This paper seeks to explore and understand the role of support staff in providing quality support in peer mediation and conflict resolution among individuals with learning disabilities. Peer mediation was introduced to individuals with learning disabilities in a 76-hour peer mediation training and ‘understand my emotion’ training. Three peer mediators were trained and supported by the support staff during peer mediation as their experiential learning. Observation and focus group interviews were conducted for data collection and analysis in three phases. The findings indicate that when individuals with learning disabilities are given the opportunity to speak up and practice their rights through peer mediation, they are able to mediate conflicts among their peers progressively. Peer mediation has improved their self-confidence through the quality support given by the support staff. The role of support staff is important in the perception, support and collaboration as a progressive learning development alongside individuals with learning disabilities. In promoting the ability and potential of individuals with learning disabilities, the role of support staff was challenged in its implication of stability. Moreover, the post-conflict experiences often led to behavioral problems in a vicious cycle which added to their mental health risks as ‘problem’ individuals. From the self-advocacy perspective, the argument is there was no opportunity for these individuals with learning disabilities to take control of their situation especially during a conflict. The aftermath continues to cause damage to their self-image and emotional state of stability. Moreover, the post-conflict experiences often led to behavioral issues in a vicious cycle which added to their mental health risks as ‘problem’ in this context (Bradshaw, Nguyen, Kane, & Bass, 2014). The dilemma often occurs in viewing individuals with learning disabilities as rightful citizens with potential and self-worth or with a need to be controlled as an individual (Dobmeier & Moran, 2008; Fyson & Ramcharan, 2010; Shaw, 2009). Punishment and sanction are commonly imposed on either one party or both. Suspension is the most common consequence executed for the welfare of other members, after warning has been given by the support staff in the training center or representatives from their family members (Tobin, 2009). As a result, their life would be oppressed when the circumstances deprive them from going anywhere.

Other interventions and strategies are highly recommended to deal with this population. These included contingency management, ecological interventions, positive programming and reactive strategies (Whitaker, 2001). According to Whitaker, these strategies require external control which occurred to limit the degree of independence of these individuals. From the self-advocacy perspective, the argument is there was no opportunity for these individuals with learning disabilities to take control of their situation especially during a conflict. The aftermath continues to cause damage to their self-image and emotional state of stability. Moreover, the post-conflict experiences often led to behavioral issues in a vicious cycle which added to their mental health risks as ‘problem’ in this context (Bradshaw, Nguyen, Kane, & Bass, 2014). The dilemma often occurs in viewing individuals with learning disabilities as rightful citizens with potential and self-worth or with a need to be controlled as an individual (Dobmeier & Moran, 2008; Fyson & Cromby, 2013; Shaw, 2009).

Hence, the underpinning principle of long-term well-being of the individual has been overlooked by the support staff and the practitioners, especially when conflict needs to be handled. Eliminating conflict is impossible but preventing


This study aims at examining the effectiveness of using intersemiotic translation in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to deaf students. The participants included six (one female and five male) EFL deaf students studying in an elementary public school in Iran. Taking an action research design, we tried to teach EFL to these students for four months and track their development during this period. Having adopted the principles of intersemiotic translation, we used pictures, animations and body language to teach EFL to the participants. For evaluating the students’ understanding of the presented materials, they were asked to draw pictures and answer to matching questions. The findings indicated that the use of intersemiotic translation and visual aids is very useful for teaching English to deaf learners especially in contexts where few teachers know American Sign Language (ASL).

Keywords: Students with special needs, deaf students, intersemiotic translation, English language teaching

Receiving enough ‘comprehensible input’ is a quintessential factor in learning a second/foreign language (Bochner & Albertini, 1988). The paucity of input makes learning English very difficult in foreign language contexts as EFL learners are not exposed to enough real language use (authentic input) outside the classroom. This difficulty can be even more for learners with hearing impairment as they cannot benefit from the audio input easily and should rely only on visual input.

Vanek (2009) stated that the greatest challenge that all deaf learners encounter is the fact that “they do not receive direct input in a language the written system of which they are supposed to master” (p. 43). As he puts it, the problem of linguistic development is influenced by two factors which are “age and intake of language input” (p. 17). Similarly, Bochner and Albertini (1988) maintained that deaf children who have hearing parents and have access to sufficient amount of language input can learn a new language better than deaf children who have deaf parents and are deprived of language input.