

Charles University in Prague

Faculty of Education

Department of the English Language and Literature

## BACHELOR THESIS

### **Teaching English to Deaf Students**

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## **Abstract**

This bachelor thesis focuses on the process of teaching the English language to students who are deaf. The objective of the theoretical part is to present possible differences in the process of teaching a foreign language that result from the different identity of deaf students and to illustrate the situation of teaching a foreign language to deaf students. The practical part aims to present various methods that may assist during the process of teaching. It also describes the observed lessons of English at schools for the hearing impaired.

## **Key words:**

Deaf students, English, Czech Sign Language, literacy of the deaf, means of communication of the deaf

## **Anotace:**

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na vyučování anglického jazyka u studentů, kteří jsou neslyšící. Cílem teoretické části práce je představit možné odlišnosti ve výuce cizího jazyka, které vycházejí z odlišné identity neslyšících studentů. Praktická část práce si klade za cíl představit možné metody, které mohou učitelé ve své výuce využít. Také popisuje náslechové hodiny angličtiny na školách pro sluchově postižené.

## **Klíčová slova:**

Neslyšící, angličtina, český znakový jazyk, gramotnost neslyšících, komunikační prostředky neslyšících

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that I have elaborated this thesis individually and that all the sources that were used are listed on the Works Cited page. No other sources were used.

Prague 2013

Tereza Kalivodová

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## **Introduction**

The objective of this bachelor thesis is the overview of the situation of teaching English to deaf students in the Czech Republic and the differences that arise from the different needs and identity of the deaf students.

The beginning of the theoretical part focuses on defining various terms that are necessary for understanding who this bachelor thesis refers to when it uses the term *deaf*. It also explains the background that the deaf students come from for better comprehension of the situation in education of the deaf. The main part concentrates on teaching the English language in the system of education of the deaf and the general and specific findings that regard the deaf students. An emphasis is put on the role of the teacher in the educational process since he/she is the mediator between the students and the subject matter that is essential to the access of information and to a better status in the labour market and the standard of living.

The practical part is divided into two parts. The first part describes the types of methods that can be used in lessons. One type of methods is based on the deaf people's visual perception of the world, next kind is the utilization of the already existing methods that are primarily aimed at hearing students. Others offer the possibility of helping students to study a foreign language and gain information through the means of a given context. The second part focuses on my observations of English lessons in all three schools for the hearing impaired that are in Prague. The objective was to observe the differences in teaching English and what methods and language was used during the lessons.

When writing this bachelor thesis, my personal objective was to gain knowledge and experience by finding valuable information that regards the teaching English to deaf students and by observing lessons because it is my wish to teach deaf students in the future with the Czech Sign Language as a language of instruction.

# **1. Theoretical part**

## **1.1. People with Hearing Impairment**

In the Czech Republic, the group of people with hearing impairment comprises a half million people (Hrubý 52). They form many different subgroups each with its specific needs. Hard-of-hearing people whose sense of hearing worsened due to their old age constitute the majority of the group of people with hearing impairment. There are approximately 15.000 deaf and hard-of-hearing people that were born with a hearing impairment or the impairment developed in their early age (Hrubý 53).

The division of the group of people with hearing impairment into subgroups is essential due to the fact that all these groups consist of people who have specific needs, however, the needs may differ; they may even oppose to one another (Hrubý 42). The basic division is **hard-of-hearing, deaf or deafened**. People who are hard of hearing “may hear only specific frequencies or sounds within a certain volume range. They may rely heavily upon hearing aids and lip reading... and may have speech impairments due to their inability to hear their own voices clearly” (University of Washington). People whose hearing loss occurred before they were born (or shortly after), therefore those who “always has been unable to perceive the phonemes of a spoken language,” (Macurová 2008, 34) and are not able to acquire a spoken language naturally and spontaneously, are pre-lingually deaf. People whose hearing loss occurred after they acquired a spoken language (at least partially) are deafened – post-lingually deaf people (Hrubý 44-45).

## **1.2. Deaf People from Pathological and Cultural Point of View**

There are two points of view that describe deaf people: the medical point of view and the cultural point of view. The medical or pathological point of view focuses on the loss of hearing and divides people with a hearing impairment into several groups (see Figure 1). From this point of view the people with hearing impairment are seen as people who lost something. The science tries to find ways to cure or ‘repair’ them. The aim is to approximate a deaf person to the standards of normalcy (Nováková; Berke). According to Pipeková, the hearing loss greater than 90 dB is defined as deafness (Pipeková et al. 86).

The cultural perspective on deafness views deaf people as members of a cultural and language minority – a Deaf community (with the capital letter *d*) who share language – in the context of the Czech Republic it is the Czech Sign Language – culture, history and life experience (Kosinová 6-7). The fact that there is a difference between the hearing and the deaf is natural. The degree of hearing loss does not matter. The deaf do not consider themselves handicapped. They use the term *Deaf* to indicate their affiliation to the Deaf community (Nováková; Berke).<sup>1</sup>

### **1.3. Means of Communication of People with Hearing Impairment**

Since the group of people with hearing impairment is divided into several subgroups, people with different hearing impairment will use different means of communication. In the context of the Czech Republic there are two languages of communication concerning the people with hearing loss – it is the Czech spoken language and the Czech Sign Language. Despite the fact that the languages differ in the medium in which they exist (the Czech language is an auditory language, the Czech Sign Language is a visual language), the languages are equal and natural living organisms developing according to the needs of their users. The Czech Sign Language (or any sign language) is not based on the grammatical structures of the Czech spoken language. The Czech Sign Language and the Czech language are both equipped to be acquired naturally. "...the critical feature of initial input is that it is consistent, adequate, and interactive, not whether it is auditory or visual. That is, infants must have adequate amounts of consistent interaction with the environment, including language, to develop properly, but there appears to be no bias toward auditory as opposed to visual input" (Wilbur 2000, 89).

There are many means of communication that hard-of-hearing, deafened or deaf people use to communicate, either with each other or with the hearing majority. The means of communication may be for example: **national spoken language, national sign language, written form of the national spoken language, signed national language, lip-reading or finger-spelling.**

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of simplicity, text I will not use the term Deaf in the following, in spite of the fact that I deeply respect the Deaf community.

### **1.3.1. National Spoken Language and National Sign Language**

In the Czech Republic the national spoken language is Czech. Hard-of-hearing and deafened people are more likely to use the Czech language, which arises from the fact that these two groups have or had a contact with the national spoken language and are led to use it or feel more comfortable using it.

Deaf people have been from time immemorial taught to speak, which is a long and a painful process. No matter how hard they try they will never achieve the results of hearing people. Because they cannot hear their mothers or fathers who often play the part of speaking role-models, they are not capable of imitating the sounds or controlling them. Some people may even mistake them for people who are mentally challenged because their speech is sometimes hardly comparable to the speech of a hearing person (Hrubý 45).

National Sign Language, in the context of the Czech Republic the Czech Sign Language, is a natural language as it possesses all attributes of a natural language. It is equal to any spoken language and it is not dependent on it as people sometimes assume. As well as a spoken language, a sign language is influenced by many factors that cause local or social differences in its usage, grammatical or lexical structures (Bímová et al. 16-17).

Many deaf people use the Czech Sign Language as their first language since it is a language that is accessible by their sense of sight, therefore can be acquired and perceived naturally. However, only 5-10% of deaf children are born to deaf parents, thus acquire the Czech Sign Language as their mother tongue. 90-95% of deaf children are born to hearing families and unless their hearing parents provide them access to the sign language, they do not learn the language until/unless they start attending schools for the deaf. Nevertheless, when communicating with a hearing person, the deaf will combine many means of communication, as it was mentioned above, some of them may use the spoken language as well.

Hard of hearing people do not usually use the sign language because many of them are raised in the hearing world; therefore they are led to use the spoken language. “Some students who are hard of hearing may never learn, or only occasionally use, sign language” (University of Washington). This statement may apply to people who are post-lingually deaf as well, since they were exposed to the spoken language from an early age.

### **1.3.2. Written Form of the National Spoken Language and Signed National Language**

There is a fixed idea among the hearing majority that deaf people are able to receive all the information in a form of written word. All deaf people are able to read, they are able to distinguish particular letters, however many deaf do not comprehend the meaning. They are also able to write, but sometimes the writings are incomprehensible (Bímová et. al. 45): “If I am able to read a German sentence, does it mean that I can understand it?” (Bímová et al. 45; as translated by Tereza Kalivodová). Hearing people do not realize that the Czech language is a foreign language for the deaf. However, since the sign languages do not have their written forms, deaf people have to become literate in a foreign language. The main problem is that until recently this fact was unknown to the educators as well, thus the spoken language and its written form were taught as a first language. Due to the visual perception of reality of deaf people, it is not possible for them to learn a spoken language naturally.

A signed version of the national language in the Czech Republic is the signed Czech. The signed Czech is an artificial device, which is a signed version of the national spoken language. The signed Czech is a combination of signs from the Czech Sign Language and the structure of the Czech spoken language (Bímová et al. 20). It may be used as a device to help people who are deafened or hard of hearing in the process of lip-reading. However, it is an artificial communication system, one may say a pidgin language and it is not possible to acquire it naturally (Wilbur 2001, 1060-1063). “If the input to the child does not carry information in a useable format, there is no information transmission” (Wilbur 2001, 1051). The signs correspond to lexical meanings of words in Czech; however, the utterances in signed Czech do not transmit the grammatical meanings that are in the form of inflection in the Czech language (Bímová et al. 21-22).

### **1.3.3. Lip-Reading and Finger-Spelling**

Lip-reading or speech-reading is a difficult and tiring technique of perception of speech (Strnadová 1) on the basis of the movement of speech articulators – lips, teeth, tongue, and cheek muscles (Hrubý 74). It is laboured even if all the conditions (people’s proximity, familiarity with the topic or context, the knowledge of all the words that are to be lip-read or a

smooth shaven face) are favourable (Hrubý 77). Czech contains 35 phonemes but there are only 11 movements of lips that are readable during a normal speech. Five movements of lips that are readable are vowel movements; however, their different quality cannot be distinguished. Eight consonants cannot be lip-read because their place of articulation is at the back of the mouth or in the throat (palatal, velar or glottal consonants). The rest of the consonants have six lip movements and the person who is lip-reading has to basically guess which one is the correct one (Bímová et al. 42). Also it is not possible to lip-read unknown words or to acquire language simply by observing the movement of articulators (Strnadová 3). What may be surprising is that all people lip-read – people who are deaf, deafened, hard-of-hearing, but also hearing people lip-read from their infancy (Strnadová 9). There is no connection between the severity of the hearing loss and the ability to lip-read.

The idea that all deaf people can understand the message given in spoken language by lip-reading is another myth hearing people adhere to and that twists the view on deaf people. Unfortunately, TV-shows or films support the idea that a deaf person is able to lip-read every word. Many people may therefore think that a deaf person who cannot lip-read is less intelligent than the one who lip-reads fantastically. The ability to lip-read is not something that people can learn, they must have a talent for it; only then can the talent be developed (Hrubý 74).

Another technique that helps deaf people communicate is finger-spelling. Finger-spelling is a set of fixed hand-shapes that represent particular letters of an alphabet (Hrubý 71). In the Czech Republic the deaf use two-handed alphabet. One-handed alphabet is used for example in the United States.

## **1.4. Literacy**

### **1.4.1. Preconditions for Reading Comprehension**

“Illiteracy is a handicap, not deafness itself” (Carver et al. 2). Carver states that literacy is access to knowledge, information, to the hearing world. “Access is drifting down the Mississippi on a raft with Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. It is retreating across the frozen

Russian steppes with Napoleon's exhausted troops. It is the understanding how the brilliantly beautiful butterfly is magically transformed from an ugly caterpillar (Carver et al. 3).

As it was mentioned above, sign languages do not have their written form. Therefore deaf children must gain their reading and writing skills through systematic learning of a foreign language. Macurová states that reading skills does not correspond to skills of recognizing and connecting particular letters. It means to understand the meaning of the message that is being transmitted via written form (Macurová 2000, 35). "Deaf children are endowed with the ability to think and to communicate just as anybody else. However, these congenital skills must be developed further with sufficient amount of stimuli" (Macurová 2000, 35, as translated by Tereza Kalivodová.). Hearing children of hearing parents or deaf children of deaf parents are exposed to many stimuli unwittingly because they share language with their parents and they learn to communicate with them naturally and on the way they gain general knowledge regarding the world.

Research showed that (American<sup>2</sup>) deaf children of deaf parents who used a sign language as their mother tongue (American Sign Language) showed better result in learning a second language (English) than deaf children who were not or much later exposed to a sign language (Wilbur 2001, 1040). "The normal language acquisition process has taken place within the confines of what all natural languages have in common" (Wilbur 2001, 1053-1054). Children who naturally acquire their first language are linguistically prepared for learning another language (Macurová 2011, 16). Deaf children of hearing parents need help with acquiring knowledge that may seem self-evident. They should be motivated to read and see the practical aspect of reading in their everyday life (Macurová 2000, 36). One of the preconditions to read comprehensibly is the knowledge of the world. A lot of information is omitted in texts and readers are expected to deduce the relationships from the context on the basis of their life experience and knowledge of the world (Macurová 2000, 38). Alena Macurová gives a precise example:

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<sup>2</sup> The motivation of the American deaf towards the English language is different from the one of the Czech deaf since for deaf Americans it is obligatory to learn English to become literate, while the Czech deaf learn English as a third language and become literate through Czech. For the sake of simplicity, learning the English language in the USA will be regarded as second language learning.

Some time before Christmas, I read a translation of an English Christmas fairy-tale to my grandsons. The tale started saying: ‘It was the first Sunday in December. Krista and John were starting to look forward to the Christmas time. They took out their last year’s Christmas stockings and every now and then they walked around the fireplace to check if it is clean enough. After all, the 25<sup>th</sup> December was getting closer and closer.’ In order for the boys to understand the story, it was crucial to explain a lot of things: the story is a story about Christmas, however the Christmas will not be Czech but English, and Christmas in England is different from that in the Czech Republic. Children receive the Christmas presents on 25<sup>th</sup> December and they usually find them in stockings, which they must get ready... With these explanations they did not merely gain knowledge about Christmas, they gained knowledge of how the world works in general. (Macurová 2000, 39; as translated by Tereza Kalivodová)

When teaching English, children (deaf and hearing) should be motivated as well. They should know the purpose and the practicalities of learning a second or a third language. Berent states that the knowledge of English is a crucial need in education. Via English learners can gain valuable information from the Internet and other sources (Berent 124).

#### **1.4.2. The Status of the Czech Sign Language**

The deaf children of deaf parents who use sign language, as well as the hearing children of hearing parents, develop “cognitive, linguistic and social skills” (Wilbur 2001, 1068). One would assume that deaf children of hearing parents should be provided with a visual language from the moment when the hearing loss is recognized. Unfortunately, the views that majority of people had on the deaf in history are still clung to. Deaf people were always taught to speak, because it was believed that only a person who is able to speak is a full and competent individual who would be able to function in a hearing world. They were taught to speak, regrettably, at the expense of other school subjects, the level of which was reduced (Hudáková).

Even though the Czech Sign Language is a natural language, in many people's minds, even professionals', it is deeply rooted as an alternative means of communication that educators should turn to when the oral approach is not successful (Hudáková). The struggle for acknowledgement of the equality of sign languages was initiated by the research of the American Sign Language in the 1960s. William Stokoe, an American linguist, proved the American Sign Language to have a double articulation, one of the properties of natural languages, in his *Sign Language Structure* (published in 1960). Many studies on American Sign Language soon followed and in the 1980s there was no doubt that sign languages are full-fledged languages (Macurová). The Czech Sign Language was officially acknowledged and enacted by law in the year 1998 (Macurová).

### **1.4.3. Deaf People's Opinions on Education**

During the campaign called "Česko mluví o vzdělávání", two workshops took place to discuss the situation in the education of the deaf. Among the participants there were: deaf parents and grandparents of deaf children, deaf senior citizens, educators of the deaf from various types of schools, students, etc. The aim of these workshops was to involve the deaf community in the discussion concerning the education of the deaf, since it is only the hearing majority that makes the decision for them. The deaf listed several problems. One of the problems they stated was that educators of the deaf and most of the headmasters of schools for the deaf have low proficiency in the Czech Sign Language which then results in the unsatisfactory communication between the students and the teachers and the restricted process of education. Also it indicates the low respect towards the deaf people and degrades it in the eyes of hearing majority. Another problem that was stated was the reduction in curriculum compared to the deaf students' hearing peers. Also the inappropriate approach in teaching the Czech language that lacks the features of teaching a second language was highlighted. The inappropriate approach thus results in low literacy skills (Česko mluví o vzdělávání).

## **1.5. Teaching English at Schools for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing in the Czech Republic**

### **1.5.1. Framework Education Programme for Primary and Secondary Education**

One of the educational areas in the Framework education programme for primary education is Language and Language Communication which applies to Czech language and literature, a foreign language and a second foreign language. The framework is the same for mainstream schools and for schools for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. The objectives should be achieved in the same manner, thus school-leavers – deaf, hard-of-hearing or hearing – should obtain the same amount of knowledge. If hearing pupils leave primary level of education having mastered the level A2 of English on the basis of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), so should deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils.

The same goals should be accomplished in the secondary level of education. All schools where pupils finish their studies by taking the secondary school-leaving examination, no matter if the schools are aimed at the hearing or the deaf, follow the same framework education programme for secondary education. That means the secondary school-leaving exam should be of the same level and the preparation for the exam as well. Thus all students should master the level B2.

The secondary school-leaving exam for the hearing impaired is divided in several groups – Group 1, 2 and 3. Groups 1 and 2 take the same test as their hearing peers, the differences are in the removal of the listening part from the examination and the increase of time allocation to it (of 50% concerning the former, 100% applying to the latter). The oral part of the second group may be modified into a written form (e.g. PC chat).

The third group undergoes the same adjustments as the second group. However the test is also modified into an exam for the deaf (the testing of Czech and English language). During taking the test the deaf pupils have the right to use the translation of instructions in the Czech Sign Language (Nová maturita 2010a.).

There still exist factors that should be respected. For example it is not desirable to use articles which would focus on music. Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners would find themselves handicapped when performing the examination. Hearing people are surrounded by

information coming from the radio for example. Even if they do not aim to listen to the radio, they get the information when shopping for example. This means they still gain knowledge about various aspects of life that they might even want to avoid. Deaf and hard-of-hearing are not able to absorb information this way and therefore might be negatively affected by these courses of action. What is tested is language, not presumably general knowledge that is easily accessible only for hearing people (Appendix – Example of a modified test from English language for students in group 1 and 2). The test adjusted for the third group – for deaf students – is modified both in the formal structure and the matter of content. The level of the test is lowered and is approaching the level A2 according to CEFR (Nová maturita 2010b).

The oral part of examination is also modified. It is realized as a communication in the written form – by the means of a PC chat.

### **1.5.2. The Study of the Research Institute of Education in Prague Concerning Deaf Learners**

In 2010 the Research Institute of Education in Prague started to observe teaching of a foreign language at primary schools for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, at primary logopaedic schools and at primary mainstream schools. The research was intended to take place for the duration of 3 years. Testing would be executed every half a year. The teaching of a foreign language is compulsory in the 3rd grade at primary schools at the very latest. The objective was to find data to possibly propose appropriate changes in teaching a foreign language at special schools, such as to postpone learning the compulsory foreign language to later years, and to decide whether the second foreign language, which will be compulsory at mainstream schools as of September 2013, will be established as an optional subject (Výzkumný ústav pedagogický). The resources for the following sections were taken from the official websites of the Research Institute of Education in Prague.<sup>3</sup>

The very first test was taken in 2010 by 147 pupils comprising 62 pupils from logopaedic schools, 10 pupils with hearing impairment and 75 pupils from mainstreams schools. The 10

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<sup>3</sup> Exact links to the tests and evaluations of the tests are included under the Internet Sources in the Work Cited section.

pupils from schools for the deaf and hard-of-hearing were attending the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at primary schools unlike the two other groups which were consisted of pupils from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. What may seem strange is the comment of the Research Institute of Education saying: "It is necessary to take into consideration that pupils with a hearing impairment, who took part in the research, are older compared to the other groups of pupils (cca 3-4 years older). It follows both their better grasp of the Czech language and their experience in understanding the world and life" (as translated by Tereza Kalivodová). Surprising is the comment concerning the pupils with hearing impairment understanding the Czech language better than its native speakers in spite of the fact they are 3<sup>rd</sup> graders.

The research should not be considered reliable for other reasons. First of all, the numbers of pupils participating in the test is quite risible and the differences between particular groups are significant. Also the point evaluations in total are counted incorrectly, which does not add up to the reliability of the test. The final assessment states that the point evaluation in total is 63 points in the test for the students from mainstream and logopaedic schools and 51 points in the test aimed at the students from school with hearing impairment. However, the numbers in tests are 69 regarding logopaedic schools and 60 regarding schools for students with hearing impairment. The two tests differ in its form too. Each test contains eight tasks, but the final evaluation expands only on seven tasks and, moreover, the numbers of tasks in the evaluation do not correspond to the numbers in the actual tests. It is understandable that there will be a listening part in the test aimed at pupils from logopaedic schools, but otherwise the tests should be composed of the same tasks. Two tasks are completely different; however the assessment does not reflect this fact. The task number 5 in the test (and number 4 in the evaluation) concentrates on matching phrases with pictures. The assessment states that the students with hearing impairment did not match the pictures correspondingly yet admits that some of the pictures were ambiguous, thus it should not be reflected in the results. The different layout of the tests is also debatable. Another fact which rather prevents achieving the goal is the absence of specification concerning the pupils with a hearing impairment. We do not know who participated in the testing, whether there were deaf students or hard-of-hearing students, which is quite crucial because both groups come from different backgrounds and have different needs.

In the second term of the year 2010, the pupils from logopaedic schools and schools for the deaf and hard-of-hearing took only one test variation. Two tasks were based on listening and the report informs that: “The pupils with slight hearing impairment and pupils with cochlear implants<sup>4</sup> are advantaged when answering some tasks. The pupils with severe hearing impairment have problems to fulfil this task successfully, even if they can lip-read the Czech language perfectly. The pupils with slight hearing impairment and pupils with cochlear implants managed to fulfil the task without bigger difficulties” (see Appendix). The fact that somebody can examine pupils with hearing impairment from listening and reflect it in the final assessment is utterly ludicrous. Also, when the lip-reading is mentioned, it shows the incomprehension of the basic knowledge that concerns the deaf.

In the first term of the year 2011, there were executed two tests of English. The first was the test from the first term of the year 2010 and will not be discussed further, the second one was new. The tests, however, were not available for public viewing. The overall evaluation of the testing from 2011 again proves the inexpertness of the team that is responsible for the research. The lack of success of the pupils who are hearing impaired is attributed to the fact that pupils did not understand the instructions of the tasks and the evaluation says that teachers had to translate the instructions to the Czech Sign Language. This statement is irrelevant since the test focuses on English not Czech. The evaluation of a task using a dictation in a part where pupils are expected to fill in the gaps in a text, says that the outcome was not satisfactory even though the teachers used sign language to help students understand the text. It is stated that the teachers were dictating and signing simultaneously. The first thing that is risible is again the occurrence of dictation, the second is the fact that teachers used the Czech Sign Language to dictate English and the last is the fact that the team surely does not understand what the Czech Sign Language is, otherwise they would know that no-one can use two languages simultaneously. That means the teachers used signed Czech or, more likely, they used just the most important signs from the Czech Sign Language (without any grammar) while speaking Czech. The signing and speaking method is not suitable for all deaf

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<sup>4</sup> “A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard-of-hearing” (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders).

pupils. However, provided that the task was based on dictation, the results of the task should not be reflected in the final assessment of the research.

In November 2010 the Research Institute of Education published an article, based on the research taking place from 2010, which observed that teaching a foreign language puts a strain on the pupils with hearing impairment (Géblová). The only goal of this testing should be finding new possible and better methods as to how to teach English to the deaf and hard of hearing, not postponing the language learning or lowering the bar.

## **1.6. Teaching English to Deaf Students**

### **1.6.1. Receptive and Productive Skills**

When hearing children are taught English, they are expected to master two receptive and two productive skills. The receptive skills are reading and listening and the productive skills are writing and speaking (Hejlová 7). If children with hearing loss are taught, the situation will change. It is important to know of the children's hearing loss to plan the lessons. Hard-of-hearing students should be enabled to practice speaking if they want to and if it is possible they should practice listening as well. That of course does not mean they should be examined and classified in speaking or listening.

When teaching deaf children, the time which is devoted to practicing speaking and listening in classes for hearing and hard-of-hearing learners, could be used more efficiently – with reading and writing practice (Hejlová 7). The speaking skills can be modified to the form of a PC chat, as it is done during the secondary school-leaving exam. The learners would strengthen their skills in writing which resemble the speaking skills in its written form and it is rather different from the writing in which students learn to analyze their thoughts and put them on paper systematically according to fixed set of rules. These types of writing use different structures, styles and vocabulary. Listening skills can be shifted to improving reading skills since modern textbooks include tape-scripts of all listening exercises. It is possible to use these tape-scripts and proceed in teaching English in the same way teachers use in classes with hearing students.

### **1.6.2. Challenges in Teaching English**

Berent describes several challenges that deaf students face when learning English. He states that since English has a fixed word order (unlike languages such as Czech that have a freer word order), learners thus:

... quickly acquire this basic SVO word order and, in case of deaf learners of English, come to overgeneralize SVO order to other structures that actually exhibit non-SVO orders. Consequently, whenever the basic SVO order is ‘disrupted’ in a more complex sentences, the resulting sentence structure is one that often poses a challenge for deaf students in their reading comprehension and written expression. (Berent 124)

Thereafter he lists the English structures in which such disruptions occur: passive formations, questions, sentences containing relative clauses or sentences with infinitives, participles and gerunds. He also mentions the problem with “establishing identity between sentence constituents” (Berent 124-126). Wilbur also describes this type of a challenge regarding deaf who learn English, and demonstrates it on the example of the process of conjunction. She states that “the easiest type of conjunction for deaf students is with sentences that do not share common elements” (Wilbur 2000, 84). An example of such sentence is: *Michael did his homework and Kathy watched TV*. “However if two sentences share similar subjects or objects, a number of unusual omissions occur” (Wilbur 2000, 84). *Jane bought the snack and Tina ate it*. Deaf students would either repeat the object or they would omit it altogether, since the object is identical in both sentences (Wilbur 2000, 84). Besides this object-object deletion, deaf students tend to omit the subject of the second sentence if it is identical to the object of the first sentence: “‘*The boy hit the girl*’ and ‘*The girl hit him back*’ might be rewritten as ‘*The boy hit the girl and hit him back*’” (Wilbur 2000, 84). This is called an object-subject deletion. Other problems, which deaf students face, occur because of the fact that “structures are taught in isolation” (Wilbur 2000, 85). The context allows certain grammatical structures and prevents those that are incorrect or do not exist within the language. Context comprises old and new information which is connected to the problems regarding pronouns and determiners. Only the context allows students to comprehend their usage.

Berent suggests some indirect methods as to how students may better acquire problematic grammatical structures. He focuses on complicated wh- questions, sentence combining with respect to relative clauses or grammar concerning infinitives and the identity that it refers to. As far as wh- questions are concerned, Berent introduces a method that is based on underlining different lexical meanings in various statements. Thereafter, students must create a correct wh- question that would correspond to the given statement (Berent 128): *Martin went to the house because he didn't feel very well.*

Relative clauses should be presented as separate sentences which students would learn to combine using relative pronouns (Berent 128): *Alan found the book. The book was published in 1899.*

The last indirect method applies to exercises which reside in given sentences and the students' decision to select the logical subject of the infinitive clauses in these sentences (Berent 128). Such sentence may be: *1. Mark told Philip to repeat the question. 2. Who will repeat the question? Mark or Philip?*

## 1.7. Methods in Teaching English

### 1.7.1. Common Teaching Techniques – Contrastive Linguistics

It is not uncommon to utilize the knowledge of the mother tongue in highlighting and explaining the differences between languages. Even though young children do not know anything about the structure of their first language from the linguistic point of view, they still know subconsciously how to use the language, they know what vocabulary to use and when to use it; they understand how the syntax of their language works.

When children start to learn a new language, teachers use the contrastive linguistics in their explanations. They try to describe the way the second language works with explaining the difference between the children's first and second language.

The fact that the mother tongue is the Czech Sign Language does not change anything. Since it is a natural language, anything can be explained when using sign language. Provided that teachers use the contrastive linguistics, learners discover what kinds of linguistic devices their

mother tongue and the second language have in common; which devices differ and how they are used in the particular language (Macurová 2011, 15-19).

The didactics and methodology that is developed in teaching English for hearing people does not have to be changed in any aspect in the process.

### **1.7.2. Teachers in the Educational Process**

The personality and identity of the teacher is a crucial aspect in education. According to Daren Olson, students find that one of the most desirable characteristics in teacher's personality is the teacher's enthusiasm towards the subject matter, the students and his/her act of teaching (Olson 96). Students respect and cherish teachers who "mastered their domain of expertise" and are able to present the subject matter clearly and correlate it with the real world so that students can see its practicality and benefit (Olson 99). "They [students] tend to make strong personal connections with teachers who also care about them and are genuinely concerned with their success" (Olson 97). This statement applies to all students and deaf students are, above all, students. It expands upon the fact that teachers need to be aware of the students' unique backgrounds and they need to respect it. What is also important is to support students' independence. Deaf people until several decades prior were led to thinking that due to their deafness they are incapable of being independent. Hearing parents may sometimes instigate their children's feeling of dependence on hearing people because they are concerned about their future (Nováková 20 Dec.).

The success of teaching deaf learners is influenced by certain additional specific factors – the level of hearing impairment, the onset of hearing loss, the hearing status of parents, parents' preferences regarding their child's language, and their opinions concerning the child's future mode of communication, the attitudes toward language learning and towards language users, possibly other physical and mental variables of students as well as the learner's previous education. (Macurová 2008, 34-35)

The teachers educating deaf students need to be familiar with all these factors and need to understand the differences and specificity of each situation in order to adopt the best suitable approach when instructing deaf individuals.

There exist several possibilities as to who may give lessons. It is a teacher who can hear without an interpreter, a hearing teacher with an interpreter, a hearing teacher who knows sign language on a high level and is able to use it as the language of instruction and a deaf teacher whose mother tongue is the Czech Sign Language.

As it was settled during the Milan International Convention in 1880, the traditional approach was the oral approach (Hrubý 109). Some conceptions of schools are based on the oral approach. During the lessons students are required to speak with their voice and to lip-read. Teachers do not use a sign language when teaching; therefore students' understanding depends solely on their lip-reading skills, possibly on their residual hearing, too.

A hearing teacher who is not able to sign and work together with an interpreter represents another way of teaching English. There may occur two main drawbacks regarding this method. The first disadvantage may be the teacher's lack of knowledge of the sign language. The second could be the interpreter's lack of qualification in respect of English linguistics, which may cause problems in presentation of English grammar. What is also important is the understanding of the role of interpreter. The teacher should be aware that interpreter's function is only to bridge the gap between deaf and hearing world, not to assist the teacher in the teaching process. Professional interpreters do not explain, add extra information or take it away. That applies for interpreting from Czech to the Czech Sign Language and vice versa (Bímová et al. 37-38).

Yet another way of English is via a hearing teacher who knows how to sign. He/she is able to present the subject matter for deaf students naturally. Similarly to the situation when a hearing teacher teaches hearing students – all the course participants use the same language. Nevertheless, as a hearing person he/she does not share the deaf experience and is not able to relate in this aspect. Unfortunately, there is not plenitude of teachers or tutors of English who know sign language and who could use it in their instruction.

The last type of a teacher to be mentioned is a deaf teacher. A deaf teacher can relate to the students because he/she comes from the same background, shares students' experience, knows

the problems the deaf have when acquiring a second and third foreign language and is also aware of the system the deaf are educated in. The teacher also serves as a role model. Since 90-95% of deaf children are born to hearing families, where the communicative skills vary from family to family, a deaf teacher is a necessary role model of the students' first language acquisition and development. Also as a native user of sign language, he/she is able to accommodate to individual language needs of the students. Just as a language model, a deaf teacher serves as role-model in a social and cultural aspect. Students can be motivated by the success of their teacher and to better understand the importance of education (Zbořilová 24).

It is only natural to have a person with a deaf identity to teach them, as it is natural for hearing children to be taught by a hearing person. Regrettably, there are very few deaf people who graduated from university, much less graduated from the field of study specialized in teaching English or who have enough knowledge of English to be prepared to teach it or tutor it.

### **1.7.3. Visualization**

The research concerning sign languages shows that the visual aspect of sign languages is reflected in the way of deaf people's thinking (Faltínová 72). There are auxiliary tools for teaching English vocabulary or aspects of grammar, such as cards focusing on prepositions, available in bookshops and on the Internet. Radka Faltínová distinguishes several categories of pictures that can be used in lessons. The first type is the illustrative pictures that accompany for example fairy tales and captivate young readers to the stories. Another type is the one that signifies various kinds of tasks, for example the picture of an elephant could mean "Do not forget" etc. These pictures can be used during lessons so that children know what to do and do not get lost (Faltínová 72).

Another very useful tool is a comic. A comic is a device that combines the visualization and a text and gives a teacher quite a free hand in the language focus (Faltínová 76). An example which may serve is a photocopy of an exercise in *Essential grammar in Use*, unit 8 – grammar focusing on present continuous and present simple tenses (see Appendix). The practical part of this thesis will also focus on particular methods in teaching, including the use of a comic.

## **2. Practical part**

### **2.1. Introduction to the Practical Part**

The beginning of the practical part is dedicated to the description of practical methods that can be used in the process of teaching English to deaf students.

The second part of the practical part of this thesis focuses on describing lessons of English that I observed. I visited schools for students with hearing impairment in Prague – the school in Holečkova Street, Ječná Street and Výmolova Street – and also lessons in a private setting – one-on-one, individual, lessons. I wanted to learn about the way the students are taught, what methods are used during lessons, what similarities and differences occur in real-life situations or what the teachers' attitudes and personalities are, and so gain new knowledge and experience.

The observations studied the lessons from several perspectives. They focused on the formalities of the lessons such as what the place where the lesson was held looked like, how the teacher and students were seated, how many students attended the lesson and what equipment was used. The paper will then describe how the lessons were executed, what the subject matter and the aim of the lesson were and what activities were chosen. The last two parts will regard the teacher and students. Their identities, attitudes and enthusiasm will be described, as well as the teacher's ability to explain the subject matter, and the students' behaviour.

From my previous study and knowledge of the deaf community and the Czech Sign Language, I believe that there should be no doubt of the advantages of the natural language of the deaf in the educational setting. During my observations of the lessons of English, I wanted to find out whether the students have the same possibilities as their hearing peers, which include the natural language of instruction and a teacher who is able to explain the subject matter.

## **2.2. Practical Examples of Methods**

### **2.2.1. Manipulative Visual Language**

The Manipulative Visual Language – MVL – is a new and, based on a research from Glasgow, an effective method that was developed to the special needs of deaf people to learn English. It was developed by Jimmy Challis Gore and Robert Gillies. As it was mentioned above, deaf children have to learn English as a second language in English speaking countries and because of that “it may be argued that Deaf children may take advantage of the strategies involved in studying English as a foreign language” (Cole). Since deaf children are not able to acquire a spoken language naturally, the authors of MVL believe that the methods that are used with hearing children are not suitable for the deaf because of their lack of spoken input (Cole). The MVL provides a “visual model of English” since it uses various tools and colours that represent grammatical structures. The tools have shapes of geometric figures such as triangles that represent the nouns (even the plural), adjectives, articles and pronouns. They vary in their size and colour. Verbs are represented by circles and prepositions by a round bridge or a crescent. The aim is to visualize grammatical concepts because “the real issue is that Deaf students are more adept at learning languages in the visual-spatial mode” (Cole). The research in Glasgow shows the remarkable improvement of deaf adults communicating in the British Sign Language when using this visual method (Cole).

### **2.2.2. Headway Textbooks for Deaf Students**

In 2003 Hana Hejlová wrote a manual called: *Headway Textbooks for Deaf Students* in which she presented the possibilities how to use textbooks, which were aimed primarily at teaching hearing students, when teaching the deaf. The textbooks she chose to present were the Headway textbooks. In the introduction she stated the reasons for her choice:

- Textbooks from the Headway series are high quality, well-proven books. They are easily available and are not dependent on any national language.
- Headway series is a multi-level course where each textbook builds on the preceding one. Hence, students can progress from complete beginner’s level to a very advanced level.

- The most important criteria for making Headway textbooks so suitable for teaching the deaf are their use of visual aids. There is an extensive use of photographs and pictures in both the Student's Book and the Workbook. They help to explain both vocabulary and grammar. (Hejlová 9)

She paid attention to every unit in the textbooks, analysed the books page by page, and afterwards described how they could be altered and used in teaching the deaf. Also she gave many examples and demonstrations of activities that could be used with deaf students in the chapter called Activities.

According to this utilization of Headway textbooks, many other ones can follow. Even though teachers should concentrate on different skills that their students ought to master, these utilizations do not complicate the process. What is more, as powerful as the Internet is, many publishers provide web pages with additional exercises to particular units of their textbooks. The Oxford University Press offers many extra resources that relate to its titles (e.g. English File, Result, Project or Solutions) that can be used in class (Oxford University Press).

British textbooks are monolingual; there is no reason why deaf learners whose mother tongue is the Czech Sign Language should be forced into using the Czech language during their English lessons. Just as hearing students are taught through the Czech language as a language of instruction, to the deaf everything can be explained in the Czech Sign Language with using no Czech language in the process.

### **2.2.3. Comic Strips – That Deaf Guy**

As it was mentioned in the subchapter Visualization, comic is a very neat technique that combines visual aids with a written word. At the same time comic allows the process of learning to be executed in an entertaining way. As well as teaching learners colloquial English, puns, etc. there is an opportunity to teach students about the world and the relationships in it. A comic named *That Deaf Guy* could be a proper tool to reach these goals. *That Deaf Guy* is a comic that focuses on an American family from California. There are three main characters: Desmond – “that Deaf guy” – is a stay-at-home dad, Helen, Desmond’s

hearing wife, is a sign language interpreter and their son Cedric is a hearing 4-year-old boy who is raised bilingually (ASL and English), in other words a C.O.D.A. which is an abbreviation that represents Children of Deaf Adults. The whole family is based on real-life people – Matt Daigle, his wife Kay and their son Hayden (Daigle and Daigle 8-9).

The comic strips focus on the everyday life of Desmond's family, showing the struggles of the family in the world ignorant of deaf culture and by presenting the deaf culture their aim to educate it (see Appendix 1 – Figure 1). It also shows the happy moments the members of the family experience (moments which does or does not differ from the ones of a hearing family – see Appendix 1 – Figure 2) or the interaction of a bilingual family. It would be of a great value if these comic strips were used during the lessons for several reasons. Aside from the fact that the comic uses everyday expressions very practically, students would learn English from the source that shows the world they live in. They would learn about their own culture, possibly about the culture of deaf Americans. They could compare their deaf culture with the culture of hearing people systematically and realize things that they may know but have never paid too much attention to, because they took them for granted, as a natural occurrence (see Appendix 1 - Figure 3). They could even find a role model in Matt Daigle. "Kids need to see deaf adults who are doing what they love and getting paid for it. I use my cartooning as my advocacy work. I feel the best way to overcome anything in your life is to find the humor in it" (Hearing Health Foundation).

What is more, a lot of Daigle's comics focus primarily on the deaf – it is the *In Deaf Culture*, which can be also used. This comic shows the moments and experience in the life of the deaf, such as the focus on interpreters. It also takes ordinary moments of hearing people, transforms them and shows them in the context of the deaf culture. Again, this relationship could provide the ever so coveted general knowledge. Students would use a comic that shows only the American deaf culture and through the comic they would learn for example about the American interpreting services (see Appendix 1 - Figure 4). Through this simple utilization of a comic, students would expand their knowledge of the world, of English, American culture and American deaf culture (M. Daigle Toons).

#### **2.2.4. Retold Versions of Various Titles – Macmillan Readers**

The more students read, the faster they learn a language. There are many publishers that publish books which retell stories in a simplified way so that the narratives are available to everyone, even to the very beginners learning a foreign language. The books are adjusted to several groups of learners from the starter level to the upper-intermediate level. The levels differ in the grammar and vocabulary demands. The number of words at particular levels varies: from 300 basic words in the Starter level up to the Upper-Intermediate that contains around 2200 words. The form of the levels changes as well. The Starter level is realized in the form of a comic book using pictures and with dialogue balloons, and rectangles at the top of the page for narrator comments.

The vocabulary is being repeated so that learners are able to absorb and remember it. At the end of the books, learner can find extra activities that help learners to revise the gained knowledge, to assure themselves that they understood the story and to reflect on it (see Appendix 2 – Figure 1, 2, 3). A lot of space and exercises are dedicated to the reading comprehension and vocabulary. The higher levelled stories also use a lexical glossary to comprehend some more difficult words, starter levelled stories sometimes use illustrated glossaries.

As it was mentioned above, the context is essential in learning a foreign language. Lexical and grammatical structures may gain additional meaning, which does not necessarily have to be captured in their isolated forms. As well as vocabulary and grammatical structures, the story also offers a lot of general knowledge of the world. In the case of this book, the retold version of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, the knowledge of the world is related to various places all over the world. Students can learn about different countries and their cultures, about travelling and all that at the nearing end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The description was based on Macmillan Readers' Jules Verne – *Around the World in Eighty Days* that is aimed at starter learners.

### **2.2.5. English/American Films, TV Series with English Subtitles**

Students should be encouraged to learn languages through the means of mass media. Even though deaf students would use this type of learning differently than hearing students, they would gain desired results. If they did not understand several words, there is always the visual aid – the film. The characters perform and use appropriate vocabulary with their performance. The students would also learn about the form of English language that is used in everyday life, they could observe the rules that cause the change of register from informal to formal language and what vocabulary and grammar it is appropriate to use in particular situations. And this kind of learning is not associated only with learning languages. The films or TV series draw learners nearer to different cultures, backgrounds and again they form the general knowledge of an individual.

## **2.3. The Observations of Lessons of English**

### **2.3.1. The School in Ječná Street**

The school for the hearing impaired in Ječná Street in Prague comprises a pre-school, a primary school, a vocational school and a grammar school for hearing impaired and was founded in 1945 as a school using the oral method – teachers use the spoken language and speech is required from students. Its objective is to instruct the students so that they achieve the education of the level of mainstream schools.

Lessons lasted 45 minutes and took place in a classroom that was designed for teaching English. On the walls there were many maps that were related to the English-speaking world, tables with irregular verbs and the seasons of the year and the months. The classes were attended by the maximum of 6 students – hard-of-hearing, deaf students or students with a cochlear implant. There was at least one deaf student in each lesson. The students were not divided in different English classes. They were seated in the horseshoe type of seating in order to see the teacher without any difficulty and to be able to lip-read. All the English lessons took place in the same classroom, which was rather convenient for the teacher since all her textbooks were in her desk in the classroom. Also, the students had dictionaries (with

approximately 20.000 entries) available the whole lesson and were encouraged to use them. The teacher used different textbooks with each grade.

The first year at the secondary school was revising the irregular verbs and then focusing on the future tense using *will*. The teacher brought additional exercises, for example a sheet of paper with Czech sentences for translation. I also observed 9<sup>th</sup> grade at primary school. Six 9<sup>th</sup> graders revised the present progressive tense; they played a game of pantomime and by imitating various activities they reviewed the grammar. They could associate the activities they were performing with the use of grammar.

The teacher was hearing. When she talked she always faced her students. She was speaking English so that hard-of-hearing students could become accustomed to its sound. Afterwards she repeated the same sentence in Czech in order for the students to be able to lip-read and understand the meaning. Sometimes she used finger-spelling to help her students understand or to remind them the word's spelling. Her communication with the students was very natural and positive. She praised her students and corrected them or reprimanded them when necessary. The teacher also knew how to motivate her students. During my visit the students took a test. From the observation I understood that the previous lesson they had taken a similar test but they did not have to accept the grade if they were not satisfied with it. They had a chance to redeem themselves when taking the test during the lesson I was observing, it was obvious that some students were positively motivated. The tests were very short and took approximately 10 minutes.

The lessons had to be very trying for students who were deaf. The teacher used Czech language of course, aside from English language, which the students can lip-read. They also used their voice when answering questions and practicing English. They understood the English grammar, when they made mistakes. The mistakes were common and matched the mistakes of the rest of the students. They were also provided with many extra materials with exercises or homework. Nevertheless, sometimes it may have been more efficient if the teacher wrote down sentences for practicing translation as well, so that students could follow her without relying solely on lip-reading. Also using only one series of English textbooks could make teaching simpler. As Hana Hejlová says in her *Headway Textbooks for Deaf Students*: "Headway series is a multi-level course where each textbook builds on the preceding one. Hence, students can progress from complete beginner's level to a very

advanced level” (Hejlová 9). It would be guaranteed that students would not omit anything during their studies and the teacher would profit from this system as well as he/she would have only one series of books to prepare from and could focus more on additional materials and exercises that are available in the Teacher’s books and on the Internet.

### **2.3.2. The Výmolova School**

The school was founded in 1916 (Hrubý 176) and is comprised of a pre-school, a primary school and a secondary school. It is the first school for the deaf in the Czech Republic where a deaf person became a deputy director. He is a deputy director at the secondary school.

The English lesson took place in a computer classroom and lasted 90 minutes. The desks were arranged to the shape of a horseshoe. The computers could be rather convenient for practicing the writing skills which would substitute speaking. There was also a data projector available which was used in the lesson I attended. There were three students, all of them deaf. Their mother tongue was the Czech Sign Language.

The subject matter was the use of the past simple tense and the perfect simple tense. Students were taught to apply their gained knowledge concerning these two tenses and become aware of their differences in use. They revised the rules very quickly and afterwards started practicing. They used the Raymond Murphy’s *Essential Grammar in Use* for practicing during the whole lesson. The exercises could be found in the Unit 20. The students completed them by themselves and then corrected them with the teacher. She insisted on translating the particular sentences so that she could see whether students truly understood the lexical and grammatical structures. If they misunderstood something, they were immediately corrected. The verbs – regular and irregular – were finger-spelled.

The teacher was a deaf person communicating in the Czech Sign Language. I was told that there were two English teachers at secondary school, one hard of hearing and one deaf. The students were divided when taking lessons of English because of the differences in needs. The students did not use the spoken language; they used only their mother tongue and finger-spelling as did the teacher. The teacher was very friendly and pleasant. She understood the needs of her students and gave everybody a chance to react and take their part. She constantly made sure everyone understood the reason as to why there was the particular tense.

Students were very calm and well-behaved. They understood the lesson and the grammar that was discussed. If they did not understand, they did not hesitate to ask.

### **2.3.3. The School in Holečkova Street**

The oldest school for the deaf in the Czech Republic founded in 1786 as the Prague Institute for the deaf consists of a pre-school, a primary school and a secondary school.

I observed two 45-minute lessons – one was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and the second was the class of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year at secondary school combined. During the first lesson the students were making a presentation about their lives, class, family, hobbies, future dreams etc. They were in a computer classroom working on their presentations. They were using the Internet which they used to find pictures, for example on Facebook, or they used the Google Translator to help them with the needed vocabulary. Unfortunately, they just copied everything the Google Translator generated; they did not rewrite the words so they probably did not remember them.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of secondary school, there were five students – three in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and two in the fourth grade. Thus the teacher had to divide his attention between the two groups of students which he, under the given circumstances, accomplished. I have understood that the 4<sup>th</sup> year student came to the lesson to practice their writing skills for the oral part in the secondary school-leaving examination which would take place the very next day. Students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year had their normal lesson during which they were revising tenses. The teacher wrote words and the requirements of formation the sentences, such as the tense, whether the sentence should be positive, negative or interrogative, on the board. The words did not follow their correct order of the finished sentence.

The teacher was deaf, communicating in the Czech Sign Language as well as the Czech Language when speaking because of the presence of hard of hearing students. Also, when it was necessary, he used finger-spelling. He was very friendly and supportive. On several occasions, he tried to relate the vocabulary to the real world so that the student would understand the connection. Sometimes, however, he helped his students a little too quickly instead of leading them to the correct use of language.

All students communicated in the Czech Sign Language. Most of the time, they were calm. Sometimes they confused the tenses that they were obliged to make. However, they did not have problems with the word order of English.

#### **2.3.4. Individual lessons of English**

The lessons I attended were 120-minute long and took place in a library or a in a café with Internet connection. The language of instruction was the Czech Sign Language. The objective of these lessons was the preparation for the secondary school-leaving examination. It was one-on-one lesson, so the only two people who were present were the student and her English tutor. The textbooks which were used were the Headway textbooks – during my first observation the textbook for beginners, during my second visit, several months later, the textbook for elementary students. During the lessons, a laptop or a tablet was used as well.

The first lesson that I attended was aimed at the past simple tense. The first thing that was done was the revision of the vocabulary from the previous lesson. The exercise focused on fixed expressions with verbs *have, do, go*. It was taken from the Oxford University Press website – from the Learning Resources Bank that was mentioned above – that is devoted to additional exercises which are intended to be used with textbooks that were published by Oxford University Press. Afterwards, still using the website, they revised the past tense formation of regular and irregular verbs and of the verb *to be*. During the lesson a listening tape-script was used as a substitution of listening. All the exercises that were based on listening were executed normally in the form of reading. After finishing her task, the student translated the text from English to the Czech Sign Language to demonstrate her understanding of the test.

Several months later I observed the second lesson which was focused primarily on the practice of exercises from a sample test of the secondary school-leaving examination (see Appendix). The test is modified for the deaf students. The first part comprises five short texts – each text matches one out of four pictures that are to be found beneath the texts. After reading the texts the students are required to choose the answers in the forms of the pictures. The student would read the texts (one at a time) alone, choose the answer and then with her tutor, she would translate the text and on the way she would correlate the information learnt

from the text to the pictures. The next task is to read a flyer and answer the corresponding questions. The part three is a story that is rather longer than previous texts with five questions that are to be answered. Students must choose one answer from three options. In the fourth task there are several descriptions of animals that must be matched with the animals' pictures and the last one is a text with several missing words that students must return to the text according to the context. Again, they have several options beneath the text. The student did all the exercises by herself and translated them to her tutor who explained grammatical or lexical structures when necessary. When she was giving her answers, she was required to justify the answers with the use of the texts. Also the tutor was constantly pointing out the verbs and encouraged the student to classify the verbs. During the lesson only the Czech Sign Language as a language of instruction was used, Czech language was possibly used only for taking notes, e.g. for vocabulary.

The student's tutor was a hearing person communicating in the Czech Sign Language. Despite the fact that she did not have pedagogical education regarding the English language, the lessons were well-organized and flowing, everything was neatly explained. When an explanation of a former grammar or vocabulary was necessary, the tutor tried to guide the student to answer instead of telling her the answers right away. She was always very energetic and positive.

The student was deaf with the Czech Sign Language as her mother tongue. When she did not understand a word or grammar, she asked right away with no shame, which was very refreshing. I really liked the tutor and student's relationship and the communication between them.

## **2.4. Findings Based on the Observations**

From my observations of the English lessons, I believe that the best approach is the one using visual medium. The Czech Sign Language as a language of instruction is perfectly suited for the students who are deaf. They can perceive it naturally without any difficulty and fatigue. It is the language through which they have access to literacy and knowledge. The students of the school in Ječná Street have skills that the oral approach requires. They have talent for lip-reading and speaking and are led to develop it. However, not all deaf students possess these

talents that could be developed and more importantly not all the students want to speak or weary themselves by using unreliable means of communication that the lip-reading is. This fact does not make them less intelligent. It is the deaf people's right to use their language in the education process and it is given by law from the year 1998 and its amendment in the year 2008 in the article number 7 (ruce.cz).

The students who have the Czech Sign Language as their mother tongue seemed more confident and were more active. I suppose that the future of teaching deaf students English and other subjects, too, consists in using the sign language, although I understand the difficulties that this necessity creates for the common budgets and the organizational role of the state in managing the pedagogical process. Of course, I am fully aware of demands that this approach puts on the shoulders of teachers.

On the other hand, the duty of a teacher is to get close to the needs, history and culture of his/her students and deaf students are concerned, it is impossible to fulfil these obligations without the knowledge of their native language. Pitifully, I should say that this necessity is not understood fully in the Czech Republic up to now as I have ascertained during my current studies of the programme Czech language in Communication with the Deaf at the Faculty of Arts.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to illustrate the situation of teaching English as a foreign language to deaf students in the Czech Republic and to point out the crucial aspects of the process.

At the beginning of the thesis, the theoretical part emphasises the importance of distinguishing the people with hearing impairment to the groups: deaf, hard of hearing and deafened since it defines the different identity, background and language skills. Due to these differences deaf people have to gain the reading and writing skills differently and their families, educators and many others should be aware of the differences so that they could support the deaf and provide them with their natural language and, subsequently, knowledge that the majority takes for granted. English pertains to the ordinary level of education and should be taught as such. Deaf people have the same right to master it and use it to their advantage in their personal life and career. A part of this bachelor thesis presents the study of the Research Institute of Education in Prague. It shows its ignorance towards the deaf community and experience and tries to violate their right to education. This thesis attempts to clarify all the false information that draws possibly important conclusions. This only shows how easy it is to draw conclusions from lack of information and knowledge that regards the deaf community and to strengthen the view of deaf people as people incapable of achieving the level of education that hearing people have access to. Certainly, modifications are necessary, although they should not be modifications in content but rather in the form of methods that are used and that are suitable for deaf students.

The practical part of this bachelor thesis introduces several methods that if implemented in the teaching strategy with deaf students, they would lead to an improvement in their literacy skills. To support this belief, one can refer to the MVL research that showed an improvement in literacy skills for all participants at the end of the study. The methods of teaching need to include visual and spatial elements which enable deaf students to remarkably improve their understanding of English grammar (e.g. MVL) and vocabulary (e.g. That Deaf guy). Other methods that are described focus on the developing of reading skills through the use of the context. It is essential to provide students with a meaningful context so that they can understand how various lexical and grammatical structures work together, what causes them

to change or which will never occur together. The simplified narratives possess a lot of information that regards the everyday life but also they include the general ideas of many famous novels and short stories that comprise the people's life experience, which all people learn from. Another very important aim of the described methods is to present the way of learning about the deaf culture. Hearing people may not be strongly aware of the importance of their culture since they have full access to it as they learn about it at school. Many deaf may not have this opportunity therefore it should be the teacher's duty to provide them with all the knowledge he/she can.

During my observations I came across several types of teaching realized through hearing teachers or deaf teachers. As discussed in the practical part of this thesis they all tried to accommodate their teaching style to the unique learning needs of the students. However, there are still many unexplored possibilities within the English teaching strategies to deaf students. This bachelor thesis introduced several innovative approaches that could help the teaching process significantly.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – That Deaf Guy



Figure 1 – Educating hearing people about what it is like to be deaf (Daigle 55)



Figure 2 – Children of Deaf Adults aka C.O.D.A. (Daigle 27)



Figure 3 – Hearing culture vs. Deaf culture (Daigle)



Figure 4 – Learning about deaf culture in America – Video Relay Service (Daigle 80)

## Appendix 2 – Macmillan Readers – Around the World in Eighty Days

Starter Level

Worksheet

### Around the World in 80 Days

Jules Verne

#### A Before reading

- 1 a How many different ways of travelling do you know? Make a list.  
Examples: motorbike, walking...  
b The story takes place in 1872. Which ways of travelling from your list do you think you will find in a story about a journey around the world in 1872?
- 2 a Phileas Fogg travels around the world and visits the following places. Which are countries and which are cities? Which city is in which country? Put them in the correct place in the table.

Japan	Calcutta	England	U.S.A.	Liverpool	New York	Bombay
San Francisco	Yokohama	India	London			

Countries	Cities
France	Paris, Bordeaux

- b Put the places from 2a on the map below. Draw a line between the places to show the journey you think Phileas Fogg will follow.



Now compare your map with the one on page 2 showing Phileas Fogg's journey.

Macmillan Readers

Around the World in 80 Days 1

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Figure 1 – Around the World in 80 Days – Before reading

- 3 The picture shows Phileas Fogg. As you read, write what you learn about Phileas Fogg in the table.



Name	Phileas Fogg
Lives where?	
Family?	
Rich or poor?	
What does he do every day?	
What does he like doing?	

## B While Reading

- 4 As you read, match the places with what happens in each place.

London	Fogg pays eight thousand dollars to travel on a ship
India	Phileas Fogg and Passepartout help a rich man's wife
Hong Kong	Fogg and Aouda find Passepartout again
Yokohama	Detective Fix arrests Fogg
New York	Passepartout forgets to buy tickets for the ship the Carnatic
Liverpool	Phileas Fogg makes a bet

- 5 The picture shows Phileas Fogg arriving back in England. Detective Fix is arresting Fogg. What are Fogg and Fix saying? Write their words in the spaces.



Figure 2 – Around the World in 80 Days – While reading

### C After Reading

- 6 Imagine you are travelling around the world from London and can stop in 4 places. Choose the 4 places you want to visit and draw your travel plans on the map.



Why do you want to visit each place? What do you want to do there? How can you travel from place to place? Write your ideas in the table.

Place	Why you want to go there	How you can travel to the next place
<i>Example: Rome, Italy</i>	<i>To visit historical places and eat Italian food</i>	<i>By train to...</i>
1		
2		
3		
4		

- 7 Write 50-70 words for a newspaper, saying who Phileas Fogg is and describing his travels around the world.

### Man travels around world in 80 days

3RD DECEMBER 1872

Figure 3 – Around the World in 80 days – After reading

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