

# Voices of the Hard-of-Hearing about their L2 Acquisition Struggles: A Case Study<sup>1</sup>

Las Voces de Estudiantes con Hipoacusia sobre sus Retos en el Aprendizaje de otro Idioma: Un estudio de Caso

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## Abstract

In the context of advocacy of the rights of minorities, communities should research about the learning rights of individuals with hearing loss. This article reports a case study that looked into the retrospectives and perspectives of three hard-of-hearing participants (HHs) on learning another language. The data on retrospectives refer to the participants' narrative accounts that -as adults today- assess what they have gone through. The data on perspectives refer to what the participants wish were done about by school communities, and society. For HHs the interpretation of language goes beyond the reception of sounds; it draws on reading the body language, context, attitudes, and affectivity. The purpose of examining their testimonies, in the form of narratives, is to contribute to the understanding of how they re-signified their struggles. The results of the study fell into three dimensions: Affective, Attitudinal, and Communicative. These involved family, teachers, classmates, and participants. The results suggest that 1. HHs feel capable of mastering an L2 in integrated classrooms, 2. Language policies and standardized exams misrepresent the HHs' capabilities, and 3. Classroom equity demands material selection and methodological adjustments as well as teacher training in inclusive practices.

**Keywords:** foreign language instruction; hard of hearing; hearing loss; inclusion; integrated classrooms; special education.

## Resumen

En el marco de la protección y defensa de los derechos de las minorías, las comunidades deben investigar más sobre los derechos de aprendizaje de las personas con deficiencias auditivas. Este artículo reporta un estudio de caso que examinó las retrospectivas y perspectivas de tres hipoacúsicos sobre su aprendizaje de otro idioma en un aula integrada. Los datos sobre las retrospectivas se refieren a las narrativas de los participantes que como adultos, que son hoy, evalúan su trasegar en las aulas. Los datos sobre las perspectivas se refieren a aquello que ellos quisieran que cambiara en las comunidades escolares y en la sociedad. Para ellos, la interpretación del lenguaje va más allá de la recepción de sonidos; requiere la lectura del lenguaje corporal, del contexto, de las actitudes y del afecto. El propósito de presentar sus testimonios es el de contribuir a la comprensión sobre cómo resignificaron su lucha y resistencia. Los resultados de este estudio se situaron en las dimensiones: afectiva, actitudinal y comunicativa que involucran a la familia, los compañeros de clase, los docentes y los participantes mismos. Los resultados indicaron que 1. Los hipoacúsicos estiman que pueden aprender otro idioma en un aula, 2. Las políticas lingüísticas y el manejo de los exámenes estandarizados y de los resultados no representan sus capacidades, y 3. La equidad en el aula requiere, el ajuste de metodologías, la selección de materiales y la capacitación docente en prácticas de inclusión.

**Palabras clave:** aulas inclusivas; educación especial; inclusión; hipoacusia; lenguas extranjeras; pérdida auditiva.

## Resumo

No âmbito da proteção e defesa dos direitos das minorias, as comunidades devem pesquisar mais sobre os direitos de aprendizagem das pessoas com deficiências auditivas. Este artigo reporta um estudo de caso que examinou as retrospectivas e perspectivas de três hipoacústicos sobre a sua aprendizagem de outro idioma em uma sala de aula integrada. Os dados sobre as retrospectivas se referem às narrativas dos participantes que como adultos, que são hoje, avaliam seu trasfegar nas salas de aula. Os dados sobre as perspectivas se referem àquilo que eles gostariam que mudasse nas comunidades escolares e na sociedade. Para eles, a interpretação da linguagem vai mais além da recepção de sons; requer a leitura da linguagem corporal, do contexto, das atitudes e do afeto. O propósito de apresentar as suas testemunhas é o de contribuir à compreensão sobre como redefiniram sua luta e resistência. Os resultados deste estudo situaram-se nas dimensões: afetiva, atitudinal e comunicativa que envolve a família, os colegas de aula, os docentes e os participantes mesmos. Os resultados indicaram que 1. Primeiros hipoacústicos consideram que podem aprender outro idioma em uma sala de aula; 2. As políticas linguísticas e o manejo das provas padronizadas e dos resultados não representam suas capacidades; e 3. A equidade na sala de aula requer o ajuste de metodologias, a seleção de materiais e a capacitação docente em práticas de inclusão.

**Palavras chave:** aulas inclusivas; educação especial; inclusão; hipoacústica; línguas estrangeiras; perda auditiva.

## Introduction

In 1824, Ludwig Van Beethoven presented the ninth symphony however, the musician was unable to hear people's ovations and euphoria the night of the debut. This almost deaf musician that struggled with his ailment all his life, managed to compose one of the most outstanding works of music (Prevot, 2020). Two centuries after the ninth symphony debut, hearing loss is still invisible and misunderstood. The World Health Organization (2019) estimates that there are 466 million persons with disabling hearing loss (6.1% of the world's population). Many deaf (hereafter D) and hard of hearing individuals (hereafter HHs) struggle to fit the world and receive little help from their communities. In Colombia, 17.3% of people have limitations to hear (DANE, 2005). Furthermore, "sensorineural hypoacusis induced by noise in the workplace has led to a significant increase in reports of hearing damage, resulting in a social and public health problem". (Tilano-Vega et al, 2014).

This case study puts forth the thesis that a disability does not exist in the individual alone but in a society incapable of adjusting to differences. The purpose of this inquiry was to interpret how three HHs aged 18, 20, and 26 assessed their L2 learning. The research question that guided this investigation was: *How do three hard of Hearing individuals make sense of their schooled L2 learning?* The literature presents views from health and education but we could not trace works on the perspectives of the HHs themselves as learners of another language (L2).

This inquiry considered research-based and theory-based literature from a medical and socio-cultural view of hearing loss. For the Ministry of Education of Colombia, (M.E.N, 2007) an "impairment in hearing may affect the student's educational performance" (p.6). Regarding the medical perspective, Jambor & Elliott (2005) explain that "Those who adhere to a medical/pathological view and do not recognize the cultural or linguistic aspects of their deafness, being deaf is a disability and disorder." (p.67). For those who identify with the deaf community, it is a part of their total identity". This sociocultural perspective focuses on the Deaf as a cultural and linguistic minority group with rights to be advocated for. Hard-of-Hearing problems demand more than a technological solution of either an implant or a hearing aid; families and communities need an understanding of discrimination and barriers to access that are bound culturally. This article analyses the narratives of society's failure or refusal to accommodate their difference. We concur with Garden (2010, p.62) that "alternative conceptions of deafness are available and can help both hearing parents and deaf children to adjust positively to the diagnosis and subsequent therapeutic and educational approaches."

HHs within the deafness spectrum are in the middle of two worlds, they do not have enough hearing loss to be deaf or enough hearing capacity to be 'hearing'. Hence, they find challenging to fit a group and understand their identity. Despite the belief

that profound deafness may affect in a greater extent the life of the individuals in comparison with those with residual hearing the author also explains that ‘those with a profound hearing loss are often forced to come to terms with their deafness and to arrange their lives according to this condition.’ (Jambor & Elliott, 2005, p.66). On the other hand, for HHs with a lower level of deafness arrange their lives according to their hearing loss may be more difficult since ‘those with some residual hearing are often caught in the middle since they may do not define themselves as deaf, yet they cannot fully function as hearing in a world that relies on hearing and speech. This may lead to frustrating experiences and a diminished self-regard’ (p.67).

About L2 acquisition, HHs find challenging language articulation and comprehension. ASHA (2005) explains that lack of hearing capacity causes a delay in the development of receptive and expressive communication skills characterized by the misperception of voiceless sounds such as *ch, g, f, k, p, s, or t* and speakers replace or exclude them in their speech. For filling the gaps in understanding HHs may use lip-reading and visual strategies. However, there are limitations for mouth shapes such as */b/, /p/ /m/* look the same. Similarly, words and numbers such as 50,15, or 60,16 sound the same. Most HH children cannot hear word endings such as */s/ or /ed/*. This disturbs verb tenses, plural forms, non-agreement of subject and verb, and possessives. (ASHA, 2005). It also affects L2 learning directly because they find challenging to identify suffixes that add meaning to words.

While in socialization, Jambor & Elliott (2005) express that “strong identification with one’s in-group is assumed to have a positive influence on self-esteem because it provides a sense of belonging and serves as a buffer against the negative impact of prejudice and discrimination” (p.67). In the case of the HHs identifying themselves as members of a group is complicated. Kemmery (2014) concluded that definitions depended on the individual and must be respected and that the feeling of misplacement increases the risk of isolation and depression.

Furthermore, Díaz & Cubillos (2014) identified four discourses toward teaching an L2 to HHs: *approbation, uncertainty, skepticism, and constructive criticism*. Their study concluded that the power of attitude constituted the response to turn a difficulty into a possibility. These discourses were reflected in our case study. Our three participants felt capable of mastering an L2 in integrated classrooms, meaning that they do not feel they should attend special education classrooms. Beltrán, Martínez, and Vargas (2015) explain that the law establishes that schools that enroll students with limitations must gradually adapt their plans following the principle of integration to serve all learners. In this sense, *integrated institutions* and *classrooms*, refer to those that enroll students with or without special conditions in the same educational space. However, the three participants expressed that their schools rarely had curricular, organizational, pedagogical adaptations, of physical, technological resources, educational materials, training teacher improvement, and, in general, of accessibility.

The three HHs' narrative memories receive the name of retrospectives and what they would like to see happening are their perspectives. This case study is coherent with the call for educators to gain knowledge of the psychological and social functioning of D/HH expressed in Dogamala et al., (2016). Hearing loss is not a limitation but a challenge for schools, instructors, learners, and all of society. Disabilities exist because the communities perceive them as a disease instead of a form of diversity. Communities who devote time and resources to educate parents, teachers and others can offer a deeper understanding of a disability. We consider that the issues discussed here value teacher knowledge and experience and we call for reinforcing them to guide and inspire.

This report first presents the problem in the voices of the three participants, then discusses the background and method. The results are grouped under affective, communicative, and attitudinal dimensions.

## The problem in the Voices of three Hard of Hearing L2 Learners

Three hard-of-hearing individuals (HHs), that go by the pseudonym of famous HHs *Ludwig* (van Beethoven), (Bill) *Clinton*, and (Thomas Alva) *Edison*, offered the views of their L2 experiences in integrated (other calls them regular) schools. They attended a specialized clinic where one of the authors of this article, an HH herself, does volunteer work. This section echoes their voices, which the authors of this article translated into English. For Ludwig:

*My classmates see me as someone who stays away from them. That is odd because they perceive that I hate them and other countless things. It angers me to give that impression. ... All the whispering and background noise is quite hard to assimilate. I don't know, one cannot concentrate.*

Ludwig's perspectives and retrospectives touched upon underlying beliefs that account for the feelings and behaviors of the actors involved and he said he advocated for inclusion. Clinton elaborated on problematic areas of the school environment.

*My classmates see me as a calm person, who sometimes does not understand, but who is a good and friendly person.*

*And then clearly if I hear background noise, chatting, and knowing that I am doing my best to follow the teacher becomes a nuisance that puts you out of the game practically. It is like that people should become aware that I am giving my best to hear the teacher.*

*Many times teachers used to play a tape for listening work, which I found difficult to understand. I almost never caught what they said. I had to remind the teacher of my condition. In my case, I think that large classes are a problem for us. So I told the teacher how ... sometimes teachers go around the classroom because they also have to give priority to those who are in the back of the room.*

The testimonies suggest that schools, teachers, and schoolmates' negative attitudes affect HHs; they need more cognitive, affective, and social support to overcome anxiety and frustration. Marschark, Spencer, Adams, & Sapere (2011) remark the difference in cognitive processes between D/HHs and hearing students. They explain that "some of those differences are the product of the reliance of D/HH individuals on visuospatial processing; some result of lesser access to incidental learning during childhood, and others reflect – in a circular fashion – the failure of educators to recognize and accommodate the classroom strengths and needs of D/HH" (p.5). Edison's testimony corroborates the other two angles of the problem.

*At school, I had to be as visual as possible, but it was difficult because the teacher was in a corner of the room, moved, and then I asked her if she could speak a little slower because I did not understand her and she did not want. That is, she did not want to help me with that because she had to teach a lesson and everything. She did not spend a couple of minutes writing the topic so I felt as if she did not care.*

The perspectives dealt with aspects of others' attitudes, behaviors, and emotions that are worth investigating. Hearing loss is often misunderstood and HHs tend to experience loneliness and isolation due to misconceptions. As Hellen Keller (in Goodreads, 2019) pointed, "blindness separates us from things; deafness separates us from people." Ludwig, Clinton, and Edison reported the need for solidarity of teachers and classmates because classroom practices affect HHs understanding and emotions.

## **Background.**

The first issue is the communication barrier. The HH condition can be more complex than profound deafness in terms of language acquisition. The deaf can fully communicate in their L1, sign language, while many HHs cannot because they grew up as oralists with no exposure to signs. These considerations were taken into account in the data analysis of our study. Jambor & Elliott (2005) state that HHs need further cues, such as face-to-face communication with constant eye contact, lip-reading, and understanding body language. Since these are rarely available in encounters with hearing people, HHs are likely to lose key information. With their residual auditory capacity, HHs acquire the mother tongue as L1 and another language as an L2, but the obstacles in communication are permanent in both, "even the use of hearing aids cannot fully solve the problem since these assistive devices cannot make other people's speech clearer, only a bit louder." (Jambor & Elliott, 2005, p.66)

Education policy in Colombia states that English is “essential” for any society interested in being part of global academic, cultural, and economic dynamics (M.E.N, 2006). However, priority should be given to mitigate the segregation of minorities. M.E.N (2004) regulates the L2 requirement for students with hearing loss mentioning that ‘If possible, they should master spoken and written English or be exempted from this requirement (...). However, if a reference to documents in another language is necessary for the development of a subject, the deaf student, like any other, should look for strategies to access information’ (M.E.N, 2004, p.12). The documents on basic learning rights for English (M.E.N, 2016 b) and the suggested curriculum for English (M.E.N, 2016 c) do not contain any reference to disabilities. Ramirez, Tapasco & Zuluaga (2009) reported an increase in the enrolment of deaf students in higher education. Similarly, Cardona & Pereira (2011) state that as part of the policy, professionals need to achieve a B2 level including the D/HH population. In contrast, ICFES (2017) expresses that:

Persons who, due to a proven diagnosis, present limitations that make it difficult for them to learn foreign languages will be excluded from taking the English module. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with any condition of cognitive, auditory, or visual impairment, regardless of whether or not they require an interpreter (Article 10).

Exemptions from the FL requirement signals low expectations from institutions and contradict the demand for English language proficiency for professionals since HHs also require it to graduate from the university. INSOR (2009) and Ochoa, Angulo & Aparicio (2017) analyzed the current policies on the D/HH population and concluded that there is a need for an inclusive educational model that responds to labor needs and the growth of their participation in society. In sum, learning rights demands actions for inclusive practices, adjustments to the course and materials design, formation, and adaptation. In the quest for equity, the exemption of requirements should be interpreted as exclusion.

Scholars like Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan, and Gala (2013) identified the lack of knowledge as the main obstacle in teaching that results in low expectations, inadequate perception of educators in considering hearing loss as an excuse for learners not to do their work. Similarly, Domagała-Zyśk (2013) reports that teaching EFL to D/HH that despite problems derived from lip-reading, they showed the capacity to produce texts at different levels of complexity. About roles, Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan, & Gala or Domagała-Zyśk (2013) claim that being a pedagogue for the deaf is not enough but knowing about the psychological and social functioning of D/HH is compulsory and highlight the role of the commitment of both teachers and learners for developing practices outside of school boundaries.

Domagała-Zyśk and Kontra (2016) collected strategies for D/HH mentioning the benefit of cued speech for producing intelligible talking and better comprehension



because it shows speech visually and in real-time resulting useful for developing literacy, speech, and intensive as well as extensive listening. Adaptations and monitoring of audio material to the HHs' styles and world knowledge are a must. While Guiberson (2014) found that D/HH children can acquire an L2 without affecting L1 development. L1 proved stronger in the bilingual children than in the monolinguals who participated in that study suggesting that D/HHs benefit from L2 instruction. Likewise, Muñoz (2015) claims that D/HHs can achieve a proper level of L2.

## Method

This investigation was based on the subjectivity of three individuals' understandings. We followed a qualitative research "characterized by an interpretative paradigm which emphasizes subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual" (Reojli ,2013. p.30).

The context of this study was a medical center specialized in technical support and therapies for the D/HHs in Bogotá, Colombia. It provided the contacts and served as the place of encounter with the participants whose pseudonyms correspond to famous HHs: *Edison* for Thomas Alva Edison, *Clinton* for President Bill Clinton, and *Ludwig* for Ludwig Van Beethoven. Table 1 summarizes the participant's characteristics. Two are university students and the other graduated from college. The three have profound hearing loss; one still benefits from hearing aids but the others have cochlear implants that are no longer useful. Their diagnoses took place in the first stage of their lives and since then, they counted with the technological and medical support available. They attended integrated schools, are oralists, and do not know sign language. They learned English in Colombia and afterward stayed in English-speaking countries.

Table 1. Characterization of the participants

Characteristics	Edison	Clinton	Ludwig
Age	26	20	18
Diagnosis's age	1	3	3
Hearing loss degree	Profound	Profound	Profound
Type	Sensorineural Bilateral	Sensorineural Bilateral	Sensorineural Bilateral
Technical help	Cochlear implant	Hearing aids	Cochlear implant and hearing aids
Language therapy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Communication	Oral	Oral	Oral
Level of education	University graduate	University student	University student
English level	B2	B1	B1

The analysis via narratives constituted a way to make sense of the experience to construct the meaning of their L2 learning contexts. For Guerrero (2011) "Narrative is

a system of understanding that we use to construct and express meaning in our daily lives” (p.89). Hearing loss was explored beyond the medical perspective and considered social, affective, attitudinal, and communicative issues informed. The narratives were derived from interviews and autobiographical writings. They compiled experiences that were socially situated knowledge constructions that involved meanings and values (Polkinghorne, 1995)

Following grounded theory principles, the data collection and analysis were interrelated. The data organization consisted of grouping according to the dimensions and units of analysis identified. For interpreting, the data and the hypotheses were scrutinized. The data collection took four sessions: in the first, they did autobiographic writings (Appendix 1). The second involved the application of a semi-structured written interview (Appendix 2). The third had a semi-structured oral interview, (Appendix 3) and the fourth a semi-structured interview (Appendix 4). Table 2 summarizes the dimensions and categories of analysis. The perspectives and retrospectives were grouped in categories of analysis within three dimensions of human development: *Affective, Communicative, and Attitudinal*. These allowed the understanding of L2 learning processes.

Table 2. Categories of Analysis

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Categories</b>
<b>Affective</b>	Emotions and Socialization
<b>Communicative</b>	Communication with teachers and classmates Self-perception of communication
<b>Attitudinal</b>	Attitudes of the educational community Self-perception of attitude

The dimensions collected the meaning that participants assigned to emotions, socialization communication, and attitudes. Ocampo (2011) states that “the communicative dimension is known as the group of potentialities of humans that allows them to make sense and meaning for themselves and represent it through the language for interacting with others” (p.60). In our analysis, affection, emotions, socialization, communication, and attitudes interweave. Attitude constitutes a psychological construct of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors which accounts for emotions, behaviors, and actions forming ideas and opinion. Díaz (2002) states ‘Attitudes refer to something concrete, that is to say, the attitude is toward an object, person or particular situation. Attitudes are not innate in humans but learned about what is favorable or unfavorable for them, and it makes them behave in one way or another (p.152). In this case study, the foci on the *Affective, Communicative, and Attitudinal dimensions* shed light on the understandings of schooled L2 learning for HH students. It encompassed the three participants’ integral development as well as the linguistic and pedagogical aspects.

## Results

The results are in line with the *Affective, Communicative, and Attitudinal* dimensions examined. The Affective Dimension comprised the classmates, teachers' and families' empathy -or lack of it- towards HHs' condition. The Communicative Dimension encompassed the participants' perception of communication with teachers, and their self-perception of communication. The Attitudinal Dimension involved the perception of the teachers' attitudes, institutions, and their attitudes towards L2 learning. The results responded to the research question, How do three hard of Hearing individuals make sense of their schooled L2 learning? The participants made sense of the L2 learning process in the narratives which analysis yielded the results discussed next.

### **Result No. 1. HHs Feel Misrepresented in Current Educational Policies and standardized exams.**

There seems to be a myth about the lack of capacity of HHs to learn an L2 in Colombia. The low expectations go beyond doubting their capacities and it is reflected in how scores in standardized national exams are reported. Saber 11, is a high school exit examination administered annually in Colombian high schools for school leavers. The exam is similar to the SAT and ACT standard examinations taken by high school students in the United States. The scores count to access for admission to higher education and financial aid, but the section of the English language is not reported for HHs. HHs' scores are not reported in the added results that show their position in reference groups because they claimed that these may affect schools' and institutions' scores.

Similarly, the Colombian state examination of the quality of Higher Education Saber Pro, which is part of a group of instruments to exercise government inspection and supervision of the educational field does not report HH's scores in the added scores. The three participants reason that their learning rights are ignored in current educational policies. Very few of the 17.3% of the population with hearing loss in Colombia receive support from the health or the educational system. Their learning rights are affected by the lack of resources and the development of communication tools that give the deaf access to education. For Tilano-Vega et al (2014), "The history of exclusion endured by the hearing impaired continues to this day, despite policy decisions" (p.2). The administration and scoring of standardized national exams present contradictions and misunderstandings of the capacities of HH individuals. Regarding L2, ICFES (2016) states that:

Those who, due to proven diagnosis presents a limitation that hinders foreign language learning will be excluded from taking the English section of the test

and, therefore, will not obtain a score. The foregoing includes, but is not limited to, persons with any condition of cognitive, auditory, or visual disability, regardless of whether or not they require an interpreter. (Resolution 455, Article 5)

The above is inconsistent with the ability that HHs have to learn an L2 successfully. The English test does not differ from other disciplines. *Saber 11* or *Saber Pro* do not evaluate listening comprehension. Hence, exempting HHs to take this exam for considering L2 acquisition difficult has no grounds. Clinton illustrates this point:

*Well, I had a good score; it was 70 percent. Well, that was a long time ago because now the rating is different, but 70% was very good because in Colombia the average back then was 40.*

Unfortunately, students with any limitations are not only exempted from the English language section but are not reported in scoring either. It is evident in the article 5 that explains that “The percentiles indicated in numerals 2.2, 2.3 and 3.2 of Article 5 will not be calculated for people with cognitive, auditory or visual disabilities” (Par.2). These policies show the low expectation that the Colombian State and government have toward the population with disabilities. Nevertheless, the M.E.N claims that policies aim to include students in schools as some schools do not register students with special conditions because these consider it will affect the institution score in *Saber 11* or *Saber Pro*.

Exclusion from the calculation does not give test-takers, with a special condition, the opportunity to know their position at the national level, in their reference group or cohort in both generic and specific competencies, and this also limits the access to benefits designed for students with high scores such as scholarships and credits condonation. On the other hand, the test booklet is the same for all students without adaptation, and the English module is not mandatory for students with disabilities. In other countries, if you have a documented disability, you may be eligible for accommodations such as extended time, extra and extended breaks, someone who reads to you instead of audio-recordings, large-type test books or Braille test books, etc. ICFES do not adapt to any disability including blindness. These policies assure that this is the ‘best way to include’ students. ICFES (2016) states:

*The examiners of any of the higher education quality state exams that present at least one condition of disability, in the terms defined by the Colombian norms, will not be included in the population of reference groups for the calculation of aggregates. (Article 9)*

The above explains why Clinton decided to register as a regular student. He took *Saber Pro*, but he did not mention his condition in the registration for the exam because he knew it would complicate his process and test administrators would not

consider his good score at all. *No, [laughing] regular, because if I did it as someone with a disability, they would have sent me to a university with sign language.*

Test administrators do not seem to understand that people with auditory difficulties do not always need an interpreter but other adaptations, for example, explaining to proctors the dynamics of the exams and how to give clear instructions. Similarly, Ludwig said about ICFES resolution:

Well, you have to see it in many ways, first that they [institutions] should treat you in the same conditions of others who take the test, They should also ensure that you are in the right environment to take it. You must continue insisting until they allow you to take the test without limitations, nor prevent you from competing at the same level as people who do not have any type of disability.

Ludwig understands that inclusion does not imply excluding students from modules but providing a proper environment. Regarding this, Edison reacted:

*I do not really agree with that because first, it seems to me that it is discrimination because they do not know what the person is capable of doing, speaking, listening, etc., so we have the right to take everything, everything that is included there. It seems to me that it is a form of exclusion.*

This resolution limits the HHs' opportunity of learning about their placement. Recognition means to support as 'Information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations' (Cobb,1976, p.300). The author explains that the support involves three types of information 'Information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, information leading the subject to believe that he is esteemed and valued, and information that one is valued and esteemed is most effectively proclaimed in public. (Cobb,1976, p.300). The three participants estimate that these policies affect learning rights. Being these actions a contradiction to develop inclusive dynamics, schools require understanding resources, adjustments, and exemptions. This study holds the view that not only HHs have the same ability to learn an L2 as any other but consider the so-called "inclusive policies" a form of exclusion that does not guarantee rights.

## **Result No. 2 HHs Consider that Schools Need to Train Teachers in Inclusive Practices and Use of Resources.**

The data revealed the difficulties derived from a lack of understanding of HH's. Schools should provide continued training in inclusive practices such as the establishment of a dialogue with learners and their families to identify their needs. Instructors should develop the capacity to select or create materials and tools that facilitate communication with the hearing impaired. Figure 1 summarizes the

perspectives and retrospectives of three individuals that allowed the identification of critical points to reflect on.



Figure 1. Hard-of-Hearing Perspectives on their schooled L2 acquisition

Clinton reported: *“My fear in class is not being able to understand what the teacher says...My fear in class is not understanding audio conversations well.* Moreover, the uses of audio tracks increase the anxiety of the HHs. For Edison, *“My fear in class is not understanding audio conversations well.”* For Ludwig, *“One of the major difficulties was to be able to listen to the teacher in English and the audios that were played on the recorder since my hearing equipment did not facilitate me to discriminate the audios with quality.”*

Instructors should not evaluate something that the HHs are incapable of doing. There are ways to do it; the main recommendation is selecting materials with high context, specifying the situation, purpose of communication, characters, roles, and visual support, among other things. To test listening, L2 instructors can apply a one-to-one interview or dictation.

The Communicative Dimension constitutes the most complex scenario for HHs. They require support from teachers, schoolmates, and the community. Ludwig articulated the importance of making others aware of the condition and inclusion:

*Years ago I had a talk with my teachers to explain a little about my experience in the school, to demystify what had happened for I spent my childhood in the*

*same school, fortunately. Then I want to go back and convince them to take a step further towards inclusion [by learning from] my particular situation.*

Ludwig described his anguish and calls for educating others to recognize the hearing loss, understand its implications, and offer support:

*The most distressing situation was the thoughts I had to myself when the teacher presented a topic and there were hustle and bustle. I could pick some ideas but understood 10% of them. And I scream in my head ¡quiet! On no, no. This is too hard..!*

Clinton commented that equity also involves having the same opportunity to access input and for that, the HHs' effort is not enough; others' contributions are also needed. Depending on the distance of the speaker, communication can be more or less affected. Ludwig refers to the activities in which classmates are located in different positions around the classroom, making it difficult to follow the activity. *"I do not understand debates and do not manage to join in. Classes in which there someone speaks here, another speaks there, or over there."*

Debates can work with HH pupils with some adaptations such as controlling noise, promoting turn-taking, asking speakers to face the HH person. A round table or panel would be a suitable arrangement. In sum, communication with HH requires the support of others to facilitate understanding and leave behind prejudices and misconceptions.

In the Attitudinal Dimension, gaining knowledge about the condition and attending to the HHs' requests facilitate the process. People tend to see HHs as misanthropic, rude, and with other negative characteristics product of the lack of connection with them. Ludwig recalled his attempts to say that he could not quite follow the class:

*The teacher was a boastful US marine. I suffered a little in class, for the recordings he used a recorder were from the 1980s. This hindered my liking the class. I go and look for the teacher but his attitude (it is offensive) a very strange attitude is strange, an attitude that does not motivate [more] is worse, it is like those times that teachers say "Come on."*

Disdain affects HH'S motivation. Szymanski et al. (2013) denote the limited expectations and the misperception that hearing loss is an excuse. The re-examination begins with schools accepting the students' circumstances and particularities, not pretending that they emulate the hearing students. The three participants agreed that language policies, classroom practices, materials, and standardized exams rarely took into account their capabilities or needs.

Result No. 2 coincides with that of Szymanski, et al, (2013) and Díaz & Cubillos (2014) who state that limited understanding of HHs does not allow the development

of positive attitudes towards inclusion. Instructors should consider knowledge about HH, dialogue with the student to understand their needs, and positive attitudes. This result is also consistent with the findings by Muñoz (2015) in which support makes a difference. This also responds to the need for an educational model of inclusion put forth by Ochoa et al. (2017) and Ramirez et al (2009). The three results derived from the perspectives of stakeholders represent a basis for reflecting on inclusive education. The Ministry of education (British Columbia, 2007) produced a resource guide for teaching the D/HHs that coincides with some of the ideas furthered by the three HHs of our study. Tilano-Vega *et al* (2014) reviewed human tools, software, televised tools, cochlear implants, and recognition systems. Schools need to know about resources.

### **Result No. 3 Hard of Hearing Individuals Feel Capable of Mastering an L2 in Integrated Classrooms.**

Evidence indicated that the three HHs feel they can achieve good L2 proficiency in integrated classrooms displaying self-commitment resiliency and advocacy. These aspects are evidenced in the following excerpts. In the Affective Dimension, positive interaction with instructors and schoolmates was identified as a determining factor not only for L2 development but for helping HHs feel their value. Clinton affirmed: *“I consider that my level of English is B1. Although in terms of communication I would be more advanced. I feel comfortable and calm in my English classes.”*

Similarly, Ludwig said *‘I’ve been learning English for ten years’* and hold a certificate of Upper- intermediate level with a 6.5 score in the IELTS test. Edison displayed self-confidence in his proficiency: *I don’t really speak English perfectly, but I manage and people understand me. I suppose I would be between B1 and B2.* The student shows he recognizes his limitations but also his strengths hence, he manages to communicate despite the difficulties evidencing resiliency and positive attitude.

In the Communicative Dimension, Clinton showed self-confidence to take part in integrated classrooms. He said that repeating may be frustrating for schoolmates and instructors. Nevertheless, they must understand that it means rephrasing and looking for clarity. Edison said: *When I ask people to repeat, they kindly do, people rarely get angry or ignore me.* Asking for support displays advocacy because the participants stood up for their rights to access knowledge in the understanding that the responsibility does not fall on them alone but depend on others.

In the attitudinal Dimension, participants agreed that they had to develop a proactive attitude. Edison showed this pro-activity. He looked for ways to understand and developed strategies for autonomous learning: *I am considering improving my English because I want to learn a third language and I do not consider this step convenient without having mastered English. (Edison) .*



The participant explained that he not only wanted to learn a language but master it. Also, he expects to learn more languages. His words exemplify self-commitment and goal-orientation.

Similarly, Ludwig showed motivation. Ludwig not only reported having the strength to achieve but manifesting awareness of his capacity, and considered that he could perform better.

*For example, I also [have it] I need more concentration to do something, even to fry an egg, to draw, to write or whatever. When we are alone, if we are in an optimal environment to concentrate, I think we can do better than others. That is my point of view.*

In sum, the participants reported having the motivation to study other L2 and confidence in their capacities to execute this aim through their autonomy, ability, positive attitude, and self-advocacy. This result is consistent with those of Guiberson (2014) who provided evidence of the capacity and benefit of learning an L2 for HH students. It also concurs with Muñoz (2015) who recognized the HHs' skills and potential in integrated classrooms. Their capacity to master an L2 despite multiple obstacles deserves the attention of institutions to debunk the myths about disabilities and stop the evident segregation through the implementation of truly inclusive policies and practices.

## Discussion and conclusions

This study explored the components of schooled L2 learning for the HHs from human experience. The Communicative, Affective, and Attitudinal dimensions supported the multi-layered results of our study whose purpose was to inquire about how HHs understood and coped in integrated classrooms. The study responded to the research question *How do three hard of Hearing individuals make sense of their schooled L2 learning?* Their perspectives were built through their experiences and the retrospectives were their opinion and beliefs on past events at different ages. Accordingly, the evidence indicated that the HHs of this study made sense of L2 learning as a process in which they developed strategies to overcome the limitations of integrated classrooms. The struggle became manageable when they counted with the assistance of schools, instructors, classmates, and family. The participants echoed messages of solidarity, adaptation, teaching, resilience, exclusion, or disdain. The main standpoints of this study are:

First, despite the difficulties, HHs felt they could learn an L2 in integrated classrooms. Their capacity to learn an L2 passes through their confidence in their ability. They reported being as capable as their classmates. They understood that

support facilitates their process and helps them feel the integration and acceptance of the community.

Second, participants made a call for inclusion to policymakers and all of society. Inclusion means adapting practices and evaluation, not excepting people. Standardized tests, such as the school-leavers test, and the university-exit standardized test (Saber Pro in Colombia) in which HHs are placed in a testing center, should be adapted to their needs, and have a trained proctor. The English language section, which does not comprise a listening component at all, should appear in the HHs' scorecard. English language majors as well as others require the scores as academic credentials, and eventually, to apply for financial aid. The good news is that late in 2019, the Constitutional Court ruled that the testing organization, ICFES (2019), had to change the administration of the tests guaranteeing the participation of students with a reported disability. This order should not impede HHS to choose (i) the type of exam, (ii) the adjustment and support, and other favorable conditions to take the test, and (iii) taking or not the section of the English test.

Lobbying at school communities should be done to abide by regulations. They should, for example, inform the staff that hearing aids have a limitation for the discrimination of speech from tracks or loudspeakers or even for natural conversations and that excepting HHs from projects, tests, quizzes, and other activities do not contribute to an equalitarian education. Schools have to enforce regulations to stop underestimating those who are different, not by choice, by for a health condition.

Third, HHs consider that schools need to train the staff in inclusive practices. Instructors need to learn about the condition and understand its implications and adaptations. They should develop a positive and dialogic attitude and have high expectations about those learners. Language instructors, for example, need to learn to assess learners in one-on-one conferences. Talking directly is one way to support affectively, socially, and cognitively for inclusion. Training in-class communication needs to start with the instructors' and classmate's awareness of how to facilitate HHs' understanding of speech, it includes, talking clearly, pausing between sentences, repeating, rephrasing and writing, and most importantly, accepting them as they are. HHs require the support of classmates for avoiding chatting or noisy situations that reduce the hearing capacity. Teachers can learn to implement, for instance, a rotating buddy system for classmates to assist HHs.

A limitation of this study dealt with the issue of subjectivity, which is common in qualitative research. One of the authors is a HH individual herself, yet she chose not to write herself in the research. The methodological ways of proceeding with and writing up research were careful about too subjective judgments. Nonetheless, personal involvement brought empathy with the participants which allowed the collection of quality data to contribute to the field of ELT by sensitizing communities about equal treatment to people with hearing loss.

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## Appendix 1

### Session No 1

¡Cuéntame sobre ti!/ Tell me about you.

A continuación, puedes contarnos sobre ti. En una página, puedes compartir lo que deseas, contar experiencias o escribir una breve autobiografía. Next, tell me about you. In one page share what you want, tell experiences, write a short autobiography.

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## Appendix 2

### Written Interview

**Sesión 3: A continuación, encontrarás algunas frases que debes completar según tus experiencias.**

Ejemplo:

Cuando no entiendo algo	<i>yo...me quedo callado</i>
Aprendo inglés porque	_____
Cuando no entiendo algo yo	_____
Cuando pido que me repitan las personas	_____
Si me repiten muchas veces las personas	_____
Cuando estoy en clase de inglés me siento	_____
Mis miedos durante las clases son	_____
Mis profesores	_____
Mi familia	_____
Mis amigos	_____
Las instituciones	_____
Lo que me gusta del inglés es	_____
Lo que no me gusta del inglés es	_____
¿Cómo me veo a mi mismo?	_____
¿Cuáles son mis fortalezas y mis debilidades?	_____
Como pienso que otros me ven	_____
Mi familia me ve como	_____
Mis compañeros de clase me ven como	_____
Mis profesores me ven como	_____

A continuación, relata una anécdota que hayas vivido en una clase de inglés y que haya tenido relación con las dificultades auditivas Appendix 3: Structured- Interview

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## Appendix 3

### Structured- Interview

#### Session No. 2. Interview

1. ¿Qué tipo de experiencia tienes aprendiendo inglés? Nombra el tipo de institución, nivel de inglés, describe en términos generales toda la experiencia que tengas aprendiendo inglés como lengua extranjera
  2. ¿Durante el proceso de aprendizaje de inglés cuales han sido las mayores dificultades?
- 

## Appendix 4.

### Semi-structured Interview

- Session 1 ¿Qué experiencias han tenido aprendiendo inglés? ¿Qué nivel de inglés tienes? ¿Cuáles han sido las principales dificultades para aprender el idioma? ¿Por qué aprendes inglés?
- Session 2 ¿Qué estrategias usan cuando no entiendes algo? ¿Cuánto puedes captar leyendo los labios, en porcentaje? ¿Qué experiencia negativa tienes aprendiendo inglés? ¿Te ha sentido en desventaja por tu condición?
- Session 3 ¿Qué piensas sobre la evaluación en personas con discapacidad auditiva? ¿Debe ser la evaluación del aprendizaje igual o diferente? ¿Qué recomendaciones darías a los docentes de inglés que tienen estudiantes con hipoacusia? ¿Qué experiencias has tenido con las voces, con los tipos de voces, con el ruido de fondo?
- Session 4 ¿Qué mitos giran en torno a la hipoacusia?  
 ¿Cuál es la reacción de las personas cuando dices que eres hipoacúsico?  
 ¿Somos sordos o somos hipoacúsicos?
- 

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