

Summer school report

DESCRIPTION

The first international summer school for Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners and their teachers took place from 26th of June–2nd of July 2022 in Telč, Czech Republic. The event was intended as a meaningful short-term mobility experience for the learners and teacher participants with an exceptional opportunity to engage in an active dialogue with peers and colleagues on the relevant topic of learning/teaching foreign languages.

The event was organized thanks to two EU funded projects:

LangSkills II

Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices / Strategic Partnerships in the field of education, training and youth

Project No: 2021-1-CZ01-KA220-HED-000023473

Coordinator: Masaryk University (**MU**)

Partners: The John Paul II Catholic University in Lublin (**KUL**), Siena School for Liberal Arts – ISLA srl (**ISLA**)

Telč 22

Erasmus+ Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals | Mobility projects for youth workers

Project No: 2022-1-CZ01-KA153-YOU-000070171

Coordinator: Masaryk University (**MU**)

Partners: European Union of the Deaf Youth (**EUDY**), Czech Deaf Youth (**CDY**), Slovak Association of Deaf Youth Clubs (**SAKMN**), Stowarzyszenie Mówiących Osób Niedosłyszących i Użytkowników Implantów Słuchowych (**SUITA**)

Aim

The summer school was intended to provide a floor for learners and teachers to meet outside the classroom, and to reflect on how the participants' approaches to foreign language teaching/learning, giving them both ideas and best practices they can put into practice.

- It was designed for learners to be a discussion forum to talk about the topics related to foreign language learning, learning preferences, deafness, relevance of meeting internationally, and appreciating each other's DHH culture.
- It offered a unique opportunity for teachers to meet educators working with DHH learners from different countries and discuss issues all teachers necessarily encounter in their classroom but perhaps approach differently. It is also a welcome chance to think of possible cooperation such as projects or exchanges in the future.

Learning outcomes

By attending the summer school, **LangSkills II learners** will:

1. become aware of their preferred learning style(s) and learning preferences
2. be acquainted with techniques and strategies leading to independent, self-regulated language learning
3. have more confidence in their ability to learn a foreign language
4. strengthen their knowledge of English and (in case of signing students) International Sign
5. learn the basics of Czech Sign Language and learn about Czech deaf culture
6. develop interpersonal and intercultural skills thanks to their interaction in the multilingual, multimodal and multicultural atmosphere of the event

By attending the summer school, **LangSkills II teachers** will:

1. meet an international group of EFL teachers working with deaf and hard of hearing persons and share best practices
2. attend a series of workshops focused on selected topics of TELF to DHH learners
3. be able to share the results of their teaching and research activities and benefit from feedback and ideas of fellow teachers
4. meet international DHH students and have the opportunity to listen to their wishes and opinions on teaching methods and activities used in their educational contexts
5. get to know the basics of Czech Sign Language and learn about Czech deaf culture and other participants' cultures
6. get an opportunity to plan future collaboration
7. review the materials created within the LangSkills II project and take part in the discussions about them

By attending the summer school, **Telč 22 youth workers** will:

1. meet other youth workers from different European countries and have a chance to discuss their daily work in their respective associations
2. become aware of their preferred learning style(s), be acquainted with techniques and strategies leading to a more effective foreign language learning, test in practice the suggested learning strategies and be able to share them with their association members
3. familiarise themselves with deaf cultures of international summer school participants
4. strengthen their knowledge of English and International Sign and become acquainted with Czech Sign Language and Czech deaf culture
5. develop interpersonal and intercultural skills
6. motivate with their example their association members to look for international mobilities as a way to self-development and to gain confidence and new skills

APPLICATION PROCESS

The call for applications was widely disseminated through the participating associations with the help of the coordinator and particularly, EUDY, through its extensive web of contacts.

Eligibility

The learner section was open to DHH learners aged 18 and over who

- are higher education students / are preparing themselves for entering university / are graduates / are preparing themselves for a career in education and/or service provision to DHH individuals / are active in youth work
- have studied some foreign language (English, Spanish, ...)
- have a good grasp of elementary level vocabulary and grammar in English
- want to meet other deaf and hard of hearing people and enjoy their time together in the Czech Republic

The teacher section welcomed teachers of foreign languages who work with DHH learners and have at least intermediate knowledge of English.

Promotion materials

[Flyer](#)

[Invitation letter](#)

[Video invitation](#) in Czech Sign Language & English captions (380 views on YouTube as of 22 July 2022)

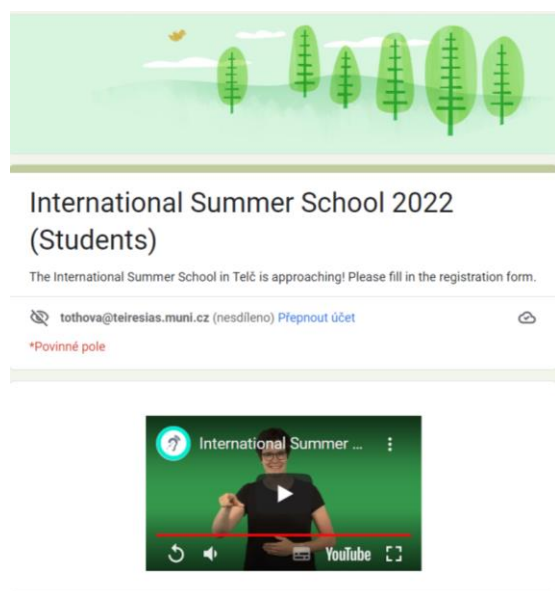
[Video invitation](#) in International Sign & English captions (212 views as of 22 July 2022)

Registration forms

The applicants were asked to fill in their registration forms:

[Registration form for students](#) (+ interpretation into International Sign)

[Registration form for teachers](#)



Participants

In total, 17 places were offered to youth workers within the KA1 programme (Telč 22): 7 for facilitators and 9 for youth workers. Out of these, 3 places remained unoccupied and 1 person withdrew for family reasons, meaning that in fact, 13 people benefited from the KA1 grant (7 facilitators, 6 youth workers). One of the original partner associations withdrew from the project due to other commitments and financial reasons, but the coordinator was able to replace it with a new partner - the Polish association SUITA.

The LangSkills II project offered 24 places: 15 for students (5 per country), and 9 for teachers (3 per country). The real numbers resulted in welcoming 18 participants: 11 students - 3 from the Czech Republic, 5 from Poland, 3 from Italy; and 7 teachers - 4 from the Czech Republic and 3 from Poland. The reason no teachers from Italy attended the summer school may lie in the fact that in Italy the great majority of deaf learners attend mainstream schools alongside their hearing peers (Tomasuolo at al., 2013, p. 12). Therefore, finding teachers directly working with DHH learners is different than in the other partner countries.

All in all, 31 participants took part in the summer school.

This group was joined by service providers: 3 international sign interpreters, 2 speech-to-text reporters, and several technicians and organizers.

Expectations

Before attending summer school, the top ranking expectations among student participants were:

- an opportunity for self-growth, gaining new experience and skills
- opportunity to meet deaf people from abroad
- a chance to practice English
- an opportunity to learn new signs/practice sign language

Extracts from their responses in the registration form are included below.

"I really like the theme of this summer school. I believe that it is important to be aware of why do you want to learn foreign language and get to know many ways of learning other languages that might work in your case. That's also a great occasion to meet D/HH from other countries and share experience with them"

"I would like to develop and get to know myself in such a group for people with hearing problems."

"I chose summer school because the only course there is full accessibility"

"Because i would like to improve my languages in English and International Sign".

Teachers' expectations mostly concerned exchanging best practices and meeting other professionals in the field:

“[I hope to learn] Tips on the most appropriate ways of teaching deaf students, how to motivate them, tips on teaching materials and tools and suitable textbooks. Knowledge about the culture of the deaf.”

Expectations were therefore in line with what the summer school was meant to offer.

Information package

Before their arrival, the participants received an **information booklet** and the latest version of the **programme**. Online consultations with the participants were held either using Zoom and MS Teams calls, phone or in person.

[Information Booklet](#)
[Programme](#)

COMMUNICATION

Smooth communication and establishing proper communication channels to ensure accessibility of the event was a top priority. A team of skilled and experienced professionals was hired to provide interpreting between English and International Sign for signers, and speech-to-text reporting (STTR) in written English for non-signing participants.

The main communication language of the event was English, accessed by the participants mostly in written form - some knowledge of English was one of the eligibility criteria.

On the first day of the event, a summer school WhatsApp group was set up. Its aim was to use it to give updates, send important messages, summarise important practical information such as meeting times, etc. Participants also used it to exchange social media profiles and to share photos and videos.

During the welcome session, contact persons were introduced: one for those who communicate using spoken English, and one for signers.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 (Sun) - 26.6.2022

The morning and noon of the first day were left for individual exploration of the town of Telč and its surroundings. Joint activities started with an afternoon welcome session held in the University Centre's courtyard. It was followed by icebreaker and getting-to-know-each-other games. The participants introduced themselves, shared their name signs, reasons for applying for this summer school and their expectations, etc. All participants took part in these sessions.



DAY 2 (Mon) - 27.6.2022

Day 2 started with a Czech sign language session and an introduction into Czech Deaf culture which continues after a coffee break. There were two afternoon sessions: learners (signers & non-signers) took part in a city discovery game with tasks revolving around the history and culture of Telč, aspects of Czech culture in general and also included some English language learning tasks. Teachers attended a session on the importance of reflective practice in ELT and included an activity related to learners' language learning journeys. There was an evening session on animals and creating new animal related signs.





DAY 3 (Tue) - 28.6.2022

The first morning session on Tuesday was used in the student section for inviting learners to think back on their language learning, feelings, motivations and all sorts of experiences that link to it. The learners were to express their individual journeys visually, by drawing them. Teachers had the chance to explore the town with the local guide. For the second morning session, the groups worked together. The participants received an adapted version of the learning styles survey (output 1) and completed it. Then they discussed their results with the session leaders.

After lunch, non-signers took part in a session on using sign language dictionaries and reasons to do so. The session was repeated after coffee break for signers. In a parallel session, teachers exchanged best practices and shared their views on challenging areas of their teaching practice and new ideas they tested with their students.

In the evening, there was an optional, quiz-based session capitalizing on information provided in the Monday session.





DAY 4 (Wed) - 29.6.2022

Morning sessions offered separate sessions for teachers and learners. Learners attended an awareness-raising workshop based on English idioms putting into practice the knowledge acquired during the Tuesday session on learning preferences. Then, they joined a lecture given by a deaf linguist on the relevance of CEFR and its adaptation for Czech Sign language users. Teachers, in parallel sessions, joined a virtual session by a German-based researcher informing them about German initiatives aimed at teachers who teach bimodal-bilingual students in a foreign language, followed by discussion. The second session focused on CEFR, its purpose, benefits and drawbacks, structure, descriptors and how it is being adapted for sign languages, including several activities and reflective tasks.

The afternoon session was given by two student participants who presented their project and their experiences with study stays abroad, showing the attendees some real-life scenarios, giving them tasks and activities and encouraging them to travel. After this session, teachers went to attend a session by a Polish teacher participant, who informed the group about the current situation of ELT for DHH learners in Poland and shared some of her teaching materials. Students were again invited to reflect on their learning thanks to an activity.





DAY 5 (Thur) - 30.6.2022

On Thursday, there was a field trip planned for all participants. The group went by bus to a Gothic castle nearby to enjoy the surroundings of Telč and its history. There were two guided tours booked for the participants. After the castle tour, the group was taken to a nearby pond, where they got divided into groups and received instructions for their roving reporters' activity while hiking back to Telč. The activity consisted in preparing TV reports from the hiking trip introducing the area to different audiences. After returning, participants started to get ready for the cultural evening, which started after dinner. It was an opportunity to discover more about each other's cultures.



DAY 6 (Fri) - 1.7.2022

Friday was the last training day. It started with separate slots for teachers and learners. Teachers attended lectures given by Polish researchers on cued speech, one of the visual systems of communication DHH persons use, and on current news and activities in the field

of EFI for DHH learners. In a parallel session, learners took part in a workshop given by EUDY representatives, on current trends and challenges in youth work in general.

The afternoon session was shared by all groups and it was led by members of the HandsDance group, who specialize in interpreting music into sign languages. This hands-on session offered a unique opportunity for participants to come up with their take on two songs. For most of them, it was their first experience with artistic sign language interpretation of songs.

The summer school was officially closed with a final ceremony, led by the organizers and invited guests: Telč mayor, University Centre Telč's director and the director of the Teiresias Centre - Support Centre for Students with Special Needs. The ceremony ended with handing over certificates. HandsDance delivered a performance and participants joined them with the two songs they learnt and rehearsed in the afternoon before the closing event.



Engagement with the local community

Ultimately, the summer school's goal was not only to provide an enjoyable and stimulating environment for the participants but also to extend its benefits beyond the direct participant circle, reaching out to local communities. For this reason, the summer school opened its closing ceremony to the wide public to attend the performance given by the Hands Dance group and two songs they performed together with the summer school participants. The aim was to share deaf culture and the different ways of expressing and experiencing music. The performance was very successful as confirmed by the town mayor, the director of the university centre and the visitors themselves.

Vladimír Brtník a Jarda Makovec jsou v místě Univerzitní centrum Telč. 4. červenec 2022 · Telč, Kraj Vysočina ·

Bylo mi velkou ctí zúčastnit se závěrečného vystoupení letní školy pro nedoslýchavé a neslyšící studenty a studentky v Univerzitním centru MU v Telči.



Středisko Teiresiás 4. červenec 2022 ·

Skončila nezapomenutelná letní škola pro nedoslýchavé a neslyšící studenty a jejich vyučující věnovaná výuce jazyků v Telči. Rádi bychom poděkovali opravdu vše... Zobrazit víc

Vám a 19 dalším

2 komentáře · 1 sdílení

Jarda Makovec 4. červenec 2022 ·

Víte, jak neslyšící tančí? Nebo jak se švédsky znakuje "děkuji" a jak třeba anglicky? My s panem starostou Vladimírem Brtníkem už jo. Člověk se prostě pořád učí...hlavně ale o sobě a o tom, že pokory není nikdy dost... A taky, že hodnotu člověka dělá hlavně to, jak se dokáže poprat či vyrovnat se svými limity. Skvělá akce se skvělými lidmi ve skvělém Univerzitním centru Telč ...

#dyckytelc
#dyckymuni



Středisko Teiresiás 4. červenec 2022 ·

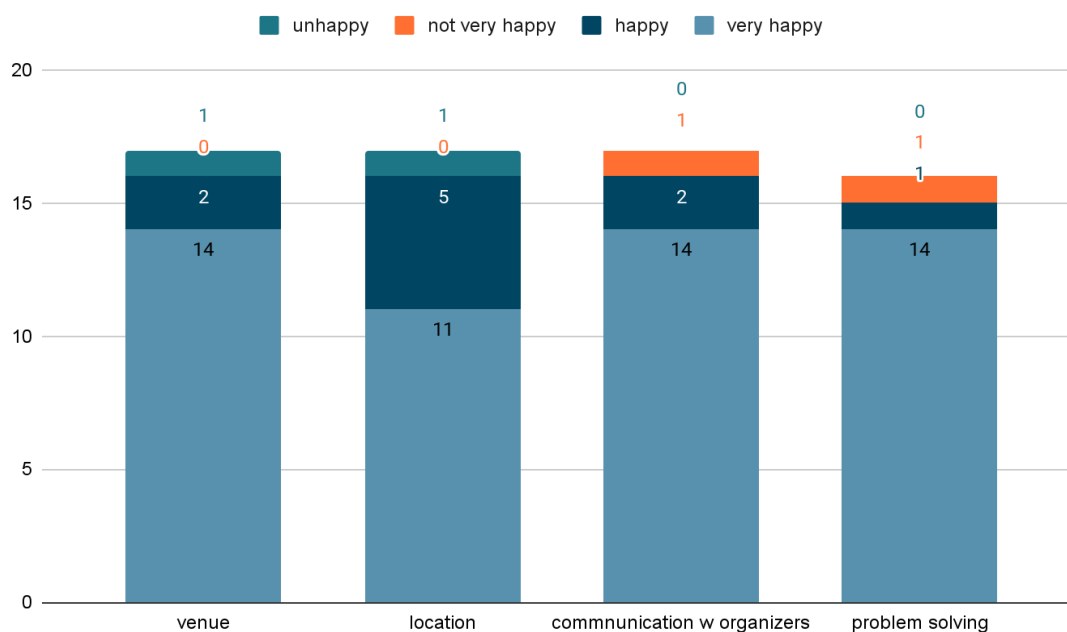
Skončila nezapomenutelná letní škola pro nedoslýchavé a neslyšící studenty a jejich vyučující věnovaná výuce jazyků v Telči. Rádi bychom poděkovali opravdu vše... Zobrazit víc

Vám a 7 dalším

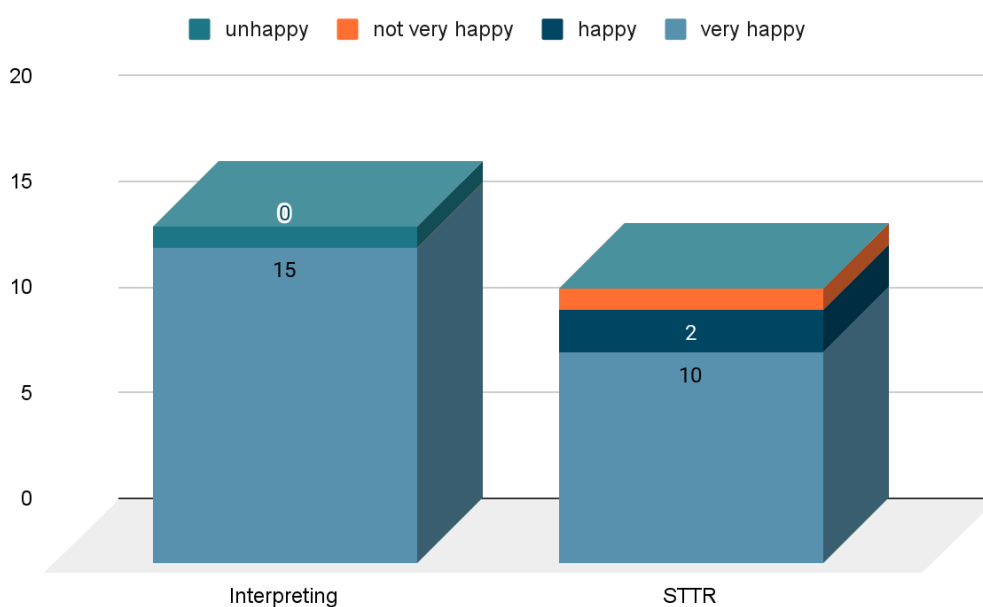
FEEDBACK

Following the event, two feedback surveys were created using Google Forms: for teachers from the LangSkills II project and for learners of both projects. In total, 16 participants took to fill in the feedback forms: 5 teachers and 13 learners.

The first part, relating to organisational issues, was common to both teacher and student feedback surveys. The general level of satisfaction with organization was very high (see Fig. 1). The evaluated items were satisfaction with the venue (Telc University Centre), location (Telc), communication with the organizers and general problem solving.



Also the vast majority of all participants was very satisfied with the provided interpreting between English and International Sign and STTR in written English.



Following questions focused on the programme itself. Participants were then asked different questions, depending on whether they attended the teacher or learner thread of sessions.

Learners' feedback on programme

Learners were asked to choose activities they thought most beneficial from several perspectives:

- Activities that were rated as **most beneficial in terms of learners' self-growth** were the Czech Sign Language & Czech Deaf culture session in the first place, followed by the Telč city game which introduced the participants to some aspects of Czech culture and took them to explore the town of Telc. The next best rated sessions were a reflective session on language learning histories and a workshop dealing with inclusive mobilities and the related do's and don'ts.
- Activities that were considered **most contributive towards learners' language learning** were the Tuesday session on language learning journeys, a session dedicated to raising learners' awareness about their learning which included the adapted learning styles survey, and an activity dealing with English idioms used as a springboard for thinking about people's learning strategies.
- Activities rated as to be leading to increased social interaction and intercultural competences were the Cultural evening, in the first place, followed by the Telc town tour, visit to the Gothic castle Rostejn, and the subsequent roving reporters activity.
- Activities that taught learners many **interesting new facts and a lot of information** were Animals: A session with an animal enthusiast, followed by a session on the importance of reflecting the way we learn, using a newly adapted learning styles survey and reflection activities, and the Monday session which introduced participants to Czech Sign Language and Czech Deaf culture.

In the final section, learners had the chance to add any suggestions or comments.

"Summer school again!"

"It was a very successful project in which I learned a lot in terms of sign languages. I enjoyed workshops and I liked working with other participants."

"The all was the best"

Some of them also left messages on social media or sent them by email:

"The TELC experience was wonderful! I learned a lot about: sign language and Czech culture, methods and styles of fast learning a foreign language, exchanges of experience with other countries and information about EUDY. I participated in all the activities with great joy, I won the 1st place at TELC (city tour Game) and the 3rd place at Kakoot Animals.

The most interesting experience was singing in the language of international signs: PHARREL William's HAPPY with the choreographer from "HANDS DANCE". The trainers from TELC are professional, they offered us many beautiful moments and useful information. I also noticed the

professionalism of the interpreters in the language of international signs! The group of participants was very active, communicative and friendly!" (student, sent by email)

One respondent suggested organizers invited more people, including deaf-blind persons. Two respondents pointed out that the event was focused on signers, who were in majority, and therefore saw the event as more suitable for sign language users. Some voiced their surprise that no more English language focused practice was involved; however, it was not the advertised aim of the summer school.

Teachers' feedback on programme

Questions for teachers were designed differently than those in the learner survey.

All teachers found the programme well planned, offering good balance between training and breaks.

"The programme was interesting, well thought out, well organized, from the initial "Welcome icebreaker games", where we could get to know almost all of the gradually arriving participants in a fun way, to the last afternoon with a very interesting cultural wrap up with the artists from Hands Dance. The morning workshops were interesting, varied and at the same time there was enough time to get to know each other and the city of Telč and its surroundings. I consider it the best summer school I have had the opportunity to attend so far."

When asked about activities the teachers found most beneficial with regard to their teaching activities, teachers repeatedly voiced that the best part was best practices sharing and meeting their colleagues such as the following teacher did: "reflection on our language path - I will be using this in my future teaching; meeting on the Framework for Languages - a lot of useful updates and tips".

"Discussion, mind map of how they [learners] learn foreign languages, what helps them in their learning - their own experiences, sharing them. What was really great was the fact that the teachers had some joint sessions with learners; this way they learned a lot about them, learn more about their needs. If the teachers and students always worked separately, the summer school wouldn't have had such an effect. It was also great that there was a mix of diverse students (deaf, hard of hearing, deaf, CI users) - this way the teachers and the students themselves got to see how diverse this group of learners is, and how to approach themselves from both the teacher and student perspective."

"I found it interesting to share experiences about teaching using cued speech and incorporating ASL into teaching or using ASL as a communication tool in English language classes, though I don't think I can use either of these communication methods in my teaching. Nevertheless, it was interesting to learn how these communication methods work in practice."

The event was considered unique because there is no similar event offering this kind of training content while ensuring such a level of accessibility.

"This is a unique event in the Czech Republic - I have never seen an event which would bring together English language teachers of DHH persons and DHH learners at the same time."

"I think that it is important for educators who teach D/deaf and hard of hearing persons to meet, either for mutual support or sharing. There are not enough of these opportunities, respectively, none at all. So it's great that such a Summer School gets to be organized."

In general, the possibility of both groups (teachers and learners) to meet was valued very highly and it testaments the need for both groups to work closely together to achieve common goals and learn from each other.

All teachers answered that they would recommend taking part in the international summer school to their colleagues because it is a chance to enrich themselves.

"I would definitely recommend it to anyone who teaches (and is involved in teaching - e.g. interpreters) DHH pupils or students in any language. I think it is important to share experiences and inspire each other - there is a wonderful space for that there."

"Certainly, it's something that we don't have time for during the school year (most of us also have responsibilities outside school) - and here is a great opportunity to "catch up" both in theory and practice, to make contacts with people who are in the same profession, and to be in touch with them for future collaboration, which will help to improve the quality of teaching, new projects, etc."

Photos

A selection of photos can be found on the Telč 22 project [websites](#).

CONCLUSION

All in all, the partnership is happy to conclude that the first summer school met its objective, was very well received by those it was meant to benefit and provided an opportunity for their self-growth. In the words of the Slovak partner, SAKMN and its president, "It's important for deaf people to build a deaf identity, to continue learning and gaining new information and, particularly, new international friends."

References

Tomasuolo, E.; Valeri, G.; Renzo, Pasqualetti, P. & Volterra, V. Deaf Children Attending Different School Environments: Sign Language Abilities and Theory of Mind, *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Volume 18, Issue 1, 2013, 12–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/ens035>