

Equal Rights in Foreign Language Education:
Language learners with special needs in Hungary
SYMPOSIUM
AILA 2008, Essen

Deaf EFL learners outside the school system

by

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The Problem

- Little is known about principles of teaching English as a foreign language to the Deaf
- Doubts about the needs of Deaf learners

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Should the Deaf learn foreign languages?

• What for?

- "Disabled" people should not be tortured with it.
- Let them learn Hungarian properly:
 - read
 - write

• Why not?

- Let them decide.
- English is the language of IT
 - Job opportunity
 - Source of information
 - International contacts

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Deaf education

- Oralist approach (Milan, 1880)
- Young children learn to lip-read and to produce sounds
- Sign language use forbidden /not encouraged
- Children of hearing parents pick up HSL from their peers usually in kindergarten
- Teachers are not required to know sign language, and few of them do.

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Foreign language education for the DEAF in Hungary

- National Curriculum: 1st FL in Grade 4
- For the Deaf: Not compulsory, schools can decide
- Few grade-schools for the Deaf offer foreign languages
- In high schools: waivers are common practice
- Higher education: SL interpreters → waivers
- Methodology for teaching FLs to the Deaf: O,
- Trained FL teachers for the Deaf: O

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A small case study

RQ: How does the teaching and learning of English take place in a group of Deaf adult language learners?

Sub Qs:

- How do the teacher and students make use of sign language in the teaching and learning process?
- Do small group-size and non-integrated teaching play a role in the effective teaching of a foreign language to Deaf students?

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Participants:

STUDENTS:

5 adults: 3 male and 2 female

TEACHER:

young female (learnt to sign for project)

Instruments:

Observation (methods, materials, HSL use)

Questionnaire (beliefs, motivation, strategies)

T & St Interviews (w/ sign interpretation)

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Results:

Ideal group size: 6 (even no. for pairwork)

Integration: Not supported

• "It is better to learn with the Deaf, because we are equal," Melinda

• "there is no Deaf group with a homogeneous knowledge of Hungarian." Teacher

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Results:

Ease of Communication:

• "Of course, for me it is easier to learn with the Deaf. There isn't as big a gap in communication. There everybody studies in sign language, that is, they are taught in sign language, and everyone understands it. This way it is also easier and quicker. And it is easier for the teacher as well, because she doesn't have to apply two kinds of methods, like if the group was mixed – then she would apply the oralist method and sign language simultaneously. "

Aron

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Results:

Integration with hard of hearing students 1:

"Since I am hard-of-hearing and know sign language as well, for me it is easier with the Deaf... I wouldn't like to be in the same group with hearing students... Surely, it is not good."

Nikolett

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Results:

Integration with hard of hearing students 2:

- " :...Viktor [a severely hard-of-hearing student who did not attend the classes regularly], when he talked to me, did not use sign language... The students nagged him, asked him to translate, because they did not understand what he said. So if such a student is in the group, and the others often do not understand what he or she says, then it is boring for them... When I had a dialogue with him, it went quickly, but it was boring for the Deaf because they didn't understand it. They could not lip-read my speech that quickly either. Not to mention Viktor's. So, in my opinion, integrated teaching in this sense is not possible." Teacher

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Results:

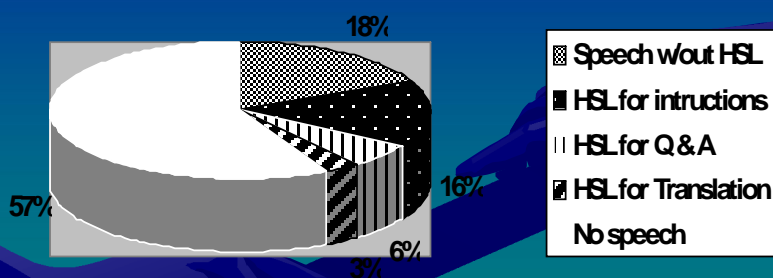
The use of sign language as part of the method:

" For me it does not depend on the group, but on the teacher, how he/she likes to teach. It depends on the teaching method. If he/she can use sign language, then it is better to learn in that group. " Imre

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Results:

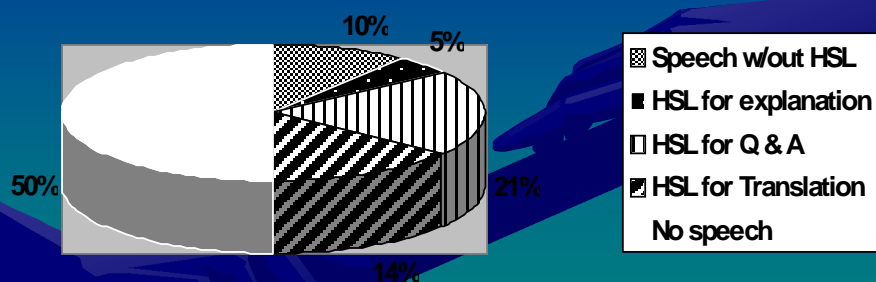
The use of sign language as part of the method -
Teacher :



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Results:

The use of sign language as part of the method -
Students:



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Conclusions

- Deaf learners can be taught foreign languages effectively.
- The learning of a foreign language cannot be built on unstable foundations, i.e. insecure use of spoken Hungarian: Sign language should be used as the Sts' L1.
- FL teachers of the Deaf should know HSL.
- Non-integrated teaching in small groups should be preferred.

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THANK YOU.

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