## TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED DURING ENGLISH LESSONS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH

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#### **ABSTRACT**

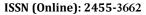
Students with Hearing Impairment (HI) face various implications in the process of learning as a result of the hearing loss. The academic performance of these students who have hearing loss or have ability to only perceive slight sound is affected greatly. These students with HI have continued to perform below average in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). The objective of this study was to find out the teaching and learning strategies employed in teaching and learning English and their implications on the academic performance. The study adopted multiple case study design within a qualitative approach. The study was conducted in the four special secondary schools for the deaf in Nyanza region of Kenya with a sample size of 48 participants. The sample size comprised 33 form 3 students, 7 teachers of English, 4 Curriculum Support Officers and 4 Principals of Secondary Schools for the Deaf. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the four schools while saturated sampling technique was used to select 7 teachers of English. Stratified sampling was used to select 33 Form 3 students. The study employed Indepth interview schedules, focus group discussion guides, Classroom Observation Checklists and the document analysis guide as the research tools for data collection. Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis based on the themes that emerged from the study. The findings of the study indicated that the methods used for instruction during English lessons include note taking, questioning technique, incorporation of ICT, Use of visual aids, dramatization, group discussions, lecturing, singing, use of peer tutoring, team teaching among others. Group discussion and peer tutoring are the preferred approaches of instruction. However, these methods needs close supervision by the teacher. The study recommends a quasi-experimental study approach on the effect of the learning strategies on deaf students' academic performance in English to identify appropriate strategies that can produce a positive outcom

**KEYWORDS:** Students with Hearing Impairment, Sign Language Systems, Teachers of English, Perspectives, Academic Performance, Teaching and Learning Strategies

#### 1.0. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The instructional strategies that teachers plan for their students are determined by their beliefs, perspectives and decisions (Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy & Davis, 2009). According to Dada and Atlanta (2002) teachers' beliefs may not only be associated with teaching practices but also with characteristics exhibited by students such as special educational needs. For instance, Siima (2011) found out that teachers perceived deaf students as slow learners and this influenced their knowledge and of use of methods in teaching reading and writing. Similarly, Ludago (2014) observed that most of the teachers of the deaf in Ethiopia were not energetic and psychologically ready to teach deaf students. Additionally, a positive relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices in the teaching of reading comprehension has been established (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991; Chou, 2008). On the contrary, other studies such as that by Khonamri and Salimi (2010) found no significant correlation between teachers' beliefs on the importance of reading strategies and their classroom practices. Richardson *et al.* (1991), Chou (2008) and Khonamri and Salimi (2010) studies relied on teachers' self-reports on the use of teaching strategies without observing their actual practices. In addition, they did not establish the perspectives of Kenyan teachers on reading comprehension teaching strategies. The current study will employ self-reports and observations to compare teachers' perspectives towards sign systems and their actual classroom practices.

Besides effective teaching strategies, the learning of English necessitates readers to be equipped with a variety of strategies to help them understand what is read (Snow, Sweet, Alvermann, Kamil, & Stricland, 2002). The setbacks of deaf students in reading comprehension have therefore been related to their learning strategies. According to Andrews and Mason (1991) and Strassman (1992) deaf students still experienced difficulties with lower-level skills which delayed the development of independent





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reading strategies such as, self-questioning, activation of prior knowledge, summarization, visualization, prediction, inferencing, monitoring comprehension and the re-reading of difficult sections of a text for understanding. Schirmer (2003) and Strassman (1997) further ascertained that deaf students were less aware when they did not comprehend, lacked awareness of learning strategies and how to use them effectively. These studies were however carried out in countries where English is the first language. Moreover, the sign systems used by deaf students in secondary schools in Kenya in English have not been identified by existing studies. The current study therefore aims at

establishing the sign systems used in special secondary schools for the deaf and their implications on academic performance in English where English is a second language and its acquisition contravenes the linguistic interdependence theory

In Kenya Certificate Secondary Education examinations, students with hearing Impairment perform below average. (KNEC; 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017). This can be confirmed in Table 1.1 which shows the mean scores in English versus KSL for A, B, C, D, E and F secondary schools for the deaf in Kenya for the 5 years, that is, 2017 to 2021

Table 1.1: Kenyan Secondary Schools for the deaf K.C.S.E. English and KSL Mean Scores for the Years 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017

Year	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
Subject/ School	ENG	KSL	ENG	KSL	ENG	KSL	ENG	KSL	ENG	KSL
A	3.0	8.0	2.4	8.6	2.9	9.7	4.1	9.6	3.8	10.8
В	-	-	2.1	8.7	2.0	6.4	2.2	5.6	2.6	8.9
$\mathbf{C}$	2.4	9.7	2.3	8.7	2.4	6.8	3.0	8.9	2.3	8.2
D	1.7	7.93	2.2	8.7	1.8	5.8	2.1	5.6	2.8	8.9
${f E}$	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5	7.5	2.0	7.6
F	1.41	7.9	1.67	8.6	1.47	4.37	1.49	7.6	2.42	6.5
MEAN SCORE	2.4	8.5	2.3	8.7	2.3	7.2	2.8	7.4	2.7	8.9

Source: County Directors of Education (Siaya, Busia, Migori, Bomet, Vihiga, Nandi)- 2022

**NB:** School B had not registered KCSE candidates before the year 2018 School E had not registered KCSE candidates before the year 2020

#### **KEY**

ENG- English, KSL- Kenyan Signed Language,

Special secondary schools for the deaf have been posting a below average record in the results of English in Kenya Certificate Secondary Education examinations. This is depicted in table 1.1. In the years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 out of the mean of 12, students registered mean scores of 2.4, 2.3, 2.3, 2.8 and 2.7 respectively. All these grades are D Minus (D-) (K.N.E.C. results, 2017- 2021). In the Kenyan grading system, these results are regarded below average and may not enable the students to enter courses that are regarded as competitive and marketable. Even if the affirmative action is considered, learners with HI who score such grades may not enter higher institutions of learning like teachers' training colleges. The reason for this low performance is suspected to be associated with the sign system used in classroom.

A check on the performance in the specific areas also showed that the learners with hearing impairment face challenges across the sections that are examined in the English paper. This is evident in Table 1.2 and 1.3 which show English results of Form 4 and Form 3 sub county joint examinations that were conducted in the year 2022.



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Table 1.2. Performance of Form 4 learners with hearing impairment in various sections of the English Paper in various Sub County Joint Evaluation

Tests, in the year 2022

				ests, in the yea	1 2022			
Skill		Reading compreh	ension	Gran	ımar	$\mathbf{W}$	riting	Expressive,
Area/ School								Receptive and Oral Skills
Section	Comprehe nsion	Literary Appreciation	Essays from Set Texts (2)	Grammar	Cloze Test	Functional Writing	Imaginative Writing	
Maximum	25	40	40	15	10	20	20	30
Score								
A	6.17	3.5	2.3	7.17	5.0	6.83	3.5	5.0
В	2.5	1.83	1.73	2.67	1.83	2.83	2.67	1.83
$\mathbf{C}$	3.83	3.17	3.17	2.33	2.5	2.8	3.1	2.5
D	3.33	0.5	2.33	2.67	0.33	5.33	3.33	3.67
$\mathbf{E}$	5.8	3.25	1.7	1.2	2.2	4.2	2.8	8.4
$\mathbf{F}$	4.0	1.145	1.36	0.00	1.43	4.0	2.0	3.72
Average	4.405	2.233	2.098	2.67	2.215	4.332	2.9	4.187

Source: County Directors of Education (Siaya, Busia, Migori, Bomet, Vihiga, Nandi)- 2022

Table 1.3. Performance of Form 3 learners with hearing impairment in various sections of the English Paper in Sub County Joint Evaluation Tests, in the year 2022

Skill Area/ School		Reading compreh		Gran	nmar	W	riting	Expressive,
								Receptive and Oral Skills
Section	Comprehe nsion	Literary Appreciation	Essays from Set Texts (2)	Grammar	Cloze Test	Functional Writing	Imaginative Writing	
Maximum Score	25	40	40	15	10	20	20	30
A	3.5	2.0	1.92	5.3	1.2	3.33	3.3	2.0
В	6.17	3.5	5.0	7.1	2.1	6.83	3.5	5.1
C	6.1	2.67	5.2	8.4	2.6	4.2	2.8	8.4
D	4.0	1.15	1.36	0.00	1.43	4.0	2.0	3.72
${f E}$	6.3	3.3	3.1	8.1	2.2	4.5	4.4	6.8
Average	5.214	2.523	3.316	5.78	1.906	4.572	3.2	5.204

Source: County Directors of Education (Siaya, Busia, Migori, Bomet, Vihiga, Nandi)- 2022



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From tables 1.2 and 1.3, it can be clearly seen that learners with HI perform below average in all English skill areas. In reading comprehension which accounts for 52.2% of all marks in English paper, form 4 students with HI have an average of 2.912 out of the possible 105 while form 3 have an average of 3.684.

#### 2.0. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students with hearing impairment are confronted with various challenges in handling their academic work as a result of their state of having hearing loss. This usually hinders their academic performance hence leading to their underperformance. Reading comprehension, writing, receptive and expressive skills and grammar all account to a high percentage of marks in English. Given that the students with HI have a below average results in these areas yet they account for a high percentage of marks in general, then this may affect their overall performance given that English as a subject, presents service skills that facilitates understanding of all subjects written in English. There are no known studies that have been undertaken regarding strategies used during instruction of English lessons for learners with HI. If any, specifically, it is not well specified which are the most appropriate methods to use in teaching English in special secondary schools for the Hearing Impairment despite the lower average performance in English. This study was therefore necessary to investigate teaching and learning strategies used in classrooms in special secondary schools for learners with Hearing Impairment and their implications on academic performance in English.

#### 3.0. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study objective was to assess the teaching and learning strategies employed in teaching and Learning English in special schools for the deaf and their implications on academic performance

#### 4.0. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted multiple case study design.

#### 5.0. LOCATION OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in secondary schools for the deaf in Nyanza region of Kenya. The Nyanza region consists of the former Nyanza province. The counties in the region are Siaya, Homabay, Migori, Kisii, Nyamira and Kisumu.

#### 6.0. TARGET POPULATION

The target population consisted of Principals of secondary schools for the deaf in Nyanza region, Curriculum Support Officers for SNE, Teachers who are teaching English in secondary schools for the HI and the form three students in secondary schools for the deaf in Nyanza region. Total target population was 111.

#### 7.0. SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND SAMPLE SIZE

The sample was drawn from four special secondary schools for the deaf in Nyanza region. The researcher then used saturated sampling to sample all the four secondary schools for the HI. Purposive sampling was used to sample 4 Curriculum Support Officers for SNE; 4 Principals and 7 English language teachers were selected while Stratified random sampling was used to sample 33 students

#### 8.0. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The study employed interview schedules, focus group discussion guide, Classroom Observation Checklists and the document analysis guide as the research tools for data collection. The interviews were used to get in-depth information from the principals and teachers of English.

#### 9.0. DATA ANALYSIS

This study adopted thematic analysis to generate the findings.

#### 10.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 10.1. STRATEGIES THAT TEACHERS USE IN TEACHING ENGLISH

Teachers of English were asked which teaching strategies they employ in class during English lessons. Some of them reported:

Methods I use are incorporating ICT, projecting, use of teaching aids (ToE 6)

Hmmm... the effective ones are the visual methods and also dramatization. They are better because they are visual. These students respond better to visual things. Anything visual helps a lot. (ToE 4)

I usually use learner centered mostly, that is a lot of presentations, demonstrations, discussions, most of the work are being done by the students (ToE 3)

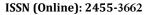
I use visual learning, because learners are sensitive. I love discussion. I love learners to have hands on. Learners to express themselves. Lecturing just a little bit but a lot of it I use learner centered and takes a lot of time. (ToE 5)

Form three students were also asked the approaches that teachers use in class. They mentioned the following approaches as the ones that teachers use in class during English lessons;

Group discussions, projectors, storying (FGD 1) Sometimes the teachers ask questions, if it is hard, then they put us in groups we discuss. For questioning, if there is any hard questions, the students asks the teacher. (FGD 2)

It can be concluded that the methods that teachers use include use of note taking, questioning technique, incorporation of ICT, Use of visual aids, dramatization, group discussions, lecturing and singing.

In regard to the approaches used in teaching, CSO SNE commented,





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Sometimes you can use demonstration or role play. Some students are good in groups, so we arrange them in groups so that the strong ones can work with the weak ones and help them. I have seen students who are deaf explaining something to others and they understand it better to one another. (CSO SNE 3)

On their part, the principals were asked the methods and approaches that Teachers of English use. They reported the following;

Hmm... mostly when I pass around, I see the teachers have put the learners in group discussions as well as lecturing method. (P. 1)

We use lecture method through signing or learning and teaching aids. We also use group discussions. (P. 2)

From lesson observation, it was noted that whilst the teacher had put students in groups for discussion then stepped out of the class shortly to attend to an urgent matter, the students dispersed from the groups and stopped undertaking assignments that they teacher had given them.

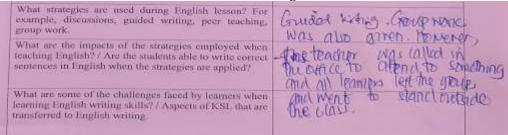


Figure 4.35. A Lesson Observation checklist on how students with HI use Group Work

From figure 4.35 which is was taken from part of the lesson observation, it can be seen that students with HI although they had been given assignment which they were doing in groups with their teacher, once the teacher steeped out, they also stopped discussion

in groups and walked out. They stood out on the verandah and started playing. From other lesson observations, it was noted that teachers used various methods during English lessons.

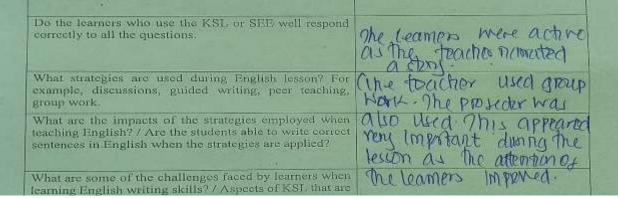
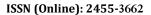


Figure 4.36. A Section of Lesson Observation Guide on various Methods Used During English Lessons.

From figure 4.36, it can be seen that teachers used various methods. These methods include note taking, questioning technique, incorporation of ICT, Use of visual aids, dramatization, group discussions, lecturing and singing, use of peer tutoring, team teaching, use of total communication among

others. The commonly used methods by teachers of English in their teaching are lecture and group discussions. Drama, debating and role plays are not utilized fully. From document analysis, it was noted that during one of the Departmental staff meeting, teachers confirmed having implemented Team teaching.





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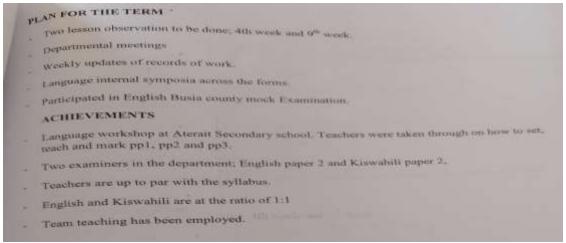


Figure 4.37. A Section of Minutes of Languages Department Meeting on Team Teaching

From figure 4.37, it can be noted that, one of the achievements noted during the meeting was employment of the team teaching. Through Document Analysis, it was also noted on the lesson

plans of the teachers of English that actually these methods were planned for.

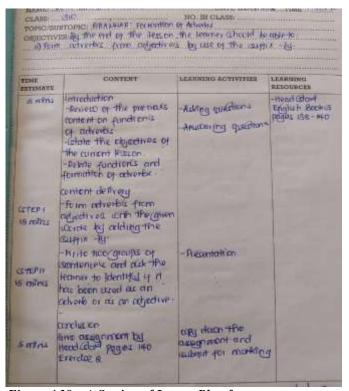


Figure 4.38a. A Section of Lesson Plan for Form 3 English

From figures 4.38a and 4.38b, it can be seen that the form three English teacher had planned to use questioning Technique, lecturing, role play, demonstration and note taking

These findings agree with findings by Riwayatiningsih (2019) who showed that the use of questions helps students to think critically hence meaningful learning. The findings also agree with finding by Situmorang (2021) who established that group work

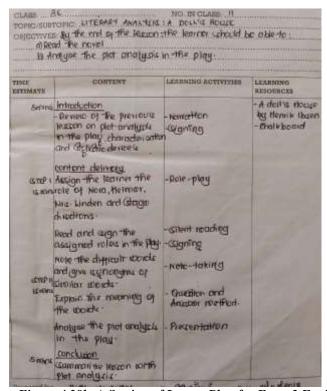
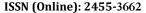


Figure 4.38b. A Section of Lesson Plan for Form 3 English

had a positive impact on students, attitudes and enlarged their commitment to completing assignments. The findings from the current study further agrees with findings from Li and Vandermensbrugghe (2011) who revealed that group work helped international students to start their writing process, it motivated them to develop their writing skills, increased their self-confidence as writers and supported them through their writing. These findings agree with fining by Caddy (2015) who





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established that teachers made use of a balanced literacy program in their classrooms but also emphasized the development of English comprehension and vocabulary among English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners. These findings further agrees with findings by Namukoa (2014) who noted that the best practices and strategies for science literacy instruction are known to teachers. However, these strategies are not fully implemented during classroom instruction. Teachers of English are only implementing some of the strategies superficially during classroom instruction.

These findings agree with findings by Mutai (2012) who established that the commonly used methods by teachers in their teaching are lecture and group discussions. Drama, debating and role plays are superficially utilized. The findings further agree with findings by Chabari and Awori (2017) who revealed that teachers were not so sure of which strategies and projects that could be used to improve writing among learners with HI. The findings further agree with Caddy (2015) who stated that teachers made use of a balanced literacy program in their classrooms but also emphasized the development of English comprehension and vocabulary among EFAL learners. Teachers adapted their strategies to provide support for the learners by adjusting their pace of teaching and providing much needed individual attention during group guided reading session especially for learners whose English reading development and academic achievement had been negatively impacted by overcrowding, lack of parental support and poverty.

The findings also agree with Wandera (2012) who argued that questions and answer instilled on students a mix of listening and speaking skills. The use of questions and answer can enable learners to be proficient in English writing skills when the questions and answers are given in SEE. Otherwise, if the questions and answers are stated in KSL then it cannot aid in writing good English.

The findings also agree with Kilave (2015) who sought to explore teaching deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh) learners and argued that for students to get background information and develop schema and vocabulary related to subject content, visual aids such as photos, films, should be used to provide multiple examples of concepts

#### 10.2. Effectiveness of the strategies used in teaching English

Teachers of English were asked their opinion on how effective the methods are and how the students receive the content when teaching using the mentioned approaches. They stated;

What I have realized with deaf, is that when you use methods that involve them, then their reception and concentration will be better and you will see them happy and interested. Methods like the use of flash cards. Also when you project, you will see most of the learners are interested. (ToE 6)

Yes, they are effective, because you find that, that thing which you did in the role play, they will be able to remember, so the question may not even touch on that particular segment, but you find that that is the only thing they remember, so they write it down, so it has an effect, at least they know what is happening in the text. (ToE 2)

I have observed that in the way they enjoy. In the way you make them to behave like teachers. It builds their confidence and then it motivates them to get something more. When you present the concept, it sticks in their mind. (ToE 3)

They are bearing fruits, when I was in my first year of teaching, I was majorly lecturing, question and answer, but I never saw fruits, but for now, if I am using learner centered, ... (ToE 6)

Form three students were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the methods that their teachers use in class during English lessons. They noted;

While in group discussions, possible one person help other then answer question and easily help each other. Projector helps to memorize same improve memory. (FGD 2)

Some of them help zero, there are songs in English, but when you read, the song, you don't understand, meaning the singing does not help, singing important zero. (FGD 6) The best method is discussion. Some students best understand so they help me understand then I improve. Discussion best since it helps us improve National unity and cooperation. (FGD 3)

Curriculum support officers for SNE were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the strategies that teachers use for instruction. One of them commented

I have observed a number of teachers at the special schools, but the methods these teachers use is the teacher centered approach. The teacher signs everything, just like that. It is teacher centered. Children are not put in groups. They are there listening and observing. Learner participation is very minimal. So the approaches are not effective. I believe the learners should be involved in the learning process. (CSO SNE 2)

From document analysis, it was noted from the schemes that the teachers did not plan for learner centered activities. According to schemes of work, the learning activities were to general and did not have specific activities to engage the students.

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Figure 4.40. A Section of Scheme of Work for Form Three English

From figures 4.0, it can be seen that when scheming, teachers of English do not plan for learner centered lessons. They do not have specific learning activities which involve the learners directly in the lesson. The activities for students mentioned are too general like discussion, reading, writing, note taking which do not engage the learners.

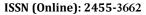
It can be concluded that students with HI consider group discussion and peer tutoring as the effective methods to be used during instruction of English lessons. It can also be concluded that use of songs is not an effective approach to teaching students with HI

These findings agree with findings by Borjian and Padilla (2010) who disclosed that there is a need for teachers in the US to help more their students becoming proficient in English in order to succeed in academics. The current study has revealed the need for teachers to use approaches that help students with HI pass their English Examinations. These findings are at variance with findings by Thu (2019) who revealed that learners understood faster concept faster and scored higher when they were taught through songs. These findings further disagree with findings by Ikonta and Maduekwe (2012) who indicated that the use of reading tactics impacted positively on students' reading and summary writing ability. The current study indicates that reading is a are approach to be used and most students with HI are poor in reading. These findings further agree with findings by Li and Vandermensbrugghe (2011) who revealed that group work helped international students to start their writing process, it motivated them to develop their writing skills, increased their selfconfidence as writers and supported them through their writing. The use of group work is an effective approach as it triggers thinking the students and enables them to improve their writing skills as well as other language skills. These findings further differs from the findings by Caddy (2015) who indicated that teachers use a balanced literacy program in their classrooms and also emphasize the development of English comprehension and vocabulary among English learners; teachers adapted their strategies to provide support for the learners by adjusting their pace of teaching and providing much needed individual attention during group guided reading session especially for learners whose English reading development and academic performance had been negatively impacted by overcrowding, lack of parental support and poverty. In the current study, no evidence has been seen showing the commitment of teachers to adapt their strategies so as to provide support for the learners to improve their performance in English. These findings also agrees with findings by Namirembe, Mkama & Kilave (2015) who indicated that preteaching and re-teaching led to a significant difference in the academic achievement of the d/hh and hearing. Namirembe. Mkama & Kilave (2015) espoused the role of visual aids such as photos, films for the students to get background information and develop schema and vocabulary related to content subject. Teachers of English confirmed the effectiveness of using projectors and visual aids when teaching English as learners understood concepts better.

The findings from the current study further agrees with findings by Choshi (2015) who established that the Department of Basic Education in South Africa has not come up with any specific teaching strategies. Teachers are therefore innovative on their own ways and they come up with approaches that suit the lesson and the type of learners. Choshi (2015) opined that teachers should use different approaches since performance of English improve. The use different strategies by teachers of English is important since learners with HI have different interests and needs hence the diversification of strategies will ensure majority are helped in class.

# 11.0. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS 11.1. Summary of Findings

The methods used for instruction during English lessons include note taking, questioning technique, incorporation of ICT, Use of visual aids, dramatization, group discussions, lecturing, singing, use of peer tutoring, team teaching among others. Use of songs is not an effective approach to teaching students with HI.





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#### 11.2. Conclusion of the findings

Group discussion and peer tutoring are the preferred approaches of instruction. However, these methods needs close supervision by the teacher.

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