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**Supporting effective working relationships in mainstream classrooms: The role of the teaching assistant**


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Aims of the presentation

- The role of the TA
  - supporting deaf students' learning
  - mainstream secondary classroom
- Evidence from a larger study
- Proposes a new model for the deployment of TAs working with deaf students



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What is a deaf student?

Who is/are the deaf child/children?




- **Any level** of hearing loss that affects the ability to **hear spoken language in any setting**
- In 2015 at least 49,000 in the UK
- 86% educated in mainstream settings (CRIDE 2015)
- Teacher of the deaf
- Teaching assistant support




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What is a teaching assistant?


- An educational practitioner, excluding qualified teachers, who supports teaching and learning in the classroom
- Includes individuals with particular skills and knowledge to support specific students




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Role of the TA


- Recent scrutiny of the TA role
- Direct support for the student
  - Pedagogical role
  - Non pedagogical role
  - Intervention studies
  - Impact on independence/independent learning skills

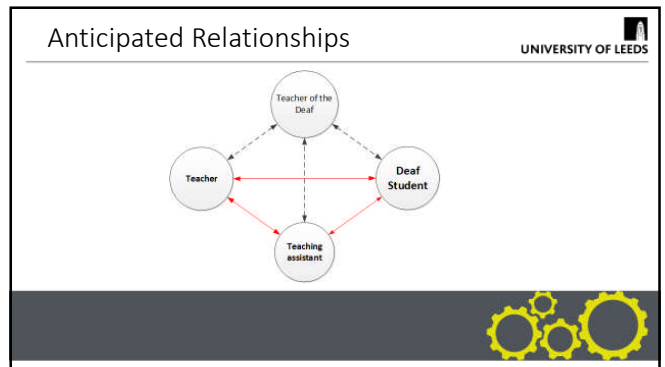
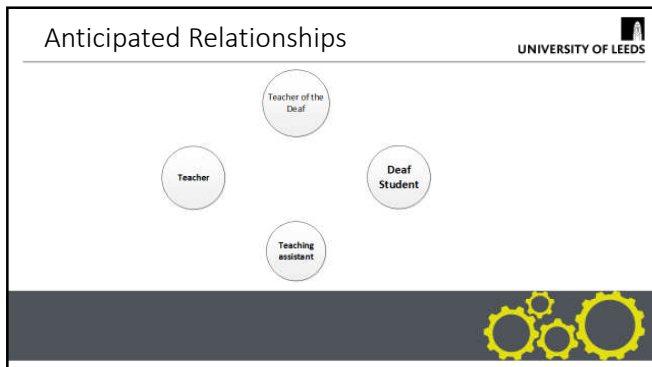


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However limited research

- Specific groups of students identified with SEND, such as deaf learners
- Secondary classrooms
- TA perspective
- Potential valuable perspective which can inform our understanding of classroom practice





### Research Questions

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- What is the nature of the relationships between the teacher, TA, ToD and deaf student in a mainstream setting?
- How does the collaboration between the mainstream teacher, TA and ToD influence the learning experience of the deaf student?

### Methodology

Data Group	Consultancy Group	Reference Group
6 TAs	4 TAs	7 deaf students
		5 mainstream teachers
		3 teachers of the deaf

The Teaching Assistants had:

- 40+ years' experience supporting deaf students in mainstream settings
- 7 schools
- 4 local authorities

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### Data and analysis

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Core Data		Reference Data
Data Group	Consultancy Group	Reference Group
Focus Group discussions' transcripts	(Review of Focus Group transcripts)	Semi-structured interview transcripts from Teachers, Students and Teachers of the Deaf
Individual interview transcripts		
Feedback questionnaires responses		

Analysis four incremental stages

- Initial interpretation during the iterative cycles validated by the Consultancy Group
- identification of data related to learning experiences and challenges encountered by deaf students
- coding using Illeris' (2007) Comprehensive Framework Learning adapted for Deaf Learners (Salter 2015)
- thematic analysis Rabiee's (2004) framework

### 1. Mediated learning experience

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- TAs frequently provided a mediated learning experience for deaf students
  - ie presented and therefore reinterpreted lesson content to the deaf student rather than the student engaging directly with the teacher
  - "So that was ... working through with him to show that actually doubling it was completely wrong." TA5
  - "after the lesson you'd go through everything make sure they've understood" TA2

## Confirmed by the teachers



- *"To explain again, to reiterate what I have said in case they've not heard it the first time and just to clear up any misconceptions" T2*
- *"you can leave them [the deaf student], ... because they've got support" T4*



## 2. Specialist knowledge in the classroom



- The TAs were explicit in their belief that mainstream teachers were frequently unaware of the particular challenges deaf students encountered.

*'This project has given me greater insight into the deaf student, I feel this would be beneficial to mainstream teachers and SLT to give them a greater awareness, so they can address the issues that these students face daily' (TA7,FQ)*



## Specialist knowledge in the classroom



- Lack of knowledge and understanding of the impact of deafness on learning
  - Use of technology
  - *"I think some teachers are under the assumption that once the child had his hearing aids in that's it, this child can hear everything"TA4*
  - Management of the classroom environment



## Specialist knowledge in the classroom



- Use of Humour

*"...when they [the deaf students] find out they've missed out on a joke the rest of the class has had a giggle at - and the teacher has laughed - that completely puts them that far back... "Oh Miss I missed out on that!"... that can result in bad behaviour right away... some deaf children do get offended if somebody's laughing and they don't know what they're laughing at" TA2*



## 3. Teachers relationship with the students



- TAs described that their own presence frequently led to a particular relationship:
  - *"Yes they understand you more because they've got this relationship with you they can ask you three times they can't ask the teacher again and again" TA6*
  - *"They find us more approachable than some teachers. Yes they find it easier to talk to us" TA3*
- Limiting teachers' engagement with deaf students
- Limiting the opportunity to develop knowledge of the student



## 4. ToD input



- Limited input from a specialist Teacher of the Deaf
  - To TA practice
  - To mainstream teachers practice
  - To the culture and interaction in the classroom

*"Without her I wouldn't be able to do some of the things that I can do" TA6*

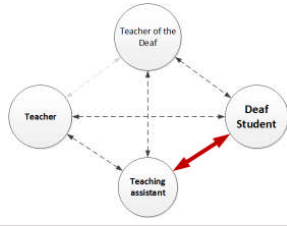


..and in a busy classroom...



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..the actual relationships identified



- Mediated learning experience
- Teacher engagement with deaf student
- Specialist knowledge
- Limited input from ToD

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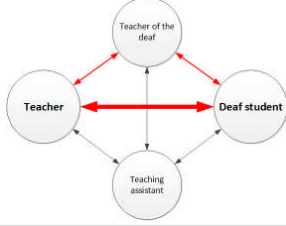
In the classroom

For the mainstream teacher to develop clear expectations of the deaf pupil:

- you need knowledge of the pupil
  - But the TA is there...
- You need an understanding of the specialist knowledge to develop appropriate expectations
  - But the ToD is not there (very often)...

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To facilitate effective collaborative practice



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