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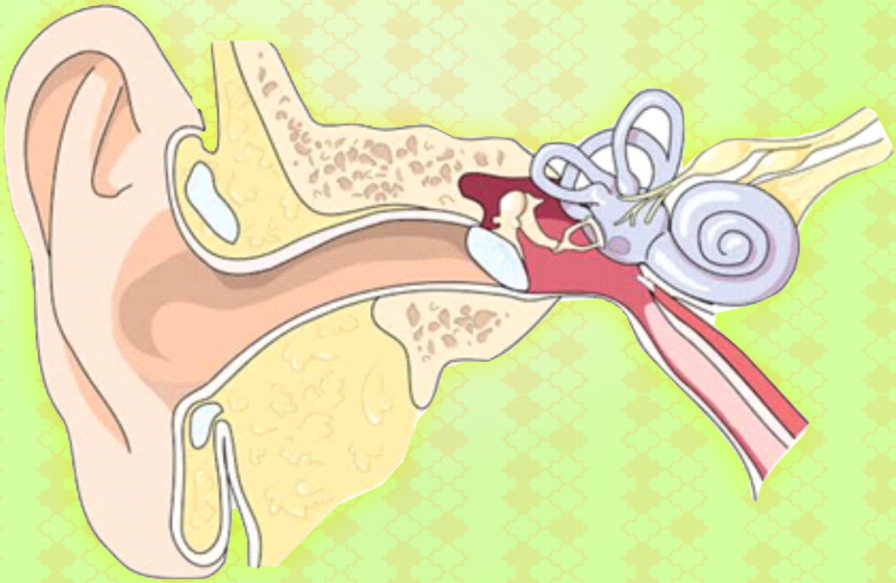

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

ABU EGWA OZEGYA

Professor of Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Sciences

Department of Special Needs Education

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DEDICATION

This Professorial inaugural lecture is heartily dedicated to the memories of my beloved father Mallam Ozegya Egwa Koyotene and my grandmother Mallama Rabi Onoshi Khosabwo for bringing me up and teaching me hard work. May their gentle souls rest in peace with the Lord Amin.

THE PRESENTER

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1.0 Preamble

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, let me begin with "Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim" (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful). All praises are due to the Almighty Allah who gives us the opportunity to actualize dreams thereby contributing to self and to the society at large.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, I like to say that most people who come from literate family background are often privileged to enjoy early academic mentorship. However, many who happen to come from illiterate background tend to find themselves passing through the academic ladder unguided and possibly uncared-for. In the scenario of today's inaugural lecturer, he comes from an illiterate backgrounds but is highly cared for both at home and during the schooling process.

Vice Chancellor Sir, I found myself into the four walls of the primary schooling system and knew nothing about academic preparation. All I realized was supposed to be in school thus, I normally wake up, prepared and be in school until I completed my common entrance examination. Few months later, I was washing at home one morning and a friend came and told me that the result of the common entrance examination that we were all expecting had been released and that I gained admission into Government Secondary School Kadarko, here in Nasarawa State.

After a year in Kadarko, the same friend who was at Government Teachers' College Obi came on holiday to narrate to me how they were being prepared to become "**Teachers"** and how they used to go for prep, observe siesta, play several games and how beautiful their school was. I became fascinated with the idea of being a "Teacher" and decided to transfer from my school because then teachers were revered, they command respect in society and were like second judges within the community.

My then headmaster Mallam Mamuda Saluhu who appointed me the "office prefect" graciously took me on his bike to Government

Secondary School Kadarko where we collected the transfer certificate to Government Teachers College Obi. I continued my studies and was exposed to the teacher education curriculum. First term form four (4),when we were introduced to “Elements of Special Education” under the principle and practice of education. At that time, our understanding of special education was basically theoretical until I completed the teachers' grade II in 1988.

My Vice-Chancellor Sir, Distinguished guests, I applied for NCE Agricultural Sciences double major at College of Education Akwanga and the Diploma Special Education University of Jos. Few months later, the NCE admission results came out and I was not admitted but was told to wait for the second list. Three weeks later both the supplementary and Diploma Special Education admission lists were released, rather than giving me “Agric” double major that I applied for and was interviewed, the college gave me “Physical and Health Education”, and the University of Jos gave me Special Education. Since I did well in Special Education during my secondary school days, I decided to go for the Diploma programme. Unfortunately for me, the first lecture I attended was taught by a person who was Hearing impaired. Though, his voice could be heard, it was monotonous and he constantly supported his teaching with “sign language”. At the end of the class, he gave a test on sign language and many of us failed including myself. After the class, I quickly rushed to my level coordinator for a change of unit because I felt I would not be able to cope with “talking fingers”, but my request was turned down because other units were saturated.

I meditated over the situation and began engaging in deep tutorials to learn the practical sign language as I realized that the lecturer would still teach us two other courses involving the practical. During the holidays, I would engage myself in voluntary teaching at the Deaf school (Model Teaching Centre, MTC Jos) to improve my sign language skills.

It may interest you that our Diploma class had a population of over five hundred (500) students divided into three units of special needs education. In my unit, the population was over 150, made up of those with intact hearing and hearing impairment respectively.

At the end of our Diploma programme, I was rated among the top 5 of my class in sign language communication and was advised to apply to serve as a sign language interpreter. My Vice Chancellor sir, I became the first sign language interpreter in Northern Nigeria. I therefore, interpreted at the University of Jos for twelve (12) years before conversion to an academic cadre.

At a proposal defense in the faculty of education, University of Jos, while responding to a PhD work, I received a phone call which would ordinarily ignore because my phone was already on silent mode. It was an anonymous call but by divine intuition I just picked it and had to suspend my presentation to answer the call. I heard a voice "Are you Dr. Abu Egwa Ozegya" I said "Yes sir". Next he said, "Have you arrived Lafia"? I was wondering, then I curiously asked, "Who please?" Then and a soft mature voice responded, "Prof. Sanusi Liman", I said wow!

Though I'd never seen him in person, I knew he was the Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Lafia. I quickly said, "I wasn't informed to be in Lafia, sir. He then said, "Please come to Lafia tomorrow". I said,"Okay sir!" Without a clue to why I was being summoned to Lafia, I sought permission from my then HOD to travel to Lafia. He gave approval and by 8:15 am the next day I was at the Vice Chancellor's complex. Five minutes later, he arrived, and I just worked straight into his office and greeted him. He asked, "Are you Dr. Ozegya" and I said "Yes sir".He took me to the Registrar and later to my Dean Prof. Josephine Egbor Odey and that was how we made arrangements for the resource verification for establishment of the Department of Special Needs Education in this University.

Today the Department not only succeeded in successful

verification and accreditation of its programmes but has graduated the first set of students in Audiology, Sign Language Communication& Interpretation, CBR Mental Health and CBR Social Empowerment. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the first set of our students are already serving their father land.

My Vice Chancellor Sir, members of the University community, the Royal fathers, distinguished ladies, and gentlemen, please follow me on this academic ride in research, theoretical concepts and communication voyage in deaf education titled: **"Communication Strategies, Inclusive Practices and Education of Children with Hearing Impairment."**

1.1 Introduction

In the general terms, communication is merely an exchange of ideas, needs, purposes, and wants between two or more parties. People often complain to their friends that they are not able to communicate. Some have promised to communicate with their friends on the outcome of certain discussions or meetings. These are signs of communication failure, communication gap and communication breakdown among people with intact hearing. One can only imagine what persons with partial or complete hearing impairment would be going through in their attempts to share ideas, feelings, and information that may be critical to their very existence.

People with intact hearing easily communicate with their peers through basically oral/ aural language, a modality that is not easily understood by persons with hearing impairment. On the other hand, persons with hearing impairment find it difficult to perceive the presence of sound through audition and may require certain amplification or modality for comprehension. Thus, for the purpose of deaf communication, care must be taken to note the lag in the development of language especially those with pre-lingual hearing impairment.

The lack of early language acquisition among persons with

hearing impairment significantly affects their understanding of information except when extra measures are taken to systematically express the message (Ozegya, 2015). For these group of persons, communication will require a series of encounters beyond hearing, to include: smelling, seeing, tasting, and touching.

Table 1: PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

How may the sender encode a message?	Verbally or nonverbally. By speak ing, writing, gesturing.
What kinds of channels carry messages?	Letters, e-mail, memos, TV, telephone, voice, body language, sign language, braille dots.
What kind of medium/channels	Medium that is understandable to both parties
How does a receiver decode a message?	Hearing, reading, observing, Feeling, Touching
When is communication successful?	When a message is understood as the sender intended it to be.
How can a communicator provide feedback?	Respond to questions, provide reactions, through gestures.

Communication with persons with hearing impairment involves the process of making meaning, sending messages, or exchanging ideas between the sender and the hearing impaired through any modality that is understandable by the two parties involved. It is also important to note that the information decoded by the receiver and the subsequent responses made should be in consonance with the initial message, otherwise communication is said to be a failure.

Inclusive education is part of the universal right to education, which is extended to all children, youths, and adults with disabilities to gain access to education in a regular classroom environment. These rights are enshrined in the right of the child, addressed in the international conventions like Education for All (1990), Equalization of Educational Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), the Salamanca, Spain framework for action (1994), and the Dakar, Senegal framework for action (2000).

An Extracts from UNESCO (1990) Education for all states that:

> The goal of education for all will only be achievable when all nations (developed and developing) recognize that the universal right to education extends to all and when all nations act to establish or reform public education systems that are accessible to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. p.10.

Similarly, an extracts from the Convention on the Rights of the Child by (UNICEF, 1989), part 1, article 2, section 1, states that: "State parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his/her parents or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status", p.2.

These declarations categorically recognize education for all children as a central goal and gave impetus to Nigeria in its production of the nation's policy on education. For instance, Section 7, of the National Policy on Education (2009) gave the aims and objectives of special education to include:

i. pursue a programme of inclusiveness and access in education;
ii. Equalize educational opportunity for all children irrespective of their physical, sensory, mental, psychological, or emotional disabilities;
iii. Provide opportunity for exceptionally gifted children
iv. Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups; and
v. The education of children with special needs shall be free at all levels within their areas of jurisdiction, p.51.

Unfortunately, most of these laudable policy statements are mere pronouncements.

Although inclusive education had begun in most states of the Nigeria, many of the schools are ill-equipped, specialist teachers are inadequate for providing technical support services, and there is lack of political will to implement the stated policies and worse still, children with special needs in the inclusive school pay for their school fees at all levels of education. These practices and scenarios negate the objectives of special education provisions as enunciated in the nation's policy on education.

Thus, Ozegya (2010a) stated that to achieve education for all, inclusive education must emphasize the placement of children with hearing impairment in their regular classes. The fundamental principle of inclusive schooling is that all children should learn together where possible using supportive services regardless of any disabilities or differences they may have. This is why the Salamanca declaration states that, schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions (Sebba & Sacheder, 1997).

To achieve inclusive education therefore, all stakeholders such as the teachers, parents, curriculum developers, government, support service providers and children with hearing impairment must be prepared to offer opportunities for educating all the children in the inclusive programme (Ozegya, 2013).

My Vice Chancellor Sir, many centuries ago, Aristotle (284 – 322 BC), the great philosopher believed that "Deaf people are uneducable because they cannot speak, so they should not be trained". This mere pronouncement created a lot of academic stagnation for hearing-impaired people. Aristotle was seen as one of the most educated elites of his time, his words were laws in the ears of the masses and on the corridor of power (Moores, 1981).

However, today, with the human rights movement across the Globe, the education of children with hearing impairment worldwide have received tremendous support from governments and private individuals. Ojile (1994) reported that the first school

for the Deaf in Nigeria, the Wesley school for the Deaf, was established in Lagos, in 1958. It was initially run by the Society for the Care of the Deaf (founded by a group of philanthropic Nigerians) and the British Methodist Mission.

In 1960, Dr. Andrew Foster, a hearing-impaired African American Missionary, opened a school for the deaf in Ibadan, and in the following years, other schools were opened. Under the Nigeria Education Act (1977), more schools for the hearing-impaired were opened such as the Tudun Maliki School for the deaf and blind, Kano State, Kwara State School for the Deaf and Plateau State School for the Deaf among others.

Just as the system of formal education for the hearing-impaired was imported to Nigeria, so the communication modality was also acquired. In the Wesley school, hearing-impaired children were taught orally. In 1960 Foster introduced the manual method and American Sign Language (ASL) because he was also an American trainee.

1.2 Conceptual Clarification

1.2.1 Children with Hearing Impairment

Children with hearing impairment are those whose sense of hearing is non-functional for the ordinary purpose of life. They are categorized into congenital and adventitious deafness. Congenital hearing impaired are those who are born with hearing impairment and before the acquisition of societal language while the adventitious hearing impaired are those who are born with normal hearing but later lost their hearing due to either accident or circumstances of life.

Ozegya (2006) stated that children with hearing impairment can be classified based on the onset as well as the degree of hearing loss. The onset referred to the period of occurrence and it is either at birth or after birth. Studies have shown that one of the most important considerations related to age at onset of hearing loss is the extent to which speech and language have progressed. It is a general knowledge that the better the child's grasp of language

fundamentals, the better equipped he/she will take advantage of the prevalent educational environment.

Similarly, the later the age at which a child suffers a hearing loss, the better the child's language competence may be expected to be. Logically, when a child becomes hearing-impaired before the acquisition of asocietal language, the child's academic achievement will be affected. This is because the natural process by which the child perceives the presence of sound for language development is defective (Jensema, 1975; Ojile, 1986; Bioson, 1986; Lere, Ozegya & Ireogbu, 2014).

On the other hand, the degree of hearing loss is the extent to which hearing disability affects an individual and ranges from mild to profound conditions. Davis (1988) stated that the degree of hearing impairment can put a learner at risk for reduced academic achievement, the magnitude of which depends on the severity of loss. Tarka'a (2002) reported that students with hearing impairment which ranges from mild-moderate hearing loss performed academically better than those with severe-profound hearing loss. The author concluded that the academic performance of students with hearing impairment declines as the degree of hearing loss becomes severe.

A. Characteristics of Children with Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment is a hidden handicap. This means that some hearing impairment do not present physical manifestation of their signs and symptoms. However, a close observation of the behaviour and mannerisms of children with hearing impairment can indicate that the child may:

- *Experience Reduced Hearing Loss:* In this condition, the individual can perceive the presence of sound but not at a normal conversational level. It may warrant the speaker to speak louder before the person with a hearing impairment can hear. This is possible due to the pathology of the ear preventing the conduction of sound energy into the ear. Many individuals with such cases may require an

amplification system to enable the person to gain maximally from normal conversation level.

- *Demand for Repetition of Words*: People with suspected cases of hearing loss usually demand a repeat of what the speaker said. This is not surprising considering the multitude of English or dialectical words present on the lips. Again, there are different places of articulation following different parts of speech organs. The advantage of intact hearing provides the individual with the correct knowledge about a sound that has been produced but when the hearing is impaired, the individual is left to guess from the multitude of words available and pronounced by the speaker. For instance, these two words, “Three and tree”, though sound alike have different places of articulation. While the former is an *Apicodental* sound in which the tip of the tongue is held by the teeth as the sound is been produced, the latter is *Apicoaveola* in which the same tip of the tongue now rises and touches the gum ridge. Therefore, because of the similarities in sound production, the person with hearing impairment usually demands for repetition of such words for better understanding.

- *Observe the Speaker's Lips Rather than Listening:* For individuals without hearing impairment, it is normal to engage in conversation without necessarily looking at the person or facing the speaker. However, the hearing-impaired reinforce the organ of sight with that of the hearing in virtually all their interaction with people. For the hearing impaired to maximally benefit from normal conversation involving the use of speech sound, they constantly watch the movement of the speaker's lips and face to deduce meaning from the conversation.

- *Tilt / Turn the Ear towards the Direction of Sound:* Every human being is supposed to have two functional hearing organs, the right and left ears. However, one of the two may become dysfunctional or the person may be hearing

better in one ear than the other. This means that the degree of hearing loss in both ears differs. The person therefore as a matter of necessity begins to tilt the better ear towards the direction of sound for perception. Sometimes, the better ear is amplified with the support of a hearing aid to help the person perceive the presence of sound during conversation.

- *Suspicious about What People Say:* Curiosity brings about suspicion about what people say. The Nigerian society is predominantly an oral environment. People whether at home, school, market or workplace communicate using verbal method without consideration for individuals with hearing impairment. In the interaction, people laugh, clap, and cheer without carrying the hearing impaired along. The human intuition begins to prompt the hearing-impaired to find out what is happening. In the process, the deaf sometimes react to the situation and may believe that he /she was the centre of discourse.

- Again, the deaf can be suspicious of an ongoing discussion because of the curiosity to contribute or be knowledgeable about the discussion and may ask to know what is happening. Such suspicion can however be of both advantage and disadvantage. The person will gain when asked and is provided with the needed information regarding the happenings. On the other hand, he/she may be frustrated if the speaker decides to ignore him/her perhaps due to a communication gap between the two parties.

- *Experience Ear Discharge:* Ear discharge is caused by bacteria or viral infectious disease popularly called Otitis media. It is an inflammation of the eustachian tube which leads to exudation of the endoloph and periloph down to the middle ear and bugging the eardrum to the external auditory meatus. The person begins to notice some purulent fluid accumulation inside the ear and even coming

out of the ear. This situation causes pain, buzzy sounds, and discomfort. It can however be medically treated with antibiotics.

- *Have Speech Problem or Monotonous Voice:* Individuals with hearing impairment may have monotonous voice due to the absence of auditory feedback making it harder to regulate pitch tone and volume. Limited exposure to spoken language skills leading to difficulties in articulation, intonation, and rhythm. The relationship between hearing-impairment and monotony of voice is correlative, not causative. Hearing impairment can contribute to a monotone voice due to reduced auditory feedback, difficulty perceiving and producing speech prosody (Rhythm, Stress, and Intonation), articulation challenges, and limited exposure to spoken language. Hearing impairment does not directly cause monotony of voice, individual differences play a significant role. However, the brain of Individuals with hearing impairment may have differences in areas responsible for speech processing and production which can affect voice quality.

- *Constantly Complain of Ear Itch, Noise or Lack of Balance:* Some individuals with hearing impairment may experience itching due to infection of different types (external otitis), bacterial and fungi. Again, the ear may be exposed to prolonged sound detrimental to the saturated hearing level and may result in progressive deterioration of the hearing. Similarly, the organ of balance in the ear, the semicircular canals may become dysfunctional due to heavy blow on the ear, accident or pressure exerted on the ear. This can change the movement posture of the individual.

- *Have Poor Discrimination of Sound:* This is fundamentally due to alack of auditory feedback (ability to hear oneself) in speech conversation. To discriminate

sound will require intact or aided hearing; any person who is unable to detect or perceive the presence of sound will find it difficult to discriminate it. This is particularly problematic with individuals who are born with hearing impairment. Depending on the extent to which the hearing problem affects the individual, the ability to discriminate various sounds can be extremely difficult for those with profound hearing impairment.

B). Types of Hearing Impairment

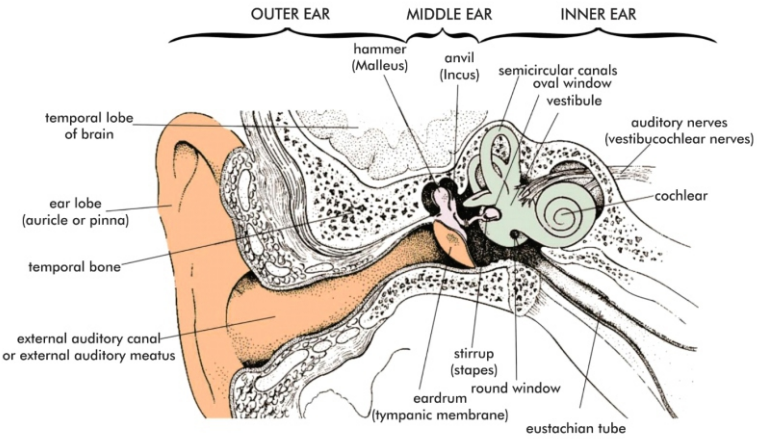


Fig. 1: Anatomy of the Human Ear

Hearing impairment can be described based on the site of lesion as follows:

Conductive Hearing Loss is associated with the pathologies or disorders of the ear which prevent the individual from localization and transmission of sound stimuli. It could be the result of obstruction, infection, or malformation of the outer or middle ear anatomy. Sometimes during play, children may insert a stone, bean seed or corn into the ear canal and this may block or obstruct the transmission of sound into the ear. Similarly, an individual may insert a sharp object into the ear or better still use the tip of a biro, sharp pin to scratch the ear canal or

clean the ear wax, in the process the object may pierce the ear drum leading to perforation of the drum. When the outer or middle ears are unable to process acoustic sound into the inner ear, a case of conductive hearing loss is established.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss is associated with the inner ear mechanism and may have to do with the dysfunctioning of the cochlea, semicircular canal, or auditory nerve problems. This prevents the sound stimuli from being converted from mechanical energy to electrochemical energy for brain interpretation. It is insightful to note that the inner ear does not use mechanical energy. Thus, sounds mechanically conducted by the outer ear have to be converted to electrical impulses before the brain can interpret them. Where there is any dysfunctioning of the apparatus of the inner ear such as nerves degeneration, cochlea dysfunctioning or traumatic factor of the semi-circular canal, the inner ear will experience inactivity leading to non-compliance with the brain. Sometimes the ear may be exposed to prolonged loud noise such as the musical, industrial or company sounds emitting from heavy machines into the person's ear. Such high levels of sounds are usually above the Saturated Hearing Threshold (SHT) and have the capacity to deafen the ear leading to irreparable hearing loss.

Mixed Hearing Loss is the combination of conductive and sensorineural hearing losses present in the child. Usually, the client experiences diminished hearing loss in both the outer, middle and the inner ear. Sometimes, an individual may present with a condensed ear wax and at the same time experience hair cell degeneration. In this situation, the former is an outer ear problem while the latter is an inner ear problem, thus, the person has mixed hearing loss. Interestingly, the ear secretes wax for its lubrication and moisture of the pinna and ear canal. However, some

people's ear over secrete the wax and may tend to accumulate overtime and blocking the pathways to the eardrum leading to reduced hearing sensitivity.

Central Hearing Loss is another type that has to do with the organ of hearing (cortex) within the brain. This is when the cortex becomes dysfunctional. This means that there will be no interpretation of sound for meaningful responses. Similarly, there are other types of hearing impairment that are not specifically based on the site of lesion. The presbycusis has to do with hearing loss based on old age it is believed that as human gets older, so it is with the anatomy of the body. The apparatus of the ear can become weak as a result of old age and may render the individual unable to perceive the presence of sound, especially at low tone. Below is the diagram showing the anatomy of the human ear.

Temporary Hearing Loss has to do with the Psychology of the individual known as malingering and feigning. It occurs because of pretense to oneself, shock, sad news or when one is depressed. This may be the result of task avoidance such as (audiometric test for soldiers being prepared for war). It is called temporary hearing loss because as soon as the psychological state of the mind is over, the hearing is automatically restored.

C). **Myths and Misconceptions about Hearing Loss**

In our society and at the workplace, hearing loss is a significant condition that can impact on communication, productivity, safety, and the overall employee's well-being. Addressing misconceptions about hearing loss is crucial for creating a more inclusive and supportive society and work environment. The misconceptions according to Lexie-hearing (2024), are:

1. **Hearing Loss only Affects Older People:**
   People of all ages can experience hearing loss. Some factors can include noise exposure, genetic and medical conditions. It is important to note that there are old people who do not have hearing loss. Depending on the causal factor, children, youths, and adults can develop hearing impairment of debilitating effects. Hearing Health Foundation (2024) reported an estimated 48 million people live with hearing loss in the U.S, and about two-thirds were under 65 years old. The foundation asserts that the American Medical Association examined a comprehensive data set of the U.S population and found that 1in5 children ages 12-19 showed some signs of hearing loss in one or both ears. Similarly, the World Health Organization has warned that 11 billion teenagers and young adults are at risk of hearing loss due to the unsafe use of personal audio devices, including smart phones, and exposure to damaging levels of sound at noisy entertainment venues such as nightclubs and sporting events.

2. **Hearing Loss is not a Serious Issue:**
   So many people downplay the seriousness of hearing loss especially at work because it is a hidden handicap, but untreated hearing loss can lead to communication barriers, misunderstanding, decreased job performance and even safety hazards. Hearing loss reduces one's ability to perceive information around and deprives the person opportunity to participate in the activities of his/her immediate environment. Issues related to family, school and workplace discourse may be unknown to the individual with hearing impairment except extra measures are taken to inform the person.

   Hearing loss could pose a safety hazard on the road and even at home. A moving vehicle could be horning to a child with deafness just as a burning house where the child is in

despite the noise and shouting about the safety of such a person may still not save the individual unless other measures are taken, the child with hearing problem may be consumed by the situation. An untreated hearing loss increases one's risk of experiencing cognitive decline, dementia, falls, social isolation and depression.

3. **Hearing Loss is always Noticeable.**
   Not all forms of hearing loss are immediately noticeable, hidden hearing loss which affects the ability to understand speech in a noisy environment can go undetected for a long time, impacting interactions and collaboration at work. Hearing problems sustained because of prolonged exposure of the ear to loud-intensitysound may not be noticed at a glance. The condition does not portray physical pathology, until communication is established one may not know that the individual is suffering diminished hearing loss.

4. **Hearing Loss is Solely Caused by Loud Noise and Contagious**
   While loud noise is a common cause of hearing loss. It is not the only factor. Age-related hearing loss, ototoxic medications, genetic pre-dispositions, and certain medical conditions can contribute to hearing impairment. It has been established that the effect of a muted gene can be detrimental to the offspring. A defective gene of deafness can be transferred to the unborn child leading to congenital deafness (Ozegya, 2008). Unlike other diseases such as leprosy, hearing impairment is not contagious.

5. **Hearing Aids solve all Hearing Problems**
   It is true that hearing aids can be incredibly beneficial, they may not completely restore hearing or address all communication challenges. Other strategies such as assistive listening devices, workplace accommodation and communication modalities may also be needed. Although

hearing aid improves the hearing ability of people with hearing impairment, it is not a replacement for hearing. The person with hearing impairment still depends on lip reading, gestures, and body movements to appreciate the dynamics of communication and interaction with people in society. The brain needs time to adjust to the sound coming through the hearing aid. Because of each person's unique audiogram, with differences in abilities to hear various frequencies, the hearing aid needs to be programmed to the patient's hearing ability, and the fine turning may take repeated efforts to appreciate it use. Even the most advanced hearing aid will not restore hearing 100 percent, and may need auditory training to help a brain process sounds (Hearing Health Foundation, 2024).

(Fig. 2: Sample of Hearing Aids).

1. **People with Hearing Loss are Less Productive**

This misconception overlooks the capabilities of individuals with hearing loss. Giving the right support and instituting inclusive policies, individuals with hearing loss can excel and contribute meaningfully to workplace and house chores. A study has shown that people with hearing impairment have excelled in both academic and entrepreneurial ventures. Some hearing-impaired people in Nasarawa State have successfully undergone poverty alleviation entrepreneurial training and demonstrated practical competence in computer application, tailoring and reading comprehension skills. The study reported despite the degree of hearing loss and gender, participants' demonstrated improved reading ability and vocational skills after intervention (Jerry, 2023).

Creating a supportive and inclusive workplace implies addressing cases of hearing loss. Employers play a vital role in providing support, raising awareness, and fostering a culture of inclusion for employees with hearing loss (Lexie-hearing, 2024). By debunking these common misconceptions about hearing loss at work and in our society, we can promote greater understanding, empathy and inclusivity, supporting employees; or children with hearing loss and raising awareness about hearing loss in Nigeria.

1.2.2 Causes and Prevention of Hearing Impairment

a) Causes

Genetic predisposition and environmental factors account for the etiologies of hearing impairment. Ozegya (2006) posited that congenital atresia, compacted wax, growth, infection diseases (otitis media) and noise-induced hearing loss are leading causes of hearing impairment in children.

Genetic Factor: Genes play an important role in congenital hearing loss, causing severe degree of hearing loss in infants. Genes can become mutated, or changed, and this can cause disorders in our bodies. Genetic hearing loss may be inherited in an autosomal dominant (When a child gets the abnormal

gene from only one parent) or recessive non-syndromic mutation (meaning two copies of the abnormal gene are present). Syndromic means that in addition to hearing loss, there are other disorders in the body, when hearing loss is passed down from parents. Autosomal recessive hearing loss can occur when a child receives a hearing loss gene from each parent. Sibling children born to the same couple have a 25% chances of have hearing loss. Typically, the parents have normal hearing and are unaffected carriers but can give birth to a child with hearing loss with procreation (American Academic of Otolaryngology, 2024).

Atresia is a congenital problem associated with malformation of the pinna. Sometimes there is no hole into the canal. Similarly, the auditory canal may be crucate, too thin/narrow or too short. In this situation, the air conduction will be less. This affects the stimulation of the ossicles and the amplification of acoustic energy. Similarly, the ear meatus and drum may be blocked because of dirt or accumulated wax. This can reduce the vibration of the ear drum. Though, the situation can be medically irrigated with normal saline, if left untreated can result in hearing loss.

To remedy such problem a simple surgery can be carried out to correct the pinna and the canal. Ahmed and Bakari (2002) posited that the instillation of olive oil, waxol, cerumol, liquid paraffin and wax aid into the ear will soften and dissolve the impacted wax. Thereafter, the affected ear can be irrigated with normal saline.

Another causal factor is the various growth in the middle ear. *Cholesteatoma,* a fibrous growth on the floor of the auditory canal and ossicles while *Otosclerosis* grows at the footplate of the stapes. These hold the ossicular chain from vibration and prevent the amplification of sound. Treatment of these growths is through surgery and the person should be referred to an Otologist.

Again, *otitis media* is a pathological condition of the middle ear. When there is any infection or influenza that leads to permanent closure of the eustachian tube, the ear may lack oxygen which is detrimental to the physiology of the ear. Eustachian tube dysfunction can prevent the middle ear from getting fresh air from the environment or lungs.

Ahmed and Bakari (2002) reported that eustachian tube dysfunction can prevent the middle ear from getting fresh air thereby facilitating exudation of fluid from the blood system to the middle ear. The authors documented that pathological conditions of the ear include wax, secretory otitis media, perforation, and disease of various types. The authors posited that otitis media is an infectious disease which occurs in stages; the acute otitis, chronic and glue ear (secretory otitis). The authors suggested that tympano plastic surgery may be carried out where the clinician uses a tube to perforate the ear drum to allow the fluid to drain out, while the eardrum is left permanent scar and to be followed up with antibiotic drugs.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss is a gradual progressive deterioration of the hearing sensitivity. It occurs as a result of exposure of the ear to loud sounds. Sound emission from factories, airports, companies, and various machines directly into the ear has the propensity of causing permanent hearing loss. It may also affect the hair cells that produce a gradually increasing hearing loss. People who by virtue of their work or pleasure expose their ears to high-intensity of sound should avoid or use ear protectors.

Reacting to incidences of noise deafness, New by (1979) reported that the sensorineural loss associated with noise exposure is cochlea in origin. At the beginning stage, noise-induced hearing loss is reversible that is, if the individual is removed from the noisy environment; his hearing will gradually improve until it reaches the pre-exposure level. This is so because, some of the hair cells responsible for the

reception of high-frequency sound have not been irreparably damaged by the noise exposure but is having some kind of *"temporary threshold shift"*. On the other hand, if an individual remains in his noisy job environment for several years, the degree of noise inducement will increase until the speech frequencies are affected. This can produce permanent disability of hearing especially in understanding speech sounds. Studies have also shown that most conditions affecting the inner ear are attributable to viral diseases such as measles, mumps, meningitis, rubella, noise, hereditary and effects of ototoxic drugs (Okuoyibo, 2001; Ozegya, 2015).

b) Prevention

In developing countries such as Nigeria, preventive measures are given less attention due to alack of adequate knowledge and cultural beliefs associated with the etiology of deafness. Prevention of hearing loss could be carried out in the following ways:

*Health Education***:** Programmes that have direct relevance to the causal factors of deafness such as genetic and hereditary deafness, chromosomal abnormalities; Usher's Syndrome etc. should be mounted in the media for the purpose of educating the public. In this regard, experts are invited to discuss issues relating to prevention of hearing loss. Similarly, hearing conservation programme should be initiated to reduce the incidences of hearing loss in schools, factories/ industries and homes where high-intensity of sound is produced.

Mass Screening is another systematic procedure in which married couples, prospective couples and school-aged children are massively screened/ checked to detect the presence of hearing loss or the potential of developing hearing impairment. *Amniocentesis* is a scientific procedure in which an amniotic fluid surrounding the pregnant mother's womb is extracted for laboratory tests. In advanced countries

of the world and even some developing countries, it is possible to carry out amniotic test to detect the presence of handicapping conditions (hearing problem inclusive). When the test results indicate the presence or potential of a handicapping condition, the couples are advised to embark on therapeutic abortion to prevent the possibility of bringing forth a child with disability.

Regular Antenatal Care is another good avenue for immunization against diseases causing deafness. Advise on good nutrition, improving personal hygiene, advantages of hospital delivery and avoidance of unprescribed drugs are rendered as preventive measures. Similarly, effective noise control measures in factories, airports, and business places where high noise is produced should be undertaken. In this regard, sensitization programme and counseling services on the effects of noise and the need for ear protectors to avert hearing loss should be intensified by people. Again, avoidance of self-medication can be helpful. Awareness on the danger of drugs to the ear especially the ototoxic type is of utmost importance. Individuals indulging in indiscriminate intake of drugs should be avoided. This will very much reduce the danger of over-dose, expired or wrong drug prescription.

2.0 Communication Strategies with the Hearing Impaired

a) Communication and Pattern

Communication with the hearing impaired ensures an exchange of ideas, concepts and needs through a language (sign language) that is understandable to both parties and at the end there must be a response that corresponds to the initial message as a feedback mechanism. Thus, communication with the hearing impaired should recognize certain patterns as:

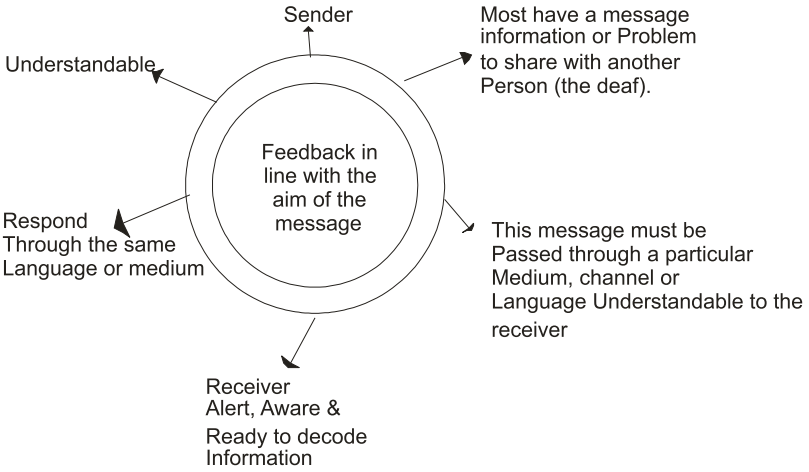


Fig 3 Pattern of Communication
(Ozegya, 1994).

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that communication involves two or more parties (Sender and Receiver). It is a cyclic motion and continues process. Thus, on communication, there must be an idea to be expressed to the receiver. There must exist a real desire on the part of the sender considering the nature of the child's impairment and deciding on the language or symbol to use. The receiver also must be on alert to digest the information. In the end, there must be feedback in line with the initial information passed by the sender. This can be in the form of a nod of the head. Facial expression, laughter or a shock and not necessarily verbal.

a) Communication Strategies

In deaf education, several strategies abound including the use of traditional speech sound. Ozegya (2010b) highlighted the strategies as thus:

i. Oral/Aural Approach – This strategy emphasizes oral (lip-reading) with speech and speech reading as the main avenue for communication and instructional delivery. It is one of the earliest teaching methods employed by hearing-impaired

instructors across the globe. It is based on the belief that people with hearing-impairment become better at making intelligible speech and speech communication can bring the deaf into the world of hearing people.

ii. Manual Communication Approach: -The manual process means communication using the language of signs. It is the first natural language of people with hearing problem. It is a combination of sign language and fingerspelling. The process is guided by its variants such as the hand shape, positioning, orientation, grammatical structure, fluency and clarity of sign as well as the use of double letters.

Handshape:- Formation of the hands which represent the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Just like the **A-Z** and **1-100** in regular pronunciation. The letters are symbolized the through formation of different hand shapes so that each hand shape signifies a particular number or letter of the alphabet (A, B, C.). Thus, finger identities are of paramount importance. The thump, index, middle, ring and little fingers are involved. It is also necessary to note that each of the fingers performs designated signs. For instance, the thump can be used to sign the following words: *A, Apple, Tomorrow, Girl, India, Not and even Onion,* while the index finger can be used to sign words like: *For, Who, What, Where, This, and Think* respectively.

The middle finger can be used to present the signs for: Medicine, Empty, Favorite, and Feel, while the ring finger accommodates signs for: *Engage, Seven, Seventeen* and the little finger can be used to present the signs for: *Individual, I, J, International, Independent, Interview and even Instruction* in that order. It is necessary to state that sign language is a deliberate act which is why any word that does not have a sign or whose signs are forgotten should be finger-spelled rather than inventing a crude sign. Therefore, it behooves the signer to appropriately form the hand in such a way that represents the intended sign. Doing otherwise may alter the meaning of that sign and can be considered as an incorrect sign.

Positioning: -Having formed the hand, it should be placed somewhere. Usually, the hand shape representing letters of the alphabet is placed in the air directly at the eye view of the receiver. However, hand-shapes for other signs i.e. words, and sentences could be placed on the body or the other hand. Someone may form a correct hand shape but placed in a wrong position and this can change the meaning of the word. For instance: The back of an index finger placed on the lips and moves forward is a sign for TRUE while the same hand shape shakes side-by-side in the air is the sign for WHERE. This means that positioning is a designated place where alternative signs are made. Thus, think/this, please/ school, foundation/ preach are typical examples of how positioning can be used to differentiate signs.

Orientation: -Movement of signs toward different directions. As I said before, sign language is a deliberate act, therefore any correct movement towards a particular direction could be subsumed as a skill. For instance, to sign **"name"** may not require any movement, but to sign **"egg"** will require slight movement from the initial position where "name" was signed. Examples of words whose signs are differentiated by orientation include: teach/teacher, double-letters (tree, book), farm/farmer, father/gentleman, mother/ladies etc. Orientation differentiates signs located in the same position or using the same hand shapes.

Grammatical Structure of Sign: -Signed English conforms to English grammatical structure. This is usually emphasized at an advanced level of sign language mastery where the child is expected to differentiate between tenses (singular/plural, words/opposite, present/past, present continues as well as possessive pronouns). For instance – **Orange/Oranges, boy/ girl, go/went/,run/running, /'s/.** It also looks at the contextual meaning of a sentence. For instance "I like you", you are like your sister" or "This is my book", I booked my flight". However, for younger deaf or congenitally hearing impaired, a

natural sign language (NSL) is preferred as opposed to the Manually Coded English System (MCE). The natural sign language is a visual-spatial modality that was not initially formed for any spoken language but was developed to express manually and non-manually without voice. The linguistic features include movement, hand shapes, location, finger/wrist orientations and non-manual signals. Whereas, the MCE have signs for specific English language-bound morphology. These two systems have different grammatical structures, while the NSL uses *object subject before the verb*, the MCE uses *subject, verb and object*. Now let us consider the use of this sentence "A dog is Sitting Comfortably on a Small Chair".

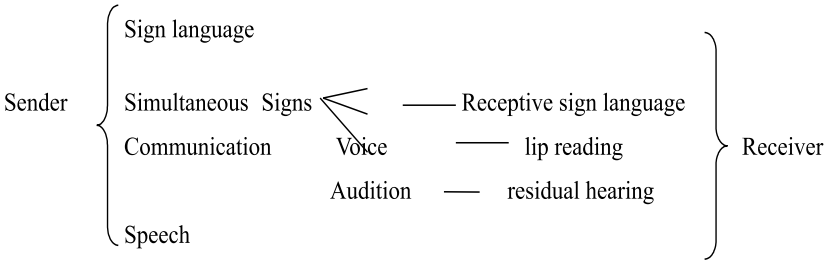
NSL	**MCE**
ONE CHAIR SMALL "cha"	A DOG IS SIT+TING COMFORT+TAB+LY # ON A SMALL CHAIR
CURVE-INDEX ONE DOG SIT (CL: DC).	

It is important to note that the natural sign language (NSL) has so many classifiers including Body Classifiers (BCL), Body Part Classifiers (BPCL), Plural Classifiers (PCL), Descriptive Classifiers (DC), Semantic Classifiers (SCL), Locative Classifiers (LCL) and Instrumental Classifiers among others depending on the usage. It is important to state that NSL are not necessarily presented in English grammatical morphology (Moges-Riedel, 2024).

Fluency and Clarity: -Connotes presentation of signs in as mooth and easy motion. The signs must be and should flow without gap, jerking or shivering on the part of the signer. The common problem associated with most beginning signers is the tendency to be fast. This may produce poor signs. The ability of an individual to sign fast is dependent on the person's ability to recall the exert sign from his/her brain. This means that the person must have learnt the signs and can recall immediately

during the signing process. Thus, beginning signers are advised to sign according to their own pace in a clear posture.

I. Simultaneous Communication-A combination of oral speech accompanied by sign language and finger spelling. Simultaneous communication is simply described as "signing and talking at the same time." Abednego (2021) stated that simultaneous communication is the rendering of a message into oral language at the same time the message is being delivered in sign language. It is diagrammed thus:



(Abednego, 2021)

Simultaneous communication is employed even when using informal signs and crude gestures, people often tend to speak at the same time. The receiver gets the massage through sign and lip-reading or speech reading. Similarly, words that do not have signs are easily finger spelled. For instance," Madidi, Amala, Kpomo, or name of people such as "Odapu, Ayitogo" Osabwaetc.

iv Total Communication Strategy- A philosophy of educating the hearing-impaired which advocates the use of any and all means of communication to provide unlimited opportunity for development of language competence. Ozegya (2010) reiterated that total communication is the right of a person with deafness to learn to use any or all forms of communication available to develop language competence. This includes the full spectrum of the total approach shown below:

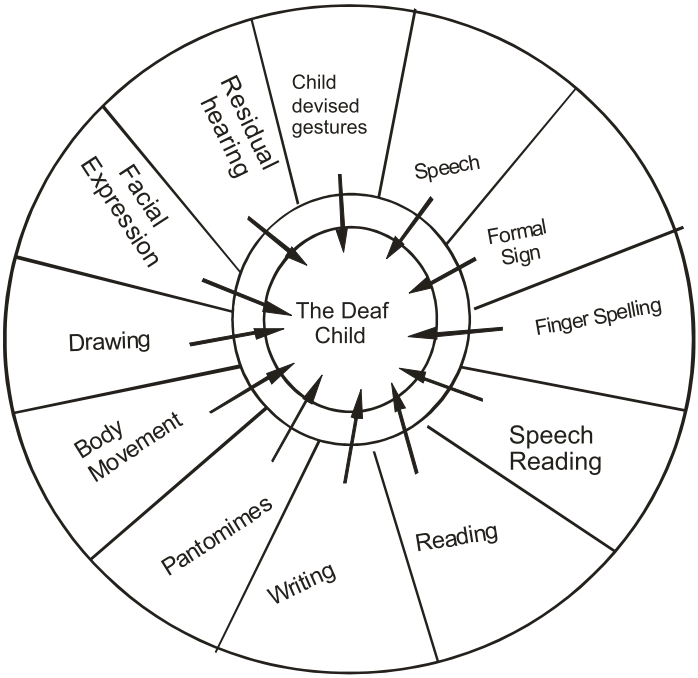


Fig 4: Spectrum of Total Approach
(Sambo, 1995).

The above illustration shows the spectrum of the total approach. This means that any teacher of the hearing impaired is at liberty to use any or a combination of these modes in a gradual fashion introducing more and more methods to deliver the needed instruction. The process of communication begins with a careful observation of the child's gestures known as the “child-devised gestures” (words) which are used in combination with other methods to form sentences.

In the application of this strategy, the activity begins with the child and ends with the child. The product of these activities or instructional delivery is the language development and mastery of content areas. All these approaches are used to ensure that the child with deafness learns to read and write. The question that readily comes to mind is what if the child is deaf-blind? Here, systematic and other pragmatic strategies may be added, “*The*

TADOMA method" this is a system of communication using touch as used by some children who have both hearing loss and sight impairments. The child with hearing-impaired blindness places a hand over those of the signer to follow what's being communicated through touch and movement. The signer signs letter of each word using the British Sign Language (BSL) alphabet or familiar sign language known to the child with deaf-blindness. For instance, the words "mango",and "book", can be finger-spelled while the child feels each hand shape and reads the information.

Experience Sharing

A case of a child with Usher's syndrome from Keana Community of Nasarawa State was born hearing-impaired. He attended the Keana School for the Deaf and completed his primary education, wrote the common entrance examination and gained admission into the Plateau School for the Deaf, Bassa. While he was being prepared to resume in school, he suddenly began to experience diminished visual loss and within few months became blind. His parents who were illiterate and who used to communicate with him through "home signs' now can no longer effectively communicate with him, even to say here is your food. Sometimes, the food will be kept in his room with verbal instruction that the food is here, but because of the deaf blindness he neither saw nor heard them. The boy will go hungry and sometimes cry out! Incidentally, only his classmates, his two teachers and I used to interact with him prior to the blindness that were able to communicate with him through *TADOMA* Method. Unfortunately, he died.

3. 0 Inclusive Practices

(a) Inclusive Education

Inclusive education involves bringing together all children with or without special needs to acquire learning experiences in the same classroom. Inclusive education accommodates the diverse learning backgrounds and conditions of the learners'. It does not reject any child. The beauty of inclusive education system is that it adapts to the learners' diversities as well as uniqueness. In the past,

some that learners were excluded from the regular learning environment otherwise called general education on account of their disabilities or other considerations such as racism, ethnicity or religious bias, gender etc. Society prejudices and negative attitudes towards those with disabilities meant that such learners suffered exclusion. Inclusive education is a move towards "including the excluded".

Ozegya, Bodang and Ezeanochie (2016) reported that one of the earliest countries that adopts public policy to extend education to children with special needs is the United States of America (USA). The Civil Rights Act of 1965 was the trigger policy that brought advocacy for the education of children with disabilities. This moved the Congress of United States to establish the Bureau of Education of the Handicapped (BEH) under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. In 1970, the congress passed the Education of the Handicapped Act PL- 91-230.

Similarly, the international conventions such as: the Convention on the Right of the Child (UNICEF, 1989), World Declarations on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) and the Salamanca Spain framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) were categorical about inclusive education of children with disabilities. According to Salamanca statement:

> Educational policies at all levels from the national to the local, stipulates that a child with a disability should attend the neighborhood school, that is, the school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability. Exception to this rule should be considered on a case-by-case basis where only education in a special school or establishment can be shown to meet the needs of the individual child p. 17-18.

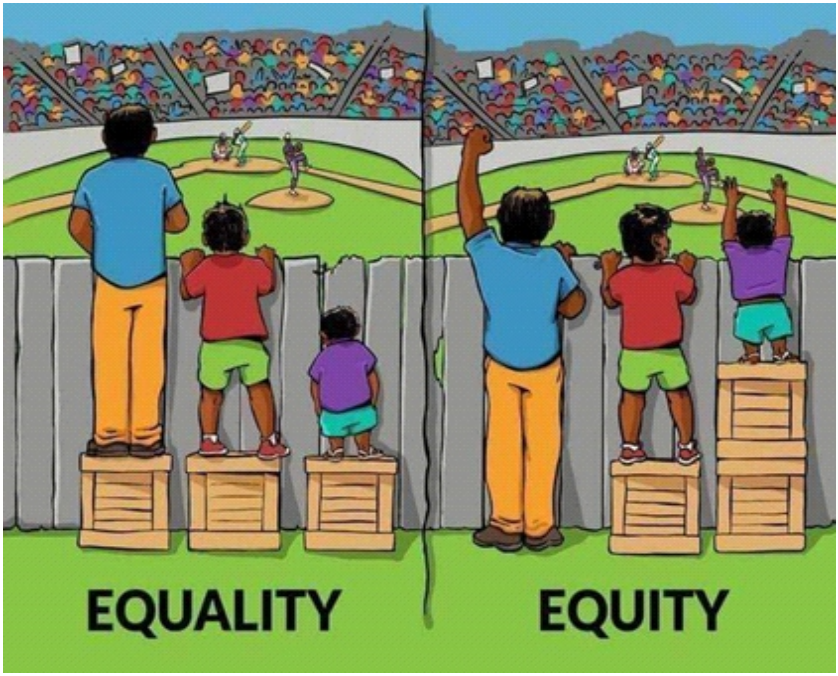
By so doing, children with special needs can live with their

families and receive the necessary support from their families and friends during the period of their education. Essentially, inclusive education seeks to remove all kinds of labeling and societal stigma on children with special needs and launches them into a life of belonging and self-worth. In the Salamanca statement, UNESCO averred that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving an education for all.

Back home in Nigeria, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2017:17-18) developed the National Policy on Inclusive Education with its implementation guidelines. The policy objectives include "improvement of access and participation, to create positive experience that would enhance learning among all learners regardless of age, nationality, ethnicity, sex or disabilities amongst others".Furthermore, the policy targets were to rehabilitate and upgrade schools in every state annually to effectively provide safe, inclusive learning environments and promote suitable learning experiences; comprehensive public awareness programmes on inclusive education, implementation and adaptation of curricular to cater for all learners (regardless of their ability and styles of learning, including accessible means of assessing and certifying all learners' progress against the curriculum amongst others (NPIE, 2017).

Similarly, the Nigeria National Building Codes (NBC) (2024) specified 10 areas of attention including structural design, fire safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, sanitation and health, electrical, plumbing, environmental sustainability, materials and constructions as well as building maintenance. Ensuring equal access to public buildings for persons with disabilities, the accessibility code mandates features such as ramps, elevators, accessible parking spaces, and sign age in buildings and facilities. This aligns with international standards for barrier free environments, promoting inclusivity and mobility for everyone.

Inclusive education framework thus, stands on three pillars: Accessibility, Equity and Participation. The picture below illustrates the concept.



Participation in School Activities by Persons with Disabilities

From the picture, access to viewingobjects is supported on the basis of equality as well as equity. It can be deduced that while equality consideration is good, equity is better because, it provides the needed accommodation based on the peculiar needs of each

child. Apart from physical accessibility to the school system, there is also the issue of access to the curriculum. While sighted children have access to printed materials, children who are blind require it in braille version, those with intact hearing listen to lectures, while the deaf require sign language.

B) Inclusive Practices

The practice of inclusive education is determined by the specification of its framework and implementation guidelines. In any case, the general principles must be borne in mind. For instance, article 3 under the general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted on 13th December 2006 which Nigeria ratified on 28thMay, 2007 provides:

a) Respect for inherent dignity, and individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons;
b) Non-discrimination.
c) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
d) respect for differences and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity;
e) Equality of opportunity
f) Accessibility

Similarly, in Article 24, under education, it provides:

1. States parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education.

2c. enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society. In realizing this right, reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided.

3c. ensuring that the education of persons and in particular children, who are blind, deaf, or deaf-blind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes or means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development (UNCRPD, 2006).

Furthermore, in full filing one of its mandates of pursuing programme of inclusiveness, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBC) (2021) undertook a situation analysis on the implementation of special education intervention funds (2013-2017) in public and private basic inclusive education programme in Nigeria. The report focused on school environment, teaching and non-teaching staff and their qualifications, project deliverables, equipment deliverables, renovation/rehabilitation of the public and private special schools/centres. The report indicated that funds were disbursed and released across 36 states and FCT Abuja for public and private basic inclusive education schools/centres. Different categories of persons with disabilities (visual, hearing, physical impairments, intellectual disability, gifted and talented amongst others enrolled into the inclusive schools/centres across the federation and in both public and private settings. There was a significant number of teaching and non- teaching staff grouped into above NCE holders, NCE and below NCE respectively. However, special teachers and other support service providers for inclusive education were absent. The report further presented the deliverables in terms of projects, equipment and renovations of classroom, toilets, library, hostel, and office furniture etc. as adequate, but some were functional while others were not.

Similarly, the UBEC (2021) needs assessment report was hinged on the premise of providing equal educational opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to meet up with international education competiveness. Findings revealed that for proper inclusive education of children with special needs, assistive technologies, special teachers, participation of PWDs in all programmes and activities of the school were needed. Others were the use of Individualized Education Programme (IEP) strategy, parents and community involvement, sensitization, periodic training of teachers as well as collaboration and partnership with organizations and non-governmental organizations were urgently needed. The needs of PWDs must be identified and provided for in the inclusive education programme.

c). Barriers to Inclusive Education in Nigeria

Inclusion encourages access, equity and participation of PWDs schooling system, workforce and community engagement. However, certain barriers can pose a threat to the actualization of these principles. Ozegya and Idris (2020) explained four barriers to effective inclusive education of children with disabilities. These include:

-Attitudinal Barriers: Lack of proper understanding of the concept of inclusive teaching and learning, cultural and religious beliefs, and resistance to change on the part of the stakeholders practicing inclusive education. Some teachers have wrong perceptions about children with special needs. Some believe that children with disabilities cannot benefit from classroom instruction and as such are very difficult to teach. This may have a negative effect on the motivation and self-concept of the children and their overall performance.

Ozoji (2005) stated that some students with disabilities are caricatured and devalued intellectually and personally by their school or teachers. Some individuals do not see the need for even the special education programme because they consider people with disabilities as unfit in the society. The question to ask is do people with disability asked to be born? When a person by virtue of accident or condition of ill-health becomes disabled, should the person require intervention? It must be noted that there is a very thin line between ability and disability. This is necessary because a "normal" person may leave his house to work, but on the way he/she may be involved in an accident and loose his sight, ear, leg, hand, or any part of the body.

-Architectural Barriers: These include physical barriers, unfriendly school plant, inaccessible environment, poor landscaping and poor structural designs. It is common knowledge to find an inclusive school without good physical accessibility; the classes do not have ramps, no pavement to upstairs, the school toilets are mostly having upper based seats and the school environment may be poorly landscaped or not even done at all.

Other issues include no designed pathways for children with visual impairment to use their mobility cane or the school environment litters with injurious objects like unfilled gutter, drainage system, unstructured school plants, stones, and tables on the way. This makes it difficult for children with disabilities to navigate the school environment thereby affecting the quality of education received by learners with disabilities.

-Funding Barriers: Poor budgeting and expenditure, expensive technologies, inadequate funds. Budgetary provisions to education over the years is on the decrease. This makes it difficult to actualize the implementation of inclusive education as enunciated in the national policy on inclusive education. Similarly, children with disability requires the support of assistive technologies of varied types. The cost of these assistive technologies are quite high and fund are needed to procure the needed facilities and technologies to support their teaching and learning experience.

-Administrative Barriers: This includes the problem of managing programmes and practice gaps. Corruption, mismanagement and disregard in the operation of the enabling laws, inability to provide accommodation such as adaptive technologies for use in the classroom and no provision for support service providers such as Brail lists, Sign language interpreters or Care givers. Sometimes, assistive technologies are provided by the government but heads of school/centres luck-up these facilities in their offices until they either spoil or are stolen. Most times the children do not get to use the facilities so supplied.

In addition, the practice of inclusive education in Nigeria is at its lowest ebb. Some persons with disability are denied access to school, where they are in school, basic support services are hardly provided, access to the curriculum content is mostly in print and those with visual impairment automatically lack access at the lower level of education. The school curriculum is mostly not adapted, and basic equipment and facilities that support their

education are either non-existent or obsolete, these challenges lessen their chances of accessing quality education (UBE, 2021; Inuwa & Musa 2023).

4.0 Education of Children with Hearing Impairment

At the global level, the initial education of children with hearing impairment suffers significant stagnation due to the 100-year war between the Oralists and manual lists schools of thought. This was a needless intellectual debate on the superiority of teaching the method best suited for learners with hearing impairment. The debate had philosophical positions for each group. According to Sambo (1995) and Abednego (2021), the Oralists school of thought believed that:

1. Hearing-impaired children should be taught lip-reading and speech from the beginning.
2. Hearing-impaired children must be in an exclusively oral environment
3. Systematic signing must be eliminated during the critical period of speech and language development.

Similarly, the Manualists' school of thought argued that:

1. It is important to produce a well-educated, well-adjusted hearing-impaired person, rather than a pale imitation of the hearing person
2. The amount of intelligible speech that hearing-impaired children are able to learn is very limited
3. The law of individual difference applies to a person's ability to learn speech and lip-reading.

However, the debate came to an end with the adoption of the total communication philosophy which accommodates the two philosophical positions and paved the way for the education of children with hearing impairment worldwide. Today, so many schools for the hearing-impairedare opened in different countries and in different states.

Back home in Nigeria, more schools for the hearing-impairedare opened and many hearing-impaired people are being educated in different fields other than just special needs education. There are hearing-impaired graduates in Economics, Mathematics, Sociology, Political Science, Social Works, Psychology and Engineering among others. The Nigeria Educational System has produced Hearing-impaired Professors, Doctors, those with Master's degree, Bachelor degree, NCE, Diploma and many at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Research Findings on Academic Performance of Persons with Hearing Impairment

Studies on the academic performance of persons with hearing impairment showed depressed academic scores. The poor performance was worst in language and reading related skills but better in Mathematics and Computation related skills (Ojile, 2006). Similarly, Jensema (1975; Ozegya, 2007) reported that several factors were responsible for the academic underachievement of children with hearing impairment. These factors include the age at onset of hearing loss, degree of loss, parental hearing status, gender, educational background, sex, and intelligent quotient, among others.

The authors explained that the age at which hearing problem set in has detrimental effect on language, speech development and academic performance of the child. Similarly, Ojile (2006) maintained that the academic performance of persons with hearing impairment steadily declines as the degree of loss becomes more severe. The author reported that 90% of children with hearing impairment have hearing parents who can neither sign nor communicate effectively with them. The children are frequently left unattended to with consequent deprivation of early learning opportunities, environments and language development. Furthermore, Hallahan and Kauffman (1982) reported that the reading ability of students with hearing impairment which relies on language skills, and is probably the most important aspect of academic achievement is the most affected.

Arising from the quest to improve the reading ability of students with hearing impairment, Ozegya (2014) analysed the academic performance of students with hearing impairment in English language in both the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) at the Plateau school for the deaf Bassa, Nigeria between 2008-2010. Results generally, indicated low academic scores except in few cases. For instance, out of the total of Seventeen (17) students that sat for the WAEC examination in 2008, none had credit in English language, while in NECO, out of a total of twenty students, only three credited English language. The remaining students either had ordinary passes or failed. The implication of the above results is that the majority of the graduates from the institution in those years cannot be admitted into any reputable higher institution in Nigeria for a degree programmes, since only few of them credited English language. This calls for strategic instruction in reading comprehension skills which is believed to influence better achievement in other subject areas.

STUDY 1: Effects of Task Analysis Method on Spelling Skills of Student with Reading Disabilities in Junior Secondary School in Azare, Bauchi State by Conducted by Dogo, Vandeh, Ozegya (2019) (Published in Nigeria), in the *International Journal of Inclusive Education Research & Development*, 1(3), 82-92

Abstract

The study experimented on the effects of Task Analysis Method (TAM) on spelling skills of students with reading disabilities in Junior Secondary School (JSS 1) in Azare, Bauchi State, Nigeria. The study was a six weeks experimental research which utilized the randomized pretest-posttest control group design. The total population for the study was 125 students with reading disabilities in Azare town. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to sample 32 participants (16 males and 16 females). The subjects were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Two instruments comprising: High Frequency Words (HFW) and Teacher Made-Test (TMT) on reading performance were used for the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and

inferential statistics. Findings revealed that the intervention using TAM was effective in the improvement of spelling skills in favour of the experimental group.

Statement of the Problem

Students in the study area have reading disabilities involving ability to spell words correctly. Poor spelling of words can continue to old age if it is not intervened. Poor spelling of words affects both writing and oral communication competence as meaning of a sentence can be distorted. The researchers experimented on how Task Analysis Method could be used to improve the spelling skills of students with reading disabilities in Junior Secondary School in Azare, Bauchi State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of TAM on spelling skills of Students in JSSI with reading disabilities in Azare, Bauchi State. Specifically, to ascertain the extent to which the spelling skills of the students can be influenced through the use of TAM.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the spelling skills means scores of students with reading disabilities in experimental and control group after exposure to TAM.

Table 2: Summary of t-Test Analysis on Spelling Skills

Group	∑n	X	SD	df	t-Cal.	∝Level	P.Value
Experimental	16	64.81	9.04				
				30	14.27	0.05	0.000
Control	16	15.31	10.52				

Table 2 above shows an independent sample t-Test which compared the spelling skills mean scores of the students in the experimental and control groups after exposure to TAM. The calculated value of t was 14.37 while the p-value was 0.000. Since the p. value is less than 0.05, it means that there was less than 1% chance that the difference between experimental and control

groups on spelling skills occurred by chance. Therefore, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant difference in the spelling mean scores of the JSS 1 students with reading disabilities after exposure to TAM.

STUDY 2: Degree of Loss and Reading Achievement of Pupils with Special Needs in Integrated Educational Programmes in Plateau States, Nigeria. Conducted by Andzayi, Ikwen, Ozegya and Owobi (2014), (Published in New York, the*Journal of Modern Education Review,* 4(8), 623-628.

Abstract

The study examined the degree of loss and reading achievement of pupils with special needs in mainstreamed educational programme in Plateau State, Nigeria. The purpose was to find out the effects of degree of loss on reading achievement of pupils with special needs in the category of visual impairment, hearing impairment, and those with learning disabilities. One research question and two hypotheses were posed for investigation. The study utilized both correlational and causal comparative designs (Ex post factor). Thirty (30) subjects participated in the study. The instruments used included 100 High Frequency Words (HFW) and reading texts which were equally brailed for pupils with visual impairment. Results indicated that the general reading ability of the pupils with special needs was poor and at frustration level. It is poorer in words recognition than reading achievement of the pupils with mild and those with moderate degrees of disabilities following the intervention. Based on these findings, the researchers made some recommendations for the improvement of reading ability of pupils with special needs in the integrated programmes.

Statement of the Problem

Pupils with special needs in the study areas were those with visual impairment, hearing impairment, and learning disabilities at Ganaka International School, Model Teaching Centre, University of Jos, and School for the Blind Gindiri who have difficulty in reading. This is manifested in their efforts to read through text of their class level. Reasons attributed to the reading failure were due

to lack of interest, good reading instruction, early exposure to reading amongst others. This pupils have difficulties in their ability to decode information inherent in words recognition as well as in reading text. Supporting the above assertion, Andzayi, Ozegya, Attah and Bodang (2009) reported that children with special needs (Visually impaired, Hearing impaired and those with learning disabilities) demonstrate depressed academic scores especially in content area reading. The authors believed that this problems can be improved through exposure of children with special needs to varieties of reading experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the effect of degree of loss on reading achievement of pupils with special needs in the category of visual, hearing and those with learning disabilities in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the purposes were to ascertain the reading achievement as it relates to degree of los and to compare the reading ability of the pupils with special needs using various degrees of loss.

Research Question

To what extent would degree of loss affect reading achievement of pupils with special needs in the integrated educational settings?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant mean difference between the reading achievement of pupils with mild and those with moderate degree of loss
2. There is no significant difference between the reading achievement of pupils with severe and those with profound degree of loss.

RESULTS

Table 3 : Mean and SD on Vocabulary Acquisition and Reading Achievement of Pupils with Special Needs.

			Words Recognition		Reading Achievement	
Categories	**Degree of Loss**	**∑n=30**	**X**	**SD**	**X**	**SD**
HI	Mild	2	12.50	2.50	14.50	2.60
LD	Moderate	3	10.33	1.24	12.42	1.34
	Severe	9	7.80	2.70	8.71	3.00
	Profound	8	3.37	1.01	6.02	2.34
VI	Partial Sightedness	2	15.66	3.29	17.24	4.04
	Low Vision	2	15.66	3.29	17.24	4.04
	Low Vision	2	14.50	2.60	13.50	2.40
	Total Blindness	2	5.50	0.50	10.08	1.04

Table 3 above presents the Mean and Standard Deviation on the degree of loss of the Visually impaired (VI), Hearing Impaired (HI), and those with Learning Disabilities (LD). The result shows significant relationship between the degree of loss and reading achievement of pupils with special needs. The mean scores of the participants steadily declines as the degree of loss becomes more severe. The depressed scores are apparent in word recognition than in reading achievement.

Hypothesis One

Table 4 : Summary of r-Score and Reading Achievement of Pupils with Special Needs.

Degree	**∑n**	**X**	**∑X**	**∑Y**	**∑XY**	**Cal. r**	**Crit. r**	**df**	**∝level**
Mild	5	31.74							
			1007.42	671. 84	60. 77	0.94	.878	4	0.05
Moderate	5	25.92							

Using the deviation method of the Persons Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient at the degree of freedom of 4 and level of significant at 0.05, the calculated r is = 0.94 which is greater than the critical value of r at .878. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected as differences exist between the reading achievement of pupils with mild and moderate degree of loss in favour of those with mild loss.

Hypothesis Two

Table 5: Summary of r-Score and Reading Achievement of Pupils with Special Needs.

Degree	∑n	X	∑X	∑Y	∑XY	Cat, r	Crit. r	df	∝level
Severe	10	7.80							
			60.84	58.47	-56	-0.57	632	9	0.05
Profound	10	8.87							

At the degree of freedom of 9 and level of significant at 0.05, the calculated r is -0.57 which is less than the critical value of r .632. This means that the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, signifies that, there is no significant difference between the reading achievement of pupils with severe and those with profound disabilities.

The data for comparison on reading achievement were grouped and analysed on the basis of degree of loss. The data depicts that the general reading abilities of pupils with special needs was poor and at frustration level. This were attested to by the Mean and SD scores of the participants. It was poorer in words recognition than reading achievement. However, pupils with visual impairment recorded higher mean scores than other categories of pupils with disabilities. It was observed that the mean scores decreases as the degree of loss becomes more severe. This study corroborates with the literature of Andzayi, et al (2009) who reported that visually impaired, hearing impaired and those with learning disabilities demonstrate depressed academic score especially in content area reading.

STUDY 3: Effectiveness of Students and Teachers Actively Reading Text model on Reading Comprehension of Students with Hearing Impairment: A Pilot Study Report. Conducted by Ozegya A. E. (2014), Published in Kenya, *International Journal of Literacy and Development,* 1(1), 147-152.

Abstract
The paper presented a report of a seven weeks pilot study on the effectiveness of Students and Teachers Actively Reading Text model on the Reading Comprehension deficiency of students in the study area. The purpose of the study was to improve the reading comprehension skills of students with hearing impairment using the adapted START model and find out differences in performance based on gender factor. A research question was posed and two hypotheses were tested. The study utilised a quasi-experimental design. 16 participants were selected through stratified sampling technique. Students with hearing impairment in JSS 2 constituted sample for the study. Both male and female students were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Two set of instruments were used for data collection. They are the 100 High Interest Words(HIW) and Teacher-Made-Achievement Test (TMAT) on reading comprehension. Findings revealed significant effect of START model on words recognition and reading comprehension of students with hearing impairment in favour of the experimental group. Students' with hearing impairment in the experimental group acquired more sight vocabulary than their counterparts in the control group and were able to answer the comprehension questions. No significant difference was however recorded in gender performance of the subjects in the study. Based on these findings, the study recommends the use of adapted START model with emphasis on the Signing Exact English in teaching reading comprehension to students with hearing impairment.

Statement of the Problem
The problem of the study is that students with hearing impairment in the study area have difficulty comprehending written text. They are also deficient in understanding certain words from a passage leading to poor performance in English Language regardless of their gender.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study is to improve the reading comprehension skills of students with hearing impairment using the START model. Similarly, the study aimed at finding out the students

reading comprehension levels and whether or not there would be difference in reading performance of the students based on gender factor.

Research Question

What are the reading comprehension levels of students with hearing impairment?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant effect of START model on reading comprehension mean scores of students with hearing impairment in JSS 2 class
2. There is no significant difference in post test mean scores across gender for students with hearing impairment in reading comprehension using the START model

Literature Review

START is an acronym for Students and Teachers Actively Reading Text. It is a model that is used for improving the reading comprehension skills of students with hearing impairment. START model comprises of eight steps plus one adapted making nine: Prediction /inferring, visualization, making connections, questioning, determining the main idea, summarizing, checking predictions, making judgments and the adapted total communication technique.

Scharlach (2008) stated that START is a model for teaching reading comprehension skills to students with hearing impairment. The model was applied to white students with hearing impairment to enhance their reading comprehension skills. The author concludes that the START comprehending framework was very effective in teaching reading comprehension skills to beginning, average and advanced readers through scaffolding by a more competent individual.

Furthermore, Ottem (1980) carried out an analysis of cognitive studies with hearing-impairedpersons using figures and the author found out that the male students with hearing impairment mean scores were significantly higher than the females'. On the contrary,

Jensema (1975) reported in a test of vocabulary, reading comprehension, Mathematics concepts and Mathematics computation, revealed that, the standard deviation scores in each area (subject) the female hearing impaired performed slightly better than their male counterparts. The author concluded however, that there was no meaningful difference in academic achievement of hearing-impaired males and females except in reading comprehension.

Results

Table 6: Reading Comprehension Level of Students with Hearing Impairment.

S/N	HIW			COMPREHENSION PASSAGES		
	Pre	Post	Av. Gain	Pre	Post	AV. GAIN
1	52 (9.2%)	57 (6.4%)	5 (1.5%)	20 (3.3%)	56 (7.0%)	36 (19.5%)
2	62 (11.0%)	93 (10.3%)	31 (9.4%)	53 (8.6%)	71 (8.9%)	18 (9.7%)
3	40 (7.1%)	42 (4.7%)	2 (0.6%)	40 (6.5%)	57 (7.1%)	17 (9.2%)
4	36 (6.4%)	50 (5.6%)	14 (4.3%)	50 (8.1%)	68 (8.5%)	18 (9.7%)
5	20 (3.6%)	42 (4.7%)	22 (6.7%)	22 (3.6%)	50 (6.3%)	28 (15.1%)
6	48 (8.5%)	46 (5.1%)	-2 (-0.6%)	32 (5.2%)	40 (5.0%)	8 (4.3%)
7	20 (3.6%)	50 (5.6%)	30 (9.1%)	60 (9.8%)	90 (11.3%)	30 (16.2%)
8	21 (3.7%)	52 (5.8%)	31 (9.4%)	26 (4.2%)	50 (6.3%)	24 (13.0%)
9	36 (6.4%)	48 (5.3%)	12 (3.6%)	42 (6.8%)	62 (7.7%)	20 (10.8%)
10	38 (6.7%)	60 (6.7%)	22 (6.7%)	45 (7.3%)	48 (6.0%)	3 (1.6%)
11	24 (4.3%)	40 (4.5%)	16 (4.8%)	22 (3.6%)	16 (2.0%)	-6 (-3.3%)
12	20 (3.5%)	56 (6.3%)	36 (10.9%)	25 (4.1%)	30 (3.8%)	5 (2.7%)
13	19 (3.4%)	65 (7.3%)	46 (13.9%)	30 (4.9%)	25 (3.1%)	-5 (-2.7%)
14	50 (8.9%)	78 (8.7%)	28 (8.5%)	61 (9.9%)	60 (7.5%)	-1 (-0.5%)
15	40 (7.1%)	64 (7.2%)	24 (7.3%)	45 (7.3%)	42 (5.2%)	-3 (-1.6%)
16	37 (6.6%)	52 (5.8%)	13 (3.9%)	42 (6.8%)	35 (4.3%)	-7 (-3.8%)
Total	**563 (100%)**	**895 (100%)**	**330 (100%)**	**615 (100%)**	**800 (100%)**	**185 (100%)**

Table 6 above shows the reading comprehension levels of students with hearing impairment using the 100 High Interest Words (HIW)

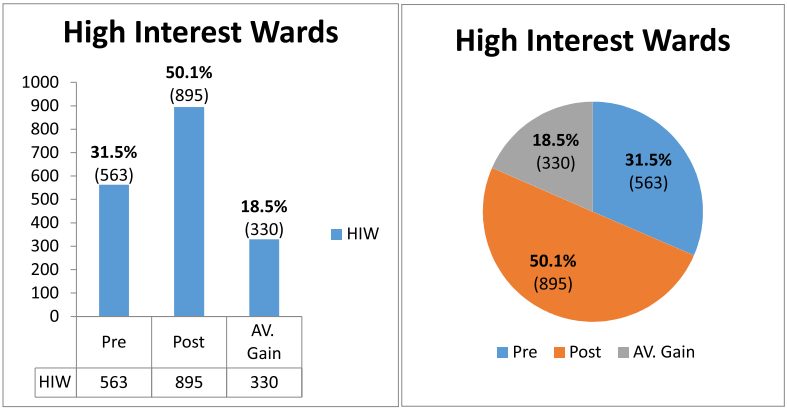


Figure 5a: Bar and Pie Charts on Word Recognition Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment. (Ozegya, 2014)

Figure 5a above shows performance of students with hearing impairment on words recognition after intervention with the use of START.

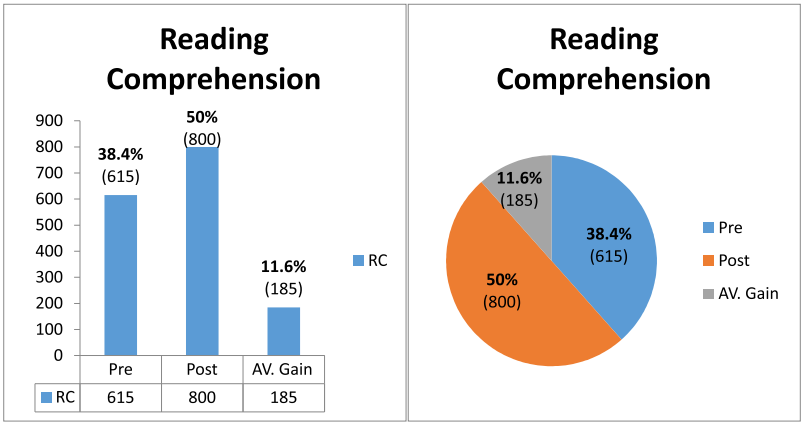


Fig 5b: Bar and Pie Charts on Reading Comprehension Performance of Students with Hearing Impairment.
(Ozegya, 2014)

Fig 5b above shows performance of students with hearing impairment on reading comprehension after intervention with the use of STARTs.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant effect of START model on reading comprehension mean score of students with hearing impairment in in JSS 2 class

Table 6: Summary Table of t-Test for Hypothesis One

Group	N	$\overline{X}$	S^2	Df	t-cal.	t.crit	αLevel
Exp.	8	76.13	16.70				
				14	6. 61	2.14	0.05
Contr.	8	45.38	156.55				

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in posttest mean score across gender for students with hearing impairment in reading comprehension using the START model

Table 7: Summary Table of t-Test for Hypothesis Two

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	S^2	Df	t-cal.	t.crit	αLevel
Female	8	71.0	112.45				
				14	2.03	2.14	0.05
Male	8	52.36	558.84				

Using the df= 14 and level of significance at 0.05, the calculated value of t is 2.03 which is less than the critical value of t=2.14. This means that, there is no significant gender difference between the performances of students with hearing impairment in reading comprehension using the START intervention model. Therefore, hypothesis two is retained.

Discussion

The result revealed that students with hearing impairment benefitted immensely from the use of the START intervention programme. This can be observed from the difference in the performance of the students after the intervention in word recognition and reading comprehension. The analysis showed that the students made significant average gain in both word recognition and reading comprehension skills after the intervention.

Similarly, it was discovered that students who participated in the START programme (experimental group) had significantly higher reading comprehension scores than students who did not participate in the intervention (control group).This shows that the START instructional framework enhanced the reading comprehension performance of the students. Those in the START classrooms significantly had better reading comprehension gains than students who were not exposed to the reading intervention. This finding synchronizes with the findings of Scharlach (2008) who found that START comprehending framework was very effective in teaching reading comprehension skills to beginning, average and advanced readers through scaffolding by a more competent individual.

Furthermore, Ottem (1980) carried out an analysis of cognitive studies with persons who have hearing impairment using figures and the author found out that the male deaf students mean scores were significantly higher than the females mean scores. On the contrary, Jensema (1975) earlier reported in a test of vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematics concept and mathematics computation, revealed that, the standard deviation scores in each area (subject) the female hearing impaired performed slightly better than their male counterparts. The author concluded however, that there was no meaningful difference in academic achievement of hearing impaired males and females except in reading comprehension.

This study also, revealed no significant gender difference in the reading comprehension performance of students with hearing impairment using the START intervention programme. Though, the mean score of the female students was slightly higher than their male counterparts, it was statistically insignificant.

WAY FORWARD

1. For maximum learning outcome expected of a child with hearing impairment in the inclusive setting, the class teacher should ensure adequate mastery of the communication approaches with them especially the use of sign language. Also, interpreters and note-takers should be adequately provided and utilised for the benefit of deaf learners.

2. Parents, government, care givers and schools should ensure sensitization on the causes and prevention of hearing loss as well as the need for hearing conservation in schools. Similarly, there should be periodic audiological assessments prior to school enrolment to monitor hearing deterioration.

3. For effective inclusive education practice, the educational and social needs such as assistive technologies and interpreters for children with hearing impairment must be identified and provided for by the government and parents.

4. Children with of students with hearing impairment should be involved in cultural activities such as dancing and drumming. Help them to understand vibrations by making them touch the drum to feel and follow the rhythm with dancing. Encourage the hearing children to appreciate the challenges and efforts of children who are deaf in the inclusive education programme.
5. The management of the Federal University of Lafia is requested to expand the FULafia Academy to primary and secondary schools and make it a model of inclusion to accommodate learners with disabilities and provide good grounds for students of the Faculty of Education for teaching practice exercise.
6. The University is also urged to establish an Institute of Education to cater for the training needs of in-service teachers in Nasarawa State and Nigeria in general.

Conclusion

Effective communication with the hearing impaired is crucial. Therefore, training programmes for sign language interpreters such as the one being provided by FULafia must be sustained to produce more interpreters and create job opportunities for graduates. The presence of an interpreter is a panacea in ensuring effective educational and social service delivery for learners with hearing impairment.

It must be remembered that providing education to children with disabilities generally and those with hearing impairment in particular is an issue of right of the child and NOT a privilege. Therefore, the appropriate education for children with special needs as enunciated in the Nigerian National Policy on Education can only be achieved if stakeholders, particularly the administrators of schools galvanize efforts, recognize the ability and potentials of the child and provide such relevant services to help the child benefit from our regular education system.

My Vice Chancellor sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all for listening!

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I thank God Almighty for the wonderful opportunity given to me to this inaugural lecture. My special appreciation goes to my committed, dedicated and consistent Vice Chancellor, Professor, Shehu Abdul-Rahman, who insisted that all Professors must be inducted to profess their areas of specialization to the University community and the general public. I thank you immensely for the unique opportunity given to me. I equally wish to thank the management and staff of the Federal University of Lafia for their support in this regard. My sincere appreciation goes to my mentors, Professor Charity Ashelo Andzayi of blessed memory, Professors, Sanusi Liman, Ihenacho Izuka John, Ambrose, I. Nwazuoke, and Josephine Egbor Odey, who mentored me at various times to the present stage. I simply say thank you and may God continue to bless you.

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CITATION OF PROFESSOR ABU EGWA, OZEGYA

Professor Abu Egwa Ozegya is a trained teacher, a sign language interpreter, a reading specialist and an expert in the education of persons with disabilities specializing in the education of children with hearing impairment. Ozegya was born into the family of late Mr. Ozegya Egwa Khoyotene Ozegya and Mrs. Safiya Aberi Ayitogo of the Ogu and Oweji Royal Houses, on 2nd January, 1969 at Keana LGC of Nasarawa State. He finished his Primary education at Central Primary School Keana and proceeded to Government Secondary School Kadarko and later to Government Teachers' College Obi in 1988. He was admitted into the University of Jos and obtained a Diploma and Bachelor of Education Degree in 1992 and 1998 respectively. He did a voluntary teaching at the Model Teaching Centre, a laboratory of the Department of Special Education, University of Jos for 2 years and later appointed as a Sign Language interpreter in 1994. He continued in the University of Jos and enrolled for his Master of Education and graduated in 2004. In 2006, he enrolled for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and graduated in 2015 with specialization in Reading Interventions for children with hearing impairment.

Academic and Administrative Career

Professor Ozegya began his working career as a Sign Language interpreter with the Faculty of Education, University of Jos, Plateau State in 1994. It is heartwarming to note that he was the first Sign Language Interpreter in Northern Nigeria. He interpreted for 12 years and was privileged by virtue of the service to attend Senate, Faculty, and Departmental meetings even before he became an academic staff. He was converted to Graduate Assistant in 2004 and appointed Assistant Lecturer in the same year. He engaged in research, teaching and community services and rose through ranks to become a Lecturer II in 2007; Lecturer I in 2010; Senior Lecturer in 2015; Reader/Associate Professor in 2019 and in the same year, he was preferred to the position of Professor of Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Sciences by the Federal University of Lafia. Professor Ozegya has taught

and supervised over a hundred student projects at the undergraduate level, over thirty Master dissertations and has successfully graduated Eight (8) PhD holders within 3 years. Even though the Faculty of Education, Federal University of Lafia is yet to commence postgraduate programmes, Professor Ozegya still have a PhD student who is waiting his external defense at the University of Jos. He received two letters of commendation by the Department of Special Needs Education and the Faculty of Education, University of Jos for outstanding performance on Departmental postgraduate matters in 2018. Similarly, the then Dean of postgraduate school rated the Faculty of Education high and that Special Needs Education produced the highest numbers of PhD holders in the University of Jos that time. It is also on record that the Department produced the highest number of Departmental staff with fresh PhDs in the University courtesy the workaholic Professor Abu Egwa Ozegya. He has written three text books and published over fifty books, book chapter, journal articles, edited books, and technical reports. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the Exceptional Child: The Journal of the National Association of Exceptional children in Nigeria.

He has served the University of Jos in different capacities at the Departmental, Faculty and University levels including: Level Coordinator/ staff adviser of students on both full and part-time programmes, Sign language interpreter to different functions, Departmental Postgraduate Coordinator, Assistant Departmental Examination Officer, Member Faculty Results Scrutiny Committee and Member, Staff/Students Campus Security Officer, amongst others.

Professor Ozegya transferred his services to the Federal University of Lafia. He was the pioneer Head of Department of Special needs Education, Federal University of Lafia, Nigeria from 2018-2021. Within this period, he got the Department verified and fully accredited by the National Universities Commission. The first set of students started during his stewardship in four programmes (Audiology, Sign Language Communication & Interpreting, CBR Mental Health, and CBR

Social Empowerment). We are proud to say that the first set of our students are currently serving their mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to their fatherland.

Research Activities

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Professor Ozegya is a research enthusiast, He won the Faculty Research Grant awarded by the University of Jos, Nigeria to conduct an Audiometric assessment of children with hearing impairment at Plateau School for the Deaf Bassa in 2013. He was the lead researcher and research team leader for the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities on the impact of Covid 19 pandemics on access to services for persons with disabilities in North East Nigeria in 2019. This researcher and erudite scholar has attended several conferences both national and international including the Reading Association of Ghana's in 2009, Reading Association of Kenya's in 2013 and the international Reading Association of South Africa in cape -Town 2014. He also attended and presented over 30 papers in both theoretical and empirical dimensions. He served as a resource person at different workshops and seminars in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Professor Ozegya has supervised and graduated Eight (8) PhD holders and one currently awaits his external defense, 15 Masters and more than 70 undergraduate students. At different times, he served as external examiner for a Master and PhD students from the University of Zulu-land in South Africa in 2019. He was an External Examiner to the Departments of Special Education, Bayero University Kano, University of Calabar, University of Ibadan and the State Polytechnic Kaduna, in Kaduna State. He was also a visiting lecturer to the Department of Special Education, State University Keffi, a sabbatical lecturer, and later a visiting lecturer to the Department of Special Needs Education, Federal University of Lafia before he became a tenure staff with this University.

Community Services

The famous Sign language interpreting on the State Television (NTA Jos) was started and pioneered by Professor Ozegya. He later had to advise the management of NTA Jos at that time to recruit other interpreters because it was conflicting with his

primary duties at the University of Jos. Today, the advice has yielded a job opportunity for both Hausa and English Sign Language Interpreters at NTA Jos. As part of his community services, Professor Ozegya featured at the area court, West of Mines Jos and Interpreted a court case involving a Deaf person and the COCIN Church. It is interesting to note that the case was adjourned twice because of communication gap between the Deaf and the court, until the court decided to invite an interpreter from the University of Jos and he was deployed to cover the session leading to successful conclusion of that case. As a teacher, part of his community services also involve teaching. So, he was a Co-organizer of voluntary mass adults' literacy classes for the deaf in Jos North L.G.C. in 1996.

He was also a consultant to the Universal Basic Education Commission on different activities: Instruments development on needs assessment and situation analysis of inclusive education intervention funds to private and public basic education programme in Nigeria; Development of inclusive education frame work and implementation guidelines; streamlining and determination of Assistive Technology to be supplied to States Universal Basic Education Board for support in the education of children with special needs in Nigeria; and as Consultant to verify equipment and facilities supplied by the UBEC to SUBEB for distribution to persons with special needs in the North Central States Nigeria covering Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger and FCT Abuja.

Professor Ozegya was a resource person at several capacity building workshops including the workshop organized by the Nasarawa State Universal Basic Education Board Lafia, in 2008 on Continuous Assessment for teachers; Capacity building workshop organized by the Bauchi State Universal Basic Education Board, in 2010 on Education of Children with Special Needs; resource person on implementation of adapted curriculum for inclusive education programme in 2012 by the Bauchi State SUBEB; Consultant to draft the curriculum and adaptation for children with special needs at lower basic education in Nasarawa State in October, 2017, Consultant on Adapted curriculum critique

for learners with visual impairment by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) Lagos in 2023. He was also at different times an INEC Collection Officer for Governorship elections in Plateau State 2003; Adamawa State 2007; INEC Returning Officer in Keffi 2014, and in Kokona (Garaku) in 2018. He has also served as Member of Six accreditation team of the National Universities Commission to the Department of Special Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka in 2021.

Membership in Professional Bodies and Associations

Professor Ozegya is a distinguished member of several learned societies and professional bodies: He is the Editor-in-Chief, National Association of Exceptional Children (NAEC), Secretary West and Central Africa Association of Special and Inclusive Education (WACAASIE), Member, South Africa Reading Association (RASA), Member, National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET), Member, Primary Teachers Education Association (NAPTEA), Member, Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Member, International Reading Association of Nigeria (IRAN), and former Secretary Alago Development Association (ADA) Jos, Plateau State chapter.

At the Federal University of Lafia, he was the pioneer Head of Department of Special Needs Education and the current Director, Centre for Disability Studies. He is a Member, Committee on Inaugural Lectures, Accreditation of programmes, Member Forum of Professors of Fulafia, Member committee on guidelines for election of Deans of Faculties, Education Representative to school of postgraduate board and Member University Editorial Committee amongst others.

Lastly and importantly, this renowned scholar is a family man. He would not have achieved much without the support and cooperation of his amiable and dedicated wife, Mallama Zainab Ibrahim Ozegya, herself an educationist. Together, their marriage is blessed with four biological children. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to welcome on stage our today's inaugural lecturer, a trained teacher, a sign language interpreter, a reading specialist and an expert in the education of persons with hearing

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The rite of passage to be come a professor in a university has for hundreds of years included the test of having to profess one's knowledge to a lay audience and fellow academics. Indeed, the origin of the title 'professor' comes from the need to profess, or declare publicly, one's knowledge. The occasion of inaugural lecture presentation is therefore an essential component of the University's public events through which the institution engages with audiences with a broader interest in its research, including funders and decision makers from government, academia and industry. Professionals and academics gain a unique opportunity to engage across knowledge boundaries for the benefit of mankind.

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