

“...but what about generalisation?”

Casey Jackson shares details of a project using ‘smiLE’ Therapy, conducted collaboratively with colleagues; Tim Meaden (QToD), Lisa Salter (Specialist Teaching Assistant) and deaf students

What we did

We used smiLE Therapy (Schamroth, 2015) to encourage generalisation of communication skills to the mainstream classroom. Our specialist provision supports deaf students with mild to profound hearing losses within a mainstream secondary school.

All of our students are hearing aid and/or cochlear implant users and communicate using spoken English. Many have additional needs and other spoken languages or British Sign Language at home.

SmiLE Therapy develops functional communication skills for real-life situations using a test-teach-test model. The therapy was first created for use with the deaf population but is now used with clients with a wide-range of communication profiles and ages across a variety of settings.

We have successfully completed modules such as ‘clarification skills’ (CS), ‘requesting and refusing an item in an office’, ‘work experience’ and ‘interview skills’. Many of these modules prepare our older students for overcoming the social isolation commonly experienced by deaf people in the workplace (Action on Hearing Loss, 2013).

We share the students’ successes, evident through their before and after videos and record forms, with mainstream school staff and parents. Sometimes we share them at Education, Health, Care Plan meetings to bring success tangibly to the meeting in a lively way.

The challenge

Comprehension monitoring is vital for our deaf students in mainstream education. Here, they must learn to listen



actively where there are likely increased communication challenges, due to noise in large classrooms untreated acoustically where the vast majority of students are hearing. Schamroth & Lawlor (2015) cite NDCS’s (2012) report that 85% of school-aged deaf children attend mainstream school.

Our service is committed to promoting student self-advocacy, as deaf adolescents can lack assertiveness in communication (Wauters & Knoors, 2007). SmiLE Therapy embodies this ethos and the use of CS facilitates this.

Our students might seek clarification generally in the provision, eg “pardon?”, “huh?”, but we wanted to teach them to make more specific requests:

- Can you say that louder please?
- Can you say that slower please?
- I need to lip read please
- What does that mean?
- Can you break that down please? (for lengthy spoken information)
- Other (often relating to equipment – eg requesting that the teacher mutes the radio aid transmitter).



Our students learned to use these CS in our provision with fellow deaf peers and staff who know them well.

Our challenge was to establish use of CS in the mainstream school, a known difficulty for deaf adolescents (Silvestre et al, 2007).

What we’re already doing...

- In-class recording: our team logs students’ use of CS or missed opportunities in the mainstream classroom on the support sheet kept at the front of each file taken into lessons. I inserted a box on the existing sheet to make recording quick and easy for my colleagues,



reduce paperwork and most importantly, encourage collaborative working, so that SALT aims become integrated with general mainstream lesson monitoring

- Fixed agenda item at weekly support team meeting: this regular, structured forum for discussion means we share observations and 'keep alive' developing skills
- 'Superstar' wall: we record smiLE Therapy successes on speech bubble post-it notes on the 'Superstar' wall, which celebrates students' academic and extra-curricular successes
- TV monitor: We have smiLE Therapy-themed slides on rotation on a screen, visible to all staff and students walking through the centre. This is a constant reminder to students to take their developing skills into the mainstream.

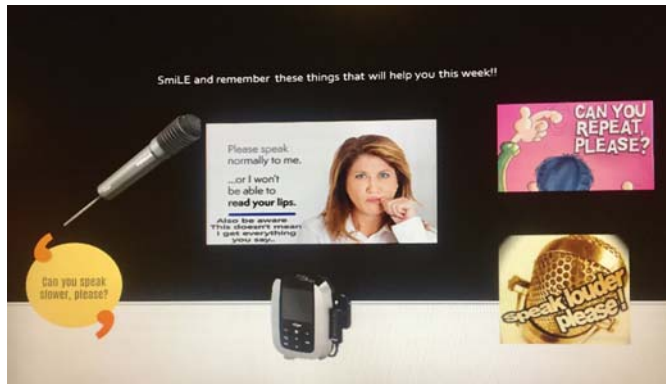


What we're developing...

- Data collection: data from the record sheets is being collated to identify patterns in use of CS or missed opportunities, eg in specific lessons or with specific staff members. We use this to tailor our work with each student to meet their individual needs
- Mainstream assembly: we promote 'hearing awareness' alongside 'deaf awareness' regularly. Our collaborative success with CS generalisation will be part of this.

The future...

- We plan to use these systems for other communication skills targeted in smiLE Therapy. This could include skills such as varied greetings and appropriate small talk.



Why use smiLE Therapy?

I love that smiLE Therapy has fostered collaborative working between professionals in my setting to maximise the benefit to our students.

Tim, Lisa and myself were trained in smiLE Therapy so that we were collaboratively empowered to deliver the programme. I have completed the full Practitioner Training, expanding our range of modules and best advising the team.

We've involved all of our colleagues, many as 'actors' in our filmed communication tasks. This joint working is particularly valuable as historically, SALT provision primarily used the traditional 1:1 model in a small room. The profession in the UK has seen a shift away from this model (Law et al, 2002), resulting in more holistic intervention. My colleagues and I possess improved understanding and respect for each other's roles, integral to a collaborative approach (Wilson et al, 2015).

What staff say

Tim Meaden, QToD:

"smiLE therapy has added an exciting new dimension to our provision and had an immediate positive impact on the well-being of the deaf young people involved..."

Our students are equipped with clarification strategies to use in situations where communication may break down through missed information or misunderstandings. On a practical level, this has empowered them to be assertive and take responsibility for explaining their communication needs, but on a much deeper level I think this is helping them to construct an identity as a deaf young person, incorporating hearing loss in a positive way. Explaining their communication needs and deafness builds their internal resources and develops a more confident sense of self for future interactions..."

The Rowan Hearing Support Centre (HSC)
In-class Support Overview Sheet

Student(s)	Date:	HSC Staff:
Subject:	Teacher:	Topic:
Lesson Aim(s):		

Student's strengths

Progress during the lesson

What the student found challenging

Basic Access Strategies

FM used with a prompt	Lighting
FM independent	Seating
Subtitles	Door closed

Urgent information to be shared with senior HSC staff: Yes / No

Seeking Clarification

Sought clarification when needed?	With:	Yes			No		
		Peer	HSC staff	Teacher	Peer	HSC staff	Teacher
Louder							
Slower							
Lip read							
Meaning							
Break down							
Other (e.g. equipment)							

Observations & Next Steps

Seeking Clarification

Sought clarification when needed?	With:	Yes			No		
		Peer	HSC staff	Teacher	Peer	HSC staff	Teacher
Louder							
Slower							
Lip read							
Meaning							
Break down							
Other (e.g. equipment)							

(please tick or write student's initials if more than one student in lesson):

Clarification Skills (CS) in the mainstream				
Date	Yr group	What does that mean?		Other
		Not used	Used	Not used
				Used
SPRING 2018				
30.01.18	12	Confirmed he understood when asked by teacher but showed his lack of understanding when started work.		Did not tell teacher that the transmitter was muted the whole time she was speaking, when questioned as to why he didn't say anything he responded with "I could hear you crystal clear".
02.03.18	7			Politely asked his partner to start again but wearing the transmitter and said "thank you".
07.02.18	12		Asked for meaning of 'route'.	
08.02.18	9		Asked for meaning of a word as soon as teacher had finished addressing the class.	
15.03.18	10			Couldn't see the writing on the board because teacher wrote in green pen. Asked teacher to change the colour.
22.03.18	11	Refused to ask teacher for the meaning of a word in science.		Did not want to ask teacher if they were allowed to use a calculator or not
23.03.18	11			Did not tell teacher that transmitter was on mute while he was teaching
SUMMER 2018				
17.04.18	9			"Can you mute the FM please?"
19.04.18	10			Asked teacher to turn mic around as teacher had put on transmitter back to front
27.04.18	7		"Can you repeat what you said about what 'oakum' means?"	

Sessions are enjoyable for students and staff. In the context of a fast-paced secondary curriculum delivered in the bustle of an inner-city academy, sessions provide a rare opportunity to slow down and, through role-play, dissect and explore the minutiae of social interactions in a way that is not usually possible in a normal school day... particularly valuable as the development of 'Theory of Mind' is a known area of risk for deaf adolescents...

This innovative practice still feels new and fresh, as the potential for developing exciting units based on social situations relevant to our students seems endless."

Lisa Salter, TA:

"smiLE therapy is invaluable in encouraging our students to seek clarification and better access mainstream lesson content when support staff are not present."

What students say

SmiLE Therapy has taught me the importance of approaching intervention with a functional mindset. It bridges the gap between the 'safe' therapy session and the potentially daunting world beyond education. It gives our students an opportunity to develop vital communication skills at each 'stepping stone': smiLE Therapy sessions, generally within the centre, in the mainstream class and outside of school – on public transport, in shops, further education and the workplace. SmiLE Therapy is giving our students the communication skills and resultant confidence needed for life beyond school.

If the teacher is not clear, ask, ask and ask!

This will help in Year 8 because you have new teachers and new lessons.



Casey Jackson is a Specialist SaLT (deafness) with the Rowan Hearing Support Centre at Southfields Academy, Wandsworth Hearing Support Service.

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