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The effectiveness of using the *Colourful Semantics* approach to support language development with children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing

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ABSTRACT

The lack of early identification, suboptimal language stimulation and limited remedial services in Sri Lanka for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing place them at-risk of language delay. The reality for many preschool and primary school children entering formal education in Sri Lanka is a language delay in spoken language and/or sign language compared to their age-matched hearing peers. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Colourful Semantics* approach as a whole-class language enrichment programme to develop the use and responses to target wh questions. Thirty primary school children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing between the ages of five-ten years were included. The programme was offered once a week for 12 weeks through the class teacher. Individual pre- and post-language measures and statistical analyses were undertaken on receptive knowledge and expressive use of the target wh questions using a picture naming task and tasks based on three local children's story books. A statistically significant improvement was observed in the understanding of target wh questions post-intervention by all the children. There was also a positive change in the responses to the target wh questions by all the children post-intervention with many combining signs or spoken words with signs. The *Colourful Semantics* approach has potential as a whole-class language-teaching approach to strengthen the understanding and use of wh question forms. This study emphasizes the benefits of collaborative partnerships between speech and language therapists and teachers in delivering intervention particularly in resource-limited contexts.

KEYWORDS

Deaf; children; language delay; Sri Lankan sign language; Colourful Semantics

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