

Teaching English to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students at secondary and tertiary levels of Education

Hosts: Charles University Prague

Organisers – NTID, Rochester, USA

“Ensuring that deaf students remember English” – The challenges and strategies involved in aiding deaf students’ retention of their English Learning in their undergraduate and post graduate lives.

**Workshop leader: Joan Fleming, Teacher of the Deaf/ Deaf Studies Co-ordinator
University of Wolverhampton, UK**

Workshop session: Thursday, 26 August 2004

Following lunch: 13.00 to 14.30 hours

Duration: 1.5 hours

Session notes for participants to accompany the Power-point presentation

Aim of the session: To exchange ideas and share teaching strategies

The Scope: Joan will use her experience and reflection to enable the group to discuss challenges and successes in English teaching to deaf sign language users. There will be an opportunity to devise practical strategies.

Session outcomes: By the end of the session issues involved will be aired, samples of students work will be seen, including an English portfolio and a typical lesson will be analysed/criticised

Introductions: Joan Fleming: I have been teaching English to Deaf students since 1974 at secondary and tertiary levels. I have used oral methods, visual aid methods and finally chosen to use sign as a Meta language and written English as the Target language. I do not use interpreters because I can sign.

(Part of my remit is also to teach Deaf Studies to deaf and hearing students concentrating upon Language Development and Deafness)

Ensuring that students remember English

As educators we accept that literacy is altered by deafness and the variables therein include: level of deafness, diagnosis, intervention, use of aided hearing, lip-reading, educational experience and family language. Here I suggest we can separate Speech and Language acquisition as regards deaf students - for me speech is not language in the sense that speech can be repeated without language being established.

Those of us who have worked with deaf students for a considerable time observe that students with a mild hearing loss up to say 20 db or hertz will generally acquire English in the manner of their hearing peers with perhaps extra support for spelling or plurality and perhaps supported speech acquisition.

My work has shown that signing children from deaf families generally have an established sign variety, which is strongly developed and is used communicatively and cognitively. For this group English is a separate language. (An estimated 10 to 15% of deaf children have signing Deaf parents - see Marschark *et al*)

Grosecan (1996, page 32) points out that there is generally:

'...little recognition of deaf people's bilingual status. They are still seen as monolingual in the majority language....'

However, the deaf children of hearing parents often have a confused pattern of English as well as sign language, which is not established. They need to almost restart their English learning unless they have had a bilingual education.

Powers, Gregory and Thoutenfould (1998, page170) state,

'Given that many deaf people develop their bilingual competence despite, rather than because of, the monolingual attitudes of their educators, we need also to recognise that some Deaf people will struggle with the lack of fully developed linguistic skills in both majority and minority languages'.

EDL is not EFL

Perhaps teaching English is **alien** to the development of a profoundly deaf person's cognitive processes as it is based upon auditory and oral elements. In other words perhaps a visual modality matches perfectly the absence of hearing and therefore English taught orally is alien and slows down the learning process. Can we therefore see this in a person's writing - generally I would say yes as my students naturally use English vocabulary with British Sign Language syntax. (Please look at the samples)

If you are a North American, British, Australian or New Zealand Deaf person then English is an **associate** language, which surrounds you but in reality is not always accessible to you. Adult students often ask why English was not explained to them via sign. (Example to be discussed vocabulary classifications)

*(English, as an **associate** language is a term used by Arthur Dimmock D. Arts an octogenarian Deaf person living in the south of England who is an historian.)*

I never assume deaf people have had English explained either in its function, expression, syntax or meaning. Therefore I am the language **giver** – it is not a competition or test as I try to surround deaf students with English but I cannot **submerge** them as I would 'hearing' foreign learners.

I would recommend the following researchers: Albertini, Marschark, Strong, Easterbrooks, Webster, Gregory and Lang. (See bibliography)

If you have taught EFL you may have to forget the **communicative method** and be prepared to be unorthodox.

Be patient students may not make the vocabulary connections of foreign learners but you could encourage that they build an electronic word bank: showing the new word, its meaning, its classification, use and a variety of linked words. This could be a signed glossary on video, CD ROM or the web See HYPERLINK www.artsigns.ac.uk
You alone can judge at what level you can teach grammatical structure.

The context of your students' learning

You alone will know the context and purpose of your students' learning – Is it syllabus bound?

Perhaps the time has come to ask students what they need and then validate through existing mechanisms a new qualification equal to, for example, Cambridge First Certificate.

Written language is not only a learning exercise but also is a medium for acquiring knowledge without it deaf students will always require interpretation.

As a tutor I think teaching stock phrases and colloquial English wastes precious time. What use is teaching a phrase like "Honey I'm home" to someone who needs to write a Biomedical Science thesis?

Visual Memories

- ❖ What strategies have we used?
- ❖ A portfolio of learning as hard copy or on disk must be retained - deaf people need recall aids.
- ❖ A foreign learner uses English to discuss English this is not generally true of deaf learners who sign.
- ❖ Demonstration through writing is essential or students will remember signs not words

Your students' needs and your responses

- ❖ Often it is easier to let students look at handout to provide a context for their learning
- ❖ Always have a structured written plan with plainly stated aims, objectives and outcomes.
- ❖ Write to each other constantly: in the classroom, on the board, interactive boards, on paper, by e-mail, by online tutorials - by any means possible!

Pilot Teaching Session for students of English for Deaf Learners at Intermediate level

EDL Semester1 1997/08 Session 2 Oct 17 ****

EDL DE1000 Session two

Aim of the session:

To introduce common structures and forms of questions in written English

Learning Outcomes:

You will practise and receive information on the following topic:

Questions

(Opportunity to see tutor one to one 4.45 - 5.00 p.m.)

Topic: 'Questions in English'

BSL and English have question sentences which can begin with signs or words.

In English they are known as the "W" words even though one of them starts with "H".

Question words are also labelled as interrogatives they are:

How, Which, Who, What, When, Where

Please demonstrate the BSL signs for the above English words and ask your partner to write a translation.

With your partner write a question starting with each of the above question words.

Example: How many students attend English?

The " W" words can be used with verbs expressing the past, present, or future.

For example:

Why do you go to London every weekend?

Why did you go to London last week?

Why are you going to London tomorrow?

Why will you go to London next year?

All of the above questions are asking for a reason for an action.

(The sign for 'REASON' and the sign for 'WHY' can be the same.)

The question words below are asking for particular information in an answer.

QUESTION ANSWER

WHAT? - Usually gives a fact

WHO? - Usually gives a person

WHICH? Usually shows a choice

WHY? - Usually shows a reason

WHERE? - Usually shows a place

WHEN? - Usually shows time

Auxiliary verbs: 'Do / does' and 'have/has' are also used in questions

Using 'Do' to write a question

Do you study at university?

| |

Question Main

verb verb

Give some examples.

Now how would you use 'Does' to write a question?

Give some examples.

Do the same for 'have' and 'has'.

Look at Unit 4, page 10, in Collins Cobuild to see how you do this.

Now practise the examples on page 11.

Lets look at 'did' and 'had' can you make questions with these words?

Give examples please

Now try to make questions with these verbs at the beginning:

Can Could Will Would

Questions made with these words are usually 'requests'.

For example:

1] Can you see me at six o'clock?

2] Could you arrive early please?

3] If you can will you bring your project?

4] Would this meeting be convenient?

Positive and negative answers

Here are four positive answers to the questions above please change them to negative answers.

Positive

Yes, I can see you.
Yes, I could.
Yes, I can bring it.
Yes, it would be nice to go.

Negative

Example: No, I cannot (can't) see you.

Practice

Example:

Question: Where do students research?

Statement: Students research in the library.

Please write questions which give these answers

- A] Projects are difficult for students.
- B] Personal study is important.
- C] There are learning centres on each campus.
- D] Students choose their own subject.
- E] The Science block is near here.

Have you understood the work today?
Have you any questions?

Thank you for attending today

The Tutor is available for one to one discussion at 5.00 p.m.



Please note this early attempt at an EDL lesson does 4 main things:

- ◇ **Uses the classic Presentation - Practice - Production method**
- ◇ **Uses familiar vocabulary within grammar training**
- ◇ **Gives success**
- ◇ **Necessitates follow up**

I am sure session members could improve upon this but the aim was to provide a written memory of the session.

More complex questions evolved to match the kind of question used in academic life. Always remember students may have a high register of sign language if they are the 10 to 15% with deaf parents.

Thank you for attending

Joan Fleming

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Recommended texts:

For students:

Swann, M. (1996) *Practical English Usage*. Oxford: OUP

Collins - Cobuild. (2002) *New Students Dictionary*
London: Harper Collins

All the Collins Cobuild Grammar series are useful

For teachers:

Albertini, J., Lang, H., Marschark, M. (2002) *Educating Deaf Students*. Oxford: OUP

Bouvet, D. (1982) *The path to language*, Avon: Multilingual Matters Ltd

Easterbrooks, S.R. and Baker, S. (2000) *Language, Learning in Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Gregory, S. and Hartley, G. M. (1991) *Constructing Deafness*. Milton Keynes: OUP

Grosjean, F. (1996) Living with two languages and two cultures. In: I Paransis (ed) *Cultural and Language. Diversity and the Deaf experience*. Cambridge: CUP

Livingstone, S. (1997) *Rethinking the Education of Deaf Students*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann

Powers, S., Gregory, S. & Thoutenhoofd, E.D., (1998) *The Educational Achievements of Deaf Children*. London: HMSO

Quigley, S. P. (1994) *Language and Deafness*. San Diego: Singular Publishing Group, Inc.

Strong, M. (1995) *Language, Learning and Deafness* Cambridge: CUP

Terms used in this handout

British Sign Language BSL the language of the Deaf Community of Britain

'Deaf' written with a capital 'D' indicating membership of the signing Deaf community

EDL - English for Deaf Learners

EFL - English as a Foreign Language

Meta language - language used to discuss new language / **target language** - the language to be learned

Profoundly deaf - indicating that a person has a hearing loss of over 90 decibels across the speech frequencies

Teacher of the Deaf - a teacher with an extra specialist qualification

