Comparison of Sign Language Skill and Academic Achievement of Deaf Students in Special and Inclusive Primary Schools of South Nation Nationalities People Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to examine the sign language and academic achievement of deaf students in special and inclusive primary schools of Southern Ethiopia. The study used a mixed-method to collect varied data. The study contained Signed Amharic and English skill tasks, questionnaire, 8th-grade Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination results, classroom observation, and interviews. For quantitative (n=70) deaf students and for qualitative data collection, 16 participants were involved. The finding revealed that the limitation of sign language is a problem in signing and academic achievements. This displays that schools are not linguistically rich to enable sign language achievement for deaf students. Moreover, the finding revealed that the contribution of Total Communication in the growth of natural sign language for deaf students was unsatisfactory. The results also indicated that special schools of deaf students performed better sign language skills and academic achievement than inclusive schools. In addition, the findings revealed that high signed skill group showed higher academic achievement than the low skill group. This displayed that sign language skill is highly associated with academic achievement. In addition, to qualify deaf students in sign language and academics, teacher institutions must produce competent teachers on how to teach deaf students with sign language and literacy skills.
Keywords : academic achievement, inclusive school, sign language, signed Amharic, signed English, special school, total communication