

Exploring teachers' views on hearing impaired students' language learning

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Context

- o Deaf and hard of hearing learners (D/HH) in Hungary: 7 residential schools, 1 vocational, 1 school for the hard-of-hearing
- o Teacher's perceptions influence their work, the expectations they have of the learners → what they value as success will influence learners' classroom experiences → interrelationship of teacher-learner beliefs and perceptions.

Research question

- o How do heads of schools and language teachers characterize foreign language learning and teaching in schools for Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners?
- o How do language teachers see their students' successes, and what do foreign language teachers find challenging in their work?

Method (1)

o Participants

- o 9 (7+1+1) schools
- o 7 heads (principals/vice principals)
- o 10 English and German as a Foreign Language teachers (8 females and 2 males; years of teaching: ranged between 3-20 years)
- o 1 itinerant teacher,

Special Education teacher	Foreign language teacher	Both SE and language teaching	Primary school teacher with English teaching qualifications
3+1	2	3	2

Method (2)

- Instrument

Semi-structured interview schedules focusing on the following issues:

- Language teaching goals in institutions for the D/HH
- Waivers and language learning
- Attainable proficiency levels
- Experiences of success
- Challenges
- Ideas as to improving language teaching in specialized institutions
- Use of HSL during language lessons

- Data analysis

19 interviews – 101 000 words

Content analysis of interviews using qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA)

Results (1)

Teaching arrangements	General description	Number of lessons
		Group size
		Other learning difficulties
	Waivers	
	Inclusion/integration	Itinerary teachers
		Problems of inclusion
Language teaching	Goals	
	Successes	Motivated learning behavior
	Challenges	Materials and methods
		Needs and wishes
Use of HSL in schools		
Language teacher training	HSL competence	
	Language specific teacher training	
	Teacher training	

Teaching arrangements

- o Two lessons a week from grade 5.
- o Small groups of students with individual needs (including additional learning difficulties).
- o Waivers – mostly given in inclusive contexts.
- o Itinerary teachers – very few with a wide geographical area to cover.
- o Problems in integration – waivers issued perhaps too readily in foreign language learning; lack of sufficient additional assistance for the teachers (need for acknowledging the extra workload and helping them with techniques and materials).

Language teaching

Teachers' perception about their learners' language learning needs and **goals** include the following:

- o Language learning goals must be adjusted to learners' individual needs;
- o Learn to get by in everyday life (written communication);
- o Use a FL for their future jobs and travelling;
- o Just simply open up the world for them.

Respondent: so that in English they learn the basics, a bare minimum, and so that they can communicate in writing

Interviewer: What do you mean by basics?

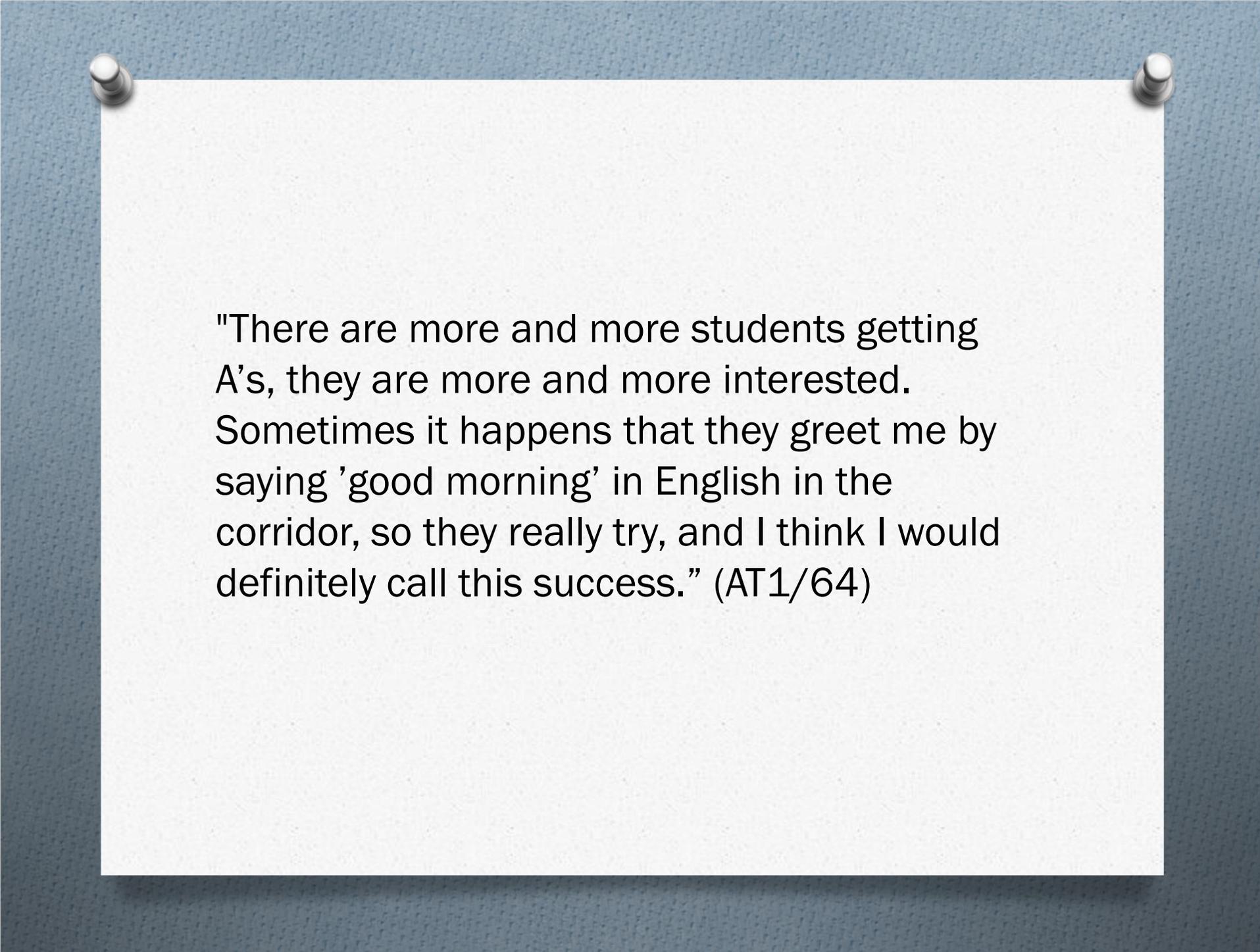
Respondent: So that they can get by using the foreign language. So they can make themselves understood in writing, and if they travel abroad, they can ask for directions, or they can simply buy a loaf of bread...

(AT1/33-35)

Language teaching

Teachers view their learners' motivated behavior as **success**:

- o Using English in- and outside the classroom;
- o Asking the meaning of unknown words encountered outside the class;
- o Using Facebook, email, online forums;
- o Using online dictionaries;
- o Interested in understanding signs and noticeboards while travelling.

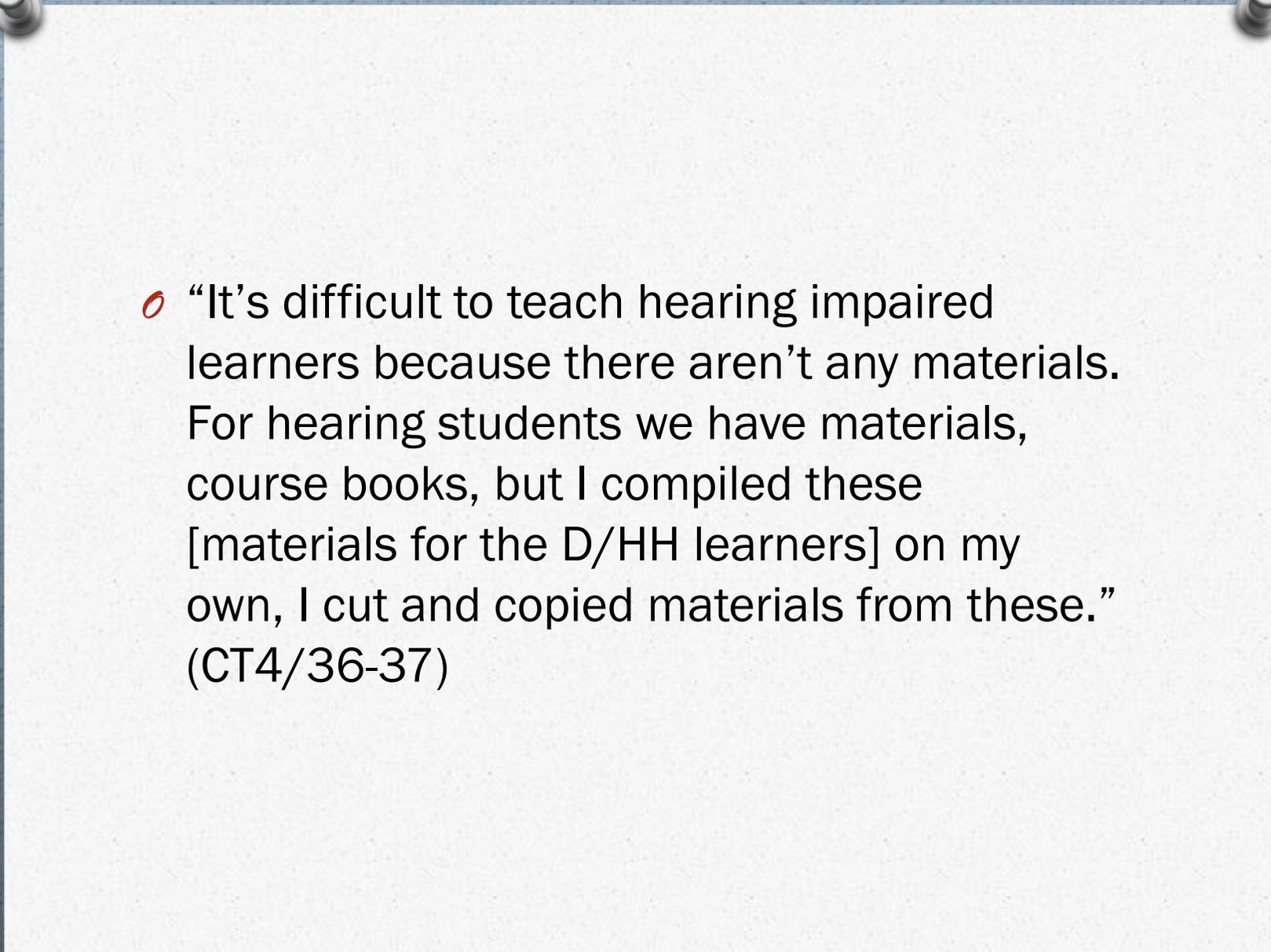


"There are more and more students getting A's, they are more and more interested. Sometimes it happens that they greet me by saying 'good morning' in English in the corridor, so they really try, and I think I would definitely call this success." (AT1/64)

Language teaching

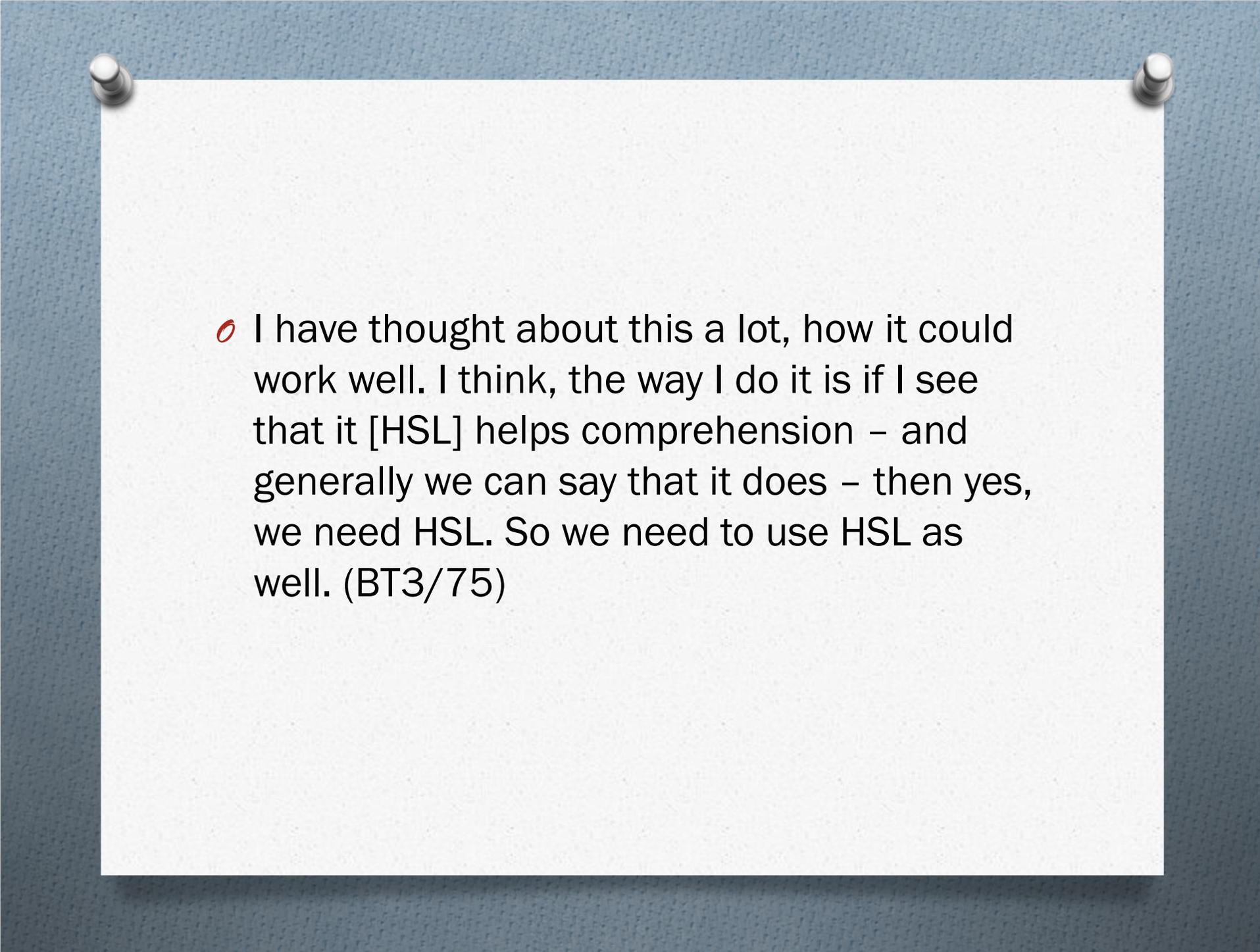
Challenges: lack of teaching methodology and materials

- o “Actually, the methodology [for teaching foreign languages to D/HH learners] is virtually non-existent. I couldn’t find anything on the internet, I asked for help from English language teachers who taught hearing impaired students before, and so I also had to develop my own technique with which teaching can be more efficient.” (IT10/101)

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- o “It’s difficult to teach hearing impaired learners because there aren’t any materials. For hearing students we have materials, course books, but I compiled these [materials for the D/HH learners] on my own, I cut and copied materials from these.” (CT4/36-37)

Use of HSL

- o All teachers agree that learning HSL would assist them in their work with D/HH students.
- o Some teachers have taken courses in HSL, but most have picked up basic signs from their students.
- o Others tend to rely on student interpreters.



o I have thought about this a lot, how it could work well. I think, the way I do it is if I see that it [HSL] helps comprehension – and generally we can say that it does – then yes, we need HSL. So we need to use HSL as well. (BT3/75)

Teacher training

Perceived necessity of the following:

- o Special education teacher qualifications
- o HSL competence
- o Language teacher qualifications (minimum in the form of a specialization)

- o The first two are generally not requirements of language teachers in inclusive settings.

Conclusion

Based on the interview data, the following can be suggested in assisting the language learning of hearing impaired students:

- o Meaningful goals (in temr of written foreign language communication)
- o Providing opportunities for learners to experience success in and outside the classroom.
- o Methods (providing methods and materials adpatable for D/HH learners' individual needs; providing possibilities for professional networking)
- o Using HSL in support of foreign language learning.



Thank you!