

# Effectiveness of American Sign Language Interpreter(s) in English Classrooms on Successful Education of Deaf Students

Alia Leavitt

## Abstract

Methods for deaf education have differed vastly over the years. There is varied research on cochlear implants, teaching American Sign Language (ASL), and teaching English as effective education to deaf students. When a deaf student is in a public school setting, they are provided with accommodations to give them equal access in the environment. If the deaf student requests, required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), an interpreter must be provided for effective communication between the deaf student and hearing teacher and their peers. This research proposal seeks to assess the effectiveness of ASL interpreters within classes teaching English. The interpreting profession does not have any guidelines particular to such an environment. In addition, there is a severe lack of research in this area. Using social media groups for educational interpreters, a mixed-methods study will be conducted by sending out a link to a Google Forms survey, asking educational interpreters their experience with interpreting in English classrooms. The five themes expected to appear following analysis of the survey responses are 1) grammatical structure of the interpretation, 2) selection of translated and interpreted content, 3) effectiveness of interpreted instruction, 4) matching the language preference of the deaf student, and 5) level of demand on the interpreter. Analyzing educational interpreter experiences improve the skill of the interpreter, as well as the overall education and future success of the deaf student(s).

## Introduction and/or Research Question

Over many years of teaching deaf students, many methods remain in use. Some deaf children attend schools for the deaf, where sign language is used to communicate and teach. Other deaf children attend public schools with ASL interpreters, sound systems that connect to their hearing aid or cochlear implant, and/or have a time apart from class to meet with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) specialist. Although the meaning of the word literacy has been debated, meaning either fluency in sign language or in reading and writing English, both have been used as methods within deaf education. Within the public school system, how effective are ASL interpreters on deaf student's educational success and literacy?

## Methods

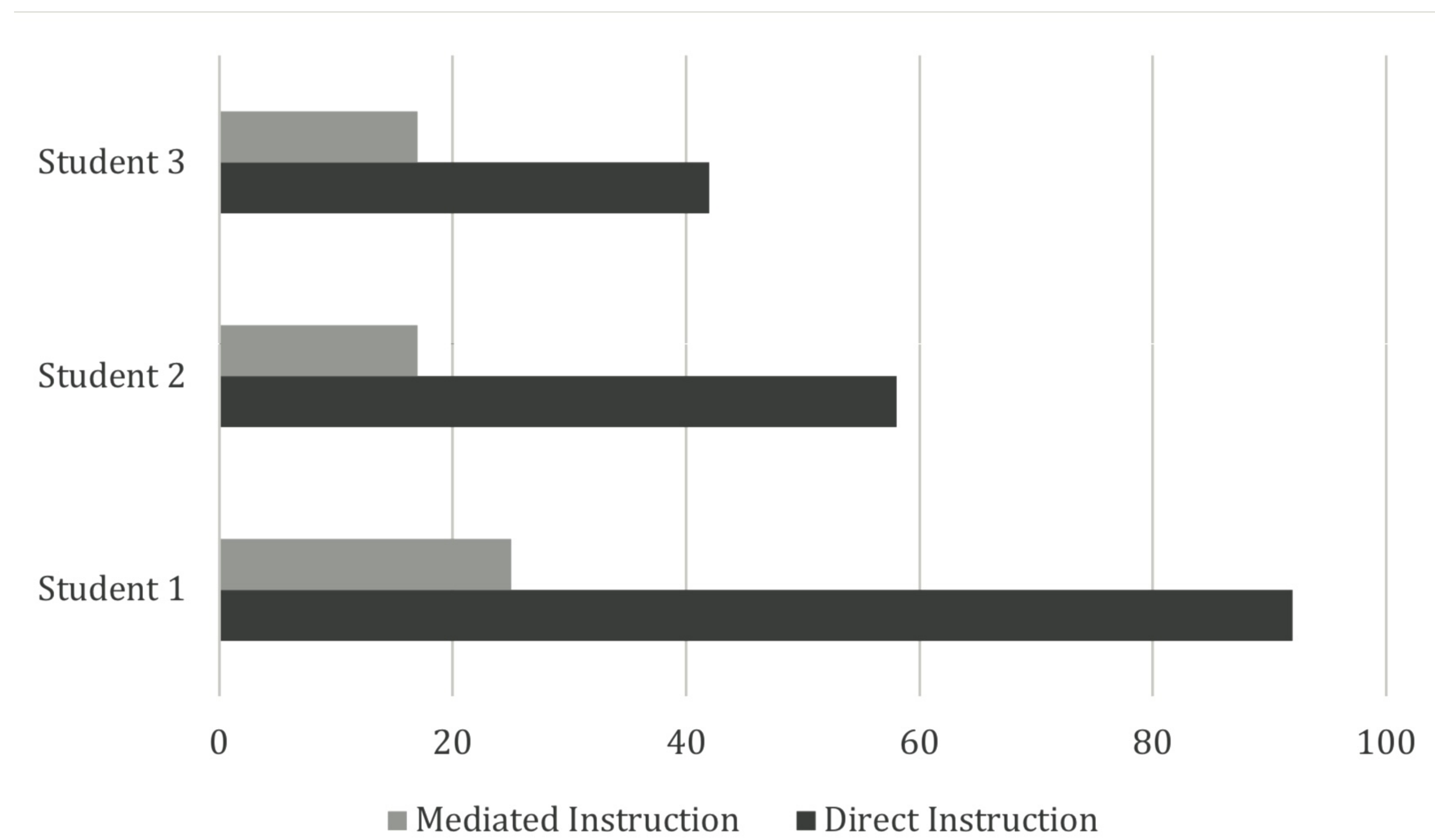
Using social media groups for educational interpreters, the study will be conducted by asking educational interpreters their experience with interpreting in English classrooms, as well as the deaf students that have worked with educational interpreters in the past.

- ❖ mixed methods approach
- ❖ link to a Google Forms survey (with the option for text or video replies)
- ❖ student and interpreter's unique perspective on literacy success
- ❖ Interpreter's qualifications and certifications
- ❖ Student's grade in the class
- ❖ Student's perspective of interpreter quality
- ❖ Student's overall experience
- ❖ Student's language preference/ what interpreter used
- ❖ Number of interpreters
- ❖ What the interpreter did with written English on tests or written on the board
- ❖ Interpreter preparation time and/or materials
- ❖ Discussion between interpreter and student
- ❖ Teacher/professor's reaction to interpreter and deaf student

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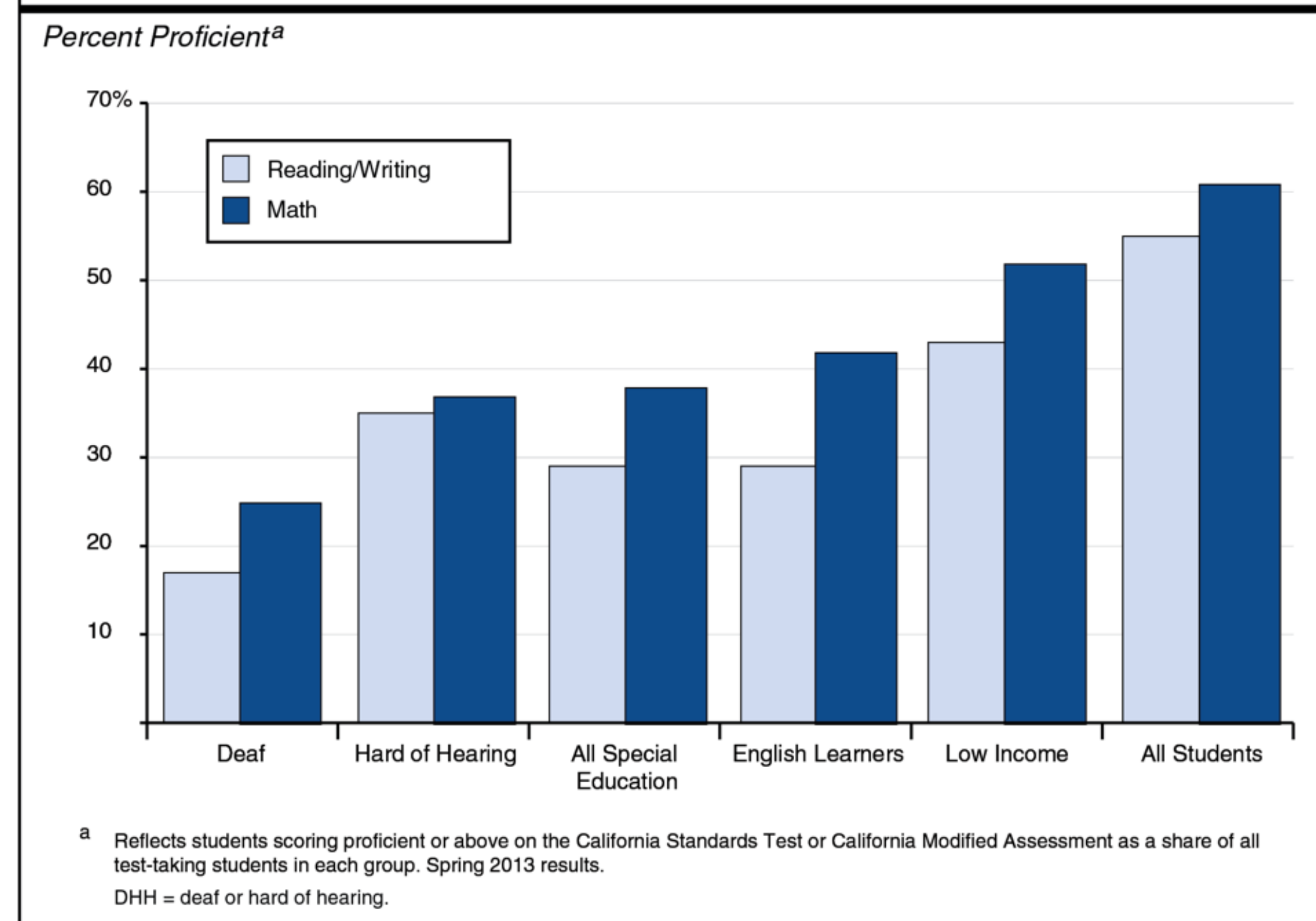


(Sign language interpretation, 2019)



Mediated instruction means that the lessons were received through an interpreter, and direct instruction means that the lesson was taught in ASL. Figure 4.1 (Williamson, 2020, p. 77).

Figure 1  
DHH Students Generally Lag Behind Other Student Groups in Statewide Assessments



<sup>a</sup> Reflects students scoring proficient or above on the California Standards Test or California Modified Assessment as a share of all test-taking students in each group. Spring 2013 results. DHH = deaf or hard of hearing.

(Anderson, 2016).

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## Conclusion

The effectiveness of ASL interpreters in the public school system though not thoroughly researched, has shown to be varied. Some deaf students rated their interpreters highly, and others disliked their interpreter's lack of skill, their disrespect, and unprofessional conduct. One reason for unqualified interpreters working in the school system is a lack requirement for certification. This is caused by the vagueness of what the ADA states about equal access for the deaf. In addition, many deaf students in mainstream public schools become isolated from their hearing peers. Although the importance of literacy in the success of students has been made clear, the average DHH student graduates high school with below-average reading comprehension skills (Luckner et al., 2005, p. 2). Taking all this into consideration, there is much work to be done to improve the quality of access for deaf students in the public school system.

## Future Work

Future work should continue to research how to better the effectiveness of interpreters and compound the evidence towards one or a couple effective ways to teach deaf children and improve their futures. More specifically, future research should compare and contrast isolated deaf students mainstreamed in public schools with interpreters and hearing peers, groups of deaf students taught by a signing teacher surrounded by both hearing and deaf teachers and peers, and attending school for the deaf with deaf teachers and peers. In addition, future work should delve into the different aspects of what makes interpreters ineffective, such as the methods of interpreting tests, quizzes, and other written homework or classwork; the dynamic of the relationship between the deaf student(s), the teacher, and the interpreter; and what kind of adaptations crucial to bridging culture and language, and successful education.

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