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INCLUSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING STUDENTS

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Abstract: The article looks at how English can be taught to deaf and hard-of-hearing students in a way that is inclusive in practice and not only on paper. It argues that these learners are a diverse group, many of whom use a sign language as their first language, so English is best approached as a written second language within a bilingual framework. Typical barriers in the four language skills are analysed, and visual, technological and assessment-related adaptations are discussed. Practical proposals for teachers and institutions are offered, with attention to the situation in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: inclusive education, English language teaching, deaf and hard-of-hearing students, sign language, bilingual education, universal design for learning, sustainable development.

KAR VA ZAIF ESHITUVCHI TALABALARGA INKLYUZIV INGLIZ TILI TA’LIMI

Annotatsiya. Maqolada kar va zaif eshituvchi talabalarga ingliz tilini haqiqiy ma’noda inklyuziv o‘qitish yo‘llari ko‘rib chiqiladi. Bunday o‘quvchilar bir xil guruh emas, ularning ko‘pchiligi uchun ona tili imo-ishora tili ekani va shu bois ingliz tilini ikki tilli yondashuv doirasida, asosan yozma ikkinchi til sifatida o‘rgatish maqsadga muvofiqligi asoslanadi. To‘rt til ko‘nikmasi bo‘yicha uchraydigan to‘siqlar tahlil qilinib, vizual, texnologik va baholash bilan bog‘liq moslashtirishlar yoritiladi. O‘qituvchilar va ta’lim muassasalari uchun, O‘zbekiston sharoitini hisobga olgan holda, amaliy takliflar beriladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: inklyuziv ta’lim, ingliz tilini o‘qitish, kar va zaif eshituvchi talabalar, imo-ishora tili, ikki tilli ta’lim, o‘qitishning universal dizayni, barqaror rivojlanish.

ИНКЛЮЗИВНОЕ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ГЛУХИМ И СЛАБОСЛЫШАЩИМ СТУДЕНТАМ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается, как можно преподавать английский язык глухим и слабослышащим студентам так, чтобы инклюзия работала на практике, а не только на бумаге. Показано, что эти обучающиеся составляют неоднородную группу, и для многих из них родным является жестовый язык, поэтому английский целесообразно осваивать как письменный второй язык в рамках билингвального подхода. Проанализированы типичные трудности в четырёх видах речевой деятельности, описаны визуальные, технологические и оценочные адаптации. Предложены практические рекомендации для преподавателей и учебных заведений с учётом ситуации в Узбекистане.

Ключевые слова: инклюзивное образование, преподавание английского языка, глухие и слабослышащие студенты, жестовый язык, билингвальное обучение, универсальный дизайн обучения, устойчивое развитие.

Introduction. Hearing loss is far more common than most teachers assume. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 1.5 billion people live with some degree of it [1]. Behind that number are very different people. Some were born deaf and use a sign language every day, some lost their hearing later, and many are hard of hearing and rely on hearing aids, lip-reading and a seat close to the teacher. Sooner or later they all end up in a classroom where someone speaks English and expects an answer.

International documents are fairly clear about what should happen next. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires an inclusive education system and, among other things, calls for facilitating the learning of sign language and promoting the linguistic identity of the deaf community [2]. Sustainable Development Goal 4 likewise speaks of equal access to all levels of education for persons with disabilities [3]. In Uzbekistan, as in many countries, deaf children have traditionally been taught mostly in specialised schools, while inclusive education in ordinary institutions is still taking shape. English teachers, whose subject seems to be built around listening and speaking, often feel the least prepared. This article starts from that gap.

The aim of the study is to identify the main barriers that deaf and hard-of-hearing students face in learning English and to propose practical, inclusive approaches that teachers and institutions can realistically use.

Research methodology. The study is based on the analysis of academic literature and international documents, comparative analysis of teaching approaches, and generalisation. It should be said openly that the article does not present the results of an original classroom experiment or survey; its conclusions rest on published research and on professional practice described in it.

Main part (results and discussion).

Not one group, but many. The first thing a teacher has to accept is that “deaf and hard-of-hearing students” is not a single category. Learners differ in the degree and type of hearing loss, in the age at which it occurred, in whether they use hearing aids or cochlear implants, in whether they grew

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up in a signing family, and in the kind of school they attended [4]. Many deaf people also see themselves not as people with a deficit but as members of a linguistic and cultural minority [5]. For a teacher this means that the useful question is not "What do deaf students need?" but "What does this student need?", and the student is usually the best person to answer it.

English as a second language, usually a written one. For many deaf students the first language is a sign language, and spoken and written languages are reached mostly through print. In our context English often becomes one more layer on top of a sign language and written Uzbek or Russian. Early access to a fully accessible first language matters a great deal, and long delays in such access can have lasting effects on later learning [6]. For this reason a bilingual approach looks sensible: F. Grosjean argues that a deaf child can and should grow up bilingual [7]. Whether skills in a sign language transfer directly to written language is still debated [8], but there is wide agreement that the reading and writing difficulties of deaf learners reflect limited access to language much more than limited ability [9]. Seen this way, English for deaf students is simply a written second language, taught with the means that are really accessible to them.

The four skills, reconsidered. A communicative English course is usually described through listening, speaking, reading and writing. For deaf and hard-of-hearing students each of these needs a second look, and the main points are gathered in Table 1.

Table 1. The four skills and vocabulary: barriers and adaptations

Skill	Typical barrier	Inclusive adaptation
Listening	Audio-only tasks and recordings are inaccessible or only partly accessible	Captions and transcripts; comprehension checked through text or sign; a choice of format for students with residual hearing
Speaking	Pronunciation is treated as the main sign of progress	Priority given to communication; written, typed or signed alternatives; oral work optional and never forced
Reading	English print is often a second language; vocabulary gaps	Pre-taught key words, images and glossed texts, explanation in sign language, extra time
Writing	Sentence patterns influenced by sign language grammar	Feedback on ideas first, then form; model texts and drafts; errors treated as language transfer
Vocabulary and grammar	Words learned by ear and sound do not stick	Visual mnemonics, colour-coding, fingerspelling together with signs, spaced visual review

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Listening is the obvious problem, but it does not have to be removed from the course. It can be redefined: students follow a recording through captions or a transcript and show understanding in writing or in sign. Students with some residual hearing may want to try the audio itself, and they should be allowed to, as a choice and not as a requirement. Speaking deserves the same flexibility. A teacher who measures progress by pronunciation alone will miss everything the student actually knows.

Visual learning without visual overload. It is tempting to assume that a deaf student simply learns through the eyes and that more visuals will solve everything. In practice the eyes can get overloaded. Research on classroom interpreting shows that a student who follows an interpreter has to move attention constantly between the interpreter, the teacher and the board or slides, and this limits how much information is taken in [10]. Simple habits help: do not speak while writing on the board or turning away; pause so that students can look at the slide and then at the speaker; let only one person speak at a time in group work; arrange seating so everyone can see each other's faces. Captions help too, and not only deaf students: there is evidence that captioned video improves attention and comprehension for many viewers [11]. The broader idea is universal design for learning, which means offering several ways of presenting information and of showing understanding from the start, rather than adapting materials after a problem appears [12].

Assessment. The standard should stay the same, while the means of reaching it can change. A listening test can be replaced by a captioned or signed version with the same learning goals; an oral interview can be done in writing or through an interpreter. The rules of external examinations differ, so it is better to find out in advance what accommodations are allowed and to document what was agreed, than to discover the limits on the day of the exam.

Proposals. On the basis of the analysis we consider the following measures appropriate. First, short in-service courses for English teachers on deaf awareness, universal design for learning and working with sign language interpreters. Second, a bilingual approach in which the sign language is used to explain and discuss, and English is the written target; where possible, deaf adults can take part as mentors or co-teachers, because they know from experience what works. Third, a rule that every audio and video material comes with captions or a transcript, and that slides and vocabulary lists are shared before the lesson. Fourth, flexible assessment with agreed and documented adaptations. Fifth, a few simple classroom norms, such as facing the group, taking turns and checking understanding, that make a lesson more accessible for everyone, not only for deaf students. Sixth, cooperation between educational institutions and organisations of the deaf community, along with more research into English teaching for deaf learners in Uzbekistan, since local data are still scarce.

Conclusion. Teaching English to deaf and hard-of-hearing students is not a matter of making a hearing lesson louder or slower. It requires seeing these learners as a diverse group, often bilingual, for whom English is mostly a written language, and building the lesson around access instead of around sound. Visual materials, captions, flexible assessment and respect for sign language do not lower the standard; they let students show what they can do. Inclusive practice of this kind supports the goals of sustainable development in education, and it usually makes the class better for everyone in it.

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