Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies
Print ISSN: 2676-5357
Online ISSN: 2676-5985

# Boosting the Trustworthiness of Narrative Inquiry in Examining Effective English Teaching to Deaf University Students: University Instructors' Perspective

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**Article info**

Article type:
Research article

Received:
2025/05/10

Accepted:
2025/08/14

**Abstract**

In the evolving landscape of integrative higher education in Iran, teaching English to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) students presents unique linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical challenges. This study uses narrative inquiry to explore how university instructors perceive and enact effective English language instruction for DHH learners. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and narrative frames from ten experienced instructors—some with direct knowledge of Iranian Sign Language (ISL)—the research highlights the emotional, visual, and ethical complexities of English teaching in bimodal classrooms. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study identified four interrelated themes: Cultural Resonance, Visual-First Instruction, Formal-Relational Calibration, and Instructor Reflexivity. These themes reveal that effective teaching for DHH students requires more than technical adaptation; it calls for culturally grounded practices, visual-semiotic reengineering of materials, emotional attunement, and ongoing pedagogical renewal. The findings offer important implications for teacher training, curriculum design, and policy development, particularly in contexts where linguistic equity and cultural identity are often marginalized. This study positions instructors not only as educators but also as cultural mediators and agents of change in the pursuit of accessible, just, and empowering English education for DHH university students.

***Keywords:*** Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) students; English language teaching; integrative education; narrative inquiry; visual pedagogy

Cite this article: Ghanbar, H., & Asghari, M. (2025). Boosting the trustworthiness of narrative inquiry in examining effective English teaching to deaf university students: University instructors' perspective. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies, 12*(Special issue), 27-58.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.30479/jmrels.2025.3833

## 1. Introduction

As Benson (2018) explains, narrative inquiry encompasses any research approach that involves the use of stories or storytelling. Building on this idea, Barkhuizen et al. (2014) describe narrative inquiry as a methodological framework that integrates storytelling with research practices. This integration can take the form of employing narratives as data sources or as analytical and representational tools. Central to this approach is an emphasis on how individuals use stories to interpret and give meaning to their lived experiences, particularly in research contexts where understanding phenomena from the participants' own perspectives is essential. Consequently, narrative inquiry not only complements traditional positivist paradigms but also represents a distinct research orientation in its own right. Due to its emphasis on individuals' lived experiences within their social contexts and its capacity to involve participants in co-constructing and conveying accessible research outcomes, narrative inquiry has seen growing prominence in the field of applied linguistics (Benson, 2018).

The rise of narrative inquiry in applied linguistics has been influenced by its adoption in related disciplines (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). For example, narrative approaches have enriched psychological research by offering deep insights into individual behavior (Lieblich et al., 1998), and they have illuminated how sociological processes are experienced on a personal level (Roberts, 2002). In the field of education, storytelling has proven especially valuable for exploring the professional experiences of teachers and instructors at different levels, from primary to postsecondary levels (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Given the strong influence of these disciplines on research in language learning and teaching, the growing use of narrative inquiry in applied linguistics is a natural progression. In recent years, narrative inquiry has also shown significant promise in the context of Deaf language education. Its foundational emphasis on lived experience and meaning-making makes it particularly suited to exploring the linguistic, cultural, and educational realities of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. By centering personal stories and promoting multimodal modes of expression—including sign language (SL) narratives, visual storytelling, and video-based data—narrative inquiry offers an inclusive methodological space that aligns with the communicative practices of Deaf communities (see Rezvani et al., 2024). Moreover, it facilitates the examination of the often-marginalized voices of Deaf learners, teachers, and interpreters, thus contributing to a more equitable representation of their experiences in language education research. This capacity to accommodate diverse epistemologies and communicative modalities underscores narrative inquiry's value in advancing research agendas rooted in Deaf linguistic rights (Ghanbar et al., 2025), effective deaf language pedagogy (Ghanbar & Eskandari, 2025), and social justice.

In the context of Deaf education at the tertiary level, narrative inquiry offers a particularly powerful lens for investigating how university lecturers understand and approach the teaching of English to Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. This methodological approach enables researchers to access and represent the nuanced, situated knowledge that lecturers draw upon as they navigate pedagogical challenges, institutional constraints, and the diverse linguistic and communicative needs of their students. In contexts like Iran—where Deaf education is still developing within broader efforts to promote integrative higher education—such inquiry is especially valuable for uncovering how educators negotiate tensions between spoken/written Persian, English, and Iranian Sign Language (ISL) in their teaching practices, something which has been totally neglected in the relevant literature.

Moreover, narrative inquiry allows for an in-depth exploration of how lecturers adapt teaching strategies to accommodate visual learning preferences, integrate SL interpreters, and develop multimodal instructional materials. It also brings to the forefront their reflections on issues of linguistic equity, cultural identity, and accessibility—topics often absent from quantitative evaluations of teaching effectiveness. By centering lecturers' lived experiences, narrative inquiry provides a means to critique systemic barriers while also highlighting locally grounded innovations. As such, it contributes not only to the scholarly understanding of effective English language pedagogy for Deaf university students but also to the advancement of diversity-embracing and socially just teaching practices in linguistically diverse contexts. This study, grounded in a narrative inquiry approach, aimed to illuminate how university lecturers in Iran employed a range of effective pedagogical strategies to effectively teach English to Deaf university students while navigating linguistic, communicative, and institutional challenges specific to the sociocultural context of Deaf education.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Trustworthiness in Narrative Inquiry

Ensuring quality in qualitative research has long been a concern for scholars seeking to establish the legitimacy and value of their findings. Rather than relying on conventional evaluation criteria derived from positivist paradigms, many qualitative methodologists (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Tracy, 2010) have argued for alternative standards that are better aligned with the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry (Healy & Perry, 2000). One of the most influential contributions in this area is Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of trustworthiness, which shifted attention to how researchers can convincingly demonstrate the credibility and relevance of their work. They proposed a set of guiding principles—namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—as indicators of research quality. Rather

than directly mirroring the metrics used in quantitative research, these criteria reflect the specific epistemological and methodological commitments of qualitative studies, offering a means to evaluate how rigorously and ethically knowledge is constructed, interpreted, and represented.

In the context of narrative inquiry (see Ghanbar et al., 2024), establishing trustworthiness requires particular attention to the relational, co-constructed, and interpretive nature of narratives. Credibility is often enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants, iterative data collection, and techniques such as member checking, which allow participants to review and validate the interpretations of their stories. Transferability is addressed not through statistical generalization, but by providing thick, context-rich descriptions that enable readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings. Dependability involves maintaining a transparent and traceable research process, often supported by detailed audit trails, reflexive journaling, and documentation of methodological decisions. Finally, confirmability is strengthened by acknowledging the researcher's positionality and ensuring that findings are grounded in the data rather than personal bias. In this study, each of these criteria informed the design and conduct of the research, with particular emphasis placed on reflexivity, transparent analytic procedures, and ongoing dialogue with participants to honor the integrity of their lived experiences.

These principles took on added significance in the context of Deaf education, where communication is inherently multimodal and shaped by linguistic and cultural diversity. Credibility was particularly salient given the need to accurately represent the lecturers' pedagogical strategies used with Deaf students, many of whom relied on ISL, visual aids, and captioned materials to access English instruction. Member checking not only served to validate the content of the narratives but also acted as a collaborative tool for ensuring that the lecturers' interpretations of Deaf students' engagement were faithfully represented. Transferability was addressed by situating participants' stories within the broader institutional and sociocultural landscape of Deaf education in Iran, which remains under-documented. This detailed contextualization allows readers working in similarly marginalized or linguistically diverse settings to draw meaningful parallels. Dependability was reinforced by careful documentation of the research process, including the use of SL interpreters where needed, and the management of multilingual data involving Persian, English, and ISL. Finally, confirmability was supported through sustained reflexive engagement, in which the researcher critically examined their own position as a hearing academic involved in Deaf education policy and teacher development. This reflexivity was essential not only to ensure analytic integrity but also to foreground the ethical responsibility of representing a community whose educational experiences are often overlooked

or misunderstood. Furthermore, in contexts such as Deaf higher education, where university instructors play a pivotal role in shaping accessible and equitable learning environments, the trustworthiness of narrative research takes on added pedagogical and ethical weight. Documenting the experiences of these instructors offers valuable insight into how integrative teaching is enacted at the tertiary level and how educators adapt to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps in real-time classroom interactions. Their narratives illuminate the day-to-day ethical and instructional challenges involved in teaching Deaf students and contribute to a growing body of knowledge that can inform both policy and practice in teacher education and institutional planning (Riazi et al., 2023, for an elaborated discussion on research trustworthiness in second language writing).

### 2.2. Previous Studies and Research Gap

Although empirical investigations into the English language acquisition of DHH individuals remain relatively scarce, scholarly interest in this field is steadily increasing (Kontra, 2020; Scott, 2022). This emerging focus reflects a broader commitment to educational equity, underscoring the imperative that DHH individuals be afforded the same access to linguistic and cognitive resources as their hearing counterparts. Among these rights is the equitable opportunity to engage in foreign language learning, which is increasingly recognized as a crucial dimension of integrative education and lifelong learning (Kontra et al., 2015). Despite the sizeable population of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH) individuals in Iran and the formal recognition of their right to accessible and appropriate language education, empirical research on their language learning experiences remains notably limited. Existing studies have primarily concentrated on specific aspects of language development, such as reading literacy among students in special schools (e.g., Hassanzadeh & Nikkhoo, 2019), error analysis in written production (e.g., Jalaypour, 2000), and challenges in spoken Persian (e.g., Zarifian, 2001). However, comprehensive investigations into broader language learning trajectories, especially in diverse educational contexts, are still lacking. In two recent studies, Rezvani et al. (2024) and Ghanbar et al. (2025) shed light on different aspects of English language learning of DHH university students. Rezvani et al. (2024), for example, conducted a narrative inquiry to explore the lived experiences of Iranian DHH learners studying English as a foreign language (EFL). Drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with ten undergraduate English majors, their thematic analysis yielded five key themes: the alignment of English learning with personal goals and aspirations; perceived language-related challenges; recognition of differences in their learning experiences as DHH individuals; the importance of visual communication; and the supportive role of technology. Ghanbar et al. (2025) as well explored how foreign language learning shapes the identities of Iranian

DHH learners. Employing a narrative approach, the researchers collected qualitative data from an intensity sample of ten undergraduate students with severe to profound hearing loss who were learning English as a third language. Participants were invited to share their personal narratives, offering insights into their individual experiences and identity constructions. Interviews were conducted, transcribed, and translated into English before undergoing thematic analysis. Four major themes emerged from the data: (a) the perception of deafness as a disability in the context of EFL learning; (b) stigma associated with deafness and education; (c) the intersection of multilingualism and DHH identity in EFL contexts; and (d) the role of resilience and self-advocacy. As evident in the literature, the predominant focus has been on DHH students, while comparatively little attention has been directed toward the perspectives of university instructors regarding effective models for teaching English to DHH students in higher education. However, instructors' viewpoints are crucial, as they are directly involved in implementing pedagogical strategies, adapting materials, and shaping effective classroom practices. Their insights can inform more contextually grounded, practically feasible, and pedagogically sound approaches that address both linguistic accessibility and academic success for DHH learners in tertiary education. To address this gap, the present narrative inquiry study aims to explore university instructors' perspectives on effective English language teaching for DHH students. With a commitment to conducting high-quality and trustworthy qualitative research (see the Methodology section for details), this study seeks to offer nuanced insights into pedagogical practices that support linguistic accessibility and academic inclusion in higher education contexts.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Context and Participants

This study was conducted at a university in Tehran, Iran, that was established in 2019 with the explicit mission of advancing diversity-focused higher education, especially for DHH students. Since its founding, the university has developed into a bilingual, bimodal academic environment where approximately half of the student population consists of DHH individuals and the other half comprises hearing students. This distinctive demographic structure fosters a dynamic and embracing diversity learning culture, promoting cross-modal interaction and mutual understanding among learners. It should be mentioned that this work is based upon research funded by Iran National Science Foundation (INSF) under project No 4033354.

Currently offering 23 academic programs in disciplines such as humanities, science, and engineering, the university admits students across associate, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Notably, the admissions process departs from the conventional national entrance examination model (in Iran)

and instead relies on high school GPA. This policy is designed to broaden educational access, particularly for underrepresented and linguistically marginalized communities. The university's diversity-centered philosophy bears resemblance to that of international institutions such as Gallaudet University in the United States, which prioritize linguistic and cultural equity for Deaf learners.

To examine instructors' perceptions of effective English language teaching practices for DHH university students, the study employed a multiple-case qualitative research design. This approach was selected to enable a comparative analysis of teaching experiences across various individuals, facilitating the identification of both convergent themes and unique contextual distinctions. As articulated by Yin (2009), multiple-case study designs enhance conceptual depth and enable theoretical development through cross-case comparison within a shared phenomenon.

Participant recruitment was carried out through purposive intensity sampling, which is particularly suitable for selecting individuals who have rich, experience-based insight into the phenomenon under investigation. In alignment with the guidance of Shaheen et al. (2019), this strategy ensured that the selected participants were not only experienced but also deeply reflective practitioners in the field of English language education for DHH students.

Eligibility criteria required participants to have a minimum of five years' experience teaching in higher education, including at least four years of direct engagement with DHH learners in English-related courses. Invitation emails were distributed to faculty members and guest lecturers in the Department of Applied Linguistics. Out of approximately 15 instructors who expressed interest, a total of 10 participants were selected based on their availability and alignment with the study criteria.

The final participant pool included eight female and two male instructors, most of whom were hearing. One participant identified as Deaf, contributing a valuable insider perspective grounded in lived experience within the DHH community. The academic qualifications of the participants ranged from current Ph.D. candidates to faculty members holding doctoral degrees. A detailed profile of each participant—including gender, age, academic status, hearing status, and years of experience in both general and DHH-specific higher education—is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participants Demographic Information*

| Participant | Gender | Age | Academic Title | Hearing Status | Years of Teaching in HE | Years of Teaching DHH in HE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 1 | Male | 41 | Ph.D. | Hearing | 15 | 5.5 |
| Participant 2 | Female | 43 | Ph.D. Candidate | Hearing | 5 | 4 |
| Participant 3 | Female | 42 | Ph.D. Candidate | Hearing | 6 | 4 |
| Participant 4 | Female | 34 | Ph.D. | Hearing | 6 | 5 |
| Participant 5 | Female | 39 | Ph.D. | Hearing | 7 | 5 |
| Participant 6 | Female | 37 | Ph.D. | Hearing | 7 | 5 |
| Participant 7 | Male | 45 | Ph.D. Candidate | Hearing | 5 | 4 |
| Participant 8 | Female | 41 | Ph.D. | Hearing | 8 | 5 |
| Participant 9 | Female | 46 | Ph.D. | Hearing | 9 | 4 |
| Participant 10 | Female | 35 | Ph.D. | DHH | 5 | 4 |

### 3.2. Data Collection

To gain a rich and trustworthy account of university instructors' perspectives on teaching English to DHH students, we utilized semi-structured interviews as the principal method of data collection. This format allowed us to maintain consistency with the overarching research focus while also giving space for participants to express their lived experiences in their own words. The semi-structured design offered a thoughtful blend of structure and openness, ensuring that while the core topics were addressed, each interview unfolded organically, shaped by the unique insights of each participant. Each session lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and followed a protocol built around open-ended, exploratory questions. These questions were carefully developed based on a review of relevant literature and refined through input from three Deaf consultants, whose expertise helped align the questions with the cultural and communicative norms of the DHH community. This co-design process enhanced the cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance of the data collection instruments.

Although the interviews were guided by pre-formulated prompts (see Appendix 1), the interviewer took a conversational, flexible approach, allowing participants to expand freely on their teaching philosophies, challenges, and successes. Clarifications were offered only when needed to maintain flow and coherence. To ensure fidelity to the participants' voices, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. For participants who were Deaf themselves, interviews were conducted in ISL, the SL widely used within the Iranian Deaf community. These sessions were facilitated by a professional SL interpreter and were both audio and video recorded to accurately preserve the nuances of signed communication. Special care was taken during transcription to reflect both the semantic content and expressive quality of these interviews.

In addition to the interviews, we invited participants to complete narrative frames—written reflections guided by structured prompts that

encouraged them to recall and describe meaningful experiences from their teaching practice. These frames served to enrich and contextualize the spoken data, offering insight into situations where English instruction for DHH students either succeeded or faced challenges. Examples of prompts included:

- *"Describe a time when you noticed a Deaf student thriving in your English class. What contributed to this success?"*
- *"Recall a situation where a Deaf student encountered a significant obstacle in learning a specific concept. How did you and the institution respond, and what impact did it have?"*

These reflective writings helped anchor the analysis in concrete classroom realities, highlighting the emotional, pedagogical, and institutional dynamics involved in effective English language education for DHH learners.

To maintain ethical integrity and strengthen the credibility of the study, we implemented member-checking procedures. All participants were given full transcripts of their interviews and asked to verify the accuracy of the content. Their feedback was incorporated to ensure that interpretations remained faithful to their intended meanings. Additionally, informed consent was obtained prior to all data collection, and the entire research protocol received ethical approval from the university's institutional review board.

Together, the interviews and narrative frames provided a multidimensional portrait of how English instructors interpret and enact effective teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse DHH university classrooms.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

To ensure depth, credibility, and reflexivity in analyzing our narrative data, we drew upon Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the central analytical approach. Given the study's focus on exploring how university instructors perceive and enact effective English language teaching for DHH students, IPA provided a well-suited methodological lens. This approach enabled us to move beyond surface-level descriptions toward a nuanced exploration of instructors' meaning-making processes, thus strengthening the trustworthiness of our narrative inquiry. IPA is grounded in the theoretical traditions of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiographic analysis, all of which center the individual's subjective experience as the foundation for knowledge-building. Rather than treating participants as mere sources of data, this method positioned them as active interpreters of their own pedagogical realities—a particularly relevant stance in the context of Deaf education, where teaching practices must respond to complex linguistic and cultural dynamics. Central to IPA is the notion of the double hermeneutic: as researchers, we sought to interpret how instructors themselves interpret their lived experiences in teaching English to DHH learners.

The analytic process unfolded in several recursive and reflective phases. First, all interview transcripts and narrative frames were closely read multiple times to develop a deep familiarity with the data. This phase involved annotating the texts with initial insights, affective cues, and points of pedagogical significance—especially those that related directly to English language instruction in bimodal classrooms.

Following this immersion, we engaged in line-by-line inductive coding, identifying meaningful statements, instructional strategies, values, tensions, and recurring motifs in the instructors' stories. Codes were kept close to the participants' own language in order to preserve narrative authenticity and contextual precision. As patterns emerged, codes were clustered into preliminary themes, which were then refined into more integrated, higher-order constructs. This iterative process ensured that our themes were not merely aggregative, but interpretatively meaningful—aligned with the study's overarching aim to surface what instructors regard as respectful, integrative, and effective strategies for teaching English to DHH students. We remained particularly attentive to how these practices intersected with issues of equity, access, and confidence-building in English classrooms.

Throughout the analysis, we prioritized the narrative integrity of participants' voices. Rather than abstracting or reducing their accounts into decontextualized codes, we treated their reflections as full, situated expressions of lived educational experience. This approach allowed the data to speak back to the theoretical framing of the study and offered grounded insights into how English pedagogy is enacted, experienced, and interpreted in DHH-focused classrooms. By integrating IPA within a narrative inquiry framework—alongside rigorous member-checking, reflective thematic construction, and attention to the sociocultural context of Deaf education—this analysis contributes a robust and trustworthy interpretation of effective English language teaching from the instructors' perspective. The process affirms that meaningful qualitative inquiry must engage both the emotional texture of experience and the institutional realities that shape it.

### 3.4. Research Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor of this narrative inquiry into university instructors' perspectives on effective English language teaching for Deaf students, we grounded our methodology in the evaluative framework proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), supported by contemporary strategies outlined by Riazi et al. (2023). In line with narrative research principles, credibility was achieved through sustained and meaningful immersion in the participants' academic setting. Over a ten-month period, the researchers regularly engaged with the university environment, spending two full days each week interacting with DHH students, SL interpreters, and instructors. Through observing English

classroom practices, attending language-teaching events, and holding informal conversations, we were able to cultivate trust and co-construct meaning in a way that honored the lived experiences and professional reflections of the instructors. To promote transferability, we provided rich, contextualized descriptions of both institutional structures and individual participant backgrounds, enabling readers to assess the relevance of findings to other educational contexts. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through methodical documentation at every stage of the research process, including data collection, narrative coding, and thematic construction. This audit trail served to make the interpretive process transparent and replicable. To strengthen analytical robustness and minimize interpretive bias, we employed peer debriefing as suggested by Janesick (2015). An external expert in Deaf education and second language pedagogy reviewed a sample of interview transcripts, narrative excerpts, initial codes, and emerging themes. This external review not only validated the consistency of our interpretations but also reinforced the credibility and authenticity of the insights gained from the instructors' narratives.

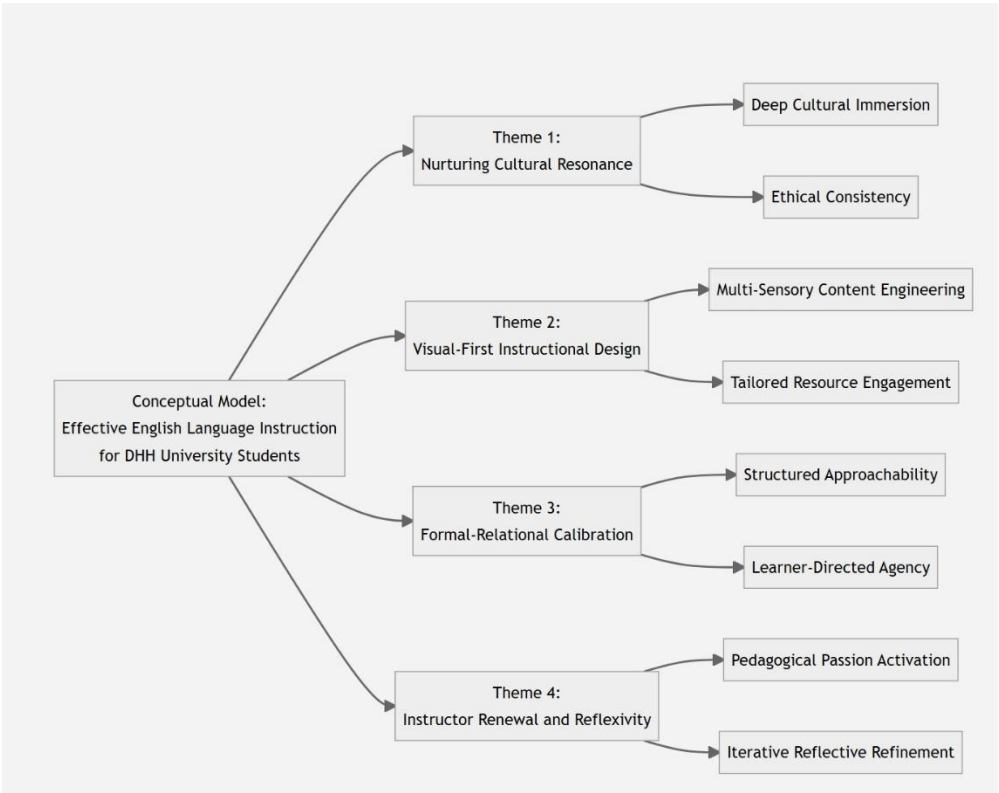
## 4. Results and Discussion

In alignment with qualitative best practices and to enhance the trustworthiness of this narrative inquiry, the findings and discussion are presented together in an integrated format. This structure allows for a more fluid interpretation of the data while anchoring the emerging themes in relevant literature and reflective analysis. The sections that follow introduce four core themes derived explicitly from university instructors' perspectives on English language instruction for DHH students—a population whose distinct linguistic and cognitive characteristics necessitate targeted pedagogical strategies (Bowen & Probst, 2023). Teaching DHH learners differs from general language instruction, requiring approaches that accommodate communication barriers, leverage visual learning strengths, and integrate culturally responsive practices to support identity formation (Mayer & Trezek, 2023). Representative excerpts from interviews are included to highlight the authentic voices of instructors who navigate these specific complexities. The interpretations that follow are deeply contextualized within the specialized literature on Deaf education and integrative language pedagogy, thus underscoring the particularities of teaching English in settings where SL use, auditory access limitations, and identity affirmation are central concerns. Overall, four major themes emerged—*Nurturing Cultural Resonance, Visual-First Instructional Design, Formal-Relational Calibration,* and *Instructor Renewal and Reflexivity*—each with two interconnected sub-themes. These collectively illuminate the nuanced, often underexplored dimensions of instructing English to DHH university students. The findings emphasize that

effective teaching for DHH learners transcends conventional approaches, demanding awareness of both linguistic accessibility and culturally grounded, ethically responsive pedagogical practices. Figure 1 displays a thematic map that outlines each theme together with its corresponding sub-themes.

**Figure 1**

*Model for Effective English Instruction for DHH Students*




## Theme 1: Nurturing Cultural Resonance

Effective English language education for DHH university students must move beyond standard pedagogical methods and engage deeply with the unique cultural, cognitive, and linguistic frameworks that shape how DHH individuals acquire additional languages (Mayer & Trzek, 2023). For DHH EFL learners, acquiring English as a foreign or third language typically occurs in a complex linguistic environment involving SL as a primary mode of communication, visual learning modalities, and often limited early access to spoken or written English (Domagała-Zyśk et al., 2021). The core focus of this theme lies in rethinking curriculum design itself—centering on how knowledge is structured and transmitted—rather than teacher-student dynamics or emotional support. Thus, traditional language teaching strategies

may fall short unless they are intentionally adapted to resonate with Deaf cultural values and communication practices (Weber et al., 2024). As noted by Howerton-Fox and Falk (2019), English instruction that overlooks Deaf cultural values and SL risks alienating learners and fostering disengagement. In contrast, when educators integrate Deaf cultural frameworks and respect SL as a legitimate linguistic system, they create pedagogical structures where DHH students can meaningfully engage with English as an additional language (Golos et al., 2021; Urbann et al., 2024). The key pedagogical shift here involves embedding Deaf ways of knowing directly into the language content—not merely adapting classroom interaction styles. This alignment between pedagogy and cultural identity reinforces learners' sense of belonging and motivation. Two sub-themes emerged within this theme: (1) *Deep Cultural Immersion*, and (2) *Ethical Consistency*.

***Theme 1.1. Deep Cultural Immersion***

In the context of teaching English to DHH students, cultural immersion means more than knowing about Deaf culture—it requires educators to internalize and integrate that knowledge into their instructional materials, examples, and semantic frameworks (Urbann et al., 2024). DHH students often learn best through visual, story-based instruction that aligns with the rich narrative traditions of SL (Cacciato, 2022; Marschark et al., 2011). As Kang and Scott (2022) suggest, SL serves as a cognitive and cultural foundation for many DHH learners, and thus effective English instruction must be layered atop that foundation rather than imposed separately. Participant 3's experience offers a compelling illustration: *"When I first taught English verb tenses, I used charts only—but after attending Deaf cultural workshops, I began incorporating stories students signed about their lives to explain tenses. Suddenly, abstract grammar rules made real sense to them."* This theme emphasizes curricular depth—using linguistic alignment between SL structures and English content to achieve understanding. Embedding instruction within SL narratives allows DHH students to draw meaningful parallels between two linguistic systems, enhancing retention and comprehension. Moreover, this approach aligns with Deaf epistemology, which emphasizes learning as a culturally situated, visual, and embodied process. By weaving students' lived experiences and SL narratives into English instruction, educators foster not only language skills but also curriculum legitimacy and cultural relevance—foundations essential for sustained motivation and deeper engagement (Hauser et al., 2010; Kang & Scott, 2021). These strategies closely align with the principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which Kubota and Lin (2009) argue is essential for creating equitable language learning environments. When students are invited to contribute their linguistic resources—such as SL narratives—they become not

only recipients of instruction but active co-constructors of knowledge. Participant 6 exemplifies this in practice: *"I learned basic signs for English idioms, but more importantly, I asked students, 'How would you sign "break the ice"?' This opened dialogue about how English expressions relate to their lived experiences."* This dialogic method is framed as an epistemological bridge between two semiotic systems—SL and English—grounded in content design. Such instructional moves expand the very architecture of what counts as English language knowledge for DHH learners.

***Theme 1.2. Ethical Consistency***

Ethical consistency in English language education is not merely about equitable policies—it involves a profound commitment to dignity, identity, and linguistic justice (Tofighi & Ahmadi Safa, 2023). Many DHH EFL learners have experienced educational environments in which their language exposure was restricted, often leading to vocabulary and literacy delays (Antia & Rivera, 2021). In this theme, ethics is conceptualized through curricular decisions—what is taught, how it is framed, and which forms of expression are legitimized. Participant 5 recounts the complexities of fairness in mixed-ability classrooms: *"Initially, allowing extra time on English quizzes only for some students caused resentment because hearing and DHH students shared the same class. Now, everyone gets the same timed tests, followed by a group discussion of strategies."* This approach represents an equitable reframing—providing accommodation without creating segregation. It echoes Samuels (2018) and UNESCO's (2017) calls for classroom ethics that promote shared ownership of learning, rather than differential treatment that may isolate students. Feedback practices are another site of ethical tension. As Participant 9 notes: *"When correcting written English, I never start with 'Poor thing' or 'I'm being lenient.' I first highlight strong sentence structures—'Your use of conditional sentences is clear'—then work on areas to improve."* This stance reflects an asset-based orientation, one that positions DHH EFL learners as capable bilinguals navigating two intricate language systems. It also mirrors findings from Rezvani et al. (2024), which emphasize that learners' confidence and persistence often hinge on whether instructors recognize and affirm their unique pathways. Here, ethical pedagogy is enacted through curricular inclusivity—validating SL alongside English in the content itself, rather than through affective or relational teacher responses (as in Theme 4). Ethical responsiveness is also a cornerstone of trustworthy narrative inquiry (Azzahrawi, 2021). This ethical stance resonates with principles of linguistic justice, which call for recognizing DHH learners as bilinguals whose languages—signed and spoken/written—carry equal validity and dignity. When educators intentionally validate SL alongside English and honor students' cultural identities, they disrupt deficit narratives and foster

classrooms where equity is lived, not merely prescribed (Padden & Humphries, 2005; Tofighi & Ahmadi Safa, 2023). How instructors respond to learner stories—whether through curricular flexibility, multimodal assignments, or diversity-sensitive assessment practices—directly influences how authentically students engage in classroom storytelling, which is foundational to the narrative method.

Together, *Deep Cultural Immersion* and *Ethical Consistency* offer a holistic reimagining of English language instruction for DHH EFL learners—not as a neutral academic endeavor, but as a discipline-specific, culturally and epistemologically grounded curriculum design. By centering linguistic identity and representation in the very fabric of what is taught, educators can transform classrooms into spaces of genuine inclusion and empowerment. This theme underscores the urgent need to build bridges, not only between languages but also between semiotic systems, cultural narratives, and the curricular frameworks that reflect them.

**Theme 2: Visual-First Instructional Design**

This theme highlights how English language instructors strategically reorient the sensory basis of instruction to meet the cognitive, sensory, and linguistic needs of DHH students. Unlike hearing learners, DHH students acquire English without access to the auditory phonological system—making sound-based instructional methods not only ineffective but exclusionary (Cacciato, 2022; Narr, 2008). As a result, English instruction for DHH learners must center on visual-first, multimodal, and meaning-anchored strategies that are not accommodations but structural necessities (Anis & Khan, 2023; Hendrawaty et al., 2024). These findings affirm that effective English language instruction for DHH students must arise from a clear-eyed understanding of how language is encoded, decoded, and scaffolded through spatial-visual channels in the absence of sound. Two sub-themes emerged within this paradigm: (1) *Multi-Sensory Content Engineering*, and (2) *Tailored Resource Engagement*. Both speak to a radical pedagogical departure from mainstream English language teaching norms—one rooted not in deficit compensation, but in linguistic equity, sensory realism, and the visual-spatial strengths of DHH learners (Marschark & Hauser, 2012).

***Theme 2.1. Multi-Sensory Content Engineering***

Participants consistently emphasized the need to transform English instruction from sound-centered to visually and physically grounded learning. English—typically taught through auditory explanations, phonetic drills, and oral dialogues—was re-imagined through visual scaffolding, embodied gestures, and spatial logic. These are not add-ons, but core tools for accessible English language instruction. *"My lesson plans always begin with a visual*

*concept map. I draw it out step-by-step and then build on it with short videos or captioned visuals. It's how they make sense of structure."* (Participant 2) This structured visual sequencing is critical for DHH students who rely on spatial reasoning and visual categorization, particularly in the absence of auditory syntactic cues (Thom & Hallenbeck, 2021). Participant 4 similarly described physically enacting new vocabulary: *"When I introduce a new English word, I stop and act it out—like charades—so they can see it, not just read it."* These gestures function as embodied translations of otherwise abstract or phonocentric concepts. Unlike strategies that focus on emotional responsiveness or relational dynamics, as explored in other themes, this approach is deeply mechanical and representational—it revolves around how concepts are *visualized, externalized,* and rendered *perceptually accessible* through spatial structuring and physical mapping. Such kinesthetic anchoring creates durable mental representations, transforming invisible elements of English into tangible, memorable experiences. This embodied and visual approach goes beyond mere teaching tactics; it actively dismantles traditional, hearing-centric norms that exclude DHH learners. By centering visual-spatial strengths and using multimodal strategies such as sign-supported glossaries, captioned media, and interactive visual aids, educators promote linguistic equity. Such methods are not accommodations but fundamental pedagogical necessities that align instruction with the sensory realities and cognitive preferences of DHH students, thereby creating more diversity-sensitive and just learning environments (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Thom & Hallenbeck, 2021; Weber et al., 2024). In essence, DHH instruction becomes an act of semiotic engineering—designing meaning not through voice and tone, but through the calibrated orchestration of image, movement, and form (Kusters et al., 2017).

This sub-theme echoes the scholarship of Serafini (2014), who argue that multimodal, visual teaching practices are not merely effective—they are imperative. It also aligns with educational justice frameworks (Cummins, 2000; García & Kleifgen, 2010), which emphasize equitable access by foregrounding learners' perceptual and cognitive modalities. Complementing these perspectives, recent research stresses the rejection of standardized, sound-reliant English materials as inaccessible for DHH learners. Instead, instructors curate customized, visually rich, and bilingual resources reflecting the communicative realities of their students, particularly the interplay of SL and written English (Domagała-Zyśk et al., 2021; Marschark & Hauser, 2012). Collaborative planning with interpreters emerges as an important strategy to refine materials based on real-time comprehension challenges, positioning interpreters as active pedagogical partners rather than mere translators. This design-centered partnership focuses on maximizing visual clarity, spatial logic, and information accessibility in instructional architecture. This co-constructive

approach not only enhances linguistic accessibility but also affirms Deaf cultural legitimacy, challenging hearing-centric norms in language education (Padden & Humphries, 2005).

***Theme 2.2. Tailored Resource Engagement***

Standardized English materials—often deeply reliant on auditory cues and oral interaction—were broadly rejected by participants as inaccessible for DHH learners (Domagała-Zyśk, 2016). Instead, instructors reported curating customized, visually-rich, and bilingual resources that reflect the actual communicative modalities of their students—especially SL and written English (Marschark & Hauser, 2012). Participant 1 shares: *"I don't use standard textbooks. I compile packets of visuals, photocopied diagrams, bilingual glossaries, and online materials—resources they can connect to and actually understand."* This shift represents a move toward perceptual justice, ensuring that materials do not assume hearing as the norm. Importantly, several participants described collaborative planning with interpreters, who helped fine-tune instructional materials based on observed comprehension challenges. *"I consult with interpreters before each module. They let me know which English words or concepts were confusing in sign, so I can prepare visual supplements."* (Participant 8) Here, interpreters are not passive translators but pedagogical co-designers, offering valuable insights into the students' bilingual processing. This supports recent findings by Domagała-Zyśk et al. (2021), who argue that teaching materials must be co-constructed with DHH learners in mind, reflecting both linguistic access and cultural relevance. Distinct from themes focusing on emotional attunement or learner autonomy, the emphasis here remains fixed on how visual information is encoded through concrete, semiotic materials—visual packets, glossaries, captioned input—not on how students emotionally process or relate to those materials. What might seem "innovative" in hearing-centric classrooms—such as visual sequencing, sign-supported glossaries, or kinesthetic modeling—is in the DHH context, foundational. These collaborative and culturally responsive practices not only improve accessibility but also affirm the legitimacy and richness of Deaf cultural identity and signed languages. By reconceptualizing instructional materials in partnership with interpreters and DHH learners, educators resist hegemonic auditory norms and promote a transformative pedagogy rooted in linguistic justice and inclusion (Domagała-Zyśk et al., 2021; Humphries, 2005; Padden & Rezvani et al., 2025; Weber et al., 2024).

Taken together, the strategies captured in this theme are centered on the systematic reengineering of English instruction through visual-semiotic logic, multimodal content forms, and precise sensory alignment. They embody a pedagogical transformation grounded in the ontological and epistemological orientations of DHH learners (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Samarji & Hooley,

2015). From visual mapping to interpreter-informed content design, the classroom evolves into an ecology of empowerment—where learners engage not as passive recipients of dominant language instruction, but as active agents navigating English through their own sensory and cultural lenses (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Wilson & Bruni-Bossio, 2020). These findings also resonate with the work of Ghanbar et al. (2025), who emphasized how storytelling and self-advocacy create space for DHH learners' identities to emerge within English learning contexts. When instruction centers on what is seen, felt, and co-constructed, language learning becomes an act of both inclusion and resistance—resistance to the hegemony of sound and affirmation of visual languages as epistemic equals (Hauser et al., 2010; Li Wei, 2024).

**Theme 3: Formal-Relational Calibration**

This theme highlights how English language instructors intentionally balance emotional attunement and structured pedagogy to meet the distinctive relational and interpersonal needs of DHH EFL students. In English education—where auditory comprehension, verbal interaction, and sound-based feedback are often prioritized—DHH learners face barriers that are not merely linguistic, but socially and affectively constructed through interactions that lack cultural or emotional clarity (Humphries et al., 2016; Marschark & Hauser, 2012). For these students, acquiring English is not only about grammar and vocabulary but about developing trust in communicative relationships, interpreting non-verbal intent, and feeling emotionally secure in environments where teacher visibility, interpersonal predictability, and cultural sensitivity are consistently enacted (Kang & Scott, 2021). Two interrelated sub-themes emerged: (1) *Structured Approachability*, and (2) *Learner-Directed Agency*. Together, they demonstrate how effective English teaching for DHH learners hinges on establishing emotionally attuned interpersonal climates—where linguistic justice and student voice are not aspirational, but integral.

***Theme 3.1. Structured Approachability***

Participants consistently emphasized that English language instruction for DHH students must blend firm academic expectations with emotional transparency—not communicated through tone of voice or intonation, but through visual routines, facial affect, signed cues, and consistent body language (Participant 9). This relational-emotional clarity plays a critical role in student comprehension and confidence, especially when auditory reinforcement is absent. *"My motto is 'Firm but Friendly.' I spell out the rules on day one, then I smile, sign, and nod—so students know I'm both accessible and serious."* (Participant 3) Such clarity functions not only as classroom management and instructional scaffolding but as a form of interpersonal negotiation, signaling mutual respect and role stability. Crucially, this

emphasis is on how teacher presence and emotional constancy are performed through visual-relational cues. Without access to prosodic cues or spoken meta-language, students rely on visible emotional cues to interpret tone, urgency, and encouragement—particularly in complex or unfamiliar English content. Participant 10 reinforces this approach through spatial and interpersonal consistency: *"I maintain office hours for DHH students. They know they can knock, but once we are in the class, we're back to academic business."* This formal-relational structure reflects Deaf cultural values around direct communication and clear boundaries. It also signals that relational trust and social cohesion in DHH education require deliberate visibility—not only in teaching materials but in teacher demeanor.

Unlike the visual-semiotic engineering strategies of Theme 2, *Structured Approachability* does not primarily focus on content design or perceptual accessibility, but on how students experience emotional stability and cultural resonance in their interactions with educators. Establishing compassionate and humanized classroom relationships not only fosters greater student engagement but also actively counters the stigma and social isolation that many Deaf learners experience—especially when instruction prioritizes emotional safety, relational trust, and cultural affirmation (Alrabai & Algazzaz, 2024; Hauser et al., 2010; Kang & Scott, 2021). As Boukhari (2025) emphasizes, relational strategies grounded in cultural sensitivity foster emotional safety and deeper inclusion, particularly for students navigating trauma, marginalization, or linguistic barriers. This perspective is also echoed in sociocultural learning theory, which posits that learning is mediated through interpersonal interaction and cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978). For DHH learners, those "tools" must be visible, accessible, and culturally resonant—rendering *Structured Approachability* not just effective, but essential.

### *Theme 3.2. Learner-Directed Agency*

Traditional English classrooms often position DHH students as passive recipients of sound-centric instruction (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Spencer & Marschark, 2010). In contrast, participants in this study described relationally-responsive spaces where student agency is foregrounded not just in *what* is learned, but in *how* students express identity, assume roles, and engage with others. DHH learners become co-creators of English knowledge, expressing their understanding through multimodal, self-directed forms of communication. *"I set aside a 'student spotlight' every other week. They choose a topic or creative project and teach it back to the class in their own style."* (Participant 2) Through signed storytelling, captioned videos, or illustrated presentations, students transition from "receiving" English to re-teaching it—not simply to reinforce content, but to assert social presence and linguistic ownership within peer networks and classroom relationships.

Participant 5 reinforced this dynamic by tailoring group assignments: *"Before every group assignment, I ask: 'How do you want to present?' Sometimes they sign a video, sometimes they draw a storyboard—it's their choice."* This pedagogical flexibility validates non-auditory literacies, expanding the definition of English proficiency to include visual narratives, spatial logic, and signed communication (Participant 1). It also aligns with linguistic justice frameworks that reject monolingual, speech-dominant standards and instead affirm the legitimacy of diverse communicative repertoires (Batterbury, 2012). Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that empowering DHH students through recognition and encouragement plays a pivotal role in dismantling deficit-oriented narratives historically imposed on this group (Marschark et al., 2011). Such affirming pedagogical approaches enhance learners' self-confidence and sense of belonging within higher education settings, facilitating active participation and academic resilience (Allen et al., 2024; Lemon et al., 2024). Importantly, these practices also serve a methodological function. As Caduri (2013) argues, narrative inquiry that values multiple forms of student expression—whether verbal, visual, or embodied—becomes epistemologically just, aligning both research and pedagogy with the lived epistemologies of DHH learners. This perspective is echoed by Young and Temple (2014), who emphasize that research with Deaf participants must account for the visual, cultural, and linguistic modalities that shape their ways of knowing, challenging dominant epistemological assumptions in mainstream educational research.

In sum, Formal-Relational Calibration demonstrates that teaching English to DHH learners involves more than content delivery or sensory accessibility—it requires a deliberate choreography of interpersonal warmth, cultural trust-building, and relational safety. Research shows that emotionally supportive teaching—marked by teacher sensitivity, positive climate, and responsiveness—enhances engagement and well-being (Alrabai & Algazzaz, 2024). Integrating local culture into instruction further reduces anxiety and fosters emotional safety by affirming students' identities (Wutun et al., n.d.). Gkonou and Mercer (2017) similarly highlight the importance of emotional and social intelligence in building diversity-sensitive, trust-based classrooms. Unlike instructional themes grounded in design (Theme 2) or teacher-centered reflection (Theme 4), this theme centers on the socio-affective architecture of the classroom, where trust, visibility, and student voice become central to language learning. Antia et al. (2009) affirm that DHH students thrive in classrooms that are both predictable and responsive, while Hauser et al. (2010) emphasize that DHH cognition is rooted in Deaf epistemology—where visual access, non-auditory expression, and identity affirmation are foundational. Collectively, these findings support the need for pedagogies that center Deaf cultural knowledge, validate SL, and challenge auditory norms. In such

classrooms, English becomes not only learnable but ownable—a language DHH students can internalize and reshape on their own terms.

**Theme 4: Instructor Renewal and Reflexivity**

This theme explores how instructors who teach English to DHH university students engage in a continuous internal process of professional and emotional growth that transcends specific instructional techniques or classroom relational dynamics. Unlike general language instruction, teaching English to DHH learners demands a sustained commitment to personal and epistemological transformation, where educators critically examine their own beliefs, emotional responses, and pedagogical assumptions to maintain relevance and efficacy over time. Instructors are not merely facilitators of cross-modal communication but reflective practitioners committed to evolving their professional identities within complex linguistic and cultural landscapes. As Domagała-Zyśk et al. (2021) emphasize, effective instruction for DHH learners requires educators to continually reflect on their positionality and adapt pedagogical frameworks—not only to align with students' perceptual realities, but also to challenge dominant auditory-centric paradigms from within. This call for pedagogical reflexivity is echoed in Urbann et al. (2024), who highlight that DHH students experience English classrooms as spaces of epistemic negotiation, where instructors must navigate their evolving understanding of Deaf culture alongside institutional expectations. Similarly, Kontra's contribution in Domagała-Zyśk et al. (2021) reveals how instructors' professional growth is rooted in ongoing self-examination and innovation in response to learners' visual and cultural needs. Two sub-themes—*Pedagogical Passion Activation* and *Iterative Reflective Refinement*—illustrate how deep emotional engagement and sustained self-critique are vital for maintaining instructional vitality and ethical responsibility in this challenging context.

***Theme 4.1. Pedagogical Passion Activation***

Many instructors described moments of profound personal fulfillment when witnessing DHH EFL students' achievements that signify not only academic progress but transformative shifts in identity and linguistic empowerment. These moments are characterized by a fusion of affect and professional purpose, reinforcing instructors' commitment to their work. Participant 7 shared: *"When a student nails a presentation in sign plus half spoken-half written English, my heart races. That moment reminds me why I do this work."* Such experiences go beyond mere skill acquisition; they embody the inseparability of pedagogy and personal meaning for instructors. Instructors often maintain emotional artifacts—like *"success boards"* with student projects and photographs—as ongoing sources of motivation rather than as classroom management tools or incentives. This practice serves as a

counter-narrative to deficit-oriented educational histories and fosters a sense of professional identity deeply intertwined with student empowerment. This emotionally grounded approach aligns with Alrabai and Algazzaz (2024), who emphasize that teacher well-being and emotional sensitivity directly influence engagement and instructional quality. Similarly, Wutun et al. (n.d.) argue that acknowledging the complex identities of DHH learners supports both psychological safety and cultural affirmation. These insights resonate with Hauser et al. (2010), who characterize Deaf epistemology as a framework centered on visual, social, and cultural modes of knowing and insist that educator acknowledgment of these modalities is fundamental to their own professional development. Collectively, these perspectives foreground the necessity for educators to embrace emotional vulnerability and cultural humility as components of their evolving pedagogical ethos.

***Theme 4.2. Iterative Reflective Refinement***

Instructors emphasized that effective English instruction for DHH learners is sustained through ongoing, critical self-reflection and adaptation rather than adherence to static curricular or institutional protocols. Participant 7 noted: *"After every class, I jot down what worked, what didn't, and why. The next session is always a tweak, not a carbon copy."* This reflective process prioritizes the instructor's internal recalibration, focusing on subtle affective and cognitive insights rather than on external structural modifications. Misunderstandings may be traced not only to observable linguistic issues but also to unrecognized emotional or epistemological disconnects between instructor intentions and student receptions. Participant 1 described the use of video recordings to analyze their own bimodal teaching: *"Watching myself sign and speak at once is uncomfortable—but it shows me blind spots."* Such practices illustrate how self-scrutiny facilitates the uncovering of tacit biases and habitual patterns that may hinder effective communication or cultural resonance. Reflexivity here serves as both a professional development tool and an ethical imperative, enabling instructors to navigate complexities inherent in cross-modal pedagogy with intentionality and care. These insights are supported by Spencer and Marschark (2010), who underscore the necessity of responsive, lived-experience-informed teaching practice. Moreover, this reflective stance aligns with diversity-oriented education frameworks that emphasize accountability, transparency, and the cultivation of trust among educators, institutions, and learners (Kuyini, 2025; Yang et al, 2025). Reflexivity thus encompasses not only pedagogical adjustment but also the fostering of genuine relational openness and emotional authenticity in the educational encounter—qualities that, as Song (2021) and Lemon et al. (2024) suggest, are essential to building integrative, affective learning spaces grounded in trust and mutual respect. This reflective posture also strengthens

the methodological rigor of narrative and qualitative research approaches, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Charmaz (2006). Instructors' engagement with member checking, reflexive journaling, and co-construction of meaning with students reinforces both pedagogical effectiveness and ethical standards. Riazi and Nazari (2024) emphasize that reflexivity must operate dually as a methodological safeguard and a pedagogical necessity, ensuring that English instruction remains adaptive, student-centered, and epistemologically equitable.

Ultimately, Instructor Renewal and Reflexivity reveals that teaching English to DHH learners is a dynamic, emotionally charged practice rooted in the continuous evolution of the educator's professional self. Instructors sustain their work not through fixed methods or institutional scripts but through a living ethic of noticing, adapting, and caring that originates within the instructor as a reflective individual. As Hauser et al. (2010) argue, DHH learners' linguistic development is tied to Deaf epistemology, where visual access, identity affirmation, and emotional safety are not ancillary—they are foundational. This theme affirms that effective DHH English instruction depends on an ongoing commitment to personal and epistemological growth—to signs, to silence, and to the unique lived realities of students navigating English in ways few traditional systems have anticipated (Domagała-Zyśk et al., 2021). By embracing reflexivity and emotional presence, instructors empower DHH learners not only to access English, but to own it. As Song (2021) argues, emotional reflexivity enables teachers to critically interrogate their own beliefs and relational practices, fostering more diversity-affirming and responsive pedagogy. This is especially vital in DHH contexts, where, as Domagała-Zyśk et al. (2021) emphasize, language instruction must be rooted in an evolving educator consciousness that is visually grounded, emotionally safe, and culturally attuned.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

This study sheds light on the complex and multidimensional nature of English language teaching for DHH university students in the Iranian higher education context. By drawing on the narrative accounts of experienced instructors, the research emphasizes that effective teaching is not merely a matter of instructional technique but involves a broader ethical and cultural engagement. Teaching English to DHH learners necessitates a fundamental rethinking of pedagogical norms—prioritizing visual communication, cultural resonance, and linguistic justice over traditional, sound-based paradigms. Theoretically, the study reinforces the strength of narrative inquiry as a methodological approach capable of capturing the richness of human experience, particularly in marginalized educational contexts. It also contributes to the growing body of research centered on Deaf epistemologies,

showing how meaning-making, identity, and inclusion intersect with language pedagogy in ways that are often overlooked in mainstream applied linguistics. On a practical level, the findings advocate for systematic integration of multimodal resources, teacher training in visual-spatial pedagogy, and collaborative planning with SL interpreters. Educational institutions must also take steps to create spaces where Deaf identity and linguistic plurality are not only acknowledged but embedded within curricula, policies, and professional development structures.

While the study offers rich, contextually grounded insights into diversity-oriented English language teaching for DHH students, it remains shaped by the specific institutional and sociocultural setting in which it was conducted. Although generalizability is not the aim of qualitative research, the situated nature of this study may limit its direct resonance with vastly different educational contexts. Furthermore, the limited participation of Deaf instructors highlights the need for more diverse and representative voices in future investigations.

To build on this work, further research could delve into DHH students' own narratives of learning, explore how diversity-oriented pedagogies evolve over time, or conduct comparative studies across different national and cultural settings to trace how policy, identity, and classroom practices intersect. Ultimately, this study invites educators, researchers, and policymakers to see DHH EFL learners not as individuals needing accommodation, but as holders of unique epistemologies and cultural assets. By centering their ways of knowing, language education can become not just more effective—but truly transformative, reimagining pedagogy through the lens of equity, dignity, and multimodal understanding.

**Acknowledgements**

This work is based upon research funded by Iran National Science Foundation (INSF) under project **No 4033354**. The authors gratefully acknowledge the Foundation's funding, which made this work possible.

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## Appendix

*Interview Questions*

1. How do you show care and support for your DHH students' academic progress and well-being inside and outside the English classroom? Could you provide some examples?
2. How do you ensure fairness and respect for all DHH students in your English classes? How do you respond to inappropriate behaviors while maintaining a positive learning environment? Please share any strategies or examples.
3. How do you balance professionalism with building friendly and respectful relationships with DHH students in your English courses? How do you involve them actively and recognize their efforts?
4. What motivates you to teach English to DHH students? How do you create or adapt content specifically for them, and how does this affect your teaching experience?
5. What strategies do you use to maintain and improve the quality of your English teaching? How do you provide constructive feedback and continue your professional growth related to teaching DHH students?
6. How do you reflect on your teaching strengths and weaknesses? What standards or principles guide your teaching of English to DHH students, and how do you demonstrate responsibility for their learning success?