Abstract
The linkages between children's and adults' language abilities and psycho-social functioning are of increasing interest to psychiatry. Children and adolescents with specific language impairment (SLI) have a higher risk of developing a variety of psychiatric disorders. The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that the level of language used in peer communication at school – whether signed or spoken – is associated with psychosocial well-being in adolescents with hearing impairments. 53 students completed a battery of linguistic tests as well as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which was also completed by their parents. The group of 34 children in mainstream education was compared to the group of 19 children in a segregated school for the deaf. The findings indicated that children's language abilities were impaired in comparison to published norms, which was particularly pronounced in segregated schools. Parents perceived their children to be in greater distress than published standards. In mainstream education, those with a higher level of spoken language had very few peer relationship problems, but considerably more in segregated schools. For those proficient in signed language, the converse was almost as significant. We conclude that peer relationship difficulties are related to language competence levels in the way children communicate at school.
References:


