

1982

Usage of oral skills by orally educated deaf adults

Ann Deatherage

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/pacs_capstones

 Part of the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Deatherage, Ann, "Usage of oral skills by orally educated deaf adults" (1982). *Independent Studies and Capstones*. Paper 305. Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences, Washington University School of Medicine.
http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/pacs_capstones/305

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences at Digital Commons@Becker. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Studies and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Becker. For more information, please contact engeszer@wustl.edu.

Usage of Oral Skills by Orally
Educated Deaf Adults
Ann Deatherage
Central Institute for the Deaf

Running Head: Usage of Oral Skills by Deaf Adults

REFERENCE ONLY
DO NOT REMOVE
FROM LIBRARY

May, 1982

Review of the Literature

Many studies have been conducted which examine the speech and communication skills/training of the deaf during their school years. Unfortunately, not many studies have looked at the communication skills of the deaf adult.

One study which did look at this topic, however, was a thesis by Paul Ogden entitled Experiences and Attitudes of Oral Deaf Adults Regarding Oralism. In this study, Ogden examined the extent of oral skills, attitudes toward oralism and oral training, communication with society and problems encountered by deaf adults in society. Surveys were sent to graduates of Central Institute for the Deaf, St. Josephs Institute for the Deaf and Clarke School for the Deaf all of which are exclusively oral schools. Each school was examined separately and compared to the others. Ninety percent of the subjects were congenitally hearing-impaired.

In a self-evaluation of speech and lipreading skills, results found 33.8% of the subjects rated their skills as "very good", 33.8% as "good" rating their speech higher than lipreading. In a self-evaluation of other's ability to understand them, 56.2% of the subjects rated their ability as "very well" with close friends and 63.3% as "well." Fifty-six percent rated their ability as "very well" with close relatives and 34.1% as "well." In all cases involving persons of increasing importance such as

insurance men and doctors, it was found that the subjects would communicate by means of writing when speech was not understood.

It was also found that the more interaction between the subject and other persons, the better the other person understood the subject's speech. Results also showed that 67% of the subjects knew sign language, but preferred to use oral communication. The majority had learned sign before the age of 21 years of age.

Results showed very positive attitudes toward oralism. Ninety percent stated they were glad they had attended oral schools and 67% replied that if they had a hearing-impaired child, they would or did send him/her to an oral school.

Looking at the social aspect, most of the subjects entertained hearing friends with only 1/10 of them entertaining oral deaf friends frequently and 48.8% never entertaining manual deaf friends. Of the 637 subjects, 44.7% were married, 24.9% to hearing persons and 75.1% to hearing-impaired persons. Responses hinted at the approval of total communication. Thirty-eight percent of the subjects indicated they would communicate with or teach their child total communication. Twenty-eight percent stated they would have preferred to have attended total communication schools themselves.

When put together, these results indicate the orally educated deaf adults do use their oral skills in their adult lives.

Another study which examined the deaf adult was done by the National Census of the Deaf Population and was written up in a book by Jerome Schein and Marcus Delk, Jr. entitled The Deaf

Population of the United States. The study looked at the size of the deaf population plus details on characteristics of deaf adults; education, occupation, communication, morbidity, and mortality. This study looked at the deaf population who had never had or lost their hearing prior to 19 years of age and labelled these as prevocationally deaf. The study was conducted through personal interviews.

Results of the study dealing with communication were examined by the communication mode used in relation to the highest grade of school completed. A self-evaluation of all aspects of communication showed the more educated group rating themselves as higher or equal to the less educated groups. Seven out of ten rated their speech as "good" or "fair", yet three out of ten use speech alone when purchasing things at a store. It is felt that this is due to the unfamiliarity of a deaf person's voice and the difficulty in understanding it.

As in the study by Ogden, it was found that when speaking to persons such as professionals, writing predominated as the form of communication. Results showed that in the job situation, 85% of the professional and technical personnel used speech at work either alone or combined with writing and/or gesture. In all occupations, 39.4% used speech alone, 25% used writing and 13.4% used a combination of speech and writing. Only 2.9% used speech and manual communication while at work. An interesting note is that income was found to be related to the mode of communication used. In ranking the incomes, it was found that in the five highest incomes(5,999-7,214) a combination of speech and writing

or speech and gesture were used. Lower incomes were characterized by an individual mode or other combinations. Craftsmen and nontransit operators were found to make up the middle income bracket and used a combination of speech and writing or other combinations. See the table on page five for listings of incomes and the mode of communication used.

Socially, results showed that most deaf adults had deaf spouses, 79.5% while only 13.6% had hearing spouses. No mention was made of the type of friends the deaf adult preferred to entertain.

Unlike Ogden's study, this study looked at the entire U.S. deaf population making no differentiation between those orally educated and those educated by other modes. However, it also found that most deaf adults preferred to use speech in communication with hearing people.

Introduction to the Study

It is my goal to examine the extent to which orally educated deaf use speech once they become adults. I want to examine the following aspects of communication among these people:

1. Do the deaf learn manual communication while in school or after their school years?
2. In what situations do the deaf use their speech in comparison to what situations they use manual or total communication?
3. To what extent do the deaf associate with hearing vs other deaf persons?
4. How much does a deaf person comprehend in a group or lecture situation and what are his reactions?

Relationship Between Income and Communication Mode
Used by the Deaf

<u>Income</u>	<u>Mode of Communication Used</u>
7,214	Speech and Gesture
6,777	Writing and Gesture
6,666	Speech and Manual
6,289	Writing
5,999	Speech, Manual and Writing
5,970	All Methods
5,758	Other
5,750	Speech
4,750	Gesture
4,599	Manual

Taken from The Deaf Population of the United States
 by Delk and Schein

This study was conducted through personal interviews with orally educated deaf adults of the St. Louis area.

Subjects

Twelve orally educated deaf adults ranging from 23 to 69 years of age were chosen as the subjects of this study. The subjects were chosen from a list of deaf persons in the St. Louis area possessing a TTY system. All of the subjects had a severe to profound hearing loss. The sample included only those with a severe to profound loss because it was felt that these persons would have more reason for learning sign language as a mode of communication. The wide age range was chosen in an attempt to include persons from a variety of oral philosophies. The subjects educational backgrounds included attendance at St. Joseph's Institute for the Deaf, Central Institute for the Deaf or Detroit Day School for the Deaf.

Procedures

The study was conducted through personal interviews with each subject. A questionnaire of 20 questions was designed to examine the extent to which the deaf used their oral skills as well as providing a brief general background. This questionnaire became the basis for the interviews. A list of the questions is located in Appendix I.

Results

Results of the interviews examined the following areas: use of a hearing aid; subject's use of sign language; family's use of sign language; social involvement with other deaf persons; communication mode used with friends, strangers, and employers; comprehension of speech in lecture and group situations; and feelings of the usefulness of sign language in communication.

The extent to which a hearing aid was used by these adults varied. Of the twelve interviewed, two reported using their aids all the time, two reported using their aids sometimes and eight reported never using a hearing aid. Of the eight that never used an aid, six stated that the aid was "no help" and the other two stated that they did not use an aid because of the type of job held and because it was noticeable to the public causing the person to be "made fun of."

Results are that eleven out of twelve of the subjects knew sign language and six of these learned it during their school years. These subjects learned sign language from a variety of sources including deaf siblings who used sign, attendance at Missouri School for the Deaf, friends in social situations, and church. The other five subjects reported that they had learned sign language after their school years at deaf clubs, from friends, or at their place of employment. Only one person interviewed did not know sign language and reported no need or desire to learn it.

Upon discovering the number of subjects that knew and used sign language, I questioned the extent to which the family of each subject knew and used sign language. Ten of the subjects reported that their parents had no knowledge of sign language. These parents were reported to use only speech in communicating with the subject. Of the two subjects that reported their parents used sign language, one reported that their knowledge was restricted to a minimal use of finger spelling with speech as the preferred mode of communication. The other subject reported that the parents did know sign language, but only used it when speech was not understood. Three of the subjects reported that their hearing-impaired siblings knew and used sign language and two reported that their children knew and used sign language.

When asked to rate their own signing ability on a scale from poor, good, very good, to excellent, five subjects reported their signing ability as excellent, five as good, and one as very good. One subject, remember, did not sign.

The next item examined in the general communication of the subjects was their involvement in social activities of the deaf vs involvement with hearing persons. Two of the subjects reported no social involvement with the deaf at all. One subject explained that she was supportive of the deaf, but did not socialize with them because they acted "immature." The other stated that he felt more comfortable with the hearing than with the deaf. Two subjects reported their only involvement with the deaf in social activities was at church which were churches for the deaf utilizing interpreters. Another subject reported her only involvement in social activities of the deaf was in social gatherings such as

parties and Bridge games. The remaining six subjects interviewed were very active in organizations of the deaf including National Association of the Deaf, Missouri Association of the Deaf, RID, The Bell Club, Alumni Associations, and the Round Table of Representatives.

When asked if they had more deaf or more hearing friends, seven subjects reported having more deaf friends, three reported a 50-50 division between hearing and deaf friends, one reported having more hearing friends, and one reported having only hearing friends.

The next major area of the results examined was that of the communication mode used with friends, strangers, and employers.

Because the majority of the subjects had both deaf and hearing friends, the question of the communication mode used with friends was divided into two parts; (1) communication with hearing friends (2) communication with deaf friends. In communicating with hearing friends, eleven of the subjects reported using speech only as the mode of communication. One subject reported using total communication with hearing friends. In communicating with deaf friends, seven of the subjects reported a combination of speech and sign together as the mode of communication, three reported the use of sign language alone, and two reported using speech only as the mode of communication.

In asking the subjects how they would communicate with a stranger, I found I had to clarify the meaning of "stranger." To do this I provided the subjects with the situation in which the person had car trouble and had to ask someone for help. The

results are that speech was the common mode of communication used with ten subjects reporting this. The remaining two subjects reported that they would use a combination of speech and writing. Here writing is used only for clarity of what was said either on the part of the speaker or listener.

In communicating with employers, seven of the subjects stated that they would use speech as the primary mode of communication supported by writing only when speech was not understood. These subjects stated that often they only needed a word or sentence written down to insure that they understood what they were being told. This was especially true in cases with other professionals such as doctors or insurance salesmen where the subject was unfamiliar with the vocabulary. The remaining five subjects reported that when they communicated with their employers, they only used speech. They stated that they had no trouble comprehending the employer nor the employer, them.

The last major area examined was the comprehension of and reaction to lecture and group situations in which speech was the mode of communication used. In both the lecture and group situation, a variety of reactions occurred which indicated a general lack of comprehension of the topic by the subjects. Of the eleven subjects interviewed, five stated that they required a notetaker for comprehension of the lecture. Four of these five also stated that they would see the lecturer afterwards for a summary of the lecture. Two of the subjects stated they usually daydreamed because they were unable to follow the lecture,

one said he had to sit in front to comprehend the lecture, another required a manual interpreter to comprehend more than 50% of the lecture, and two stated they do not attend lectures now because they get nothing out of them.

In a group situation such as parties where several people are conversing, five subjects reported that they ask the people what was said when they do not comprehend, while the remaining six subjects stated they would leave a group situation without an interpreter. These subjects expressed their preference for one on one communication situations.

Subjects were asked how helpful sign language was in communication. In most cases, several advantages were stated. Nine of the twelve subjects interviewed reported that sign language helped in understanding and made communication clearer. Of these nine, four also reported that sign language helped them learn more vocabulary. The remaining subjects reported that sign language gives them information of expression such as tone of voice which they are unable to pick up from speech and hearing.

Conclusions

Based on these results, it is concluded that the orally educated deaf adult does use his oral skills after the school years, but that for better comprehension in the communicative situation he does supplement the speech with other modes of communication including writing and sign language.

As hypothesized, it is also concluded that the oral deaf adult comprehends very little in either a group or lecture situation without the aid of an interpreter (oral or manual).

The subjects' reports of the helpfulness of sign language in communication for such things as clarity of what is being said, vocabulary learning, and information of expression, in addition to the fact that half learned sign language while in school has educational implications. If sign language is that helpful to the deaf person in providing a more complete comprehension of the communicative situation, it may be considered as a supplemental mode of communication to the oral method. This may include using sign language in the classroom for vocabulary learning or setting aside a portion of the child's day for activities which entail the use of sign language. This would be especially helpful to the child who is oral, but whose skills are such that communication is a problem. It is felt that further studies should be done in this area.

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name

Age

Name(s) of School or Schools Attended

Did you learn sign language or fingerspelling while you were going to school or after your school years?

How did you communicate at home?

Does anyone in your family know or use sign language or finger spelling?

Do you know sign language now? Fingerspelling?

How would you rate your signing?- Good? Poor? Very Good? Excellent?

How do you communicate with your Family?

How do you communicate with your friends?

How do you communicate with the people you work with?

Do you have more deaf friends or more hearing friends?

Do your deaf friends use sign language?

How do you communicate in a business transaction?

Do you use a hearing aid? How often?

If you do not use an aid very often, Why not?

If you do not use sign language, Why not?

If you do use sign language, do you find it helpful in Communicating? How?

Are you shy about signing in public?

Are you involved in social activities, clubs, etc. with deaf people?

What do you do in a group or lecture situation in which the speakers are using speech only and you do not understand? Is it difficult for you to comprehend the conversation?

Age of Adult	Highest Level of Education Completed	Use of Hearing Aid Now	Hearing Deaf Friends	When Sign Language Was Learned	Self-Rating of Signing Ability	Family's Use of Sign Language	Feelings of signing in Public	Involvement in Social Activities of the Deaf
23	college	always except at home	more hearing friends	during school years	good	Sibling - yes father - fingerspells only	Depends on situation sometimes shy	none
25	college	always	more deaf friends	during school years	good	Occasionally	not shy	church only
27	college	always	more deaf friends	college UTID	good	none	not shy	church only
30	college	50% of time	more deaf friends	after school years	very good	Parents - no Hearing-impaired siblings - yes	not shy	very active in organizations of the Deaf
41	college	never	50-50	after school years	excellent	none	Does not sign in public	?
42	Trade School	never	50-50	after school years	excellent	Parents - no children - yes	not shy	active in organizations of the deaf
47	High School	never	50-50	after school years	excellent	none	not shy	social gatherings only
48	High School	never	more deaf friends	during school years	excellent	Hearing-impaired sibling - yes parents - no	Sometimes shy - depends on situation	very active in organizations of the Deaf
61	High School	never	only hearing friends	—	Does not sign	none	—	none
61	college	never	more deaf friends	during school years	good	none	not shy	very active in organizations
63	Business school	never	more deaf friends	after school years	good	none	not shy	active in organizations of the Deaf
69	High School	never	more deaf friends	during school years	excellent	Parents - none children - yes	not shy	very active in organizations

Appendix I

Age of Adult	Communication Mode Used with Friends	Communication Mode Used with Strangers	Communication Mode Used with Employer	Reaction to lecture situation using speech as Communication Mode	Reaction to group social situation using speech as Communication Mode
23	hearing - speech deaf - ASL (American Sign language)	speech and writing	speech and writing	daydreams	leaves if no interpreter
25	hearing and deaf friends - speech + sign language together	speech and writing	speech and writing (for clarity)	daydreams or notetaker	
27	hearing - speech deaf - speech and sign together	speech	speech and writing (for clarity)	asks for summary after lecture notes on blackboard	can't comprehend prefers 1 to 1 communication
30	hearing - speech deaf - speech and sign together	speech	speech and writing (for clarity)	notetaker	leaves prefers 1 to 1 communication
41	hearing - speech deaf - sign language	speech	speech	ignores lecture or leaves	asks what's going on
42	hearing - speech deaf - sign language	speech	speech	ignores lecture or leaves	ignores conversation or leaves
47	hearing - speech deaf - speech and sign together	speech	speech and writing writing in air	asks for summary of lecture or has notetaker	asks person to repeat
48	hearing - speech deaf - speech and sign together	speech	speech	uses interpreter or only get 50%	bored, don't comprehend
61	Speech only	speech	speech	won't go without interpreter (oral)	won't go without an oral interpreter.
61	hearing - speech deaf - speech and sign together	speech	speech and writing (for clarity)	notetaker ask for summary afterwards	asks person to repeat
63	hearing - speech deaf - speech and sign together	speech	speech and writing	notetaker or meet with lecturer after lecture for summary	asks person to repeat
69	hearing - speech deaf - sign only	speech	speech	notetaker	

Appendix II

REFERENCES

Ogden, Paul W. Experiences and Attitudes Of Oral Deaf Adults Regarding Oralism. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1979.

Schein, Jerome D. and Delk, Marcus T. Jr. The Deaf Population of the United States. Silver Spring, Maryland: National Association of the Deaf, 1974.

LIBRARY
CENTRAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF