf children use sign language to develop communication and social skills. When entering grade 1, students must reach a certain level of sign language to receive the Vietnamese lesson message translated into sign language. According to our research, through teachers who directly teach in class, the children's sign language proficiency is still limited.

Ms. Nguyen Thi Th., a teacher of deaf children at the Central College of Pedagogy's Faculty of Special Education specializing in teaching deaf children, commented on the students' linguistic abilities: In the classroom, children' sign language communication skills are unequal and inconsistent (with the same symbol but various expressions)....

Especially, Vietnamese is a tonal language, but this characteristic is also a big obstacle for them. They often mistake tones or carets, “\”with “/” or vice versa, lack of. Because children keep writing in sign language syntax, it is difficult to totally eliminate grammar mistakes. Their vocabulary is still limited, particularly in generic terms. That is the opinion of Ms. Linh Thi Son, a teacher for deaf children at the Hanoi's Private School for deaf children.

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About Materials and Textbooks Teaching Deaf Children

The purpose is to teach deaf children the language but the materials developed for teachers and children with hearing impairments have received little participation from the direct teaching teachers, who have extensive experience teaching Vietnamese to deaf children. As a result, there is an inadequacy when the documents that are said to be the results of expensive research and printing are not practical for teaching Vietnamese language to deaf children.

When asked about deaf children's educational materials, Ms. Pham Bich Th. stated that "there should be programs, textbooks, and reference books exclusively for primary school deaf children because their native language is sign language, which is received through visual channels." In order for the children to understand the content of the lesson correctly, the teachers have to spend a lot of time. There are words, teachers have to stop, create context, express a long time, the children understand.

CONCLUSION

The quality of teaching is always the issue that receives the top attention of the entire educational system and social community. To improve the quality of education, the authorities are constantly looking for innovative measures. Teaching Vietnamese in sign language for deaf children is even more necessary, because they have to learn Vietnamese as a foreign language! According to our research results, in order to effectively teach Vietnamese language to deaf children, teachers must not only understand the grammar of sign language but also have an understanding of the culture of the deaf. This is also a strategic issue in the training of teachers in the Faculty of Special Education in pedagogical schools. In addition, to assist teachers in preparing lesson plans, the Ministry of Education should promptly compile

textbooks with appropriate content for deaf students. It is necessary to invite collaborators who are teachers with experience in teaching deaf children and even teachers and collaborators who are deaf to participate in program development. Organize seminars to come to an agreement on the roadmap and give suggestions on how to teach each lesson.

Another important factor to consider is deaf children. In order to effectively teach Vietnamese by sign language for children, the whole family and society must join hands to create a friendly sign language communication environment for children to use proficient. Paying attention to helping children develop sign language in accordance with the language level of their age will help them when entering grade 1 will absorb Vietnamese lessons effectively.

Finally, teaching Vietnamese in sign language to deaf children is a new and difficult job. It is hoped that the authorities, especially the school centers that teach deaf children, will have timely and practical attention, helping them learn Vietnamese effectively, from which they will be able to develop comprehensively and integrate into society.

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