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Strategies Used in Teaching English Composition to Learners with Hearing Impairment in Nyanza

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Abstract
The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E) and Mock results in the last five years show that learners with hearing impairment perform poorly in English compared to their hearing counterparts in shools in Nyanza Province. A summary of the national examination scores in 2009 and 2010 put English composition scores at 40.48% and 42.70% respectively. The purpose of this study was to establish strategies used in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment in Nyanza Province. A descriptive survey design was used in this study. A sample of 61 learners and 4 teachers of English were used in this study. Data was collected using lesson observation schedules and questionnaires. Results of this study indicate that repetition, discussion, questioning, guided writing and demonstration were the most frequently used strategies in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairments. However, group work, peer-teaching, story-signing, cooperative teaching; and dramatization were the least used strategies. These findings are important since they reveal that the most effective strategies such as peer teaching cooperative teaching and dramatization are least used with learners who are deaf and this may be the cause of poor performance in English writing composition.

Keywords: teaching strategies, English composition, learners, hearing impairment, Nyanza province.

INTRODUCTION

English composition writing is an important part of the English curriculum in Primary Schools in Kenya. There are four language skills taught in the English syllabus, namely; listening (or reception of signed information), speaking (or production of signs), reading and writing. The objective of the primary English curriculum expects all pupils to acquire sufficient command of English in spoken and written forms to enable them to communicate fluently, independently and accurately in everyday life. Pupils are also expected to acquire writing skills to be able to express own ideas meaningfully and legibly in English, to convey information and to communicate effectively. Both secondary and primary school English syllabi have been adapted to cater for learners with hearing impairment. (KIE, 2002; 2004).

Research has shown that language development is important when considering factors that are important in teaching children with hearing impairment because language development plays an important role in a child's literacy learning (Sandra, 2005). Children with hearing impairment acquire language in different ways depending on the home environment. Children with hearing impairment need linguistically rich environments in order to acquire sign languages. Most children with hearing impairment (95%) have got hearing parents and are therefore language deprived whether the language is spoken or signed until they start school leading to a delay in language development. The early development of language enables a child to develop effective and orderly reasoning which is important in composition writing. (Adoyo, 2008)

In a study by Burman, Nunes, and Evans (2006), it was noted that children with congenital-profound hearing impairment whose First Language (L_1) is British Sign Language (BSL) need to be literate to communicate effectively in a hearing society. Burman, Nunes and Evans hold that both spelling and writing skills of such children can be limited to an extent that no assessment method could adequately appraise their competence. There is need therefore for instruments to be created that could aid assessment to support teachers in setting objective for their learners with hearing impairment's writing development. In addition, the choice of teaching strategies and availability of resources such as teacher aides, nursery aides, interpreters, note-takers and audio-technicians have an effect on how much learning takes place (Petty, 2004; Otieno, 2010). Petty (2004) suggests a wide range of strategies from which a teacher can choose: demonstration, discussion, questioning, group work, games, role play and drama, shared reading and guided discovery. This study proposed to find out the strategies used in teaching English composition writing to class seven learners with hearing impairment.

In a study on 'Deaf Ways of Writing Narratives', Koutsoubou (2004) reported that the use of sign language in the writing process had positive effects only on specific groups of learners with hearing impairment and on specific aspects of writing. Learners with hearing impairment were divided into groups according to different abilities in sign language and written Greek. Both groups were presented with sign language video stimuli and directed composition writing from picture stimuli. It was realized that picture stimuli benefited others while others benefited more from sign language video stimuli. This indicates that learners with hearing impairment have individual differences among themselves and in order to meet the need of every child, the teacher must diversify teaching strategies

Another study (Hedge, 2005) suggests three main teaching methods that can be used in teaching English composition writing and the activities involved. These are; shared teaching and learning which involves exchanging of letters, sharing journals; cooperative teaching and learning which involves, keeping a class journal, making a class magazine, working together on a project, sharing cultural information and reading together; finally role play which Hedge says involves news casting and peer teaching. These methods are discussed with reference to teaching hearing learners but there is no indication that they have been successfully used to teach English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Other strategies suggested as effective in teaching and learning English composition writing are shared reading and scaffolding writing (Trupe, 2001; Hedge, 2005; Medwell, Coates, Wray, Griffiths, & Minns, 2006).

According to Gathumbi and Masembe (2005), there are many strategies a teacher can choose from in teaching English composition writing namely; field trips, hands on activities, songs, project work, group work, pair work, story-telling, discussions, poems, debates and presentation. However, they do not specify which of these strategies is applicable to teaching of English composition writing to learners with hearing impairment.

Kenya Deaf Resource Centre (KDRC) (2009) identifies five strategies that may be used in teaching learners with hearing impairment; language experience, dialogue journal, shared writing, guided writing and writers workshop. In addition to this, KDRC also suggests that repetition, increased exposure to written English and translation would help improve the composition writing skills of learners with hearing impairment. This study intends to find out strategies used in teaching English composition to class seven learners with hearing impairment in Nyanza Province.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey was used in this study to seek opinions and find out facts on the strategies used in teaching English composition writing to class seven learners with hearing impairment. The study was carried out in Nyanza and involved 69 pupils of class seven with hearing impairment and 5 teachers of English. Saturated sampling technique was used to select a population of 61 pupils and 4 teachers. Data was collected through lesson observation schedules and questionnaires.

Reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study with similar population who did not form part of the study. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data from lesson observation schedules was transcribed and reported.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to establish the strategies used in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment in Nyanza province. The study carried out lesson observation using observation schedules with a pre-determined list of eleven strategies. There were four classrooms in which lesson observation was carried out two times each on different occasions. The classrooms observed are hereby coded as 1, 2, 3and 4.

In classroom 1 it was observed that the most used strategies in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairments were; discussion, guided writing, questioning and repetition. The least used strategies in this classroom were; demonstration, peer teaching, cooperative teaching, group work, story signing, dramatization and debate. Therefore, the most used strategies in classroom 1 were comparatively fewer than the least used.

In classroom 2, the most used strategies were; discussion, demonstration, guided writing, questioning and repetition. However, peer teaching, cooperative teaching, group work, story signing, dramatization and debate, were the least used strategies.

In classroom 3 the most used strategies were; demonstration, guided writing and repetition while discussion, peer teaching, cooperative teaching, group work, questioning, story signing, dramatization and debate were the least used strategies.

In classroom 4, discussion, guided writing, questioning, story signing and repetition were the most used strategies while demonstration, peer teaching, cooperative teaching, group work,

dramatization and debate were the least used strategies

The results from lesson observation schedules show that in all the four classes observed, repetition and guided writing strategies were the most used. There were three classes in which questioning and discussion were the most used strategies. Demonstration was the most used strategy in two of the classes observed while story signing strategy was the most used in only one of the classes observed. The strategies that were observed as the least used in all the four classes were; group work, debates, peer teaching, cooperative teaching and dramatization. However, demonstration was the least used strategy in classroom 1 and 4, while story signing was least used in classroom 1, 2 and 3. These results indicate that most teachers confine themselves to repetition, guided writing, questioning and discussion strategies in teaching composition to learners with hearing impairment at the expense of other strategies. Therefore, this study concluded that there was lack of diversity in the choice of teaching strategies used in teaching English composition writing to learners with hearing impairment in Nyanza Province.

The respondents were provided with questionnaires seeking to establish which strategies were used in teaching English composition to class seven learners with hearing impairment. The strategies considered in the questionnaires included: discussion, demonstration, dramatization, guided writing, questioning, debates, group work, peer teaching, repetition, story signing and co-operative teaching. Results are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

Responses were based on a five point likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5; Agree (A) = 4; Undecided (U) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

Table 1; Respondents' rating on the use of discussion strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	17 (27.87)		34 (55.74)		5 (8.19)		1 (1.63)		4 (6.56)		61 (100)	
Teachers	2 (50)		1 (25)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		4 (100)	

From Table 1 both learners and teachers indicated that discussion was widely used in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Thirty four 34 (55.74%) of the learners agreed and another seventeen 17 (27.87%) strongly agreed that teachers used discussion in teaching English composition. Four 4 (6.56%) learners strongly disagreed and only one 1 (1.63%) disagreed that discussion was used to teach English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Among the teachers, 2 (50%) strongly agreed while 1 (25%) agreed they use discussion in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Results from Table 1 indicate that discussion was a commonly used strategy in teaching English composition thus learners had chances to express themselves freely and build their confidence. This study supports that of Petty (2004), that learners had chances to express their own ideas. These results are further supported by Gichuba, Opatsa & Nguchu (2009) who stated that discussion helps learners to develop their language and confidence because it is carried out in a free and relaxed atmosphere.

Demonstration Strategy

In order to establish whether demonstration strategy was used, respondents were asked to state whether demonstration was used in teaching English composition. Table 2 summarizes the response

Table 2: Respondents rating on the use of demonstration teaching strategy

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	30 (49.18)		18 (29.51)		2 (3.28)		7 (11.48)		4 (6.56)		61 (100)	
Teachers	2 (50)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		4 (100)	

Table 2 shows that a majority of learners, 30 (49.18%) strongly agreed while 18 (29.51%) agreed that demonstration was used by their teachers in the English composition lessons. There were 7 (11.48%) learners who disagreed while 4 (6.56%) strongly disagreed that teachers used demonstration. and 2 (3.28%) of the learners were undecided as to whether demonstration was used. Among the teachers, 2 (50%) strongly agreed and 1 (25%) agreed that demonstration was one of the strategies they used in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Only 1 (25%) teacher did not agree that he used demonstration in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. The results from this Table indicate that demonstration was used by most of the teachers. These results are further support the studies by Petty (2004) and Ngaroga (2005) who found out that demonstration gives learners opportunities to practice what they have seen.

Dramatization Strategy

Respondents were asked whether dramatization was used in teaching English composition. Responses are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Respondents view on dramatization strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	11 (18.09)		6 (9.84)		9 (14.75)		17 (27.87)		18 (29.51)		61 (100)	
Teachers	1 (25)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		2 (50)		0 (0.0)		4 (100)	

Table 3 indicates that eighteen learners 18 (29.51%) strongly disagreed and seventeen 17 (27.87%) disagreed that teachers used dramatization as a strategy in teaching English composition. Eleven 11 (18.09%) of the learners strongly agreed, 9 (14.75%) were unsure, while 6 (9.84%) agreed that their teachers used dramatization. However, among the teachers, 1 (25%) strongly agreed and another one 1 (25%) agreed to using dramatization while the other 2 (50%) disagreed that they used dramatization as a teaching strategy. These results suggest that dramatization was used by some teachers to teach English composition. The results in this study differ from the findings of Petty (2004) who found out that dramatization helps to raise learners self-esteem and self-confidence, encourages empathetic understanding, and identification.

Peer Teaching Strategy

Learners and teachers were asked if peer tutoring was used in their classes and results are presented in Table 4

Table 4: Respondents rating on peer teaching strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	2 (3.28)		5 (8.19)		15 (24.59)		14 (22.95)		25 (40.98)		61 (100)	
Teachers	1 (25)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		1 (25)		2 (50)		4 (100)	

Table 4 shows that peer teaching was rarely used as a strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Twenty five 25 (40.98%) learners strongly disagreed while fifteen 15 (24.59%) were undecided and fourteen 14 (22.95%) disagreed that teachers used peer teaching strategy. Only 5 (8.19%) of the learners agreed and 2 (3.28%) strongly agreed that peer teaching was used in their lessons. Among the teachers 2 (50%) strongly disagreed, one 1 (25%) teacher disagreed and another one 1 (25%) strongly agreed they used peer teaching in English composition lessons. The results in this table indicate that most of the teachers did not use peer teaching strategy.

Cooperative teaching Strategy

Learners and teachers were asked to state whether co-operative teaching strategy was used in class during teaching and the results are summarized in Table 5

Table 5: Respondents rating on cooperative teaching strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	24 (39.34)		18 (29.51)		8 (13.11)		4 (6.56)		7 (11.48)		61 (100)	
Teachers	3 (75)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		4 (100)	

Table 5 shows that twenty four 24 (39.34%) learners strongly agreed and eighteen 18 (29.51%) agreed that their teachers used cooperative teaching strategy, while all the teachers' responses were positive; 3 (75%) strongly agreed and 1 (25%) agreed that they used cooperative teaching in English composition lessons. However, eight 8 (13.11%) of the learners were undecided, seven 7 (11.48%) strongly disagreed and another 4 (6.56%) disagreed that their teachers used cooperative teaching. The findings from this Table indicate that co-operative teaching was widely used by teachers. The results from Table 5 are supported by Hedge (2005) who suggested that

cooperative teaching is one of the strategies used in teaching English composition writing.

Guided writing Strategy

While, learners were asked to state whether their teacher used guided writing strategy in teaching English composition, teachers were asked to indicate whether they used guided writing strategy. Results are presented in Table 6

Table 6: Respondents rating on guided writing strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	27 (44.26)		18 (29.51)		4 (6.56)		9 (14.75)		3 (4.92)		61 (100)	
Teachers	4 (100)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		4(100)	

Table 6 indicates that many learners 27 (44.26%) strongly agreed and 18 (29.51%) agreed that guided writing was used for teaching and learning English composition. This was recorded against 9 (14.75%) learners who disagreed, 4 (6.56%) who were undecided and 3 (4.92%) who strongly disagreed. However, among the teachers all the 4 (100%) strongly agreed to the use of guided writing. Results from Table 6 indicate that guided writing was used regularly. Both the teachers and the learners supported this view.

Groupwork Strategy

The learners were asked to indicate if they found it less challenging writing compositions in groups. The teachers were asked whether they liked using groupwork teaching strategy. Responses are presented in Table 7

Table 7: Respondents view on groupwork strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	27 (44.26)		17 (27.87)		10 (16.39)		4 (6.56)		3 (4.92)		61 (100)	
Teachers	0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		3 (75)		4 (100)	

Table 7 shows that some learners preferred working in groups 27 (42.19%) strongly agreed with the use of groupwork while 17(27.87%) agreed. The Table also shows that there were 10 (16.39%) learners who were undecided, 4 (6.56%) who disagreed, 3 (4.92%) who strongly disagreed. Among the teachers, 3 (75%) strongly disagreed while 1 (25) was undecided indicating that a majority of the teachers did not employ groupwork as a strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. According to Petty (2004), groupwork is active and gives learners a chance to use methods, principles and vocabularies that they are being taught. She adds that, in a group, shy learners get a chance to participate in the learning process and build self confidence. Groupwork also has a built-in self-check and peer-tutoring aspect where errors in understanding are ironed out in a very supportive atmosphere. Therefore, Petty (2004) negates the results in this Table because though most learners 27 (44.26%) strongly agreed and 17(27.87%) agreed that it would be less challenging if they wrote compositions in groups, most of the teachers 3 (75%) admitted they did not use groupwork and 1 (25%) of the teachers were undecided. Gathumbi and Masembe (2005) also negate the results in this Table since, although they cite groupwork as one of the strategies of teaching English composition that teachers of hearing learners can choose from, teachers tended to avoid using it. Therefore, lack of use of groupwork teaching strategy contributed to the challenges learners with hearing impairment faced in English composition writing to a large extent

Questioning Strategy

According to K.I.E. (2006), questioning is a strategy in which the teacher involves the learners in the learning process by use of a series of questions that

require specific information on a particular topic or test the learners' knowledge on a specific topic. Questioning is also used to provoke critical thinking, make learning interesting and get immediate feedback (Petty, 2004). Learners are allowed to ask questions in the process of learning. There are two types of questions; open-ended and close-ended. The teacher can use both in teaching. Questions use the words who? What? How? Where? Why? and when? often (Gichuba, Opatsa & Nguchu, 2009). Learners were asked to indicate whether questioning was used by their English composition teacher while the teachers were asked to state whether they used questioning as a teaching strategy. Their responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Respondents rating on questioning strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	35 (55.38)		15 (24.59)		1 (1.63)		5 (8.19)		5 (8.19)		61 (100)	
Teachers	3 (75)		1 (25)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		4 (100)	

Table 8 shows that both learners and teachers agreed that questioning was used. Among the teachers 3 (75%) strongly agreed that they used questioning as a teaching strategy and were supported by 35 (55.38%) of the learners who indicated that they strongly agreed and 15 (24.59%) who agreed. Five 5 (8.19%)

strongly disagreed and another 5 (8.19%) disagreed that questioning was used as a teaching strategy. Only one 1 (1.63%) of the learners was undecided. Studies by Petty (2004) and Gichuba, Opatsa and Nguchu (2009) and K.I.E. (2006), support the results in Table 8 which indicate that questioning was used as a strategy to teach English composition by all the teachers. Both teachers and learners agreed that questioning was used as a teaching strategy to teach English composition thus minimizing the challenges faced by learners with hearing impairment since it is a strategy that is relevant at all levels of learning.

Story Signing/Story Telling Strategy

In story signing strategy the teacher signs a story he wants the learners to write as the learners watch. Alternatively, the teacher may sign a story related to what he wants learners to write on or ask learners to sign a story they know on a given topic. This is a strategy directly transferred from story telling strategy used with hearing learners (Gichuba, Opatsa and Nguchu, 2009). Learners are usually given time to write a story after this learning experience. Both teachers and learners were asked to indicate whether they preferred story signing as a strategy for teaching English composition. Table 9 presents the results

Table 9: Respondents rating on story Signing/Telling strategy of teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	20 (32.79)		21 (34.43)		0 (0.0)		11 (18.03)		9 (14.75)		61(100)	
Teachers	1 (25)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		2 (50)		1 (25)		4 (100)	

Table 9 shows that there were divergent views among the learners and the teachers concerning story signing as a strategy for teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment. Whereas 21 (34.43%) agreed and 20 (32.79%) of the learners strongly agreed, there were 11 (18.03%) who disagreed and 9 (14.75%) learners who strongly disagreed that story signing was used in teaching English composition. On the contrary, only one (25%) of the teachers strongly agreed to using story signing strategy. Other teachers either disagreed 2 (50%) or strongly disagreed 1 (25%). The results from Table 9 indicate that though most learners preferred the use of story signing, a majority of the teachers did not favor it as 2 (50%) disagreed and 1 (25%) strongly disagreed. The study by Gichuba, Opatsa and Nguchu (2009) negate the results in this Table which indicate that teachers did not use story signing strategy in teaching English composition. The reason for the divergent views on story signing was as a result of the question requiring respondents to state their preference. Since a large number of learners, 21 (34.43%) who agreed and 20 (32.79%) who strongly agreed preferred the use of story signing, the choice of the teachers not to use it could result in challenges learners face in English composition writing.

Repetition Strategy

Learners were asked to state whether their teacher used repetition in teaching English composition. Teachers were asked to state whether they used repetition in teaching English composition. Results are summarized in Table 10

Table 10: Respondents rating on the use of repetition strategy in teaching English composition to learners with hearing impairment

Respondents	SA		A		U		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Learners	19 (31.15)		18 (29.51)		12 (19.67)		10 (16.39)		2 (3.28)		61(100)	
Teachers	4 (100)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)		4 (100)	

Table 10 shows that repetition is one of the most applied strategies in teaching English composition to class seven learners with hearing impairment. There were 19 (31.15%) learners who strongly agreed that it was used in composition teaching and 18 (29.51%) agreed. There were 12 (19.67%) learners who were undecided, 10 (16.39%) who disagreed, 2 (3.28%) who strongly disagreed that repetition strategy was used and another 3 (4.92%) whose responses were invalid. Among the teachers all 4 (100%) strongly agreed that they used repetition. The results from this table indicate that repetition as a teaching strategy is widely used in teaching composition to class seven learners with hearing impairment. The positive response of both learners 19 (31.15%) learners who strongly agreed and 18 (29.51%) agreed teachers 4 (100%) showed that repetition had minimal contribution to challenges faced by learners with hearing impairment. Longman (2003) supports the results of this Table since they reveal that repetition teaching strategy was used thus enhancing mastery of concepts and providing learners with an opportunity to restate what the teacher had taught in order to learn it or to show they had learnt.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to establish the strategies used in teaching English composition to class seven learners with hearing impairment. Strategies used in teaching English composition were considered in this study because they are the means through which both the learner and the teacher interact in the learning/teaching process. Strategies used for teaching were also important to consider

because learners with hearing impairment may not benefit from some of the strategies used with hearing learners. Through lesson observation schedules and questionnaires, this study established that teachers used discussion, repetition, demonstration and guided writing more than other strategies such as groupwork, story signing, peer teaching, cooperative teaching, debates and dramatization. This study also established that there were strategies which were preferred by the learners but not the teachers. For instance story signing was preferred among the learners but not among the teachers. Though many studies (Gathumbi and Masembe, 2005; Hedge, 2005; Shirfin and Polania, 2007 & Trupe, 2001) suggested a variety of strategies that could be used in teaching and learning English composition writing, the results of this study revealed that teachers used only a few of these strategies in the classroom situation

This study established that the teaching strategies used by teachers in teaching English composition were limited to discussion, repetition, cooperative teaching and guided writing. Therefore, limited choice of teaching strategies could lead to inadequate delivery of the curriculum to a diversity of learners with hearing impairment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Teachers of learners with hearing impairment relied more on the use of traditional strategies such as; discussion, guided writing, repetition and questioning. Demonstration and story signing were only used to a small extent. Although many learners preferred story signing, it was not used by many teachers. Dramatization, group work and peer teaching were the least used strategies in teaching English composition writing, although these strategies are normally effective with learners who are hearing impaired. It is clear from these results that teachers sometimes choose strategies which are different from learners' preference contributing to low performance in learning English composition. This study is important for the teachers and curriculum developers because, it demonstrates that not all the strategies they use or recommend are necessarily appropriate to those with hearing impairments.

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