

Problems Faced by Students with Hearing Impairment in Inclusive Education at the University Level

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This article reports on a qualitative study which was conducted to identify the problems faced by students with hearing impairment studying in inclusive education at the university level. The sample of the study consisted of all the four deaf students studying in Department of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. A structured interview with open-ended questions was used to investigate the problems of students with hearing impairment. Collected data were analyzed through (transcribing and coding) the statements given by the deaf subjects. It was found that students with hearing impairment were facing many difficulties regarding mode of instruction used by the teachers in class room; lack of sign language interpreters, and teachers' (inability to use) sign language during instruction. It was surprising to find out that students with hearing impairment did not report any difficulty (socializing) with their hearing counterparts. The problems of students with hearing impairment can be reduced by making appropriate arrangement to meet their needs in inclusive classroom.

Keywords: students with hearing impairment, inclusive education, mode of instruction, sign language, socialization

Introduction

During the last few decades numerous changes have taken place in the educational systems of special need students in Pakistan. The reason behind these evolutionary changes was the commitment of the professionals who had an urge to go side by side with other professionals working in other parts of the world in providing services to students with special needs.

Segregation was the foundation stone of education for special need children. Segregation is an educational system where students with special needs are educated separately from their non-disabled peers (Olukotun, 2004). Later inclusive education programs were launched because segregated education caused discriminatory attitudes among masses towards special need students. A collaborative study was conducted to find out the effect of segregation on post-school adjustment of special needs individuals who had been educated in segregation (Haszi, Johnson, Haszi, Gordo and Hull 1989). It was found that post school adjustment was

more challenging for segregated students with special needs, than for non-segregated students with special needs.

Lindsay (2007) is of the view that inclusive education is the main objective for the education of special need children and adolescents. Inclusive education stresses the participation of special need students in communities, culture and curricula of local schools, discouraging all forms of exclusion. (Booth, Ainscow, 1998). More than 300 participants representing 29 governments and 25 international organizations met in Salamanca, Spain from 7 to 10 June 1994 to further the objective of Education for All by considering the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, namely enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs. Inclusive education was also stressed in Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education for all by bringing about some trivial changes in programs and policies of the country. The statements request governments to give priority to inclusive systems of education and adopt

it as law or policy. They focused on the provision of education to every person and every child, regardless of interests, capabilities and special needs (Hameed, 2002).

Inclusive education means that students with special needs are provided with specialized education in age-appropriate regular classes in local schools according to their special educational needs (Forman, 2002). The concept of inclusive education has been drawn from the human rights perspective which contents that disability causes changes in human characteristics which may be in form of sensory or physical ability, but these changes do not restrict human capabilities (Riox, Cabbet, 2003).

Inclusive schools show good performance in Pakistan. The education of children with special needs was placed on the government agenda for the first time by the National Commission on Education in 1959. This commission emphasized that children and adults with mental retardation should be provided with vocational training. Moreover, different training programs should be launched for the teachers of children with disabilities. Afterwards funds for special education were provided on the recommendation of the Education Policy of 1972 (Hameed, 2002). The United Nations asked member countries to take active part in solving problems of persons with disabilities (UNICEF, 2003).

As far as children with hearing impairment are concerned they are facing a number of problems regarding their academic, intellectual, linguistic, social and emotional development in inclusive schools. According to Bailey Plessis (1998), most of the educationists agree that for the implementation of inclusive education money, space, planning, time and smaller number of students in a class are important factors. The communication problems of children with hearing impairment are the main hurdle in implementing inclusive education. Moreover both the regular and special education teachers want authoritative role in inclusive setup. Navin & Thousand (1987) propound that social interaction between students with and without hearing impairment in inclusive classroom is not at satisfactory level. The hearing students hurt them and hesitate to include them in school activities and games (Navin Thousand as cited in Andrews, 2000).

Moreover, there are a number of curricular problems regarding curriculum adaptation and modification to meet the unique needs of students with hearing impairment. In the same way, sign language interpreters and teachers in inclusive classroom have to face the problem of interpreting certain concepts and, as a result, the students with hearing impairment fall academically far behind their hearing peers (Moore, 1996).

It is necessary to consider the facilities and services available in the school and universities which need to be adapted to the needs of special need students. The design of the classroom requires special consideration to adjust to students with disabilities (Alahmadi, 2001). The teacher of inclusive classroom might make special demands in case of multiple disabilities in severe form in special needs students. For instance, blind, deaf and physically challenged students will need a specific teaching adjustment and curriculum adaptation while organizational environments of an inclusive classroom, careful attention is required to be paid to classroom space, design, location, lights, elevations and supportive material (Schmidt, Cagran, 2008, as cited in Alqaryovti, 2010). Fuller, Healey, Bradley & Hall (2004) reported the obstacles faced by handicapped at university level. The results of their study indicated that there were many barriers to inclusive instruction such as the fast rate of teachers' speech during lectures, difficulty in participating in discussions and answering the questions.

Students with hearing impairment lag behind in academics as compared to their counterparts with visual impairment and physical disabilities on account of their problems in communication, socialization, curriculum adaptations and modifications and above all sign language interpretation. These problems take a more severe form when these students with hearing impairment join higher education. Taking into consideration the sensitivity of the issue, the researchers conducted this study to investigate the problems faced by students with hearing impairment in inclusive setting at the post graduate level.

Objectives of the study

The study was conducted to achieve the following

objectives:

1. To investigate problems regarding teachers' modes of instruction in inclusive classrooms with hearing-impaired students;
2. To know the level of hearing-impaired students' satisfaction with instruction in inclusive classrooms;
3. To identify the barriers to inclusive instruction for hearing-impaired students at the university level.

Research questions

To represent the true sense of the study, following research questions were developed:

1. What were the problems regarding teachers' modes of instruction in inclusive classroom?
2. How satisfied were hearing-impaired students with instruction in inclusive classrooms?
3. What were the barriers to inclusive education at the university level?

Research Methodology

The participants in this qualitative study consisted of all four students with hearing impairment studying in Department of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. Due to the rigorous and elaborate nature of qualitative research, data were collected from the students of only one department. An interview with open-ended questions was used for collection of data from students with hearing impairment. Interview

was divided into three sections: (1) modes of instruction in inclusive classrooms (2) students' satisfaction (3) barriers being faced by students with hearing impairment in inclusive classrooms.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers personally visited Department of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore and requested the students with hearing impairment for granting time for interview. Each student was asked to select a place for interview. All agreed to give the interviews in the same Department. The authors interviewed the four subjects in January, 2012, on four consecutive days. The questions of the interviews were interpreted in sign language by one of the authors who was proficient in the use of sign language whereas the other researchers were busy in transcribing the responses of the deaf students. The students' responses were transcribed in written form for later analysis.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed through qualitative data analysis techniques e.g., transcribing, coding, and categorizing the responses. Findings were derived from emerging themes. Responses to the questions of the interview are presented in tabulated form. Responses to each statement are given in rows. Separate columns present responses of every subject. (I DON'T SEE THESE TOTALLED RESPONSES).

Table 1: Student responses to the questions about teachers' modes of instruction. Modes of Teachers' Instruction

Questions	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
1: Whether teacher teaches faster than you can learn?	Absence of sign language	Can't understand	Can't understand	Can't understand
2: Is there any note taker to assist you when the teachers are dictating notes?	Only one interpreter	No note taker	No interpreter	No special attention
3: How do you feel without any sign language interpreter in the class?	Feels sad	Feels sad	Feels frustration	Sits silently

4: Do teachers pay extra attention to you during and after the class?	No special attention	Little attention	Little attention	Low attention
5: Are most of the teachers not trained for special students and their mode of teaching becomes difficult for you?	I face difficulty	I face difficulty	I face difficulty	I face difficulty
6: Do the teachers feel concerned about your hearing impairment?	Little concern	No	No	No

Table 1 shows that in response to the question no. (1) “Whether teacher teaches faster than you can learn” Case (1) responded that, usually teachers followed a slow pace during teaching and did not use sign language. Case (2) told that usually teachers followed a slow pace during teaching. Case (3) responded that his teachers taught him faster than he could learn, and they did not take into consideration his difficulty in hearing. Case (4) reported that teachers taught him faster and did not use sign language. So he could not understand whatever they did teach. When they were asked about note takers to assist them when the teachers used to dictate notes to other class fellows, Case (1) and (2) told that teachers did not dictate notes to them. They wrote on white board and there was only one sign language interpreter to assist them. Moreover Case (1) reported about experiencing feelings of frustration in absence of an interpreter. Case (2) told that there was one sign language interpreter. Case (3) and case (4) reported that there was no interpreter with them and they did copy notes from their other class fellows.

Telling about teachers’ concern Case (1) reported that teachers were more concerned about

other hearing students than him. He used to copy notes of student sitting next to him. He also reported that class teachers did not give special attention to him. Case (2) told about teachers’ concern that most of the teachers were not special teachers and it made their mode of teaching difficult for him. Case (3) and Case (4) told that teachers gave little attention to them in class and did not attend them out of class.

When they were asked about any difficulty they were facing during instruction. Case (1) told that he had been facing difficulty because some teachers did not know the use of sign language. Case (4) also reported the same kind of difficulty. Case (3) said that all teachers had not been concerned about his presence, most of the time they remained busy in teaching other hearing students.

When interviewees were questioned about teachers’ concern toward their disability, Case (1) told that teachers were seldom concerned whether he was a hearing student or hearing impaired one. The three other subjects reported that their teachers had no concern about their disability.

Table 2: Level of Students’ satisfaction with instruction in their institution.

Questions	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
1: Do you feel belongingness to the classroom during lessons?	I feel myself a part of class	I feel embarrassment	I feel myself alone	I do not feel excluded in the presence of the interpreter
2: Do teachers make	Teachers make	Teachers do not	Teachers are not	Least concerned

sure that you understand before they move to next topic?	sure	make sure	concerned	
3: Are teachers always ready to give you assistance after the classroom?	Teachers do not attend after class	Teachers do not help out of the classroom	Teachers do not help	Teachers do not assist out of the class
4: Are there enough interpreters to ease communication problems in the classroom?	Only one interpreter	Only one interpreter for assistance	Class mates assist me in communication	Only one interpreter
5: Is Communication the best when there is an interpreter?	Can better work with interpreter	Better understanding in presence of interpreter	Better communication in presence of interpreter	Better communication in presence of interpreter
6: Are Sufficient teaching materials available for you in the classroom?	Use of multimedia	Use of white board and multimedia	Use of multimedia	Use of white board more often

Table 2 presents the responses of the interviewees to measure their level of satisfaction with instruction in their institution. In response to the statement about their feelings of belongingness to the classroom during instruction, Case (1) told that he felt himself a part of class. Case (2) responded that he felt that all other students were hearing but he was not, so he did feel embarrassment. Case (3) replied that he felt himself alone in the class. Case (4) responded that if sign language interpreter remained present with him, he did not feel separated from the class. When they were asked, “whether their teachers make sure about their understanding, before they move to another topic”, Case (1) replied that his teachers usually checked whether the sign interpreter was interpreting everything or not. Case (2) told that most of the time teachers just wrote on white board and he used to copy that material. Case (3) reported that teachers were not concerned whether he understood material or not. Case (4) reported about less concern of teacher about his understanding of subject matter.

Telling about the teachers’ willingness for extra assistance after the class, Case (1) reported that he

used to go to his teachers for help, while Case (2) reported that usually teachers did not attend him after class. Case (3) responded that teachers did not help him out of the class. Case (4) answered that teachers did not teach him out of class but whenever he went for help, they assisted him. When they were asked about the presence of interpreters in order to solve their communication problems, all of the subjects reported about the presence of only one interpreter to assist them. In response to the statement whether communication is the best when there is an interpreter in the class. All respondents reported about better understanding in the presence of an interpreter. Moreover Case (1) reported about feelings of frustration to participate in any activity in the absence of sign interpreter. Telling about the availability of sufficient teaching materials, Case (1) and Case (3) told that, their teachers used to teach them through multimedia and white board. Case (4) reported about the use of white board only. Moreover, he complained that teachers used to write just headings on the board and explained details verbally which was difficult to understand for him.

Table 3: Barriers to inclusive instruction at the University Level

Tables	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
1: Are you encouraged to participate and allowed to figure out things.	Involvement in activities	Not encouraged by peers	Encouraged by girls only	No encouragement by peers
2: Do your classmates or friends help you when you feel stuck?	Class fellows do not assist	Class fellows do help	Class fellows do help	Only one class fellow helps
3: Are sign language interpreters adequately involved during lessons?	Full involvement of interpreter	Interpreter is not fully involved	No interpreter to assist	Interpreter is not fully involved
4: Do you prefer to go to the teacher for help than the hearing students?	Go to teachers for help	Go to teacher for help	Go to teacher	Go to teacher rarely
5: Do you feel frustrated to participate in activities When there is no interpreter?	Frustrated in absence of interpreter	Feel frustration	Face difficulty to participate in activity	Feel frustration
6: Are there cordial relationships between the hearing impaired and hearing students?	Good relationship with other mates	Good relationship with peers	Cordial relationship	Good relationship

Table 3 revealed that in response to the question whether they were encouraged to participate and allowed to figure out things, Case (1) told that other class fellows involved him in different activities but did not allow him to figure out things by himself. Case (2) and Case (4) reported that they were not encouraged to participate and allowed to figure out. Case (3) said that he was encouraged to participate by girls only and other class fellows learned sign language from him.

Talking about help provided by class mates and friends, Case (1) answered in negation whereas Case (2) and (3) answered in affirmation. Case (4) reported that one of his class fellows helped him out. Reporting about the involvement of sign language interpreter during lesson, Case (1) reported about total involvement of interpreter in taking notes for him whereas Case (2) and Case (4) reported inadequate attention of sign language interpreter.

Case (3) told that there was no sign interpreter to assist him. Three out of four participants responded that they could go to teacher more often than hearing students. Only Case (4) told that he used to go rarely. All of the respondents expressed having feeling of frustration in the absence of sign language interpreter. In spite of all barriers and feelings of frustration, all participants reported cordial and pleasant relationships between hearing students and themselves.

Findings

The responses of the subjects were analyzed to identify the problems faced by hearing impaired students in inclusive system at the university level. Through interview following problems emerged:

- Students with hearing impairment were unable to understand teachers' instruction in class.
- Teachers were totally lacking in use of sign language during instruction.

- The number of sign language interpreters in the department was not sufficient to meet the needs of students with hearing impairment.
- Unavailability of sign language interpreters was causing frustration in students with hearing impairment.
- Teachers were not giving extra attention to students with hearing impairment in and out of class.
- Teachers did not make sure whether hearing impaired students understood instructions or not.
- Teachers were not concerned about the presence of hearing impaired students in class room.
- Teachers did not give assistance to students with hearing impairment after the class.
- Communication was the best in the presence of a sign language interpreter.
- Assistance from the class fellows and friends in learning was not sufficient.
- Hearing impaired students did not feel belongingness to the class during lessons.
- There was no encouragement for students with hearing impairment to participate in different activities.
- Students with hearing impairment were having cordial relationships with their hearing class mates.

Discussion

The study aimed at identifying the problems of students with hearing impairment in inclusive education at university level. The results of study showed that students with hearing impairment were facing a number of difficulties. They were experiencing problems of following and understanding instructions, lack of adequate sign language interpreters in classroom, and lack of teachers' assistance inside and outside the classroom. It confirms the findings of Fuller, Healey, Bradley & Hall (2004) who have reported about the obstacles faced by handicapped at university level. The results of their study indicated that there were many barriers to inclusive instruction such as the fast rate of teachers' speech during lectures, difficulty in participating in discussions and answering the questions. Some lecturers even restricted disabled students to tape the lectures. There was lack of suitable computer programs.

The responses of the students reveal that the role

of sign language interpreter is important in inclusive education as the students reiterate that the teachers' instruction and communication is the best when there are interpreters to assist them. They reported that they are always frustrated in the absence of interpreters. Further, this study indicates that hearing impaired students have cordial relations with their class fellows and other hearing students. It verified the vision of Thomas (1997) who explained inclusion as a viewpoint of acceptance and love, presenting framework with which all students are valued and provided equal opportunities.

Another major finding of the study is that students with hearing impairment are not encouraged to participate in social activities, which is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Navin & Thousand (1987) who propound that the hearing students hurt the hearing impaired students and are hesitant to include them in school activities and games. Another surprising finding of the study is that there are cordial relations between students with and without hearing impairment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of findings mentioned above:

- First and foremost important thing is the appointment of at least one sign language interpreter in the Department of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan and in any other institution where students with hearing impairment are studying.
- As teachers are not proficient in using sign language, they should be encouraged to learn sign language with the help of students with hearing impairment, their colleagues and above all by attending training workshops and refresher courses on sign language.
- The teachers should exhibit devotion and dedication in performing their duties regarding students with hearing impairment and try to give additional time to these students in and out of the classrooms.
- The teachers should provide copies of lecture notes, handouts, course contents and reference lists in advance so that they may go through the material well in time.
- The teachers of the deaf students should show some flexibility in using assessment procedures

according to the needs of deaf students and stated course objectives.

- The sign language interpreters can be allowed to view the course contents, lecture notes etc beforehand so that they could have an intensive reading of this material and may interpret it to students with hearing impairment competently.
- The concept of inclusive education should be incorporated in the curriculum of all teacher training institutes and colleges of education.
- All institution dealing with higher education should establish a Disability Friendly Centre (DFC) where every student with special needs may get registered at the time of admission so that he could claim for adequate support services during the course of his studies.

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