

## ORAL ENGLISH IS ORAL AND I AM DEAF: DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ON TRIAL OF PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY IN NIGERIA

Olubukola Abiodun Olufemi-Adeniyi<sup>1</sup>, Olaotan Oladele Kuku<sup>2</sup>, Samuel Olufemi Adeniyi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Special Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Psychology, Federal College of Education (Tech.) Akoka-Yaba, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, University of Lagos, Nigeria

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received: June 2024

Revised: June 2024

Accepted: July 2024

#### Keywords:

Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Oral English, Phonetics and Phonology; Oral English Teacher

### ABSTRACT

*Speaking is about hearing and inability to hear or hear correctly may hamper the expected communication of meaningful words. For the deaf and hard of hearing, production of meaningful sound becomes difficult because of inability to process auditory information properly. Hence, engagement in exercise that will involve oral language might be a difficult task. This study therefore investigated the attitudes to and knowledge of oral English by the deaf and hard of hearing learners and their teachers' perception. Descriptive survey research design was employed and a total of 100 deaf and hard of hearing students and 29 teachers were purposively selected. Attitudes to Oral English Scale, Perceived Knowledge of Oral English and Perceived Adequacy of Oral English with reliability of 0.78, 0.81, and 0.77 respectively were the instruments used to collect relevant data. Data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistic such as percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results revealed that deaf and hard-of-hearing students have positive attitudes towards the English language but possess poor knowledge of oral English and exhibit a negative disposition towards the teaching of oral English to the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Additionally, there was no significant relationship between their attitudes towards oral English and their knowledge of oral English. Hence, alternative arrangement should be provided for the deaf and hard of hearing to compensate for the oral English learning.*

### Corresponding Author:

Olaotan Oladele Kuku,

Email: [kuku.oladele@fcetakoka.edu.ng](mailto:kuku.oladele@fcetakoka.edu.ng)

<https://doi.org/10.33369/espindonesia.v3i2.34805>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hearing is life and as such sense of hearing is one of the most important sense organs in man that makes life to be meaningful and enjoyable. Hearing connects us to other people, allowing us to communicate and enjoy relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. Good hearing influences good communication both in verbal and non-verbal orientations. Therefore, inadequate or impaired auditory performance can hinder communication, creating barriers to effective interaction. Improper auditory function may be occasioned by hearing loss which manifest in different degree of losses causing partial or total impediment to smooth flow of communication thereby distorting activities of man. Hearing loss can be defined as loss of auditory sensation to process sound information due of pathologies of auditory apparatus at any division of hearing be it at the outer, middle, and inner ear or at the auditory section of the brain.

Hearing loss is the most prevalent sensory deficit, becoming a severe social and health problems in developing countries like Nigeria. People with hearing loss find it difficult to engage and risk losing out on some of life's most precious moments. The epidemiology of Hearing loss varies worldwide. Approximately 5.3% of the total population has some hearing impairment worldwide, of which about 91.07% are adults, and 8.93% are children, respectively (WHO, 2017). For children aged between 5 and 14 years, the prevalence was estimated at 1.9% in sub-Saharan Africa compared to 0.4% in high-income countries (Mulwafu, Kuper & Ensink, 2016). However, no stable or relevant data to describe the prevalence of hearing impairment across ages in Nigeria. Though there is no doubt that hearing loss affects quality of life, communication, social and psychological disposition of the affected. For instance, in deaf and hard of hearing individuals, hearing loss impedes speech and language development and sets the affected children on a trajectory of limited educational and vocational attainment (Daud, et al. 2010; Olatoke et al., 2008). It must then be noted that once hearing is impaired, communication becomes problematic because speech and language will be impaired.

Speech and language are essential tools for social interaction, information gathering and importantly in learning processes. However, impaired hearing distorts information and adversely affects learning process. Language which is an essential tool is adversely impaired when hearing is disabled. Physiologically, the neurobiology of hearing is intrinsically coupled to communication (Podury et al., 2023). Hence, communication in form of speech and language require auditory processing in order to detect, discriminate and extract meaningful sound information from acoustic wave length. So electrophysiological measure of auditory perception suggests that the ability to be inducted in to super segmental features of sound is part of developmental process of man that take off from infancy and it is dependent on the state of auditory ability (Flo et al., 2022). So, once hearing impaired, language in form of phonological colouration is adversely affected. Hence, deaf and hard of hearing individuals may find all aspects of language development difficult to comprehend.

In classroom environment, learning activities are sometimes difficult for learners that are deaf and hard of hearing where there are no complimentary and assistive devices to interpret instructional messages. Choudhry et al. (2021) noted that children with any sort of hearing loss showed poorer academic outcomes as compared to normal hearing peers. The impact is even much greater on reading and writing skills (Marschark et al., 2015). This is because good reading skill is made possible by ability to comprehend sound information accurately. For academic success of learners, having good receptive, expressive and communicative skills are needed but in case of hearing-impaired children, active involvement in classroom was lacking because of lack of communication skills engender by deficient auditory ability in processing verbal information (Antia et al., 2009).

In English, the deaf and hard of hearing learners encounter difficulty in word processing, lexical flexibility and text writing (Nugroho & Lintang Sari, 2022). This is as a result of poor or inadequate exposure to language. Achieving mastery of language demands proper processing of letters, syllables, words and sentences. However, children that are deaf and hard of hearing may find it difficult to synthesise linguistic composition of spoken words because of lack of or inadequate processing occasioned by poor auditory reception due to pathologies or impediment that may constraint the flow of verbal information. The inability to adequately comprehend and process verbal information may reflect in the attitudes to and achievement in English, especially, the oral aspect English language among deaf and hard of hearing students.

Oral English is a major and compulsory aspect of English language in Secondary School level in Nigeria education system and English Language is a compulsory subject for all students including the deaf. Westwood (2018) noted that deafness puts young children at noticeable interruptions in many areas, including literacy skills, spoken language acquisition, and social development. With undue interruption, deaf and hard of hearing may find it difficult to cope with oral language production thereby affecting performance in oral English. To overcome these students with deafness need a special language, speech, and audiological rehabilitation curriculum (El-Zraigat, Ibrahim, 2013; Movallali et al, 2015). This is mostly uncommon in the process of teaching these set individuals English, most especially in Nigeria. Teaching English to students with deafness is still a big challenge for teachers today. The process teaching English to the deaf, hard of hearing and non-hearing-impaired students is quite different. It is very tough for the deaf students to learn English because of the substantial delays in generating phonemes, syntax, and vocabulary (Cawthon, 2001). The inability to easily comprehend spoken sound because of some auditory anomalies and developmental delay may likely influence the perception of these individuals to oral English aspect of the general English language.

Apriliyanti (2023) noted that teaching English; speaking, listening, and reading skills are most prioritized to be taught but are also the most difficult to teach in an inclusive classroom involving deaf and other special needs children. This is corroborated by many researches that found that teaching language in an inclusive classroom is difficult, with unique challenges that necessitate specialized treatment (Cooc, 2019; Jobling & Moni, 2004; Khasawneh, 2021). This is because teachers need to prepare interesting and innovative media to

attract students' attention and facilitate the predictable focus of students with special needs. Most teachers may not be able to do this because it is tasking and capital intensive. Not only this, the signs both British, American and other nations who have develop native sign language for the deaf could not convey sound which is the vehicle for phonological, pragmatics, syntax and morphological skills in oral English as aspect of English language teaching.

It is an establish fact that deaf and hard hearing students face barrier in communication, teaching oral English to the deaf may create additional burden when this aspect of subject forms a deciding criterion for a student with hearing impairment to pass or fail English. It is on that this study investigated attitude to and knowledge of as well as perception of teachers of the deaf towards teaching of oral English to deaf. The research hypothesis "Attitude to oral English do not significantly relate to knowledge of oral English among deaf/hard of hearing students". To prove the hypothesis, there are three research questions are as follows:

1. What is the attitude of students that are deaf/hard of hearing towards oral English?
2. What is the level of knowledge of students that are deaf/hard of hearing in oral English?
3. How do the teachers teaching oral English perceive the adequacy of teaching the aspect of English to the students that are deaf/hard of hearing?

## 2. METHOD

This study employed descriptive survey research design to seek opinion of both deaf and hard of hearing students and their teachers on the issue of oral language teaching and learning. The populations for the study were deaf and hard of hearing students in special, integrated and inclusive schools in Oyo and Lagos States. A sample of 100 deaf and hard of hearing students were selected purposively Ijokodo High School and Methodist Grammar School in Oyo state and State Grammar school, Surulere and Ipakodo Senior Grammar School Lagos and 29 teachers. The students were all in Senior Secondary School year 3.

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents across schools and gender

State	School	Student			Teacher		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Lagos	State Grammar School, Surulere	12	15	27	1	5	6
	Ipakodo Senior Grammar School	13	14	27	1	7	8
Oyo	Ijokodo High School	9	12	21	1	6	7
	Methodist High School	12	13	25	1	7	8
Total		46	54	100	4	25	29

The instruments for this study comprised two scales for the students and one scale for the teachers. The scales for the students were attitude to oral English and perceived knowledge of oral English scales. These scales were developed by the researchers with reliability coefficients of 0.78 and 0.81 respectively. Perceived adequacy of oral English to the deaf scale was developed for the teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students with 4 Likert type and reliability of 0.77. We personally administered the scales to both students and their teachers in the locations selected for the study. Responses were collected, coded, and analyzed using simple percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 The attitude of students that are deaf/hard of hearing towards English Language

**Table 2.** Percentage Description of Attitude towards English Language among Deaf/Hard of Hearing

SN	Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)
1	I like English language as a subject.	65	28	6	1
2	I have interest in some aspects of English Language	35	38	21	6
3	I always feel happy anytime we have English language	43	34	13	10
4	I will like to study English language in the University/College of Education.	41	29	18	11

5	Our teacher teaches us how understand some aspects of English language which has increased my likeness.	34	40	12	14
6	English language helps us to understand other subjects.	42	33	16	10
7	Studying English language is one of the best that can happen to me.	27	35	15	23

The data presented in Table 2 indicates that 93% of respondents agree liking English language as a subject. Furthermore, 73% of the respondents expressed interest in some aspect of the English language. Additionally, 77% of respondents reported feeling happy during English language lessons. Moreover, 70% of respondents indicated a desire to study English language in university. 74% respondents attributed their liking for English to the teaching methods employed by their teachers. Furthermore, 75% of respondents stated that studying English language aids their understanding of other subjects. Finally, 62% agreed that studying English language is one of the best things that can happen to them, indicating a positive attitude towards studying English language among students. The indication is that the deaf and hard hearing have positive attitudes towards English Language as a subject.

### 3.2. The level of knowledge of students that are deaf/hard of hearing in oral English?

**Table 3.** Percentage Description of Perceived Knowledge of Oral English among Deaf/Hard of Hearing

SN	Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)
1	Oral English is too difficult for me because I cannot hear.	39	42	10	9
2	I don't think students with hearing impairment should offer oral English.	28	25	21	26
3	I feel it is punishment for students with hearing impairment to be forced to offer oral English.	39	38	11	13
4	I don't even understand what the oral English stand for.	24	29	26	21
5	There should be alternatives to oral English for someone with hearing impairment.	40	30	11	18
6	Sign language cannot even convey meaning of words/letters/syllables in oral English.	52	32	12	4
7	Listening to reading expression in oral English is difficult.	38	37	15	10
8	Oral English should not be made compulsory for students with hearing impairment.	27	33	19	22
9	My performance in oral English is not always encouraging.	42	28	7	23
10	Our teachers find it difficult to explain some terms in oral English to students with hearing impairment.	34	42	13	11

The analysis presented in Table 3 indicates that a significant majority of respondents, comprising 81%, agree that oral English is too difficult for them due to their inability to hear. Furthermore, a notable portion of respondents, accounting for 53%, agreed that oral English should not be taught to deaf and hard of hearing students while 47% agreed with this statement. Moreover, substantial majority of respondents, totaling 77%, agreed that it is punitive for students with hearing impairment to be compelled to offer oral English. Additionally, more than half of the respondents, amounting to 53%, agreed that they do not fully understand what oral English entails. When considering alternatives to oral English for hearing-impaired individuals, 70% of respondents agreed with this notion. Also, a significant proportion of respondents, constituting 84%, agreed that sign language cannot mode of instruction during oral English lesson. Furthermore, a substantial majority, encompassing 75% of respondents maintained that comprehending reading expression in oral English poses difficulties. Regarding the compulsory nature of oral English for hearing-impaired students, 60% of respondents agreed that it should not be made compulsory. In addition, 80% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with their performance in oral English. Of concern is that 76% of respondents indicated that their teachers struggle to elucidate certain terms in oral English. Overall, these findings suggested a prevailing concern towards oral English among the deaf and hard of hearing students.

### 3.3. The teachers teaching oral English perceive the adequacy of teaching the aspect of English to the students that are deaf/hard of hearing?

**Table 4.** Percentage Description of Teacher's Perception of teaching Oral English among Deaf/Hard of Hearing

SN	Statement	SA		A		D		SD	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	Teaching English Language to students with hearing impairment is tasking.	16	54	10	36	2	6	1	4
2	Most concepts in Oral English lesson are difficult to interpret in sign language	15	52	11	38	2	7	1	3
3	Stress and intonation in Oral English is difficult for students with hearing impairment.	20	69	8	28	1	3	0	0
4	Students with hearing impairment are easily distracted during oral English lesson.	12	43	13	46	3	11	0	0
5	Government should provide alternative to oral English for students with hearing impairment.	16	55	11	38	1	4	1	3
6	Many students with hearing impairment in secondary school do not have hearing aids and are not trained on sound recognition due to lack of equipment.	19	66	10	34	0	0	0	0
7	Students with hearing impairment do not consider oral English meaningful so their level of seriousness is low.	13	45	12	41	3	10	1	4

The findings from Table 4, reflected the perception of teachers of oral English while teaching the deaf and hard of hearing students. Firstly, a substantial majority of teachers, comprising 86%, agreed that teaching oral English to hearing-impaired learners is a challenging task. Similarly, 90% of teachers noted that most concepts in English lessons are difficult to interpret in sign language. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority 97% agreed that they students encounter difficulties with stress and intonation in oral English. Additionally, a notable proportion of teachers, accounting for 89% agreed that deaf students are prone to distractions during oral English lessons. Moreover, 93% of teachers agreed that the government should offer alternatives to oral English. Notably, all teachers agreed that deaf students lack hearing aids and are not trained in sound recognition due to inadequate equipment. Additionally, 86% perceived that deaf students' did not consider oral English meaningful which affected their seriousness. Finally, an overwhelming 97% of teachers deem the teaching of oral English to students as inadequate. These findings collectively underscored the numerous challenges and deficiencies encountered by teachers handling oral English with deaf students.

Research Hypothesis 1: Attitude to oral English do not significantly relate to knowledge of oral English among deaf/hard of hearing students.

**Table 5.** Relationship between Attitude to and Knowledge of Oral English

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	r-cal	Sig.
Attitude to Oral English	100	20.84	2.98	48	0.06	0.66
Knowledge of Oral English	100	26.98	4.52			

The data presented in Table 5 indicate a correlation coefficient of 0.06 ( $p > 0.05$ ) for the relationship between attitude towards and knowledge of oral English among deaf or hard of hearing students. This correlation coefficient falls below the critical value of 0.304, considering 48 degrees of freedom at a significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was retained, leading to the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between attitude towards oral English and knowledge of oral English among deaf or hard of hearing students.

The results revealed that deaf and hard of hearing students have positive attitudes towards studying English language. This is because not all aspects of English language are oral, hence, all some other aspects of English language may be interesting to some of them who could be good in arts and commercial subjects. The finding might as result of extra efforts demonstrated by some English teachers to make the subject interesting and personality of some of them. The result was in line with the study by Ahmadi-Azad, Asadollahfam and Zoghi

(2020) who investigated the effects of teacher's personality trait on EFL learners' foreign language enjoyment. The outcome of their research revealed that personality traits could affect the learners' learning English as foreign language. On the other hand, if teachers' personality that is not welcome and too difficult for learners to bear, performance in such subject may be consistently poor. In the case learners with deafness, the difficulty of comprehension of verbal information may be compounded with the personality of teachers who is not friendly and could not persevere.

The findings further indicated that the deaf and hard of hearing perceived learning oral English as difficult and something that should not involve. This is because oral English is oral and involves the use of functional hearing system and ability to speak clearly; hence, their lack of ability to hear and speak could hamper their performance in this aspect of English language as subject. The finding lent credence to the position of Cawthon, (2001) who posited that it is very tough for the deaf students to learn oral English because of the substantial delays in generating phonemes, syntax, and vocabulary. Westwood (2011) also noted that deafness puts young children at noticeable interruptions in many areas, including literacy skills, spoken language acquisition, and social development. With undue interruption, deaf and hard of hearing may find it difficult to cope with oral language production thereby affecting performance in oral English. This then means that deaf and hard of hearing students may continue to have difficulty in oral English and limit their performance until there is technological breakthrough in this area.

In addition, the results showed that teachers of the deaf perceived oral English as inadequate and believed that an alternative should be used to compensate for this aspect. The finding reflected the perceived difficulty faced by the deaf and hard of hearing to comprehend oral English and also the challenges faced by the teachers to deliver quality lessons in oral English to the deaf and hard of hearing students. This finding corroborated Apriliyanti (2023) position who noted that teaching English; speaking, listening, and reading skills are most prioritized to be taught but are also the most difficult to teach in an inclusive classroom involving deaf and other special needs children. This is because while hearing may be able to comprehend the super segmental features of sentences, the deaf and hard of hearing may find it difficult to synchronise and synthesise the flow patterns of sound in words and sentences production. This indicates the extent to which oral English may be difficult to teach by the teachers as well as learn by learners who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Again the study revealed no significant relationship between attitude towards oral English and knowledge of oral English among deaf or hard of hearing students. This implies that deaf and hard of hearing attitudes did not significantly influence their knowledge of oral English. It then suggests that whatever the attitudes of deaf and hard of hearing toward English language, for the fact that deaf cannot hear and speak, the performance in oral English will be affected because of their inability to comprehend speech and all forms of acoustic information. The finding reflected positions of Cawthon, (2001) and Westwood (2011) who posited that it is very tough for the deaf students to understand phonemes, syntax, and vocabulary because of noticeable interruptions in spoken language acquisition and literacy skills.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study is an assessment of the perceptions of deaf and hard of hearing and their teachers towards oral English teaching and learning to the deaf and hard of hearing in inclusive, integration and special schools in two states in South West, Nigeria. The study found that deaf and hard of hearing students showed positive attitude to English language as subject but demonstrated poor knowledge of oral English. Also, the results revealed no significant relationship between attitudes and knowledge of oral English among the deaf and hard of hearing. This affirmed the fact that the deaf and hard of hearing students do not benefit from the teaching of oral English.

It was recommended that alternative arrangement should be provided for the deaf and hard of hearing to compensate for the oral English. This will stop the ugly trend in the performance of deaf and hard of hearing in English language as a subject. Government should also work with stakeholders in the areas of assistive technology that will be able to present various aspects of oral English to the deaf should alternative arrangement be perceived not adequate in oral English.

#### REFERENCES

- Ahmadi-Azad, S., Asadollahfard, H., & Zoghi, M. (2020). Effects of teacher's personality traits on EFL learners' foreign language enjoyment. *System*, 95, 102369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102369>.

- Antia, S. D., Jones, P. B., Reed, S., & Kreimeyer, K. H. (2009). Academic status and progress of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in general education classrooms. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 14, 293–311. doi:10.1093/deafed/enp009
- Apriliyanti, D. L. (2023). Teachers' challenges in teaching English to students with special needs: How to cope with them? *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 3(2), 131-140.
- Cawthon, S. W. (2001). Teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms with deaf students. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*, 6(3), 212-225.
- Choudhry, A. M., Noor, H. S., Shahid, R., Muktar, T., Zahra, S. M., & Butt, G. A. (2021). Academic performance of hearing impaired children who received early intervention. *Journal of Pharmaceutical international*, 33(57a) 227-234.
- Cooc, N. (2019). Teaching students with special needs: International trends in school capacity and the need for teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 83, 27-41.
- Daud, M. K. M., Noor, R. M., Rahman, N. A., Sidek, D. S., & Mohamed, A. (2010). The effect of mild hearing loss on academic performance in primary school children. *International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology*, 74, 67–70
- El-zraigat, I. (2012). Assessing special needs of students with hearing impairment in Jordan and its relation some variables. *International Educational Studies*, 6 (2), 63-72
- Flo, B. K., Matziorinis, A. M., Skouras, S., Sudmann, T. T., Gold, C., & Koelsch, S. (2022). Study protocol for the Alzheimer and music therapy study: An RCT to compare the efficacy of music therapy and physical activity on brain plasticity, depressive symptoms, and cognitive decline, in a population with and at risk for Alzheimer's disease. *PloS one*, 17(6), e0270682.
- Jobling, A., & Moni, K. B. (2004). I never imagined I'd have to teach these children': Providing authentic learning experiences for secondary pre-service teachers in teaching students with special needs. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(1), 5-22.
- Khasawneh, M. A. (2021). Problems teaching English to deaf students. *Indonesian Journal of Creative Counseling*, 1(2), 32-42.
- Marschark, M., Shaver, D. M., Nagle, K. M., & Newman, L. A. (2015). Predicting the academic achievement of deaf and hard-of-hearing students from individual, household, communication, and educational factors. *Exceptional Children*, 81(3), 350-69
- Movallali, G., Jalil-Abkenar, S. S., & A'shour, M. (2015). The efficacy of group play therapy on the social skills of pre-school hearing-impaired children. *Archives of rehabilitation*, 16(1), 76-85.
- Mulwafu, W., Kuper, H., & Ensink, R. J. H. (2016). Prevalence and causes of hearing impairment in Africa. *Tropical Medicine and International Health*, 21(2), 158-165.
- Nugroho, F. A., & Lintang Sari, A. P. (2022). Deaf students' challenges in learning English; A literature review. *Indonesian Journal of Disabilities Studies*, 9(2), 217-224.
- Olatoke, F., Ologe, F. E., Nwawolo, C. C., & Saka, M. J. (2008). The prevalence of hearing loss among children with CSOM in Nigeria and its effect on academic performance. *Ear Nose Throat Journal*, 87, 5–15
- Podury, A., Jiam, N. T., Kim, M., Donnenfield, J. I., & Dhand, A. (2023). Hearing and sociality: the implications of hearing loss on social life. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 17, 1245434.
- Westwood, P. (2018). *Inclusive and adaptive teaching: Meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom*. Routledge.
- World Health Organization [WHO] (2017). *Health statistics and information system WHOQOL: Measuring quality of life*. Retrieved from [www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/whoqol-qualityoflife/en/](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/whoqol-qualityoflife/en/)