

What factors are important for skilled reading in deaf individuals?

Research has shown the importance of sound-based phonological skills for word recognition and reading in hearing readers. Hearing readers who struggle with literacy have deficits in sound-based phonological processing which has led to a huge shift in the teaching of phonics to hearing children in the last 20 years. Teaching strategies used there are often applied to deaf children. However, a plethora of research shows that both deaf children and adults do not always utilise sound-based phonological information processing during word recognition and reading. What does this mean for reading development in deaf children? What factors predict reading success in deaf individuals? Research findings from my PhD work will be discussed, in which I explored sound-based phonological processing in deaf adults who are skilled readers. I will present preliminary findings from a UK pilot study on phonics and vocabulary intervention for deaf and hearing children between the ages of four and six (the first two years of British formal education). I will share our findings from my current research about exploring comprehension skills in British Sign Language (BSL) and printed English. Finally, I will identify some gaps in UK-based research and future directions.