UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Deafblindness and Italian Tactile Sign Language (list)

2526-1-E2007P005

Learning area

I. Learning area: Acquisition of language skills in LIS, LIST and Italian

Learning objectives

Knowledge and Understanding

• Knowledge of the modalities of human language, with particular reference to the comparison between spoken languages, visual sign languages, and tactile LIS.
• Understanding of the main processes of language processing across different sensory modalities.
• Knowledge of research methodologies applied to the study of spoken and signed languages, with specific attention to deafblindness.
• Production skills in the interaction with a deafblind person.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding

• Apply theoretical knowledge to the analysis of studies on language in spoken languages, sign languages, and tactile LIS.
• Interpret research data and findings while taking into account the linguistic and sensory specificities of deafblindness.
• Use the acquired concepts to understand bilingualism and language access across visual, auditory, and tactile modalities.

Making Judgements

• The ability to critically evaluate theoretical models, experimental data, and methodological approaches related to language processing in signed and tactile languages.

• Awareness of the linguistic and cognitive specificities of deaf and deafblind individuals within an inclusive and intercultural perspective.

Communication Skills

• Present theoretical concepts clearly and in a structured manner.
• Use appropriate and accessible communication strategies, with attention to the visual and tactile dimensions of communication.

Learning Skills

• The ability to engage in autonomous study through the critical analysis of scientific texts and research materials.
• Tools to understand and interpret studies on human language across different sensory modalities.

Contents

- Deafblindness: detailed overview of the clinical and demographic profile, in Italy and worldwide
- History and culture of the Deafblind community
- Communication methods and technological innovations; socio-haptic communication; ProTactile
- Assistive technologies and devices for independent living
- Code of ethics and professional conduct of the interpreter-guide
- Comparison between LIS and LISt; linguistic analysis of LISt
- Comparison between LIS, LISt, socio-haptic communication, and ProTactile

Detailed program

- Course presentation and examination format, Q&A
- History and cognitive studies on touch
- Introduction to the concept of deafblindness, the Deafblind community, and demographic data on the Deafblind population
- History of Deafblind individuals: women, Helen Keller, Sabina Santilli, Barbara Verna
- Legislation and advocacy/support associations
- Deafblindness: classification based on causes and age of onset
- Usher syndrome, CHARGE syndrome, ageing
- Main communication systems used with and by Deafblind people
- In-depth study of socio-haptic communication and ProTactile
- Innovative technologies and devices for independent living
- First approach to a Deafblind person: rules of conduct
- Guiding and orientation techniques, with practical exercises
- Comparative linguistics of LIS and LISt
- Changes in formational parameters in LISt
- Signing space and spatial positioning
- Feedback
- Numbers
- Adverbs
- Interrogative sentences
- Conditional sentences
- Deixis
- Disambiguation techniques (cues)

- Code of ethics and professional conduct of the interpreter-guide
  Practical exercises

Prerequisites

Basic competences in LIS

Teaching methods

Lectures
Practical exercises
Video observation and related reflections

Assessment methods

The exam will be oral and will be divided into two parts: an assessment of the theoretical content through five questions on the topics covered during the course, and a practical component (interaction in LISt, approach to a Deafblind person, and guiding techniques)

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- D. Coppola - "Toccare con mano. Strategie comunicative nel mondo della sordocecità"- Uninova. 2026
- M. Mazzeo. Tatto e linguaggio- il corpo delle parole. 2003
- Cardinaletti A., Cecchetto C., Donati A.- Grammatica, lessico e dimensioni di variazioni nella LIS- 2011
- Haptic Signals as Part of Interpreter Services for Deafblind People. Historical and Developmental Perspectives from a Norwegian Context
- Eli Raanes, Queen Maud University College, Trondheim, Norway, 2023
- A preliminary description of haptices in Italian social-haptic communication: a phonological perspective- Laura Volpato (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice), FEAST, volume 5, 2023
- Social-Haptic Communication. History, Research and Applications- Riitta Lahtinen, Russ Palmer, Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, collana “Lingua dei segni e sordità”, 02/2026
- Haptics signals – www.spreadthesign.com

Any additional materials will be published on the e-learning page associated with the course.

Sustainable Development Goals

REDUCED INEQUALITIES