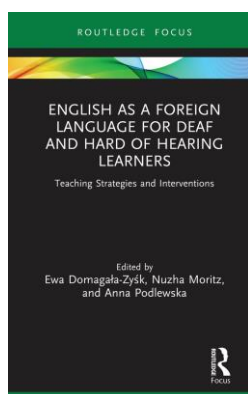




Book review. English as a Foreign Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners: Teaching Strategies and Interventions, by Ewa Domagała-Zyśk, Nuzha Moritz, and Anna Podlewska (Eds.)

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With the ever-increasing importance of the knowledge of foreign languages and cultures — and that of English as an international language in particular — and the key role this linguistic development plays in different areas of life including personal and academic growth, careful planning and implementation of language courses for different groups become crucial. This is all the more so for learners with special needs for whom the teaching methods and strategies need to be adapted to best suit these learners' varied abilities and wants. The edited volume *English as a Foreign Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners: Teaching Strategies and Interventions* is a timely contribution to the field of special needs education and provides a comprehensive review of effective practices and strategies for teaching English as a foreign language to the deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners. This collection of essays links theory and practice through reporting on research findings and presenting some tried and tested teaching ideas that take into account the

special needs of DHH learners. The book is organised in two parts and contains a total of nine chapters.

The opening chapter, “Introduction: State of the Art of Research on Teaching English as a Foreign Language to DHH Learners”, by the editors, reviews some of the main theories in the field of foreign or second language acquisition that have played an important role in language learning research. These include behaviourism — or SRR (stimulus, response, reinforcement) —, Chomsky’s theory of language acquisition device, Selinker’s theory of interlanguage, Anderson’s adaptive control of thought (ACT) model, and Krashen’s theory of SLA, with the last one said to have provided the most significant input in the methodology of teaching English to DHH learners (p. 4). This chapter specifically elaborates on the emergence of *surdo-glottodidactics*, as “a relatively young subdiscipline of glottodidactics ... primarily concerned with the teaching of foreign languages to, and the learning of foreign languages by, DHH students” (p. 6). After presenting a brief background on the origins of the term and its etymology — deriving from Latin *surdus*, meaning ‘deaf’, and Greek *glotta* ‘language’ and *didaskein* ‘to teach’ —, the chapter concludes with a review of the current research on the art and methodology of teaching foreign languages to DHH learners.

Chapter 1, “To Speak or Not to Speak? Speech and Pronunciation of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Learning English as a Foreign Language”, by Ewa Domagała-Zyśk, addresses the speech and pronunciation challenges of DHH students in EFL classes. In this respect, it is held that although the main impact of deafness from birth concerns the learning and use of spoken language, it is promising that, overall, spoken language development of DHH children may be more possible today than in the past, “thanks to early diagnosis and intervention, the rapid development of technology ..., and DHH children being offered personalised care and education that gives them a higher chance of reaching their full cognitive potential” (p. 18). And this spoken language development, of course, entails not only first but also foreign language learning. This chapter looks at some of the barriers and challenges in this regard, and describes teaching methods and strategies that can promote DHH students’ speaking skills and good pronunciation habits. These strategies include building on learners’ existing speech therapy habits and knowledge, adjusting the listening exercises to make them approachable for each learner (e.g., via visually supported listening), practising lip-reading, using speech visualisation methods, allowing conversations with native speakers, and integrating digital technology into instruction. At the end of the chapter, the author highlights two key aspects to bear in mind when teaching DHH learners to speak a

foreign language: “their physical ability to use speech, which is directly connected with their speech rehabilitation and successes in their national language, and their motivation and willingness to learn to speak in a foreign language” (p. 29).

Chapter 2, “Phonic Reading as a Strategy in Learning to Read English as a Foreign Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pupils”, by Patricia Pritchard, explores the challenges faced by young DHH students when learning to read English as a foreign language and concentrates in particular on decoding English texts using phonic reading. It is argued that a key factor in this regard is having knowledge of the target language’s speech sounds and the way they are represented in writing (p. 32). This chapter specifically reports on an informal assessment of young Norwegian DHH students as to how a reading strategy could enable them to decode English written words. Given the fact that DHH students often have fewer reading strategies compared to their hearing peers, it is suggested that “there is a need for systematic teaching of many different strategies, of which phonic reading is a basic and important one” (p. 42).

Chapter 3, “Using Cartoons as a Strategy for Enhancing Oral Communication in EFL Classes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students”, by Nuzha Moritz, focuses on how the use of cartoons in teaching English to DHH students can promote intrinsic motivation and make learning more effective and enjoyable. For DHH learners, cartoons are believed to elicit interest and build confidence as they are fun, colourful, entertaining, and simple to understand (p. 45). Having outlined some advantages and drawbacks of using cartoons as EFL materials in general, and for DHH learners in particular, this chapter reports on an action research that aimed to observe the students’ level of participation and involvement in the communicative tasks, comparing the use of traditional materials (short documentaries as listening tasks) and cartoons. The findings revealed that the students’ attitudes were considerably different when they were watching cartoons and they seemed to enjoy the classes more and had more participation in the activities (p. 49). Highlighting some additional benefits of using cartoons in EFL classes for DHH students, it is suggested in this chapter that “the combination of sound, vision, and various paralinguistic features is beneficial to the students because it helps them to build a wide range of strategies” (p. 51).

Chapter 4, “Bringing Film to English as a Foreign Language for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Class”, by Anna Podlewska, explores how films can be integrated in English for the DHH classes and provides practical examples of a variety of suitable video content together with sample tasks. Among the advantageous side

effects of using film in language education, it is argued, are “greater inclusiveness, increased motivation and willingness to perform in- and out-of-class activities, exposure to authentic language, and more opportunities to practise speech reading skills in the target language” (p. 54). This chapter looks at seven examples of film materials that can be used as pre-existing video content in English for the DHH classes. The examples include short films, vlog entries, trailers, and feature-length films (to be watched at home and then worked on in the class). The overviews are accompanied with practical suggestions and strategies that are adapted to the needs and abilities of DHH learners. At the end of the chapter, some ideas about creating and using teacher-generated video content are discussed.

Chapter 5, “Individual Differences in Deaf Learners’ Second Language Acquisition”, by Jitka Sedláčková, underlines the importance of approaching each language learner individually and focuses on increasing teachers’ awareness of the areas of differences among DHH learners. In this connection, it is widely acknowledged that there are individual differences in language learning abilities and preferences which apply to DHH learners as well as to other learners in general. For DHH learners in particular, these areas of differences also include the degree and the type of hearing loss — i.e., innate or acquired, prelingual or postlingual, etc. It is argued, however, that “the heterogeneity of DHH people is ... primarily based not so much on the type and severity of one’s hearing but on one’s means of communication and life experiences” (p. 83). In view of that, in this chapter differences in means of communication and educational experiences among DHH learners are discussed.

In Chapter 6, “Deaf Schoolchildren, Adolescents, and Adults on Methods and Strategies That Work for Them When Learning Foreign Languages”, Edit H. Kontra focuses on language teaching methodology for DHH learners and its unique challenges and requirements. This chapter reports on two research projects carried out in Budapest, Hungary — one on DHH adults and one on school children — that aimed to shed light on what methods work best for DHH students when learning a foreign language, based on the qualitative data collected in individual interviews with DHH learners. The chapter discusses in detail some methods and strategies that were received well by the DHH students, which include using written support, using writing as a memory strategy, integrating communicative tasks, using sign language, etc. The author concludes with highlighting some barriers to overcome in DHH language learning contexts and how DHH learners can be taught best, in view of their special needs, so that they can achieve their full potential.

Chapter 7, “Adult Deaf and Hard of Hearing People on Learning English as a Foreign Language: International Experiences and Recommendations”, by Paulina Lewandowska, draws on findings from an empirical research on DHH students’ experience of learning English as a foreign language, using a retrospective of current users of this language, which aimed to contribute to a better quality of English classes for these students, especially in mainstream schools. Data for this study were gathered using questionnaires that asked DHH participants about their English learning background, including “the type of schools they attended, how long they learned English and at what level, their subjective assessment of the success of their learning, ... their use of various extracurricular forms of English learning” and also “the barriers and challenges they faced while learning a foreign language at school” (p. 114). Based on the findings, some recommendations for EFL teachers who work with DHH students are offered.

The final chapter, the “Conclusion”, summarises the interventions highlighted throughout the book in four general recommendations that emphasise: 1) the importance of acquiring all language skills based on the recognition of each student’s individual needs and biological and social conditions; 2) the importance of a high level of phonological awareness as a significant asset for DHH students, accompanied by visual, tactile, and/or movement cues; 3) the integration of carefully selected practice materials for meaningful interaction in the target language, including the use of cartoons; and 4) the use of video materials as comprehensible input, whether found on the internet or provided as part of a teaching handbook (pp. 128–129). The chapter concludes with raising some new research questions for future studies in the field.

In summary, the book is compiled in a clear and easy-to-follow manner, linking theory and practice and focusing on the special needs of DHH learners of foreign languages. Despite the fact that the book is overall an academic work written by scholars in the field, it has simple and understandable content and language in many of the chapters, which makes it accessible not only for expert readers, but also, to a large extent, for any interested reader who might somehow be involved in working, or living, with DHH individuals learning a second or foreign language. The practical recommendations on teaching methods and strategies provided in some chapters (e.g., those on using cartoons, films, and phonic reading) add to the merits of the book, as they make it a hands-on guide for language educators working in the field. In fact, the sample tasks and strategies presented in those chapters can be applied well beyond the specific contexts and materials discussed, and can

possibly be a source of inspiration for language teachers to craft and expand on their own teaching ideas.

To sum up, this edited volume is an important contribution to the field and an essential read for anyone interested and involved in special needs language education, from practitioners and researchers to language teachers working with DHH learners in both special and mainstream learning environments.



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