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HOW SOUND IS EXPERIENCED IN dEAF/DEAF PRACTICE? ON SOUND EMANCIPATORY STRATEGIES

Abstract: The paper aims to answer how deaf/Deaf practice inferred the sound. The author analyses the Reddit discussion on deaf experiences with sound. Using Steven Feld's concept of acoustemology, which is one's sonic way of knowing and being in the world, the author discusses the meaning of sound in the deaf/Deaf epistemological experience. The sound is a *pharmakon*. For the deaf/Deaf, the sound brings both positive and negative, expected and unexpected. Ernesto Laclau's term of emancipation is used to explain how d/Deaf sound practices entail this ambiguity. The author describes four sound emancipatory strategies: expect unexpected, sound management, fabrication of sound, and semiosis. The deafness condition breaks down the perfect ideas of sound and silence, placing us in the sound continuum. Sound is perceivable, but the significance it brings is sometimes debatable. Sound emancipatory strategies enable d/Deaf people to tell their own story of experiencing sound, take control over the sound and show their expertise on it, free their hearing process, and break speech hegemony.

Keywords: deaf/Deaf, sound, acoustemology, emancipation, emancipatory strategies

Introduction

Deafness is, on the one hand, hardly connected with sound and, on the other hand, very closely related to it. From the anatomical and physiological point of view, people have two ears. Each consists of the outer, middle, and inner ear. One has such anatomical parts as the pinna, external auditory tube, eardrums, ossicles, Eustachian tube, cochlea, vestibule, and semicircular canals.

The above information is both necessary and not important. While discussing deafness, the crucial meaning of this hearing process refers to human language ability. Those who can hear and have appropriate social conditions can easily acquire their first language. The first language is the basis for building knowledge and developing

other cognitive skills related to language. Having this done, people establish all cultural diversity in the world. However, there is another way. One can skip the hearing process and acquire visual language. Having this done, one can develop all necessary cognitive skills and start creating all cultural diversity worldwide.

In the real world, both scenarios and some mixtures occur. Mara Mills wrote: “A deaf spectrum – or «deafnesses» has replaced the deaf/hearing binary in both the biomedical and cultural realms.”¹

Living within a deaf spectrum means one experiences many sound-related practices that do not happen without the participation of consciousness. One needs to focus on these practices. These sound-related practices include: hearing something, noticing a sound, being aware of sound, being interested in sound sources, reacting to sound, be active in a sonic space. Although some of these sound-related practices may seem highly similar to hearing people’s, they differ. Being in a deaf spectrum means that one hears “something”. In medical and audiological jargon, one has residual hearing. One can hear some types of sounds: with particular frequencies and above particular volume. This diversity contributes to the lack of hearing standards inside the deaf spectrum. Deaf hear individually, uniquely, and independently.

The paper aims to answer how d/Deaf experience sound in their practices. To answer this question, the author has looked at internet materials² from the world-famous Reddit, “an American social news aggregation, web content rating, and discussion website”.³ One question asked on the website was: “No longer deaf people of Reddit what’s something you thought would have a certain noise but were surprised it doesn’t?”⁴ The discussion has 5.1 k comments from both deaf and hearing people and 579 printed pages. The analysis focuses on the posts written by people who are deaf or hard of hearing. To do this, the author first identified all who openly admitted to being deaf, hard of hearing, hearing loss, and using hearing aids or cochlear implants. Their statements account for 10% of this discussion thread. The author used thematic content analysis to construct four categories of sound experiences in deaf/Deaf practice. Identifying analysis themes was theoretical (deductive).⁵ To do so, the author

¹ M. Mills, *Deafness* [in:] D. Novak, M. Sakakeeny (eds.), *Keywords in Sound*, Duke University Press, Durham–London 215, p. 45.

² My approach can be defined as “ethnography that uses the Internet only as a tool” – D. Jemielniak (ed.), *Badania jakościowe*, vol. 2: *Metody i narzędzia*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012, p. 207 – and it only complements my previous research: M. Dunaj, *GLUCHY ŚWIAT. Głuchota w perspektywie antropologii zaangażowanej*, Wydział Filozoficzno-Historyczny Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2015.

³ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reddit> (accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁴ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁵ V. Braun, V. Clark, *Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology*, “Qualitative Research in Psychology” 2006, vol. 3 (2), pp. 77–101.

refers to two notions: Steven Felds' term "acoustemology" and Ernesto Laclau's term "emancipation".⁶

Acoustemology and Emancipation

Steven Felds⁷ has created the term "acoustemology" to theorize sound as a way of knowing. He discusses Merleau-Ponty's concept of sensation as experienced presences and Henri Bergson's idea of perceptions filled with memories⁸ to ask "how the physicality of sound is so instantly and forcefully present to experience and experiencers, to interpreters and interpretations".⁹ Feld focuses on the materiality of sound. From this starting point, one can consider d/Deaf sound experiences because it makes it possible to observe sounds outside speech. However inadequate may seem deafness and sound, the idea of acoustemology enables understanding that sonic experiences are subject to d/Deaf social reality.

In his book *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* Feld describes how one remark of his Kaluli informant helps him understand that knowledge is "a method for putting a construction on the perceived, a means for scaffolding belief systems, a guide to actions and feelings".¹⁰ The author of this article assumes that the d/Deaf have their knowledge of perceived sound. From the audiological point of view, there are different levels of acoustic sensitivity. d/Deaf can have slight, mild, moderate, severe, or profound hearing loss. d/Deaf have their custom reaction to sounds. Although d/Deaf can produce and receive some sounds, they always do it their way. Specialists make many tests to check hearing abilities: the automated otoacoustic emission (AOAE) test, the automated auditory brainstem response (AABR) test, visual reinforcement audiometry, play audiometry, pure tone audiometry, bone conduction test, and tympanometry. After completing all those procedures, each d/Deaf receives a hearing loss picture: an audiogram.¹¹ These pictures are different for different d/Deaf people. Each of them hears something different. For them, hearing becomes a unique feature. One cannot prepare an average hearing scale for the d/Deaf as a group. When one is d/Deaf, it means one hears off the scale. However, this scale is analogous to Felds' "Western system's systematic and hierar-

⁶ E. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, Verso, London–New York 1996; T. Ziółkowska, *Inny (Wykluczony): dyskurs, puste znaczące, emancypacja*, "Analiza i Egzystencja" 2013, vol. 23, pp. 189–210.

⁷ S. Feld, *Acoustemology* [in:] D. Novak, M. Sakakeeny (eds.), *Keywords in Sound*, Duke University Press, Durham–London 2015, pp. 12–21.

⁸ S. Feld, *Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea* [in:] S. Feld, K.H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe 1996, pp. 91–135.

⁹ Idem, *Acoustemology*, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁰ Idem, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*, Duke University Press, Durham–London 2012, p. 45.

¹¹ See the audiogram pictures: <https://www.asha.org/policy/gl1990-00006/#sec1.2> (accessed: 21.07.2022).

chic terms”,¹² which become an obstacle to understanding Kaluli’s bird perception, classification, and symbolism. To understand d/Deaf ways of experiencing sound, we have to leave audiological scales and focus on their ways of describing it.

Acoustemology goes in line with relational ontology. As Feld puts it: “Knowing through relations insists that one does not simply «acquire» knowledge but, rather, that one knows through an ongoing cumulative and interactive process of participation and reflection.”¹³ This is precisely the situation described by Reddit forum d/Deaf members. The process mentioned above includes practices of describing sound experiences. The only proper knowledge of sound is the cumulative knowledge of different d/Deaf people.

Focusing on what people say, we step into d/Deaf discourse. According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the concept of discourse “captures the idea that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by particular systems of significant differences”.¹⁴ For those authors, there are no ontological differences between social practice’s linguistic and behavioral aspects. There is an analogy between linguistic and social systems. Nevertheless, “whereas particular discourses are partial fixations of social meaning, discursive fields are characterized by a «surplus of meaning» that can never be fully exhausted by any specific discourse”.¹⁵ Laclau’s concept of emancipation is related to the above ideas of discourse. For him, emancipation is an example of an “empty signifier”. There is an impossibility of achieving “a total and fixed representation of meaning”.¹⁶ As Laclau puts it: “there can be empty signifiers within the field of signification because any system of signification is structured around an empty place resulting from the impossibility of producing object within”.¹⁷ Why is this empty place so important? Empty signifiers are crucial for a hegemonic relationship, a “relation by which a particular content becomes the signifier of the absent communitarian fullness”.¹⁸ Social systems have a fundamentally political character. The d/Deaf discourse represents those forces that “are excluded in the process of political constitution”.¹⁹ The only way to change the social position is to gain political power. d/Deaf can achieve it by taking up the hegemonic play.

The author considers Reddit discussion a discursive practice that uses the concept of emancipation to construct their social identity. In this context, articulating a particular sensory experience constructs the political identity of those who can manage

¹² S. Feld, *Sound and Sentiment...*, op. cit., p. 44.

¹³ Idem, *Acoustemology*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁴ D. Howarth, *Discourse*, Open University Press, Maidenhead 2000, p. 101.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 103.

¹⁶ S.T.G. Narwaya, *Discourse Analysis in the Perspective of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe*, “Journal Communication Spectrum: Capturing New Perspectives in Communication” 2021, vol. 11 (1), p. 5.

¹⁷ E. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 43.

¹⁹ D. Howarth, *Discourse*, op. cit., p. 104.

the sound. The meaning of sound as something inaccessible or hard to reach for the d/Deaf is challenged here. The sound becomes a full-fledged source of the knowledge production process. The sound is taken as it is perceived, and on this basis, the meaning of sound is created. Those d/Deaf discourse practices reveal the fictitious fullness of the meaning of sound, which is present in the discourse of the hearing. Those practices are emancipatory because of its potential to create a community and their potential to construct new meanings.

The thematic content analysis brings four emancipatory strategies. Those four sets of discursive emancipatory practices present four ways of dealing with sound experiences.

Expect Unexpected Strategy

In the analyzed material, a large group of statements concerns the surprise with the sound. The scope of surprise includes objects, activities, and phenomena which suddenly turned out to produce sound effects.

wolfeardmermaid:

When I first got fitted with my hearing aid and was leaving the hospital, I kept spinning to check who was walking behind me. My mum finally informed me that I could hear my own footsteps. I was just expecting them to be a lot less loud.²⁰

Scrublette:

You're absolutely correct lol, my bad! I expected butterflies and birds to have a really loud kind of noise similar to really really loud wind (also heard weirdly due to aides) which shocked me when I learned only really big birds make a whoosh noise lol.²¹

Forum d/Deaf members evaluate perceived sound effects both positively and negatively. Sometimes sounds are annoying or unpleasant.

AliyaG:

It was more the everyday sounds that got me. Things like someone shutting a car door, change dropping in the register drawer, mostly metallic sounds were the worst offenders.²²

stopstaringatmeswan4:

I was almost in tears by the end of dinner. The cutlery scraping against the plates made me want to tear my hearing aids out and stomp them to pieces. I thought mom was angry when she was cleaning up after dinner and slamming everything around. She wasn't angry.²³

²⁰ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibidem.

Choosing the sonic way of getting to the world has transgressive potential for the d/Deaf. By exposing themselves to the act of listening, the d/Deaf consciously decide to experience something unexpected and “affirms the limitlessness”²⁴ of sound. The d/Deaf acts of listening are constantly recurring practices of creating new sound.

i_seek_for_a_rainbow:

Wore hearing aids all my life, I upgrade me new hearing aids from old like 3 time. I *swear* my family and friend voice sound different every time when I got upgrade each time. Took me while to get used to hear their voice.²⁵

d/Deaf forum members describe the process of adjustment to sound as time-consuming, patient-requiring, and full of surprises. Sometimes during the adjustment process, one becomes a detective constantly trying to figure out the source of the sound. Sometimes one realizes that he or she has forgotten the sound of something and suddenly rediscovers it. There is also the issue of emotions caused by the act of hearing. The last one can be overwhelming and bring one to cry or be furious, insane, or just frustrated.

foredeckkitty:

About 8 years ago technology changed enough that they were able to recreate sounds for those of us that had missing frequencies. For me it's the upper ones. I can't hear children or women mostly. I got in my car and just the sound of my keys bouncing against the dash reduced me to tears. I was a sobbing, hysterical mess when I got to my mother's 10 minutes later to pick up my son. I walked into my job as a teacher and heard students I couldn't hear before. Started crying all over again. Fire alarms. Those things make noise? And fuck does that HURT. My husky! What a whiny little thing he is! I thought he didn't “woo”!! Nope! Just couldn't hear it! Glass, water, pins, liquids, dishes tapping, the damn dishwasher... Sounds I thought I knew changed. Silent things no longer were. There are so many things. I cried for weeks.²⁶

By describing astonishment and sound adjustment process, d/Deaf forum members articulate one of their emancipatory strategies. The “expect unexpected” strategy helps them to face the new sound situation without constantly reassuring others of the happiness they experience from hearing.²⁷ Epistemologically, the situation they experience is not a simple return to a hearing state; it is instead stepping into a new world. d/Deaf are not cured with hearing prostheses but start a new life under new conditions which are not yet fully recognized. The “expect unexpected” strategy articulates the

²⁴ M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca–New York 1977, p. 35.

²⁵ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ See the description of amateur videos showing the moment of cochlear implant activation, in which the narrative is conducted so that the viewer has the impression of watching the happy transition from illness to health: M. Zdrodowska, *Telefon, kino i cyborgi. Wzajemne relacje niesłyszenia i techniki*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2021, pp. 289–290.

gradual process of learning about sound and getting used to it. During this process variety of emotional and cognitive states is considered normal. This acceptance must be articulated to validate the experience of deafness.

Sound Management Strategy

Once the d/Deaf step into the new sound world, they can use sound management practices. One set of those concerns the body. It is the body of a d/Deaf or of hearing person who produces sounds. The body is positioned so that it works best with sound. d/Deaf stay active subjects while hearing.

466923142:

You have a “side” that you unobtrusively try to force people to when they are walking next to you. Try to get first to a table for a meal to make sure you are not stuck with everyone sitting on your bad side.²⁸

Another set of management practices is related to hearing people. d/Deaf forum members describe how they sometimes make fun of hearing people because of their lack of competence in being with a d/Deaf person. Hearing people tend to forget the specificity of sound perception by deaf people, so being with them can be tiring. Joking is a way to avoid permanent frustration.

DiscordFish:

I’ve been fully deaf in my right ear since birth. I like to give my friends a hard time when they call my name and say “I’m over here!”. I just respond “I don’t know where «here» is you twat!”. “Oh yeah, I forgot!”. Usually gets a good chuckle from everyone.²⁹

Sound management practices also rely on educating the hearing. The scope of knowledge transferred includes descriptions of how one hears with hearing aids or cochlear implants, medical procedures related to the hearing prosthesis, personal narratives about hearing, and answering many different questions. The whole Reddit forum thread is an example of this educational practice. Behind this practice is an assumption about the specificity of the sound experienced by the deaf. As this sound differs from sound experienced by hearing, there is a need for explanation. The expert knowledge, in this case, belongs to the d/Deaf. As experts, they know when to use and when not to use sound. Sometimes, the sound is challenged as a source of knowledge.

²⁸ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

²⁹ Ibidem.

Hotlikessauce69:

Exactly, so imagine my frustration when I've asked someone 6 times already to repeat the instructions because they can't speak clearly. I usually just tell myself "fuck this it isn't working" and then ask "do you mind writing it down in an email? I can't follow what you are saying".³⁰

However, the power to manage the sound lies primarily in the possibility of giving up the sound. It means that one does not have to hear. One can stay without sound.

Elphaba78:

One of the great things about hearing-aids is I can take them out whenever I want and not hear a damn thing.³¹

Here we are in the center of the sound as a *pharmakon* issue. The Greek word *pharmakon* has two meanings: "cure" and "poison". Jacques Derrida draws attention to this in his interpretation of Plato's works.³² To explain this binary opposition inscribed in the concept of *pharmakon*, Derrida appeals to ancient Greek medicine. Hippocrates and his fellows saw disease as a violation of body's balance and the proper relation to the body's surroundings. The treatment consists of the restoration of the natural conditions. The use of *pharmakon* can cure but also can additionally violate the body's balance. We can see the logic of *pharmakon* in the d/Deaf practice of turning off the hearing prosthesis.

For the deaf, the effects of the physical ability of hearing are always unpredictable. Accepting a prosthesis is an act of transgression, crossing the borders of one's embodiment. The paradox is that one can fully understand the meaning of this act only when the transgression occurs. People differ in their abilities to hear before the hearing aid is on. The after-prosthesis experience of hearing is different for each person. For some, the change is almost imperceptible. Others feel sounds so overwhelming that they can not stand them. There are those for whom the sounds become super signals which impose. The sound is something variable and unstable. The sound and its source are not permanently connected. However, it is an effect of the interplay of different sonic variables like the weather, background noises, battery charge level, and general psychophysical condition. The sound is not fixed, and protean. One can not rely on sound. One hears something, and at the same time, one can not be sure if it is not only one's mind-producing sounds. From the moment one fully understands that one's hearing is impaired, one can not be sure if the experienced perception is true or false. The management strategy helps articulate the principle that putting effort into a sonic experience is only an option. This strategy involves making informed decisions about where someone wants to go and which rocks to avoid. Consequently, d/Deaf assimilates the knowledge that sound does not have to be overwhelming.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² J. Derrida, *Plato's Pharmacy* [in:] idem, *Dissemination*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1981, pp. 95–117.

Steffchen:

I once wore my hearing aids while at the office. Urgh, I hate all these clicking noises! Every computer-mouse, every keyboard, the pen clicking... arrrgh! I normally wear them only at gatherings, meetings and such, when it's important to understand each other. Otherwise I just enjoy some sweet silence.³³

Fabrication of Sound Strategy

Some d/Deaf forum members enthusiastically described the benefits of their hearing prostheses. Hearing aids can do a lot.

I love mine. I think the combo...HA brings in a lot of bass, CI brings in everything else.³⁴

[deleted]:

I like spending time outside and hearing aids made it such a surreal experience between birds, squirrels, wind in the trees, and everything else I was missing out on.³⁵

TheBinksterIsHere:

The hearing aids scan at a rate of 100x per minute and cancel out other environmental noises so my brain can focus on the words people are saying.³⁶

Ashkir:

It's very hard to learn to filter out the background. So hard now that modern hearing aids will do the filtering for you. Mine has settings that let me control the intensity. It can even translate Spanish speakers into English. It is really good at it. When someone had a heavy accent I can't understand it. I just have them speak to me in their native language and it will turn it into English and speak it into my ears. About a 5 second delay though.³⁷

MatlabMenagerie:

I always hated hearing my fridge through my hearing aids, but now that I have a CI I just asked my audiologist to program it so that I won't hear it as much anymore.³⁸

Feld coins the term *acoustemology* "to argue for sound as a capacity to know and as a habit of knowing".³⁹ The above d/Deaf statements also reveal some habits of knowing. One can fabricate sound so that it becomes convenient. The mediation

³³ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ S. Feld, *Sound and Sentiment...*, op. cit., p. 27.

through the prostheses makes sound a parameterizable phenomenon. The user can set the parameters as desired. However, the sound is subject to fabrication in different ways. One can hear something that is not heard by others, and sometimes one can not realize hearing something.

SharpenedChopsticks:

I started losing my hearing as a toddler due to a variety of factors. But I didn't talk much and learned to read lips very well so it took a long time before anyone realized what was going on. What tipped them off was not that I couldn't hear things. It was that I heard things no one else did. I was having auditory hallucinations because my brain was trying to fill the silence. I remember asking people if they just heard a dog bark and they would look at me strangely. Several surgeries and tubes later I was fine.⁴⁰

Jonathan Ree⁴¹ reveals how the sound is not susceptible to the cross-testing of another member of the community. d/Deaf sound fabrication seems to be an individual activity. Off-scale hearing makes the sound inappropriate to become a cement of a cultural community. However, sound fabrication habits can help establish a community anew. Sound has performative power. Mladen Dolar⁴² indicates political and educational rituals that must be enacted with voice.⁴³ By fabrication of sound strategy, the d/Deaf establish their own sound rituals. It is not only the body which has to adjust to new hearing prosthesis. It is the sound itself that can be adjusted as well. Through the interplay of body and technic, the d/Deaf create a space of sonic freedom. There is no wrong way of hearing into this space. That is why fabrication sound strategy has an emancipatory potential to deny one's inability to hear. Everybody can hear what one wants.

⁴⁰ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁴¹ J. Ree, *I See a Voice. A Philosophical History*, HarperCollins Publishers, London 1999, pp. 46–47.

⁴² M. Dolar, *Polityka głosu*, "Teksty Drugie" 2015, no. 5, pp. 238–260.

⁴³ Polish deaf performer Daniel Kotowski uses his own "strange" voice to make his hearing audience feel uncomfortable. In his performance *A Tool for Using Speech*, <https://youtu.be/VRD11QT3P6E> (accessed: 21.07.2022), Kotowski invites Zoom participants to write some text in chat which is then read aloud by the artist himself. As Kotowski's speech is barely understandable, participants face many unpleasant feelings. After a while, one starts thinking that one is participating in a kind of torture. Kotowski wanted to show how hard it is for the d/Deaf to be a conformist. However, he tries so hard, still disappointed hearing. The performer asks what to do if one does not meet the standard we (hearing) expect. He shows the consequences of carrying out community rituals in an improper manner. The community collapses, and taboos are revealed. There is no place in voice speaking community for those who can not speak. The unasked question could be as follows: are you like the Spartans throwing unwanted children off the rock?

Semiosis Strategy

Forum d/Deaf members note that they developed extra skills.

Hotlikessauce69:

However, because I've had to fill in the blanks so much with people, I have gotten really good at interpreting broken English. Because of my experiences making sense of things I didn't hear correctly, I use the same skills to understand what people mean when they don't have the vocabulary for it. I worked at Trader Joe's for a long time and there were a lot of people who didn't speak English who'd come in looking for something they didn't have a word for or had trouble pronouncing the word. They'd make a gesture and with the context I could accurately guess what they needed. Plus there's lots of products that people just don't know how to pronounce such as cheeses and wines. Some people would get very shy about mispronouncing something and I would kindly tell them to just guess. I only needed a few of the sounds to get it.⁴⁴

There are two ideas in the above description. The first idea concerns the necessity of supplementing the content of people's speech. The distinction between sound as a mere sensory phenomenon and speech as a cluster of meaningful sounds is evident. The practice of semiosis makes it possible to break the dominance of speech as a semiotic system. The second idea relates to functioning on this semiotic system's outskirts. It turns out that the d/Deaf have mastered communication in an atypical sound environment. It is because they use some extra visual cues to make sense.

hypotheticalhawk:

Yes! It's almost like a superpower, being able to understand broken English when my coworkers with normal speech processing struggle because they rarely have to rely on all the nonverbal aspects. Like I can't understand your words if the register is beeping because that's all my brain can focus on, but if you're trying to find shampoo and tell me "uh... soap?" with a scrunching motion by your hair, then I got you, loud and clear, as the metaphor goes.⁴⁵

The practice of constant semiosis⁴⁶ contradicts the stereotypical image of deafness as a state of exclusion. It places the accents differently in the story about how people get to know the world. Being in the d/Deaf spectrum allows one to become creative, exercise multi-sensory orientation in the world, and better understand one's communication attempts and needs. Sounding in d/Deaf culture is a condition of

⁴⁴ See: https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/9wdvtk/no_longer_deaf_people_of_reddit_whats_something/ (accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Christine Sun Kim, a deaf American sound artist, has explored the idea of semiosis in her drawings. She formulated her definition of silence as a very obscure sound. Persistently questioning what she calls "the ownership of sound" – B. London, *Soundings: A Contemporary Score*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 2013, p. 11 – Kim explores the materiality of sound. She created her visual language by combining graphic, musical notation, American Sign Language Glossing, and American Sign Language (ASL). As the sound became her artistic domain, she understood its similarity to American Sign Language. She explained it using the piano metaphor. (See: <https://youtu.be/2Euof4PnjDk>, 8':17" – 9':16", accessed: 21.07.2022).

and for knowing.⁴⁷ Through d/Deaf embodiment, sonic sensations are perceived and processed. Living inside the deaf spectrum does not mean remaining utterly silent, in a semiotic desert. Sound is present as an extra-acoustic representation.⁴⁸ Deaf writers describe the sound as sight, touch, mental fantasy, rhythm, and signs. Sonic phenomena are present in sign language folk stories⁴⁹ in the form of separate lexemes, musical visual vernacular⁵⁰ performances, and metaphors.⁵¹ Joke Schuit⁵² distinguishes two central metaphors: sound as a movement of the source of the sound and sound as a feeling of the undergoer of the sound. The first type of metaphor is in the *The Corpus-based Dictionary of Polish Sign Language*.⁵³ In the example below, the sound of the hammers hitting the door is represented by the movement of the hand holding a hammer:

The boy went downstairs for breakfast in the morning. Everyone shouted: “Oh, there is!” The boy was surprised what was going on, so they explained to him that there was an alarm at night, cars came on signals, hammers were hammered on the door. The boy was surprised and said he did not hear anything, he slept soundly.⁵⁴

The following examples represent the second type of metaphor. The sign NOISE is a compound of two signs LISTEN and VIBRATION:

Mickey Mouse was walking, looked out the window and heard a noise, wanting to know what had happened, she went to the door and opened it, and there her son was playing cymbals.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ S. Feld, *Waterfalls of Song...*, op. cit., p. 97.

⁴⁸ R.S. Rosen, *Representation of Sound in American Deaf Literature*, “Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education” 2007, vol. 12 (4), pp. 552–565.

⁴⁹ “The importance of storytelling in Deaf culture should not be understood as simply a form of escapism. The thirst for information is a major theme in a culture not only denied access to broadcast media and public communication through ignorance, but, because of the oralistic restrictions, exclusion from parental and educational information.” – P. Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon 2003, p. 309.

⁵⁰ A.A. Zaghetto, *Musical Visual Vernacular. How the Deaf People Translate the Sound Vibrations into the Sign Language: An Example from Italy*, “Signata” 2012, no. 3, <http://signata.revues.org/934> (accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁵¹ In the sense of conceptual metaphor theory by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson. See: G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago, Chicago 1980.

⁵² J. Schuit, *The Sounds in Silence: The Representation of Sound and Accent in Sign Language*. A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in 2018, available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237466092_The_sounds_in_silence_The_representation_of_sound_and_accent_in_sign_language (accessed: 17.08.2018).

⁵³ J. Łacheta, M. Czajkowska-Kisil, J. Linde-Usiekiewicz, P. Rutkowski (eds.), *Korpusowy słownik polskiego języka migowego / Corpus-based Dictionary of Polish Sign Language*, Faculty of Polish Studies, University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2016 (online publication: <https://www.slownikpjm.uw.edu.pl>, accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁵⁴ See the sentence in *Polish Sign Language*: <http://www.slownikpjm.uw.edu.pl/media/video/2847/00321.mp4> (accessed: 21.07.2022).

⁵⁵ See: <https://www.slownikpjm.uw.edu.pl/media/video/2434/00169.mp4> (accessed: 21.07.2023).

d/Deaf incorporate sound experiences into their cultural narratives. They tell stories that illustrate the materiality of sound. In their cultural reality, the sound is about vibrations, movement, simultaneity, astonishment, and the body's inner feelings. d/Deaf sound is a part of the spectacle of sensations. It is not limited to speech only.

Sound and Deafnesses

Jessica A. Holmes writes in the conclusion of her paper that:

The fundamental difference lies in the value we ascribe to our listening strategies relative to those of other listeners, d/Deaf or otherwise. I am not suggesting that deafness reveals that musical "expertise" is relative or subjective. More precisely, it is that deafness calls us to a pluralistic understanding of what listening expertise entails.⁵⁶

Deafness condition breaks down the perfect ideas of sound and silence. Alternatively, to put it more precisely, the condition of deafness breaks the dichotomy between sound and silence and places us in the sound continuum. Once stepping into *the deaf spectrum*, sound becomes a far more problematic than it might seem at first glance. There are at least four threads of this problematic matter.

First, even the best sound amplifier or prosthesis does not transform a deaf or hard-of-hearing person into a hearing one. d/Deaf experience sounds like something unexpected, unstable, and tricky. The "expect unexpected" strategy enables d/Deaf people to tell their stories of experiencing sound.

Secondly, the process of acquiring hearing ability is complex and complicated. It requires mastering different abilities like the physiological ability to hear something, the ability to consciously notice a sound, the ability to be aware of different sound's existence, the ability to get interested in sound, the ability to react to sound, and last but not most minor, the ability to be active in sound space. For the d/Deaf, mastering all those abilities is an option rather than a necessity. Management sound strategy helps the d/Deaf take control over the sound and show their expertise.

Thirdly sound is perceived and conceptualized as a body-technic interplay. If technology is the method for using scientific discoveries for practical purposes, d/Deaf strategies made us rethink the methods and the purposes. The more d/Deaf knows the sound, the more deaf spectrum navigation options have. The fabrication of sound strategy frees the hearing process of the d/Deaf.

Finally, everything leads to the divine ability to create. However, sonic experiences are heterogeneous for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons and, at the same time, differ from the sonic experiences of hearing persons. Semiosis strategy reveals its emancipatory potential in breaking speech hegemony.

⁵⁶ J.A. Holmes, *Expert Listening beyond the Limits of Hearing: Music and Deafness*, "Journal of the American Musicological Society" 2017, vol. 70 (1), p. 213.

Deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie's behavior during her music lessons, symbolizes all the strategies described above.

And I remember when I was 12 years old, and I started playing timpani and percussion, and my teacher said: "Well, how are we going to do this? You know, music is about listening." And I said: "Yes, I agree with that, so what's the problem?". And he said: "Well, how are you going to hear this? How are you going to hear that?". And I said: "Well, how do you hear it???". He said: "Well, I think I hear it through here." And I said: "Well, I think I do too, but I also hear it through my hands, through my arms, cheekbones, my scalp, my tummy, my chest, my legs and so on".⁵⁷

Glennie shows that she was listening her way. d/Deaf shows that they experience the sound their way. The most emancipatory power lies in the articulation of this.

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⁵⁷ Ibidem, 7':55" – 8':40". See: <https://youtu.be/IU3V6zNER4g>, 7':55" – 8':40" (accessed: 21.07.2022).

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