Chapter summaries

PART I
LEARNING STYLES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING LEARNERS

Chapter 1: Learning styles in foreign language education – new trends and questions

Izabela Olszak

The first chapter reviews the emergence and evolution of learning styles, noting their complexity. It covers contemporary research beyond foreign language learning and DHH students, providing purposefully a broad context. In reaction to today's diverse educational landscape and the great variety in student population, which exhibits a wide range of learning patterns and preferences, the author argues for the employment of personalized approaches to education. Inclusive teaching plays an important role in this rich and changing landscape. Within this aspect it is vital to acknowledge the styles of students with special needs, in this case, particularly deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners. Understanding that DHH learners do not conform to a single learning style, research advocates for diverse teaching methods to support the development and enhancement of 21st-century skills. The chapter concludes by stressing the need for a mix of instructional approaches to create an inclusive learning environment for all students.

Chapter 2 Explore the way you learn: Developing a tool for DHH learners and teachers to reflect on their foreign language learning

Lenka Tóthová, Jitka Sedláčková

Chapter 2 explores the significance and implications of considering learning styles in the language classroom. While there is ongoing debate about the impact of catering to individual learning styles on learning outcomes, the authors emphasize the value of using learning style inventories and questionnaires as tools for reflection and discussion about learning processes. This leads to their decision to adapt the existing tools so as to support deaf and hard of hearing learners in their self-assessment practices and thus widen their learning perspective and strengthen their autonomy as learners. In the second part of the chapter the authors present in detail the adaptation process of the Learning Style Survey: Assessing Your Own Learning Styles by Cohen, Oxford and Chi (2001) to the specific needs of the deaf and hard of hearing learners population, addressing the challenges and solutions encountered. This inclusive approach aims to empower both learners and educators by fostering an understanding of individual learning differences. Ultimately, the chapter underscores the importance of learners understanding their own learning preferences to shape their educational experiences. The discussed reflective tool is provided in the annexes.

Chapter 3 Learning styles of deaf and hard of hearing students in EFL classes – learners' profiles and learning and teaching tips

Anna Podlewska
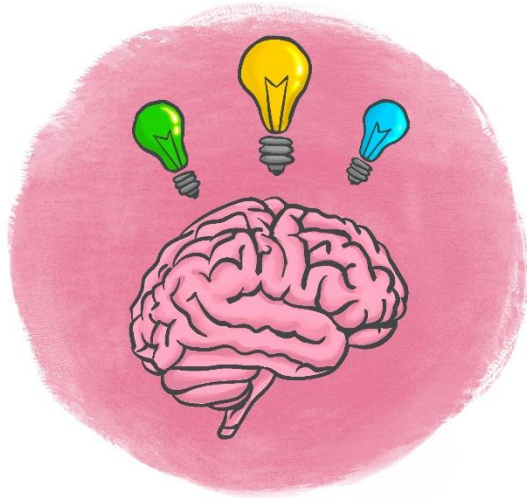
The third chapter of this work explores both the theoretical foundations and empirical investigations concerning the learning styles of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners, offering valuable recommendations for teaching practice. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction for DHH students, recognizing and integrating various learning styles is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment. While DHH EFL learners have unique strengths, preferences, strategies, and activities, EFL teachers also have established teaching habits. By understanding both the individual needs of students and the ingrained teaching patterns of educators, it is possible to organize activities that cater to the diverse requirements of the classroom, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for all students. Additionally, the chapter provides insights into the methodology of language acquisition for learners with visual, verbal, and kinesthetic preferences. It also delves into the psychological aspects of learning alongside extroverted and introverted students, and further explores the learning styles of deductive, inductive, creative, detail-oriented, global-oriented, and systematic learners.

PART II
REFLECTING ON LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE
EDUCATION OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING LEARNERS

Chapter 4 Effective learning strategies for today EFL learners – new questions, doubts and ideas

Izabela Olszak

The fourth chapter explores effective learning strategies for modern English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, addressing recent concerns and opportunities. The author introduces the field of glottodidactics and examines the role and strategies of the foreign language learning process. The chapter reflects on the concept of learning strategies and discusses their evolution, with a detailed focus on Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The author also introduces the concept of surdoglottodidactics, which deals with teaching methodology and the effective learning process for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners. It emphasizes the principles of subjectivity, normalization, integration, and inclusion, advocating for equal opportunities and support for DHH students to overcome access barriers to foreign language learning. Overall, the chapter asserts that effective learning strategies remain a priority in contemporary glottodidactics and surdoglottodidactics. It calls for a nuanced understanding of these strategies to develop language skills effectively, acknowledging their complexity and importance in foreign language education.

Chapter 5 Strategies for deaf and hard of hearing students learning to read and reflecting on learning to read in a foreign language

Jitka Sedláčková, Lenka Tóthová

The focus of this chapter is on reading skills, as the dominant receptive language skill in language learning for the majority of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners, and vocabulary, as one of the building blocks of reading comprehension. It emphasizes the need for integrated practice of the individual language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The authors advocate for explicit strategy instruction, which benefits all learners, especially low-achieving and DHH readers, by helping them effectively use various reading strategies. The chapter outlines the necessity of addressing reading skill development in DHH learners and suggests possible ways to enhance reading skills in foreign language teaching and learning. Recommended strategies include vocabulary building and scaffolding techniques such as skimming, scanning, guessing, recognizing cognates, and understanding word families. Various teaching techniques to develop these strategies are discussed. Finally, the authors recommend using questionnaires to support strategic reading and vocabulary use, not for (self)assessment, but for self-reflection to help learners understand their preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. Two examples of such questionnaires are provided in the annexes.

Chapter 6 The Speaking Learning Questionnaire (SLQ) and how to include it into your teaching and learning practice

Paulina Lewandowska, Marta Chomicz, Ewa Domagała-Zyśk
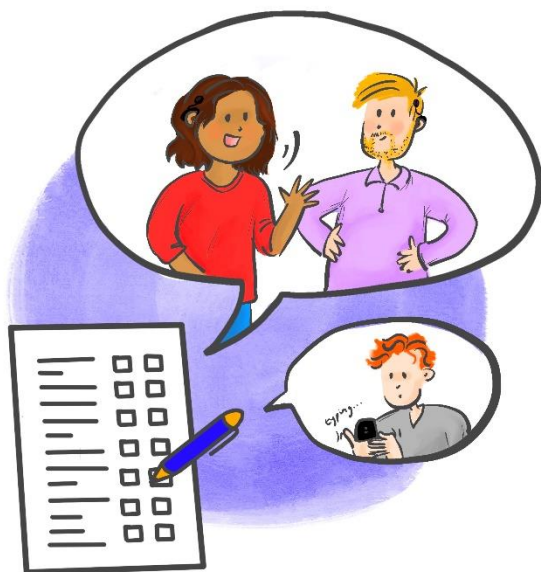
The authors provide insights into developing oral communication skills in deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners who aim to communicate orally in a foreign language. They begin by highlighting the complexities of learning a new language, particularly the challenges of mastering speaking skills, which are further amplified for students with diverse needs. Despite current technological advancements and educational support, these challenges persist. To address these issues, the authors present a questionnaire designed to offer foreign language teachers valuable insights into their students' speaking learning strategies. This allows teachers to tailor their teaching methods and techniques. Additionally, the questionnaire empowers learners by increasing their self-awareness of their learning habits, enabling them to actively engage in their language learning journey and make necessary adjustments for improvement. The questionnaire is described in detail, serving as a crucial tool for both understanding and enhancing the speaking learning strategies of students and teachers. The chapter concludes with comprehensive recommendations aimed at enhancing speaking and listening skills in these learners, providing effective support for their language acquisition.

Chapter 7 Insights into learning to write in a foreign language for deaf and hard of hearing learners and their teachers

Marta Chomicz, Paulina Lewandowska, Ewa Domagała-Zyśk
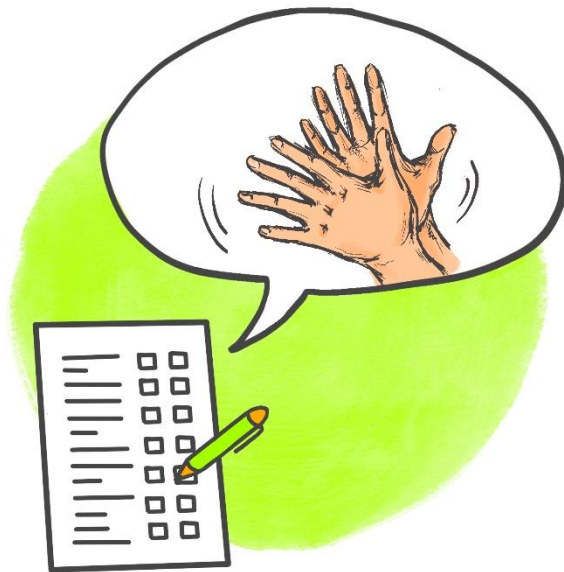
The author begins by describing the challenges and difficulties related to writing for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) learners. These challenges extend beyond typical grammar or syntax errors to include deeper motivational issues and difficulties with imaginative and creative writing due to limited exposure to diverse narratives. To better support the writing development of DHH students, the author recommends using tools such as the Writing Learning Questionnaire, provided in the annexes. This survey encourages students to reflect on their writing habits, strategies, and attitudes, offering valuable insights into their learning processes and preferences. The chapter concludes with a recommendation for educators to employ MAPS strategies to enhance the writing experiences of DHH students. MAPS stands for Multimodal learning opportunities, Adaptive writing prompts, Planning tools for visual organization, and Supportive collaborative writing projects. These strategies aim to create a more inclusive and effective writing environment for DHH learners.

Chapter 8 Using sign languages in foreign language classes for deaf and hard of hearing learners

Beata Gulati

The final chapter of Part Two focuses on the role and strategies for using sign languages in foreign language learning for deaf, and hard of hearing (DHH) learners. After explaining the main models of deafness—medical, social, and cultural—the author advocates for a bilingual, bicultural approach that teaches both sign language and written/spoken language. The chapter offers numerous tips and strategies to leverage the bicultural heritage of students who use sign language. These strategies address classroom adjustments, curriculum content accessibility, as well as the education and professional preparation of teachers. Included in the chapter are questionnaires designed for both teachers and DHH learners. These tools encourage reflection on classroom experiences, approaches, and preferences, aiming to foster a friendly and inclusive environment for both educators and students.

PART III
LEARNING STYLES AND PREFERENCES IN PRACTICE

Chapter 9 Teaching Italian to Deaf population

Laura di Gioia

A significant portion of the first text is dedicated to the historical context and challenges faced by the Deaf community in Italy, especially after the Milan Congress of 1880, which prioritized oral education over sign language. The author highlights the clandestine existence of sign language and the cultural richness it brings, which was largely ignored in favor of oralism. The author then introduces a successful initiative to teach written Italian to Deaf individuals using Italian Sign Language (LIS). This project utilized a bilingual method to teach Italian through LIS, focusing on practical language use in everyday situations. The course was structured into two levels—elementary and intermediate—and included theoretical grammar lessons and practical exercises. The project faced several challenges, including the students' initial resistance to learning through LIS and their difficulties with certain grammatical concepts that do not exist in LIS, such as verb conjugations, articles, and sentence structure. Despite these challenges, the students showed significant improvement in their understanding and use of written Italian. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the course, noting the difficulties and strengths observed. The author's experience leads her to say that teaching Italian through LIS is an effective method, fostering a greater desire among students to read and engage with the language.

# Chapter 10 Working with authentic text in a foreign language class for the deaf: A communicative approach

Elisa Veronica Verrando

In 2015, a project was initiated to address the challenges faced by deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) individuals learning Italian, particularly those migrating to Italy. With no specific courses available, these individuals often struggled with social integration and employment. The project began by teaching Italian Sign Language (LIS) to those familiar with their native sign languages, followed by written Italian. The main objective was to teach grammatical rules and elementary vocabulary of written Italian to achieve basic linguistic skills (A2/B1), which in the Italian school system is typically achieved around age 14. Lessons, totaling 132 hours, were conducted using LIS and focused on the reading, analysis, and discussion of authentic texts, including literary passages, journalistic texts, comics, and advertisements. The course aimed to equip the participants with effective communication tools and strategies that facilitate autonomy in various contexts such as work, school, and family.

Chapter 11 Teaching a foreign language to Deaf and HH students: The experience of Mason Perkins Deaf Fund summer programs in Italy

Genny Brusegan Conte
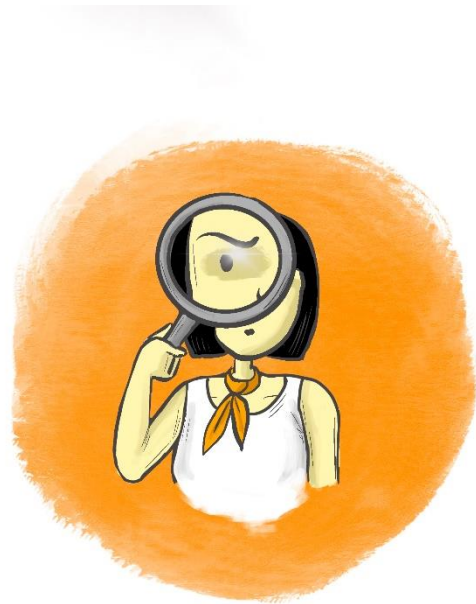
This chapter focuses on the unique Summer Program offered by the Mason Perkins Deaf Fund in Siena, an annual cultural exchange where Deaf American undergraduate students and professionals from various U.S. states immerse themselves in Italian Sign Language (LIS), Italian Deaf culture, and written Italian over three weeks. The curriculum is aligned with the CEFR A1 level, and the author details the communication and teaching methods while sharing personal insights and experiences. The chapter concludes with the author advocating for more opportunities to structure similar courses, not only for U.S. students but also for deaf immigrants from the same country or region. The author emphasizes that starting from a shared language and background is beneficial for peer-to-peer learning, enabling students to support each other and acquire the foreign language more quickly.

Chapter 12 A Multicultural Journey: The LangSkills international summer schools for deaf and hard of hearing learners and their teachers

Paulina Lewandowska

The last chapter focuses on the LangSkills II International Summer Schools series. These summer schools for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners of foreign languages and their teachers are highlighted as a transformative experience for participants, showcasing the significance of multilingualism in their lives. It's described as a pivotal event in a series across partner institutions' countries, aiming to enhance communication, education, and inclusivity within the DHH community. Through its focus on language learning and cultural understanding, LangSkills II equips participants with the skills needed for higher education, employment, and international interactions. The programme underscores the importance of multilingualism in fostering inclusive communities where linguistic diversity is celebrated and valued.