



## EXPLORING THE STRATEGIES AND TIPS USED BY TEACHERS TO TEACH WRITING SKILL TO AUDITORY CHALLENGED LEARNERS IN BENIN: CASE STUDY OF CSEB

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### Abstract

This research work investigates the strategies and tips used by teachers to teach writing skill to Deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) learners in CSEB Benin. The aim is to point out and analyse the problem related to the development of literacy skills, so as to suggest practical solutions. The current study has been carried out using a mixed methodology including questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and an evaluation of learners writing production. The analysis of variance shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between deafness and deaf student writing production performance. This proves that D/HH learners experience more difficulties than their hearing peers. In addition, there is deficiency of communication due to the inappropriate teaching-learning method and conditions. In order to overcome these shortcomings, this study suggests that teachers should master ASL themselves and use specific instruction model such as SIWI. Moreover and curriculum should be revised and adapted to such a category of learners for the improvement of their writing proficiency.

**Key-words:** Exploring, Strategy, Tip, Writing, Deaf.

### Résumé

La présente recherche examine les stratégies et astuces utilisées pour enseigner la composition écrite aux sourds et malentendants de la CSEB Bénin. L'objectif est de mettre en évidence et d'analyser les difficultés liées au développement des capacités de lecture et d'écriture. Cette recherche a été menée suivant une méthodologie mixte. Les outils de recherche comprenant des visites de classes, les interviews et une évaluation de la production écrite des apprenants ont été utilisés. L'analyse de variance montre qu'il existe une corrélation statistiquement significative entre la surdité et les performances en expression écrite. Ceci prouve que les conditions d'enseignement-apprentissage ne sont pas adéquates. Afin de surmonter ces lacunes, les suggestions suivantes ont été faites : la révision et l'adaptation des programmes d'études aux besoins des sourds et malentendants, la maîtrise du langage des signes par les enseignants et l'utilisation du modèle d'instruction SIWI afin d'améliorer les compétences linguistiques de ces élèves.

**Mots clés :** Explorer, Stratégie, Astuce, Composition écrite, Sourd et malentendants.

## Introduction

Education is a basic human right regardless of physical, mental and social status; the disabled people constitute a minority group with specific language and culture. As for other minorities, people who are Deaf or Hard for Hearing (D/HH) have a variety of backgrounds and needs (Dostal, H. et al., 2017). Accordingly, they have specific exigences for education. Along with traditional education goals, D/HH schooling aims at communication, literacy and integration. Thus, they can either attend specialized schools for students with hearing impairment or be educated with hearing students in mainstream schools.

The CSEB school in Benin Republic has a mixed approach as It is a specialized school originally designed for hearing impairment students where hearing students have been integrated. In such an environment, the better bilingual development for both hearing and D/HH living in a community can be expected. On the other hand, integrating people with various backgrounds and communication styles often leads to conflicting relationships and forms of discrimination. The perceptions of being different (held by either D/HH children themselves or by their hearing peers) may result in peer interaction difficulties regardless of social skill levels (Antia, D. et al., 2011). Hearing loss creates barriers to learning in the typical classroom environment and impacts social interactions (Anderson, k., 2017). Obviously, the addition of a hearing student to deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) presents both challenges and opportunities for language and literacy skills development.

In fact, the most significant difference between the use of literacy skills in children who are hearing and children who are deaf is the reliance by children who are deaf on literacy skills, such as writing, as a mode of social communication (Maxwell 1985; Rottenberg and Searfoss 1992). Evidence from Rottenberg and Searfoss (1992) indicated that children who are deaf use literacy as a way to learn about and gain access to a world where the majority of people use a verbal mode of communication. When attempts at signed communication fail, children rely on drawing or writing to express themselves (Maxwell, 1985; Rottenberg Searfoss, 1992).

Thus, in Benin republic, D/HH students mostly communicate among themselves using American Sign Language (ASL) or Its French variant (FSL) but the main way to communicate with their hearing peers who do not master a sign language is through writing. Hence, efficient teaching of writing skills to D/HH students reveals to be crucial to their social integration and development. Unfortunately, they do not master this skill. This is undoubtedly a problem. There are obvious reasons: the barriers related

to deafness itself, the complexities of writing skills development and the exigences of D/HH education.

This paper helps to shed light on the requirement of deaf education in terms of language teaching/learning. In addition, it points and analyses the strategies and materials used in order to assess the difficulties related the development of deaf students' language and literacy skills. This enables to select and/or design the most relevant teaching activities, methods and technics that can be used for the improvement of writing skill while dealing with deaf students.

Regarding the goal of the study the following questions have guided it:

- ✓ What are the specificities of D/HH language education?
- ✓ What problems do EFL teachers encounter when dealing with writing skill with deaf learners and how can they be overcome?
- ✓ How can EFL teachers teach efficiently writing in deaf /hard of hearing schools?

The present research cannot solve all the problems related to D/HH education as it focuses only on the writing skills development. Accordingly, other communication means are not taken into account. Moreover, this study took place in CESB with its specificities and results cannot be applied to all other D/HH schools.

This paper is organised into six (06) sections. After dealing with the introductory section presented above second section presents the theoretical keystone. The third section is method used for data collection, the fourth one covers the presentation of the results, the fifth section is about the discussion and suggestions and the last one deals with the conclusion

## **1. Theoretical Keystones**

### *1.1. Deaf*

Deaf with a capital "D" is commonly used to indicate individuals who see themselves as members of the Deaf linguistic community, which communicates through American Sign Language (ASL). A lower case "d" commonly refers to those individuals who communicate in an English-based sign system and/or via speech. For the purposes of this article, the distinction between Deaf and deaf, despite the mode of face-to-face communication, is not relevant as writing is done in English. We use the term deaf, with a lower-case d, to indicate individuals who cannot hear.

## 1.2. Writing

To “write” according to the Longman Dictionary of current English (1995: 1962), means “to think and record especially on paper”. Writing can then be seen as a thinking process in which a person produces something in a written form to convey a meaning, to make things happen or communicate a message. For Winter wood (1989: 103). “Writing is the mental activity that may result into text”. It is an activity through which students are asked to describe things or interrelationships, to define concepts and to give their points of view about given issues. It is seen as a process, a complex one, and its stages must be taught to learners. Hence, there are many approaches to writing that can be explored.

## 1.3. Approaches Used to Teach Writing to Hearing Students

### 1.3.1. Product Approach

With the product approach, as viewed by Brown (1994:320), EFL teachers focus on what a final piece of writing will look like and measure it against criteria of “vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation, as well as content and organization”. The product approach ignores the actual processes used by students to produce a piece of writing. This approach has received much criticism; in the mid-1970s it was replaced by the process approach (This sentence is not clear).

### 1.3.2. Process Approach

The process approach identifies four stages in writing: prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, editing (Tribble, 1996: 54). An important element of this approach is the meaningfulness it brings to learners, who make a personal connection to the topic and come to understand the processes they follow when writing about it. The process approach is widely accepted and used because it allows students to understand the steps involved in writing.

Nevertheless, it has been criticised because ‘it views the process as the same for all writers’. In the 1980s, the genre approach became popular.

### 1.3.3. Genre Approach

According to Cope and Kalantzis (1993: 11), “the genre approach consists of three phases: (1) the target genre is modelled for the students, (2) a text is jointly constructed by the teachers and students, and (3) a text is independently constructed by each student”.

This approach succeeds in showing students how different discourses require different structures.

#### 1.4. *Approaches of writing for D/HH students*

A number of approaches can be used to teach D/HH students, each of them having their advantages and limitations.

According to Anderson (2017) four (4) approaches can be explored; (The four approaches should be clarified further):

- **Strategic Instruction Model (SIMS):** For Stephen D. Luke, S. (2006) Strategy Instruction is a powerful student-centered approach to teaching that is backed by years of quality research. In fact, strategic approaches to learning new concepts and skills are often what separate good learners from poor ones. Considering that many students with disabilities struggle with developing strategies for learning and remembering on their own, a parent or teacher skilled in introducing this process can make a world of difference. Strategy instruction supplies students with the same tools and techniques that efficient learners use to understand and learn new material or skills. With continued guidance and ample opportunities for practice, students learn to integrate new information with what they already know, in a way that makes sense – making it easier for them to recall the information or skill at a later time, even in a different situation or setting.

- **Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI):** SIWI is an approach to writing instruction that aims to be responsive to the varied language needs of deaf learners. SIWI draws upon evidence-based approaches to teaching writing such as strategy instruction in writing and collaborative, interactive writing. SIWI also contains elements that provide teachers with guidance on language instruction such as how to navigate between ASL and English when teaching developing bilinguals, or how to facilitate greater expressive language clarity and complexity among children with language delays. There is growing evidence to suggest SIWI has a positive impact on students' expressive language, word identification, motivation, and writing outcomes at the word-, sentence-, and discourse-levels.

- **Visual Phonics:** Trezek B. J. & Wang, Y. (2006) define Visual Phonics as a system of 46 hand-shapes with corresponding movements -which when used together are called "cues". These cues represent the 46 phoneme sounds of spoken English. This system was originally developed by a mother for her deaf son, to aid in teaching speech and reading.

Visual Phonics is used by Speech Language Pathologists, Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Regular Classroom Teachers, It is a valuable tool that can augment any program and method already in place, in which speech, reading, and writing are being

taught, While it is not a language such as American Sign Language or a communication system such as Cued Speech, it lends itself in such a manner that it can easily be incorporated, without interference. Current research shows that Visual Phonics:

- ✓ Increases the speed and rate at which Kindergarten students learn phoneme awareness and letter/sound recognition
  - ✓ Significantly lowers the confusion between letter reversals b/p, and voice and voiceless phonemes
  - ✓ Meets the criteria of providing differentiated instruction for students needing hands on visual, tactile learning
  - ✓ Offers a way for students to see and feel where and how a sound is produced
  - ✓ Encourages students to write phonetically at an early age by helping them to sound out words
- Makes a visual, tactile, sensory memory of English phonemes that all students can fall back on whether they are Hearing, Deaf, Hearing, or ELL

• **Bedrock Literacy and Educational Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students:** Developed by Di Perri, K. A. (2013), the Bedrock Literacy Curriculum. is written to provide foundational language and literacy experiences to all Deaf and Hard of Hearing students regardless of language use. Though many of the activities are based on the student who uses ASL, they are also applicable for those students who use Spoken English. Often students who use Spoken English also exhibit gaps in their foundational understanding of English. This curriculum is intended to build a firm foundation on which true understanding and competencies are founded. The most important features of Bedrock literacy include:

- ✓ Designing Specific performance based Objectives
- ✓ Teaching D/HH Students 'how' to read in a meaningful manner with or without English phonetic information(surface to deep structure level reading)
- ✓ Teaching D/HH student a visual way to begin independently writing without English phonic information
- ✓ Starting a an entry level point that makes sense to D/HH student ( not replicated from curriculum designed for hearing children)

The most relevant in Benin context and more specifically in BSEC school is the Strategic and Interactive Writing Instructions (SIWI)

#### *1.4.1. Strategic and Interactive Writing Instructions (SIWI)*

SIWI is a classroom approach for teaching deaf students to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. SIWI is comprised of seven driving principles, with three

overarching, theoretical-based principles. Those principles are summarized in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Driving principles of SIWI with Definitions

Principles	Definitions
Strategic	The instruction is strategic in that, students are explicitly taught to follow the processes of expert writers through the use of word or symbol procedural facilitators .
Interactive	SIWI is interactive in the sense that students and the teacher share ideas, build on each other’s contributions, and cooperatively determine writing contributions, and cooperatively determine writing actions. Through this process, the student externalizes his/her thoughts in a way that is accessible to his/her peers.
Linguistic and Metalinguistic	Persons have two separate routes to develop ability in a second language (not clear)– acquiring implicitly and learning explicitly. The implicit and explicit approaches of SIWI aid in developing linguistic competence and metalinguistic knowledge among D/HH students (Wolbers, Dostal, & Bowers, 2012).
Balanced	While writing as a group, the teacher identifies balanced literacy objectives for his/her students that are slightly beyond what students can do independently. The teacher is cognizant to target a mixture of word, sentence, and discourse level writing skills that will be emphasized during group-guided writing.
Guided to Independent	When the teacher has the ability to step back and transfer control over the discourse level objectives (e.g., text structure demands) to the students during guided writing, s/he will then move students into paired writing. The teacher will circulate the room to observe what students can do in a less-supported environment. If students exhibit good control over the objectives, the teacher then moves students into independent writing. When the teacher has the ability to step back and transfer control over the discourse level objectives (e.g., text structure demands) to the students during guided writing, s/he will then move students into paired writing. The teacher will circulate in the room to observe what students can do in a less-supported environment. If students exhibit good control over the objectives, the teacher then moves students into independent writing. <del>When the teacher has the ability to step back and transfer</del>
Visual Scaffolds	The teacher will circulate the room to observe what students can do in a less-supported environment. If students exhibit good control over the objectives, the teacher then moves students into independent writing. (Why has this sentence been repeated over and over again?).
Authentic	During SIWI, the students and the teacher generate, revise, and publish pieces of text for a predetermined and authentic audience. Writing instruction and practice is always embedded within purposeful and meaningful writing activity.

*Source: Adapted from Dostal, H., Bowers, L., Wolbers, K., & Gabriel, R. (2015). “We are authors”: A qualitative analysis of deaf students writing during one year of Strategic and Interactive Writing (SIWI). Review of Disability Studies International, 11(2), 1-19.*

Writing teachers spot that one approach is not rigidly needed to adopt in a writing classroom. In some cases, combining the approaches is a new way of thinking about writing.

This is interesting as this study seeks to pinpoint the specific needs in developing writing in D/HH students. It is important to note that Number of strategies designed for hearing learners can be adapted to the Deaf learners (not clear). Nevertheless, some modifications need to be implemented. Using EFL teaching strategies with deaf learners is a recognition that deafness is not an insurmountable disability; rather, to be deaf means that one belongs to a unique cultural and linguistic minority. Brokop (2009). English, being a 'new' language for Deaf learners, offers chances to overcome limitations and frustration related to the degrading perception of handicap related to deafness they experience (not clear).

Designing appropriate writing instruction models for D/HH learners (ASL) should take into account the existing differences between hearing and D/HH. This discernment is critical for integrative environments where both hearings and Deaths cohabit and where instructions are primarily given by hearing teachers. The Most important differences are summarised in the table below.

**Table 2.** Distinctions between EFL and Sign Language

<b>EFL for Deaf Learners</b>	<b>EFL for Hearing Learners</b>
Instruction delivered in visual modality (sign language) and written language.	Instruction delivered in a combination of spoken English and written language.
First language has no written form.	First language does have written form.
Inconsistent first language exposure: Majority of learners who are deaf are born into hearing families: the parents may not master sign language.	Fluent First language exposure.
Once at secondary school, deaf learner has to learn three languages namely: sign language, French, and English.	They have to learn French and English.
Exposure to English as a foreign language limited to written form.	Constant exposure to the oral form of the foreign language.
Little connection between the sign language and the written form of the foreign language.	Connection between oral and written form of the foreign language.

Sources: Brokop, F. & Persall, B. (2009) *Writing Strategies for Learners who are Deaf*. Accessed 06/10/2019 from: <https://www.norquest.ca/NorquestCollege/.../learning/CELS-Writing-Strategies.pdf>

## 2. Method

The current study has been conducted using a mixed methodology including both quantitative and qualitative types of research.

### 2.1 Target Population and Sampling

EFL Teachers, EFL learners and school administrators of BSEG have been taken into account.

#### 2.1.1. Teachers

I sampled six (06) EFL teachers. Two of them use ASL and the other need interpreters (not clear). The teachers sampling is summarized in the following table.

**Table3.** Selected teachers and means of communication used in D/HH classes

Population	Means of communication			total
EFL teachers	American Sign Language	Professional interpreters	Student interpreters	
	02	02	02	06

#### 2.1.2. Learners

I sampled 96 learners. These sampled learners are from the class of *troisième* to *terminale*. This choice is justified by the fact that they are much matured to give accurate answers.

Learners are distributed in the following table

**Table 4:** selected learners

Learners	Frequency
Deaf or Hard for hearing	48
Hearing	48
Total	96

#### 2.1.3. School Administrators

The principal, the vice principal and the prefect were involved in this research (How many of them? What is the difference between principal and Head master here?)

## 2.2 *Research Instruments*

To carry out this search for information, I used different techniques: inquiry about lessons on writing and classroom observation, interview with teachers, questionnaires to teachers, interviews with the school administrators and students' composition papers collection for a survey.

### 2.2.1. *Questionnaires*

Questionnaires were made up for EFL teachers and learners in order to get information from them on the topic under consideration.

Through questions addressed to teachers, we intend to know the skills they teach more in their classes, the difficulties they faced during writing activities with deaf learners, the teaching strategies that they use to teach writing and what they think can be done to improve Deaf student's competence and performance in writing.

### 2.2.2. *Interviews*

Interviews were also conducted to get more information and address some important point that may have been overlooked during questionnaires. It also helps to crosscheck some answer provided for the questionnaires.

I found it necessary to design questionnaire to teachers. Then, I had semi-structured interviews (How was it possible to use both semi-structured and unstructured interviews during the same investigation and with the same participants?) with all the sampled teachers after each classroom observation. The interview was made of four (04) questions intended to further investigate the problem and causes, the way they teach and practise writing in their classes, especially while dealing with deaf learners, and get their point of view and suggestions as far as improving deaf writing composition is concerned.

The head master in collaboration with the supervisors was interviewed. I have a structured interview composed of four questions with them. The first question was to know the materials that they put at the disposal of English teachers in that school for the improvement of English language. The second question was asked to see if the school provides the teachers who have never been in contact with deaf learners, with some in-training service. Through the third question, I intended to know if the government has ever taken an action towards the education of deaf learners. The fourth question deals with the difficulties related to Deaf education in this Specialised Private School.

### 2.2.3. *Classroom Observation*

This instrument enables me to observe teachers at work. All the six (06) sampled teachers were observed. Through that instrument, I intended to check:

- ✓ The overall classroom ambience.
- ✓ If the teachers extricate between deaf and hearing students.
- ✓ If the teachers use ASL or need a translator and the implications in terms of communicative efficiency.
- ✓ How the writing skill is taught.
- ✓ The relevance of writing activities teachers presents to students.
- ✓ To crosscheck data collected using other instruments

### 2.3 *Survey of Tests Papers*

With the intention to assess:

- ✓ The reliability, the validity and the relevance of the evaluation process for writing skills development
- ✓ Deaf or hard of hearing and hearing students' performances in writing defined by the following criteria:  
Understanding of the subject coherence, vocabulary, grammar, ideas (creativity and originality) and spelling.

I collected students' test papers for this purpose which allows to measure difficulties they face during written productions. Further comparison was made with hearing students, production in order to check if those difficulties were credited to deafness or if they are related to the teaching methods.

### 2.4 *Procedures of Data Collection and Methods of Data Analysis*

For the data collection, the questionnaires were administered to both teachers and learners since they are the principal target of my work. In the selected classes, with the contribution of the teacher, students filled the questionnaires so that I can collect 100% of them on the field (not clear). A French version of the questionnaire provided to the students, hence, there was no need for translation. The teachers filled their questionnaire at the same time. This strategy used helped me to get back all the distributed questionnaire papers. The data collected have been analyzed using SPSS 25 and the results, presented through tables, pie charts and figures.

### 3 Results

This section displays the analysis of data obtained from questionnaires

#### 3.1. Teachers' Responses

##### 3.1.1. Skills taught by Teachers during English Class

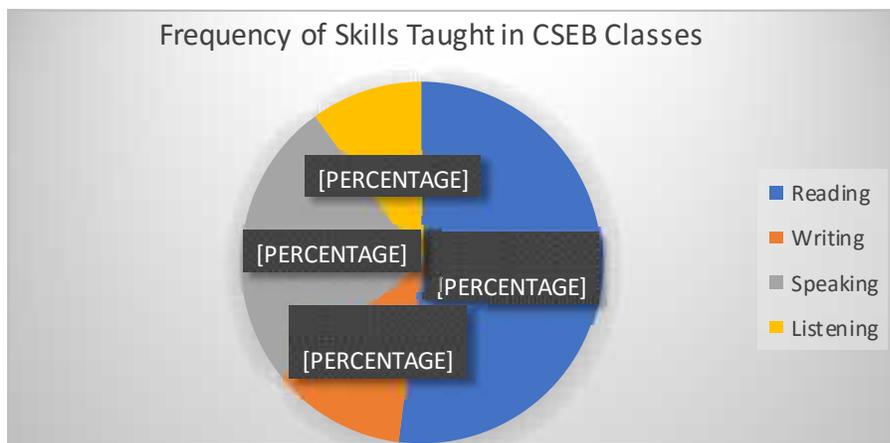


Figure 1. Skills taught by Teachers during English Class

This figure shows that the four languages skills are taught in CSEB, but not to the same extent. Reading skills covers 52% against 12% for writing. Speaking and listening are respectively 26% and 10 % of the teaching activities completed in the investigated school. (What do these percentages represent?). Clearly, even in deaf schools' communicative skill are developed owing to the fact that the school uses the official curriculum so that both Hearing and Deaf students take part in national examinations.

##### 3.1.2. Strategies used with Deaf Learners

Table 5. Variation of the teaching strategies

Variation of the teaching strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	06	100
No	00	00
Total	06	100

Table 5 proves that hundred percent (100%) of EFL Teachers vary their teaching strategies when dealing with deaf learners. This means that teachers try their best to meet the specific learning needs in Deaf classes. Still, they remain powerless as far as the teaching conditions and the curriculum limitations are concerned.

### 3.1.3. Difficulties Encountered by Teachers when Dealing with Writing Activities with Deaf Learners

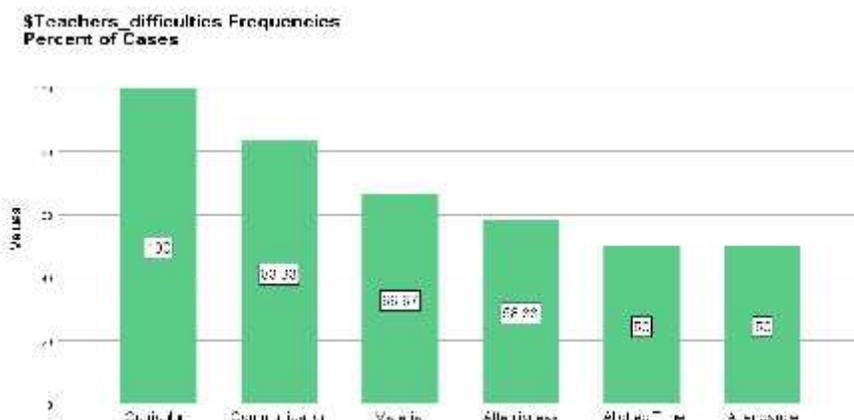


Figure 3. Difficulties Encountered by Teachers when Dealing with Writing Activities with Deaf Learners

The current figure illustrates that the main challenges of teachers are imputable to the curriculum, the communication and the lack of adequate material respectively representing, 100%, 83,33% and 66,67%. Additional hindrances namely attentiveness (58.33%) and attendance to English classes mostly experienced with Deaf students stem from disorders cause by deafness. These factors, in addition to the insufficient time allotted to English, leave no real chance for the development of writing skills.

### 3.1.4. Teachers' Suggestions to improve Deaf Students' Competence and Performance in Writing

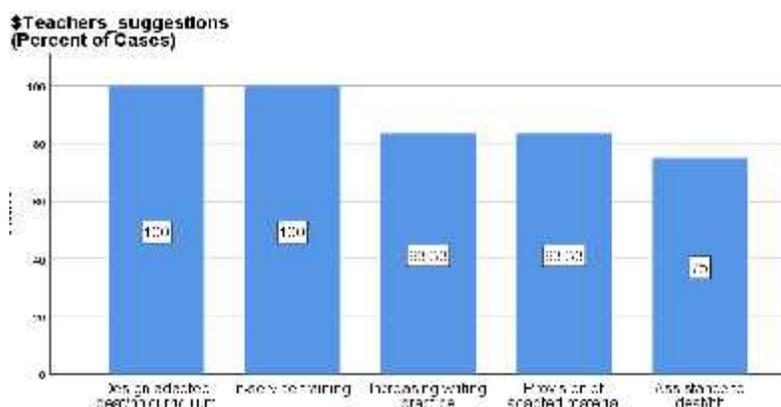


Figure 2. Teachers' suggestions to improve deaf students' competence and performance in writing

The figure 2 facts that teachers unanimously (100%) suggested that an adequate curriculum should be design for D/HH. They also requested more efficient in-service trainings (not clear). Also, (83.33%) of them pleaded for a provision of appropriate material, compulsory for any consistent development of writing skills (not clear). Furthermore, they advocate for a caring and sustainable assistance to Deaf/HH student because deafness disorders lead both physical and psychological health problem that negatively affect Deaf learners Schooling (not clear).

### 3.2. Results from the Test Paper Survey

#### 3.2.1. Hearing Students Versus Deaf/HH Students Writing test Scores

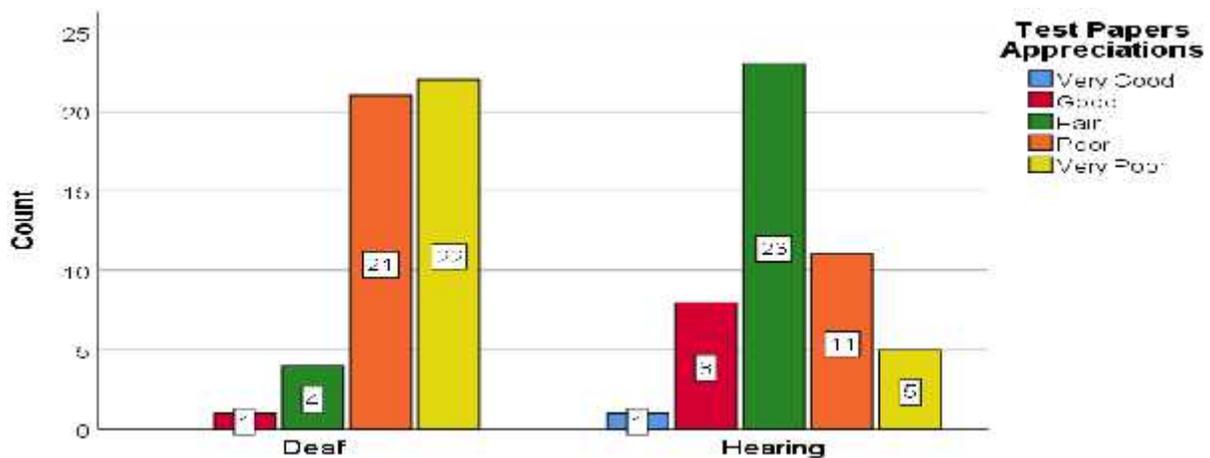
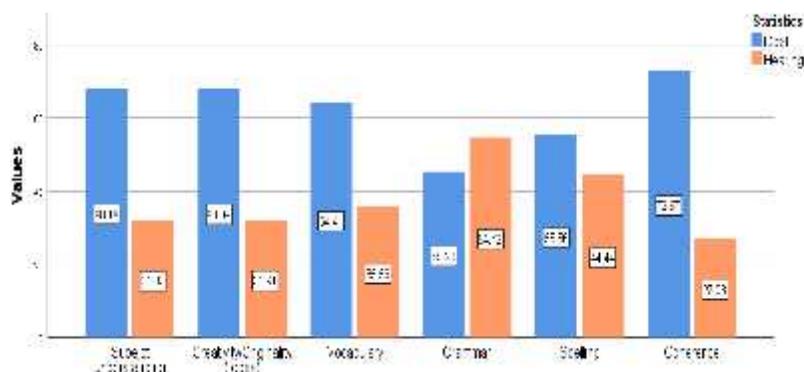


Figure 4. Assessment of Hearing Students versus Deaf/HH Students Writing Production

CSEB Students' overall performance in writing is merely mediocre, ranging from fair to very poor. Predictably, the majority of Deaf/HH scored an edge below their hearing peers, ranking poor and very poor with difficulties of languages input barrier attributable to deafness. An extended analysis of their production displays the subskills that need to be addressed if a substantial improvement of their writing proficiency is to be expected.

### 3.2.2. Difficulties related to Writing



**Figure 5.** Comparing Difficulties Encountered by D/HH and Hearing Students During Writing Composition

This bar chart illustrates how deaf students have some difficulties attributable to their status. Unfortunately, they face almost twice more difficulties as their hearing peers in understanding (68.18% vs 31.82%), creativity (68.09 vs %31.91%) coherence (72.97% vs 27.03%), and vocabulary (64.41% vs 35.59%). Both categories of students struggle in spelling. D/HH peer have more difficulties in spelling (55%) than their hearing peers (44.44%) (Not clear). Such a result is understandable as the current curriculum is exclusively designed for hearing students. Happily, Deaf/HH outperformed in grammar (54.72% vs 45.28%) clearly, they are not intellectually retarded. Rather, they require additional assistance and optimised conditions for linguistic competence development.

### 3.2.3. Analysis of statistical significance of correlation between deafness and writing proficiency

**Table 7.** Analysis of variance ANOVA table overall score in writing \* status ( deaf\*hearing)

ANOVA Table <sup>a</sup>						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
overall score in writing * status	Between Groups (Combined)	450.667	1	450.667	48.927	.000
	Within Groups	865.833	94	9.211		
	Total	1316.500	95			

Table 8: Measures of Association of overall score in writing \* status

Measures of Association		
	Eta	Eta Squared
overall score in writing * status	.585	.342

The measure of association Table 8 indicates that in the current case the Eta squared value expressing the Effect size is  $ES = .342$  as  $0.04 < ES \leq 0.36$ , the correlation between the dependent variable (overall score in writing) and the independent variable (Status: Deaf/hearing) is significant but moderate.

This confirms that there is correlation between the deafness and D/HH student performances. This justifies their poor overall level. Psychological barriers hindering the social integration of these students make the teaching-learning process more difficult with them.

### 3.3. Results from Interviews

During the interviews, results revealed the problem of the sign language mastering. All of the six (06) teachers agree that deaf learners do not master the writing skill as their hearing peers. In addition, teachers answered that the procedures of teaching are the same as the ones used with the hearing learners since they are together. The only thing that differs is that the lessons are transmitted to deaf learners through interpreters or sign language for those teachers who master it. Teachers acknowledge that although in-service training is organized for ASL mastering, only two (2) that is 33.3% of them can sign while teaching. In fact, ASL is not compulsory for recruitment in CSEB, neither is the participation to in-service training. Moreover, those in-service trainings efficiency cannot be proved. For example, one of the teachers confesses that he has been attending those training sessions for six years, but he is still unable to use the signs language. This example reveals the problems of staff management and motivation.

It is fortunate that CSEB is a well-equipped school and students have access to library, video projector, etc. However, there is a problem because those materials are only useful out of classroom settings, for co-curricular activities. In fact, CSEB EFL teachers attest that they teach according to the official curricular, using the “outdated” and “deprecated” documents designed for hearing students using the competency-based approach. Those documents are merely useless for an effective writing skill development for D/HH learners. Moreover, the respondent teachers claim that due to

the little time allotted to EFL teaching learning and the pressure to cover the official curriculum, deaf students do not get the deserved attention. The teaching experience become frustrating for both students and teachers.

Besides, the teachers deplore the fact that most students do not perform the writing task during summative evaluations. For obvious reasons related to difficulties they experience, they simply give up and rely on grammar structure and reading comprehension activities. This mirrors the actual English class practices.

#### *3.4. Results from the Classroom Observation*

The class observation has taken place at CSEB. Six (06) teachers were sampled and all of them have been observed. The rooms are well built, winded and lit. The students were arranged in groups of six (6) students including both Deaf and hearing with the purpose of facilitating communication and comprehension during assignments. Unfortunately, the unbalanced number of hearing and deaf in each class does not allow such arrangement. Strategies used by teachers are limited to groups work and collective work. Individual work is time consuming because of the problem of communication.

Reading comprehension is the routine language activities in the visited classes. Only one teacher out of the six dealt with writing activity. She could communicate using both speech and ASL. However, dealing with different stage of writing is exhausting because of communication gap between teacher and students.

Only two teachers out of six teachers observed master the sign language. The remaining ones, need interpreters. They either use professional interpreters or student - interpreters.

The ideal condition of teaching to deaf student is when the EFL teacher can signs using ASL or FSL. However, in the observed classroom where deaf and hearing are integrated, the teacher uses both speech and ASL which is exhausting! When the investigated teachers sign, they slow down their speech rate to a word-by-word communication resulting in an inadequate and inauthentic speech for hearing students who feel left out and simply disconnected! This harmfully affects their communication skills.

Teachers who cannot sign use an interpreter. With some accommodations and training, possibilities there are to reach an optimal synchronization where the tandem 'teacher-interpreter' can efficiently communicate. The problem is that hearing students who are learning ASL instinctively and are training themselves, easily get distracted by the interpreter's gestures trying to decode. Obviously, the presence of interpreters in the

observed classrooms does not always benefit the hearing students, the D/HH students either.

In the absence of qualified interpreters, student interpreters are helpful. They easily create an efficient and sustainable communicative environment with their D/HH mates. The only condition is that those students must be brilliant in the specific class subject in question and be good at signing.

Some problems of the interpreting that are worth pointing out:

- the delay on the feedback and the misunderstanding it can generate
- the lack of knowledge in the subject and the biases and or error of interpretation
- Everything cannot be interpreted (jokes, humours, interjections, etc.); henceforth, it is practically impossible to have a vivid and enjoying communicative English class.

Another problem is that in BSEG, professional and student interpreters use French Sign Language (FSL) to teaching English. Either the EFL teacher speaks French to teach English, then the interpreter translates in FLS or the teacher uses English, then the interpreter first translates in French and after in FSL. In such conditions only, grammatical structures can be taught in a mechanical way leading to incomplete and biased language learning (not clear). the direct consequence is that the language students develop distorted! They hardly make sense and their written productions are limited to basic communications. In addition, the structure of ASL itself does not allow a comprehensive English Language teaching. Moreover, there are very few writing practices and even worse, the topics are not motivating because they do not tackle the life time of the learners (not clear).

## **4 Discussion**

### *4.1. Effect of Deafness on D/hh performance*

As the results indicate, hearing loss significantly influences the language and speech development of students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing that negatively affects their academic achievement, social and emotional interaction, and cognitive milestones (Moore, 2001). The current study evidences this effect of deafness on students' overall writing performance (figure 4). In addition, D/HH face more difficulties to develop literacy skills. The impact of deafness on D/HH language development can be measured through analysis of variance (ANOVA) of our sample summarized in tables 7 and table 8 (Effect size is  $ES = .342$  as  $0.04 < ES \leq 0.36$ ).

#### *4.1.1. Requirement of D/HH education*

These data are interesting as they confirm the predicted negative impact of Deafness on literacy skills development. Likewise, they show that deafness is not a limitation of intellectual capabilities it a surmountable disability when required conditions are met. Students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing are considered exceptional learners (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2009; Smith, 2007, Beveridge, 1999; Bunch, 1987; Moores, 2001). Beveridge (1999) advocates that D/HH students require special services which must be offered by qualified and skilled teachers in order to respond to their unique needs. In a practical classroom situation it involves designing adequate curriculum and material integrating visual scaffolding procedure authentic material, interactive strategies and instruction model. The Siwi instruction model appears to be the most appropriate model in CSEB context.

The definition of those conditions is prior to a clear understanding of the problem related to deafness. Ghari Z (2016) explains that Deaf children experience more illnesses compared to hearing children. D/HH people devolp six (6) time more mental health problem because of the central nervous system disorders related to deafness (not clear). The psychological conditions including a communication barrier, low self-esteem, and lack of strong attachment are also considered to have a strong effect on mental health. This justifies During the classroom observations and interviews. It turns out that deaf students are often absent for health reasons. Clearly, D/HH students deserve medical and psychological assistance!

#### *4.1.2. Difficulties Related to Communication and Integration*

The integration of D/HH and hearing is important for their social development. Nevertheless, numbers of aspect of such an association prove to be limitative to both D/HH and hearing students. Different studies point out that there are differences in the educational needs of students who are D/HH and hearing students (El-Zraigat, 2007, 2010; Livingston, 1999; Naiman, 1979; Syverrud, Guardino, & Selznick, 2009). This corroborate the result of the present study as the cohabitation D/HH-Hearing cannot solve all the problem correlated to Deaf learners' language development. Rather, such an integration, to some extent, negatively affects language development and may lead to some segregations and conflict among peers. How do those studies related to your own study?

#### 4.2. *SIWI as an efficient strategy in D/HH*

Teaching writing to D/HH using SIWI has proved to be helpful but the implementation in CSEB context required commitment and facilities. The problem is how to best teach literacy (English in print) to deaf students. In the linguistic interdependence model of Cummins, bilingual approach can be applied or modified for instruction of students whose first language is ASL (not clear) (Mayer & Wells, 1996). The interdependence model assumes that individuals have access to literacy in their first language. Unfortunately, Benin D/HH do not develop a first language owing to the fact that they mostly come from illiterate, yet, hearing families. They have their only contact with a structured language at school and learn ASL from scratch. Regrettably ASL, does not have a written form. Consequentially, it's difficult for ASL users to transfer literacy proficiency to English. The mediocre performance of those learners noticed in figure 4 and the difficulties mentioned in figure 5 are tightly related to this situation.

Studies show that D/HH individuals who communicate in an English-based sign system or via spoken English have a bridge connecting their face-to-face language to print which is not the case of Benin D/HH (What is the difference between deaf people and D/HH?). Clearly, they have a double challenge: mastering ASL and transferring it into literacy skills.

As shown by the current research, the quality and characteristics of writing done by D/HH students indicate that the texts typically produced by deaf students are comprehensible but are characterized as lacking in organization and supporting detail, choppy, and immature (Albertini & Schley, 2011; Antia, Reed, & Kreimeyer, 2005; Mayer, 2010; Paul, 2008). Mayer (2005:58) has noted that *"Deaf students' writing often persistently contain simplified sentences, grammatical errors or non-standard usages."* These traits are likely due to the deaf students' incomplete control over English syntax and limited vocabulary compared to their hearing peers (Strassman & Schirmer, 2013).

Another hurdle to the D/HH learning is that the majority of the investigated teachers generally stress on grammar and vocabulary. There is no specific time devoted to teaching composition, doing exercises related to writing. No one teaches composition properly said, i.e. teaching students how to think on a topic, how to generate ideas, how to organize those ideas and produce a coherent work.

## 5 **Suggestions**

### ➤ **To Educational Authorities**

The educational system should take into account minorities and students with impairment while designing curriculum. They should invest in research on innovative

teaching/learning approaches and create optimal conditions for the integration of all student without discriminations. They ought to sensitize populations on the possibilities to school D/HH children at an early age. They must create more public specialised schools with up-to-date and appropriate facilities for people with impairment.

➤ **To EFL Teachers**

Teachers who are teaching the deaf learners should try their best to get a specific training concerning the methodologies of teaching. They have to bear in mind that, dealing with deaf students is not similar to teaching hearing students. This category of learners has specific learning needs and they shall be handled in different ways. It is necessary to stress writing skill more; since writing is the main means of communication within the deaf and the people who do not master the sign language. Teachers should also motivate deaf learners during English courses; interesting and contextualised topics must be explored. Teachers might use the following tips adapted from Briggie (2005) to organize their classroom in order to maximise visual input and ensure that students receive information in a clear, efficient manner:

- ✓ Write key words, phrases, and assignments on the board.
- ✓ Use visual aids whenever possible to provide additional access to information presented in class.
- ✓ Arrange seating so that students with hearing impairments can see much of what is occurring during class. Make sure that the light source (window or open door) is behind; visual cues are difficult to see when looking into the light.
- ✓ Present new vocabulary to students prior to the lesson. This allows students to recognize the words and signs during the lesson and thus maximize comprehension.
- ✓ Teach students to raise hands and be identified before speaking or responding in class. This allows students who are deaf to know who is speaking.

By making some small changes one can create a more visual classroom environment. These visual strategies not only will benefit students with hearing impairments, but also will provide additional input for hearing students. Visual input must always be considered when planning lessons and activities. They should adjust story time so that it possible to sign while reading, or have an interpreter sign the story as the teachers read it aloud.

If using an interpreter, he or she should sign near the book. This shows the connection between the written words, the oral story, the pictures, and the signs (Avoid the use of the imperative here). Exploring students' names to show the interrelatedness of sign and English is another high-interest, successful activity.

The use of the bullet points must be limited as much as possible. It is advisable to replace the bullet points with coherent paragraphs.

➤ **To Deaf Students**

Deaf learners should not be limited by their disability. They should bear in mind that they can succeed like anybody if they really want and show more interest in English by learning their English lessons regularly; they can be friend with English partners so as to exchange mails with them in English. The internet and social media may be useful to practice writing. They should not wait for written tests before writing.

➤ **Working with interpreters**

It is helpful to employ an interpreter who has some knowledge of the subject, especially if the vocabulary is highly specialized. ASL sign users will need interpreters during lectures. However, the interpreter should be within hearing distance and ready before the teacher starts talking. He or she must speak to the student directly, not to the interpreter. Teachers should be aware that the interpreter always lags a little behind the speaker. Therefore, they may have to pause or speak more slowly to ensure the interpreter is keeping up. If the interpreting has been intensive, it is recommended to provide a short break every 15-20 minutes or negotiate an appropriate time with the interpreter as signing is intensive and tiring work.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the strategies and tips used by EFL teachers to teach writing skill to deaf learners in CSEB (Benin) with an aim to generate information that could be used to modify existing practices for the benefit of such learners. The objective is to shed light on the requirement of deaf education in terms of language teaching/learning and assess the difficulties related to the development of deaf students' language and literacy skills. This enables to select and/or design the most relevant teaching activities, methods and technics that can be used for the improvement of writing skill while dealing with deaf students.

The current study carried out through a mixed methodology reveals that D/HH students meet more difficulties in literacy skills development owing the poor/non-existent initial language input. The results confirm the predicted negative impact of Deafness on literacy skills development. Likewise, they show that deafness is not a limitation of intellectual capabilities. Rather, it is a surmountable disability when required conditions are met. To achieve these requirements, the use of SIWI instruction model of instruction for writing skills development is advisable.

D/HH learners come from different systems and actors which includes themselves, their parents and institutional barriers that exist in deaf education. It was discovered that hindrances which affect D/HH academic performance are correlated to deafness being both psychological and physical impairment. This includes their health issues such as their hearing loss and other forms of impairments; their reading and learning habits; and their expectations in excelling in education. Also, parental involvement in their children's education was low due to their low expectation of their children's education. In addition, some institutional barriers such as ineffective instructional, inadequate reading and teaching materials, facilities and rigid syllabi contents are breaks for their success (not clear). The Government needs to provide teaching and learning materials and the necessary facilities. In addition, early interventions to enhance D/HH' academic capabilities must be adopted.

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