

Background & Purpose

Background:

- Understanding how language develops in children who are learning two languages can provide a better understanding of language development in general.
- There is an abundant amount of research regarding language skills of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (d/hh); however, it is unclear if researchers are using a similar definition when describing the characteristics of bimodal/bilingualism.
- Bimodal bilingualism is the use of both an oral language and a sign language, which in the U.S. often includes the ability to perceive and produce both American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken and/or written English.

Purpose:

- The purpose of this study was to examine if there is a consistent operational definition of bimodal bilingualism, specifically English and ASL within scholarly journals related to the field of Deaf Education.

Methods & Procedures

Methods:

- A content review was conducted on what is known about bimodal/bilingualism in the discipline of Deaf Education
- Data was gathered from the CINAHL Complete Database, accessed through the University of Arkansas Library.
- Articles were retrieved from three journals: American Annals of the Deaf, Deafness and Education International, and Journal of Deaf Education and Deaf Studies.
- The search terms used for each journal were as follows: 1) "Bilingual AND Bilingualism", 2) "Spoken English AND American Sign Language", 3) "Bilingual OR Bilingualism AND Deaf", 4) "Bilingual OR Bilingualism AND Deaf AND Bimodal", 5) "Bilingual OR Bilingualism AND Bimodal."

Procedures:

- Exclusionary and inclusionary criteria were developed to further narrow the search results.

Results

Results:

- The final results yielded 338 articles within the three journals, with 19 of those articles meeting the inclusionary criteria.
- 318 were excluded due to the following reasons: age groups not within our criteria, languages were not spoken English and ASL, articles published before 2000, participants were hearing, obituaries and book reviews, lack of empirical data or review of empirical data, and lastly, if the article focused on a topic not relevant for this study.

Search Terms Results



Inclusionary/Exclusionary Criteria

Inclusionary Criteria

- Participants aged 0-21
- Peer-reviewed articles
- Articles published after 2000
- Empirical evidence/data
- Bimodal/bilingualism referring to ASL/English

Exclusionary Criteria

- Not focused on participants 0-21
- Articles not peer-reviewed
- Articles published before 2000
- Lack of empirical data
- Articles referring to bimodal/bilingualism not referring to ASL/English
- Book reviews
- Articles with participants who had additional disabilities present
- Obituaries

Discussion & Conclusions

Discussion:

- This content review yields knowledge gathered on the consistency of the term bimodal/bilingual when used to describe the language skills of Deaf children within Deaf Education journals since 2000.
- It was found that while all the articles consistently used the term bimodal/bilingualism to describe English and ASL as languages, there is variability in the overall use of the term, with some articles not providing an explicit operational definition within the text.
- Research within this field of study is rapidly developing, which makes it ever more important to establish an operational definition of bimodal/bilingualism. Thus, aiding in the reliability and validity of various articles with similar research topics and designs.

Limitations:

- Challenges arose when there was not a direct definition provided, which resulted in piecing together a definition from various parts of the article.
- Inconsistencies related to fluency of ASL/spoken English and what level of fluency one must possess to be classified as bimodal/bilingual.
- A lack of description of the term "modality" and how it relates to bimodal/bilingual.
- Determining a specific term to refer to bimodal/bilingualism. There are various terms used in place of bimodal/bilingual, such as "bi/bi," "bilingual/bicultural," and "Deaf multilingual learners."

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