

Agnieszka Dzieciół-Pędich, PhD

adzieciol-pedich@uwb.edu.pl

IPSEN SIG - <https://ipsen.iatefl.org/>

University of Białystok, Poland



Teaching students with a hearing loss – teaching tips

Table of contents:

- **Hearing loss – impact**
- **Deafness – types**
- **Classroom arrangements – seating**
- **Classroom arrangements – lightning**
- **Teacher’s behaviour**
- **Classroom arrangements – acoustics**
- **Addressing students /giving instructions / testing accommodations**
- **Useful links:**

1. Hearing loss – impact

Hearing loss impacts¹:

- the production of speech sounds
- hearing and understanding language

¹ <https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/factsheet-adjustments-for-students-with-a-hearing-impairment/>

- producing oral language
- acquiring and using background knowledge
- accessing information presented in the classroom
- understanding new concepts – particularly language-based concepts
- interacting with others

2. Deafness – types

There are two basic types of deafness: **pre-lingual** and **post-lingual** deafness.

Pre-lingual deafness

- Pre-lingual deafness occurs before learning speech or language.
- More than 90% of pre-lingually deaf children are unlikely to ever develop good speech and good speech-reception skills, despite being fitted with hearing aids and provided with oral instruction and speech therapy at a young age².
- Without developing a strong language base before age 10 years, deaf people are unlikely to develop and use abstract concepts, and, despite about 90% of deaf children being raised orally, most end up using sign language as adults³.
- Deaf children who were most likely to attain high reading levels and graduate from college were, in fact, the children whose parents were themselves deaf⁴.

Post-lingual deafness

- Post-lingual deafness develops after the acquisition of speech and language⁵.
- Post-lingual deafness can occur gradually or have a sudden onset⁶.
- One's communicative ability is not necessarily affected by hearing loss.
- We can observe alterations in voice tone and modulation.
- Students might have to adapt to using hearing aids or a cochlear implant, develop speech-reading skills, and/or learn sign language⁷.

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(00\)05294-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(00)05294-6/fulltext)

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(00\)05294-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(00)05294-6/fulltext)

⁴ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(00\)05294-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(00)05294-6/fulltext)

⁵ <https://www.sharecare.com/health/hearing-damage/what-is-post-lingual-deafness>

⁶ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hearing-loss/>

⁷ <https://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-teaching/specific-disabilities/deaf-hearing-impaired>

- Individuals might suffer from loneliness and depression - a result of isolation (the inability to communicate)
- Individual might find it difficult to accept their disability. The challenge is made greater by the need for those around them to adapt to the person's hearing loss.
- Communication difficulties and adjustments may lead to a level of anxiety about performing in front of others. This may affect participation in lessons, particularly for students whose speech development has been impacted by their hearing loss.

3. Classroom arrangements – seating

- Seat the pupil for optimal listening and visual cues within the classroom⁸:
 - o pupil's back to the window
 - o seated one third (1/3) of the distance of the room from the teacher
 - o not in the front row directly beneath the teacher
 - o away from chatty or easily-distracted students

!!! Some students may not be comfortable with these suggestions or have alternate strategies. Respect their choices.

4. Classroom arrangements – lightning

- No bright lights shining directly in the child's face.
- Back-lighting is ideal.
- Students who lip-read cannot function in darkened rooms. You may need to adjust the lighting in your teaching environment⁹.

5. Teacher's behaviour

- Talk to parents and students to learn as much as you can about the student's needs and concerns.
- Be aware that every child is an individual with his/her own strengths and limitations. Thus it is important not to have a preconceived notion of function based on the degree of hearing loss¹⁰.

⁸ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/classroom-tips.html>

⁹ <https://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-teaching/specific-disabilities/deaf-hearing-impaired>

¹⁰ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/classroom-tips.html>

- Learn basic signs for instructions.
- Request in-service instruction to learn how to check your pupil's hearing aids¹¹ (Make sure Ss and parents are comfortable with that!). Keep extra batteries at hand.
- Face the class, not the blackboard, when speaking¹².
- Don't walk around the classroom while speaking.
- Ensure that you are clearly visible to the student at all times.
- Don't stand in front of the window.
- Keep your hands and other objects away from your face while speaking.
- Don't make any sudden head movements.
- Talk to your students facing them and keeping an eye contact.
- Don't suddenly touch your students.
- Check with pupils periodically to be certain that they can hear you well.
- Speak:
 - o in an ordinary tone of voice,
 - o without exaggerated lip movements,
 - o and at a normal rate of speaking¹³.
- Use age appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. Avoid:
 - o idioms,
 - o sarcasm,
 - o slang (if you use them, explain).

6. Classroom arrangements – acoustics

- For a pupil with a hearing loss, choose a classroom located away from traffic and noisy areas.
- Even simple things like shrubbery just outside the classroom windows can help reduce external noise¹⁴.
- Ensure that any background noise is minimised¹⁵.
- Evaluate and monitor internal classroom noises on an on-going basis¹⁶.
- Have equipment serviced regularly to eliminate noise created by malfunction¹⁷.

¹¹ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/classroom-tips.html>

¹² <https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/factsheet-adjustments-for-students-with-a-hearing-impairment/>

¹³ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/classroom-tips.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/how-listener-friendly-is-your-classroom.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-teaching/specific-disabilities/deaf-hearing-impaired>

¹⁶ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/how-listener-friendly-is-your-classroom.html>

- Close doors and windows, and also turn off any unused electrical equipment.

7. Addressing students /giving instructions / testing accommodations

- When addressing the pupil say his/her name first.
- Gain a deaf student's attention before speaking to him/her¹⁸:
 - o stand on a chair,
 - o stomp on the ground,
 - o wave your hand in their line of sight,
 - o or turn the lights off and back on.
- Use a focusing phrase e.g. "listen to this question".
- Model good listening habits by really listening to what your pupils are saying and showing interest¹⁹.
- Schedule specific times for sharing information / asking questions and give your full attention.
- Repeat and rephrase when necessary. Emphasize key words.
- Sometimes ask other pupils if they have heard or understood rather than always focusing on the child with hearing loss²⁰.
- Use buddies to help relay and rephrase information²¹.
- Repeat classmates' answers.
- Support your verbal instructions with visuals.
- Write instructions up on a board, so there is a point of reference for the student.
- Provide an outline of what is to be learnt.
- Teach routines, expectations of behaviour and consequences explicitly.
- Explain (sudden) changes of routine/activities so students know what is going on around them.
- Write classroom transitions on the board.
- Change the nature of the task (more emphasis on writing) and vary the conditions for a task.

¹⁷ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/how-listener-friendly-is-your-classroom.html>

¹⁸ <https://research.avondale.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1357&context=teach>

¹⁹ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/how-listener-friendly-is-your-classroom.html>

²⁰ <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/classroom-tips.html>

²¹ <https://www.deafnessforum.org.au/factsheet-adjustments-for-students-with-a-hearing-impairment/>

- Allow students to record lessons / take pictures of the board.
- Any videos or films used should, where possible, be captioned²².
- Be flexible with assignment deadlines.
- When their range of literacy is an issue, students may require the use of a thesaurus or dictionary during exams. A personal computer with spelling and grammar functions may be required²³.
- Provide extra time in examinations, particularly extra time for reading questions. Some students will prefer to have questions and instructions 'signed' to them²⁴.

Remember that no instructional strategy, however differentiated, will be effective if the student does not comprehend a speaker's communication attempts.

8. Useful links:

1. American Sign Language Dictionary:

<http://www.lifeprint.com/>

2. Online service for downloading subtitles from YouTube:

<https://downsub.com/>

3. Captioning and subtitling tools:

<https://www.ai-media.tv/the-best-free-captioning-and-subtitling-tools/>

4. A deafie's guide to accessing captions:

<https://www.hearinglikeme.com/a-deafies-guide-to-accessing-captions-anywhere/>

²² <https://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-teaching/specific-disabilities/deaf-hearing-impaired>

²³ <https://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-teaching/specific-disabilities/deaf-hearing-impaired>

²⁴ <https://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-teaching/specific-disabilities/deaf-hearing-impaired>