

Bilingual Books in British Sign Language and English: The Development of E-Book

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Abstract : For some deaf children, reading books can be a challenge. Frank Barnes School (FBS) provides guided reading time with Teachers of the Deaf, in which they read books with deaf children using a bilingual approach. The vocabulary and context of the story is explained to deaf children in BSL so they develop skills bridging English and BSL languages. However, the success of this practice is only achieved if the person is fluent in both languages. FBS piloted a scheme to convert an Oxford Reading Tree (ORT) book into an e-book that can be read using tablets. Deaf readers at FBS have access to both languages (BSL and English) during lessons and outside the classroom. The pupils receive guided reading sessions with a Teacher of the Deaf every morning, these one to one sessions give pupils the opportunity to learn how to bridge both languages e.g. how to translate English to BSL and vice versa. Generally, due to our pupils' lack of access to incidental learning, gaining new information about the world around them is limited. This highlights the importance of quality time to scaffold their language development. In some cases, there is a shortfall of parental support at home due to poor communication skills or an unawareness of how to interact with deaf children. Some families have a limited knowledge of sign language or simply don't have the required learning environment and strategies needed for language development with deaf children. As the majority of our pupils' preferred language is BSL we use that to teach reading and writing English. If this is not mirrored at home, there is limited opportunity for joint reading sessions. Development of the e-Book required planning and technical development. The overall production took time as video footage needed to be shot and then edited individually for each page. There were various technical considerations such as having an appropriate background colour so not to draw attention away from the signer. Appointing a signer with the required high level of BSL was essential. The language and pace of the sign language was an important consideration as it was required to match the age and reading level of the book. When translating English text to BSL, careful consideration was given to the nonlinear nature of BSL and the differences in language structure and syntax. The e-book was produced using Apple's 'iBook Author' software which allowed video footage of the signer to be embedded on pages opposite the text and illustration. This enabled BSL translation of the content of the text and inferences of the story. An interpreter was used to directly 'voice over' the signer rather than the actual text. The aim behind the structure and layout of the e-book is to allow parents to 'read' with their deaf child which helps to develop both languages. From observations, the use of e-books has given pupils confidence and motivation with their reading, developing skills bridging both BSL and English languages and more effective reading time with parents.

Keywords : bilingual book, e-book, BSL and English, bilingual e-book

Conference Title : ICEDHI 2018 : International Conference on Education of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : June 25-26, 2018