

Sign Language and Bilingualism in Deaf Education

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh





SIGN LANGUAGE

AND

BILINGUALISM

IN

DEAF EDUCATION

E-Book Author
By

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Rotary Volunteer
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Rtn. Jayant Marathe
President 1995-96
Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji

A MOMENT OF PRIDE

May 12, 1996

It is a moment of great pride and elation for me as the President of Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji to write a few words on the occasion of the publication of this book on 'Deaf Education' by one of our devoted Rotarians, Dr. Dilip Deshmukh.

Dr. Deshmukh has been a very good friend of mine for the last twenty years and one thing I have noticed about him is that he has that rare combination of being a theorist as well as a field worker. From the time the Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji on his urgings decided to set up a Deaf School, he has plunged himself with single-minded dedication in the establishment, evolution and expansion of this school. His genius lies not only in bringing the newest techniques available in India and abroad in the development of this school but also in trying to mold new techniques which suit the community he is serving.

For the last 10 years, he has tried to come to grips with the basic causes regarding the hearing disability and has traveled extensively in India and abroad in search of its root cause. His research in connection with effects of consanguinity on hearing disability will, hope, result in greater awareness regarding possible ways to avoid this disability in children.

Dr. Deshmukh recently met with a small accident and found that the time he could not normally spare from his busy schedule, he could now spare. This was a blessing in disguise and the result is this book which I hope will go a long way in finding the ways of mitigating the suffering of the Deaf.

I congratulate Dr. Deshmukh on this achievement and in the spirit of the current election euphoria, can only say on behalf of the members of my Rotary Club Dr. Deshmukh Go Forward. We are With You".

(Jayant Marathe)

A FEW WORDS



Rtn. Ramesh Marda
Chairman
Rotary Welfare Trust

12 May, 1996

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh is a humanitarian, a dedicated Rotarian and Founder Chairman of the prestigious Rotary Deaf School at Ichalkaranji.

I remember, it was in the year 1981, which was incidentally 'The Year for the Disabled Persons,' that Rotary Welfare Trust Ichalkaranji undertook the responsibility to start a School for the Deaf. The School first started in the premises of the The Yashwant Co-operative Processors Pvt. Ltd. with all Rotarians actively participating in the project. Dr. Dilip, noble as he is, readily accepted the Chairmanship of the school at the outset. Due to the limitations of the then premises, and the large number of deaf students, we Rotarians then decided to build a full-fledged Deaf School near Ichalkaranji.

The dream project took off to a flying start and we all were lucky to get an acre of land at Tilawani from the Government of Maharashtra and a grant of Rs. 3,60,000/- from the Government of India. The Rotarians contributed generously for the balance amount and the dream was converted into a reality. Today, the Rotary Deaf School is the most prestigious institution of its kind. The school is always in search of new horizons. Several projects are undertaken for the development of the students and make them take up the challenges of life as they grow up. Parents Guidance Seminars, Peripatetic Teachers Scheme, State Level Seminar on Sign Language and RYLA - The Deaf Way are just a few examples of this.

We also have a Rehabilitation Center for vocational training of the disabled. Dr. Dilip is a key person in the Deaf School and an inspiring source for most of the activities there. His untiring efforts and fieldwork is responsible to initiate the INDO-USA Clinical Collaborative Research Project to identify the genes causing 'Non Syndromic Hereditary Hearing Impairment.'

Dr. Dilip attended 'The Deaf Way', an international conference and presented his paper. At present as a Rotary Volunteer, he is propagating and promoting the idea that the deaf students can express themselves better by using sign language. Bilingualism in Deaf Education is the key activity.

So much is his involvement that during a compulsory rest, caused due to an accident, Dr. Deshmukh started writing a book on 'Sign Language and Bilingualism in Deaf Education'. I do hope that this book will be a milestone in the study of deaf. I sincerely salute the devotion of Dr. Dilip in the field of disabled and wish him every success in his road to the long journey, which he has undertaken.

Ramesh Marda

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- 1. Name :** Dr. Dilip Lalasaheb Deshmukh
- 2. Birth Date :** July 3rd, 1950.
- 3. Qualifications:** B.A.M. & S., L.C.P.S., F.C.C.P..M.C.C.P., F.I.C.S.E.P., F.A.G.E., M.S.A.S.M.S.. C.D.(U.S.A.), F.R.S.H (LONDON)
- 4. Affiliation :** Chairman and Founder of Rotary Deaf School and Institute of Speech and Hearing, Ichalkaranji, since 1981.

5. Paper Presentation:

- a. 'The Deaf Way' - As an official delegate, the paper entitled 'Parents Involvement and Participation in the Education of a Deaf Child' was presented at 'The Deaf Way'; the international conference and festival of Deaf Art, Culture, History and Sign Language; organized by the Gallaudet University at Washington DC, on July 9-14, 1989. There were only 3 paper presenters from India. Dr. Deshmukh was the only paper presenter from Maharashtra State.
- b. 'IAPMR 1991': The paper entitled 'The Deaf Way - A Memorable Experience' was presented at the 'International Conference - Indian Association of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 1991, organized by All India Institute of Medical Sciences at New Delhi, on January 27-30, 1991.
- c. 'Indo USA Workshop': Another paper entitled 'Deafness in Maharashtra' was presented at the 'Indo-USA Workshop' on 'Mapping Genes of Deafness', organized by All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi; on January 8-9, 1992.
- d. 'International Conference on Bilingualism in Deaf Education': The Swedish National Association of the Deaf in co-operation with the World Federation of the Deaf and Stockholm University organized this conference on August 16-20, 1993. Dr. Deshmukh presented his paper entitled 'Status of Sign Language in Deaf Education in India'.

6. RESEARCH PROJECT:

A Collaborative Clinical Research Project entitled 'Nonsyndromic Hereditary Hearing Impairment - Gene Mapping' with National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, Bethesda, Maryland, USA; is in progress. After attending 'The Deaf Way', Dr. Deshmukh initiated the idea of such Research Project. The aim of the Project is to identify, clone, sequence genes that cause Nonsyndromic hereditary hearing impairment. At the 'Indo-USA Workshop' on 'Mapping Genes of Deafness' organized by All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, on January 8 and 9, 1992; Dr. Deshmukh presented his paper 'Deafness in Maharashtra'. He was also a Panel Member of the discussion on 'Approaching for Tracking Genes for Deafness in India'. At present, Dr. Deshmukh is working as a Co-Investigator of this Research Project.

7. Propagation of Sign Language and Bilingualism:

To enhance the movement of propagation of Sign Language and Bilingualism, Dr. Deshmukh has enrolled himself as a 'Rotary Volunteer' through which he has organized several seminars in different places of Maharashtra viz. Pune, Nasik, Amravati, Solapur, Sangli etc. He was the main coordinator of the 'State Level Seminar on Sign Language' organized by the Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji in December 1994, which was attended by Ms. Liisa Kauppinen, (the then General Secretary) President, World Federation of the Deaf.

He has written several articles on this subject in various magazines, bulletins and newspapers including Maharashtra Times, Loksatta and Indian Express. He has addressed on 'The Deaf Way' and 'Deaf Culture' at various meetings and State Level Seminars. His interview on sign language was telecasted on Bombay Doordarshan (T.V.) during the program 'Dnyandeep' on July 28, 1994. His article titled 'Status of Sign Language in Deaf Education in India' was published in the Spring 1994 issue of 'Signpost' (publication of International Sign Linguistics Association) and in the 'Deaf American Monograph 1995' published by the National Association of the Deaf, U.S.A.

8. Rotary Career:

Charter Member and President of Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji in the year 1986-87, when the Club received 4 District Awards, and Rotary International's Presidential Citation. Felicitated as the Best GGR (Governor's Group Representative) in 1987-88. District Chairman of various committees since 1988-89.

9. Appreciation & Awards:

- a. The National Deaf Children's Society, London, awarded a Certificate of Appreciation in Recognition of Outstanding contributions to the welfare, development and happiness of deaf children.
- b. He has received 'Sfurti Puraskar' from Sfurti Yuvak Mandal, 'Shri Shivachhatrapati Puraskar' from Maratha Mandal, 'Service Award' from the Lions Club of Ichalkaranji and 'Eminent Citizen of India Award' from the Association of College of Chest Physicians, New Delhi.

10. Special Executive Magistrate:

The State Government of Maharashtra had nominated Dr. Deshmukh as the SEM (Special Executive Magistrate) during 1990-1995.

11. Brief Life Sketch:

After completion of medical graduation from R.A Podar Medical College (Ayurvedic) Bombay and Nagpur Medical College Nagpur, Dr. Deshmukh started his Clinic at Ichalkaranji in May 1976. At present he is having a Nursing Home. With the help of service organizations, he has arranged various medical camps, viz. family welfare camps, children immunization camps, skin disease camps, blood donation camps, eye camps, cancer detection camps etc., vocational guidance seminars, various exhibitions, cultural and sports activities especially for the disabled. He is happily married to Ranjana and the couple is blessed with a son Amit (studying in a Medical College) and a daughter Aditi (studying in Std. X). Hobbies Yoga Sana, Vipasana, Music, Travelling. Uptillnow he has travelled U.S.A... Canada, U.K., Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, Luxemburg and Netherland. He is associated with following organizations.

- Chairman** : Deaf School and Institute of Speech and Hearing Ichalkaranji
- President** : Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji (1986-87)
- President** : Medical Association of Ichalkaranji (1995-96)
- Chairman** : The Friends of the Handicapped, Ichalkaranji (1987-92)
- Vice Chairman:** The Kolhapur District Cricket Association for the Handicapped, Kolhapur.
- Joint Secretary:** Creative Film Club, Ichalkaranji.
- Member** : Child Welfare Committee organized by the District Social Welfare Officer, Kolhapur.
- Member** : State Level Advisory Committee for Service to the Disabled.

PREFACE



Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

It is my immense pleasure to place this book - 'Sign Language and Bilingualism in Deaf Education' in your hands. I am involved in the field of deaf education since 1981. But until attended 'The Deaf Way' in 1989, I had no proper understanding of sign language and deaf culture. More over only harboured the same misunderstanding and prejudice about these concepts like any other staunch 'oralist'.

But 'The Deaf Way' proved to be a turning point in my life. It gave me a new vision. I realized the power and potentiality of the deaf. I found that in developed countries where sign language and deaf culture have been accepted, deaf people have progressed rapidly and have successfully become even lawyers, physicians, teachers, school administrators, air pilots, chemists, psychologists, social workers and other professionals; whereas in countries where Oralism is prevalent and the deaf people are looked down upon and not accepted as just another sociocultural variation in society, there have been no such accomplishments.

As a result, after returning from 'The Deaf Way', I started proclaiming the importance of sign language. But had to face strong opposition and criticism. Knowledge is power. Hence started collecting the information for which World Federation of the Deaf, Gallaudet University, Swedish Association of the Deaf, ISLA (International Sign Linguistics Association), IASCAL (International Association for the Study of Child Language) and many others whole heartedly assisted me. The field of linguistics is fascinating indeed. And the study of sign language is still more fascinating. I found that sign language is more than a communication medium for the deaf. It is the very basis of his cognitive, social, academic and emotional development. It is the foundation of deaf culture. To prohibit the use of sign language is nothing short of linguistic genocide and cultural genocide too. In fact, a part of the human race the deaf people have been kept out of the bounties of human progress, because of the infamous congress of Milan in 1880, which passed a resolution to promote 'Oralism and to stop sign language in deaf education. And thus just for ignorance and prejudice, the deaf were oppressed for merely a full century.

It has been repeatedly observed and documented upon that deaf children lag substantially behind their hearing age mates in virtually all measures of academic achievements in spite of the efforts of dedicated, committed, hard-working teachers and adequate financial support. In the late 1960, a philosophy called 'Total Communication' was brought into action which encouraged the use of 'signs'. As it calls for the teachers to use 'signs' in the classroom, it has come to stand as a symbol of opposition to Oralism and as such has enjoyed substantial support from the adult deaf population. But it was observed that although it resulted in a drastic improvement in the communication between deaf children and their hearing surroundings, their spoken language skills were not improved to the same extent.

Later during 1970-80, it was repeatedly observed by linguistic researchers working in different parts of the world that the reading and writing levels of deaf children of deaf parents are higher than those of hearing parents. It was also realized that SIGN LANGUAGE is the natural language of the deaf having a grammar of its own. These findings coupled with the demand of deaf associations and a growing awareness about deaf pride gave a boost to the movement for BILINGUALISM, which gradually became firmly enrooted.

I still remember vividly an incidence at 'The Deaf Way'. The organizers of the conference had advised the paper presenters to have a meeting prior to presentation with the interpreter. There was a sentence in my paper which stated that the deaf students could go to normal school after completing their education at the deaf school. The interpreter asked me curiously, "What do you mean by 'Normal School'?". I said, "Where you and I i.e. hearing persons go". He politely suggested to me to delete this word from my paper as, when we call 'Normal School' for the hearing students, we indirectly call the deaf schools as 'Abnormal'. However, the deaf are not abnormal. Similarly, I was often using the word 'deaf-mute'. But the deaf are not mute. They can talk in sign language; they can sing in sign language, they can present intellectual wit, conversation, evocative disputation and poetry too in 'sign language'. Since then have never used the word 'mute' for the deaf. For this reason only, we have changed the name of our 'Deaf Mute School' as 'Rotary Deaf School'. I have observed similar changes in the concepts of deaf educators in Maharashtra State. Prior to attending the 'Sign Language Orientation Seminar', they were skeptical, but at its end, all confessed that their prejudices are cleared. After seeing the results of the 'State Level Seminar on Sign Language and Bilingualism' in 1994, and other such seminars in different parts of Maharashtra, I am pleased to note that positive attitude is definitely developing in the field of deaf education in Maharashtra. I think, its entire credit goes to the genuineness and worthiness of sign language.

I have written various articles on deaf education. Many of them regarding sign language and bilingualism are included in this book. The reader may find repetition of some points viz. deaf culture, sign language, cognitive growth, language acquisition and learning, identity, socialization, human rights and so on. However this repetition is unavoidable as these themes are too interlinked to be separated from each other. Hence, I appeal to you to look at this subject with a positive attitude,

In the 'Annexure'. I have included the articles of Dr. Lars Wallin and Bonaventura. These articles, as per my experience during the orientation seminars, provide the very basic and vital information in a simplified way. Even though its translation in English, from its original Swedish and Danish scripts is a bit of poor quality, I am confident; it will clear the prevalent misunderstandings and prejudices about sign language and therefore will help in making a way for the implementation of bilingualism.

Later, I have also included the resolutions passed in international conferences, which provide the guidelines suggested by the WFD. In short, my purpose of including all these various materials in this book is to keep in front of the readers not only the limited parameters of deaf education, but also to enlighten him about the total magnitude of this subject vis-a vis the deaf.

A developing country like Uganda has started research in Kenyan Sign Language. It is because of unstinted efforts of the National Deaf Association of Uganda. Wherever deaf come together, sign language grows. In India too, there exists an Indian Sign Language. Its study began in 1977 (Vaishya, Woodward and Wilson 1978). As a result, All India Federation of the Deaf published the first Indian Sign Language Dictionary in 1980. But later, nobody undertook any effort in promoting sign language. It is therefore the call of the time that Deaf Community in India i.e. the deaf, their associations, their teachers, parents, family members, educators, policy makers and people working with the deaf - all together are called as 'Deaf Community'; should strive hard for recognition of Indian Sign Language, study of sign language in linguistic departments of the university, inclusion of deaf teachers in the field of deaf education, enhancing the deaf awareness, initiation of interpretation courses, provision of text telephones for the deaf, increasing the duration of news for the deaf on television, and every such attempt to strengthen the movement of deaf culture, Indian Sign Language and Bilingualism. Ms. Liisa Kauppinen commented during the closing ceremony of the 'State Level Seminar, "I am waiting for the day when the deaf in India will be doctors, engineers, professors and members of the Rotary Club too." The day won't be far off, if the 'Deaf Community' in India makes sincere attempts for it. If this book is useful even in a small way, towards achieving this goal, I shall consider my efforts as fruitful.

At the end, I express my heartfelt thanks to Mr.Lars Wallin and Bonaventura for allowing their articles to be included in this book. A word of thanks to Mr. Madhav Prasad Goenka also, who not only has written an article for this book, but at every step of preparation of the book has guided and assisted me and boosted up my morale. Indeed, he is my friend, philosopher and guide. A word of appreciation and thanks also to Mr. Ashok Gatade, Mr. Pandit Sutar and Mr. Suhas Mali for looking after the technical aspects of preparation of this book.

I express my heartfelt gratitude and sincere thanks to the World Federation of the Deaf, Gallaudet University, Swedish Association of the deaf, ISLA (International Sign Linguistics Association), IASCAL (International Association for the Study of Child Language) and all those who have nurtured my knowledge and study of sign language.

My thanks are also to Dr. Yerker Andersson, Ms. Liisa Kauppinen Dr.Merve Garretson, Ms. Jean Lindquist and staff of the WFD and Gallaudet University as every letter of these dignitaries ends with a pat of appreciation and encouragement.

And last but not the least my sincere appreciation goes to my colleagues of the Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji and also to the staff of our Rotary Deaf School, especially Principal Mr.Gajendra Nidgunde and Mr. Ananda Ranadive. All of them have stood by me in every project of welfare of the deaf. am forever grateful for their kind co-operation at every step of the development of our Rotary Deaf School. Once again a very big 'Thank you' for all those who have helped me directly or indirectly in the publication of this book.

As usual, I shall end my preface with these words. "My efforts will be continued till the deaf in my country will be able to enjoy life like 'The Deaf Way'."

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

May 23, 1996



A HISTORIC MOMENT

Dr. Yerker Andersson, President World Federation of the Deaf,
Addressing the United Nations General Assembly
In 1992. He is using Gestuno.



OUR INSPIRATION

Ms. Lissa Kauppinen
President (1995)
World Federation of the Deaf.

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A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

(A Report)

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

I had been receiving brochures from the Gallaudet University regarding 'The Deaf Way' since 1988. Yet when I entered the University Campus at Washington DC to attend the International Festival and Conference of Deaf People, held from January 9-14, 1989; I was stunned. As one who has been exposed to the field of education of deaf children only, I had never given even a thought to the problems of deaf adults. When I entered the Ely's Hall, found everyone there was engrossed talking- in sign language of course. One could not see any difference between the hearing and the hearing impaired persons. In fact my wife and I were 'deaf and mute' there, because we could neither sign nor understand signs.

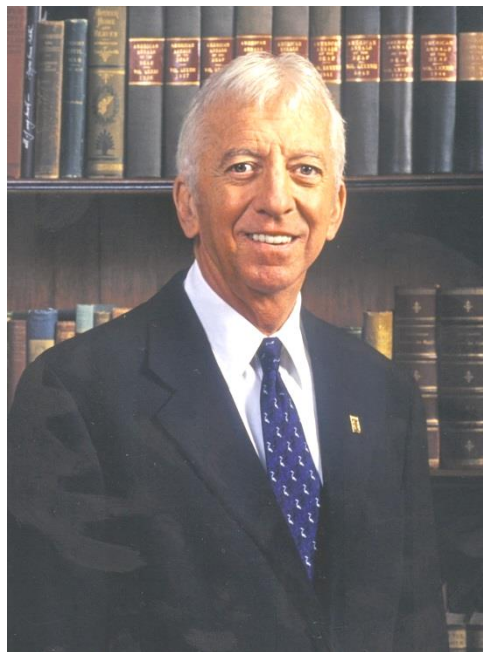
Well, for me it was just the beginning of the memorable week of 'The Deaf Way'.

It is difficult for me to describe the full grandeur of the event. I may recall the famous story of Alibaba Cave. It was difficult for Alibaba to carry from the famous cave all the diamonds, jewelry, precious stones etc. Similarly it was difficult for me to attend and participate in every program & presentation or festival activities at 'The Deaf Way'. However, whatever treasure I could gather, has left me overwhelmed. I am finding it very difficult to express my all feelings about 'The Deaf Way' in a few pages.



The Gallaudet University which sponsored this event is a comprehensive multipurpose educational institution serving both deaf and hearing individuals through teaching, research and public services. Authorized as a college for deaf students by the United States Congress in 1864, Gallaudet was accorded university status in 1986. More than 2200 students from across the U.S.A. and around the world attend Gallaudet. Its programs are located at the University's two campuses in Washington DC and at five regional centers across the country.

Over a dozen international conferences on special topics had been held under the auspices of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). But all of them focused on deafness-related problems. The Deaf Way was the first conference to include a celebration of deaf culture, art, sign language and deaf history. It was a first of its kind a celebration of and by the deaf people from all parts of the world. More than 6000 delegates, most of them deaf, from 81 countries gathered for a week of scholarship, friendship, and cultural sharing. The Deaf Way established a new direction for meeting of deaf people by focusing on the ability, diversity and richness of deaf culture and language rather than on the limitations of deafness.



In his opening address at the Omni Shoreham Hotel Gallaudet President I King Jordan speaks of 'The Deaf Way' as a 'Sign Post', a point of reference for "where we are going as a world community of deaf and hard of hearing people".

During the opening ceremony, Gallaudet University's first deaf president, Dr. I. King Jordan, described how this remarkable celebration, would serve as a 'touchstone' and a 'signpost' to mark how far deaf people have come as a 'world community'. Jordan contrasted the Deaf Way with another international gathering-the infamous Congress of Milan in 1880 where hearing people (denying deaf participants the right to vote) decided to outlaw absolutely the use of sign language in the education of deaf children. "We are no longer at Milan," Jordan pronounced emphatically, "this is 1989 and this is The Deaf Way!".

The plenary sessions, symposiums and paper presentations were held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, while the festival performances at the University campus. The Omni Shoreham is a Washington's landmark five star hotel. Since 1930, it has provided a resort ambience and exceptional service to its often legendary guests. President Truman played poker here, John Kennedy courted Jackie here and many Presidential inaugural galas happened in the grand ballrooms.

One remarkable feature of The Deaf Way was the technology involved in organizing a conference which would be as communication accessible as possible to everyone. Jordan estimated that the total cost at roughly US \$3.5 million-most of it spent for communication accessibility.



The enormous space in the Omni Shoreham Hotel's Regency Ballroom made video screen enlargement of presentations and interpretations a vital part of communication accessibility. American Sign Language, real-time captions, and international gestural communication are each projected on large screens for audience viewing.

More than 225 sign language interpreters were present at the Omni Shoreham to provide translation in American Sign Language and International Sign. Another 50 interpreters provided voice translation in Spanish, French and English. Rooms where the largest conferences were held included large screens where participants could view the speaker, real time captioning in English and sign language interpreters. In addition, satellite coverage carried highlights of the week to Europe and Scandinavia every day of the event, and specials were aired, via satellite in South America, Central America, parts of Canada, and at all of Gallaudet's regional centers.

CULTURE



The conference itself focused on four areas: Deaf Culture, History. Sign language and Arts. Each included two major plenary sessions, daily symposia and many smaller presentations. One can get an idea of the nature of plenary addresses by their themes: Misconception of Deaf Culture in the Media, The study of Sign Language in Society, Reflections of Deaf Culture in Deaf Humour, Sign Language and Education, Human Rights and Deaf People, Deaf People in the Arts: Struggles and Successes, Deaf Studies and Advocacy, The Concept of Deaf Culture etc.

Deaf culture was not only one of the thematic areas of 'The Deaf Way' conference but it was also in evidence throughout the Gallaudet Campus - in the stories told by deaf people about their lives, in the plays, dances and art by deaf presenters, from many countries, in the lively interactions taking place in the International Deaf Club Tent, and in all the places where people from different countries came together.

According to plenary speaker Paddy Ladd, co-founder of the National Union of the Deaf in London, "Culture means the way of life of a group of people - their language, their beliefs, the things they create, the stories they tell. Deaf culture can be seen in the sign languages used by deaf people around the world; in new art forms such as signed poetry, sign song, and deaf theatre; in the clubs, schools, associations, sports, and political structures developed by deaf people."

Said Ladd, "If hearing people write 'the deaf', we feel as if we are like animals in a zoo. Yet we can write the deaf and feel a sense of pride about who we are, almost a race of people."

In the view of most cultures, deafness means that something is missing. But deaf people are different because of language and culture. If the deaf could hear tomorrow, they wouldn't instantly become hearing people, "Because", says Ladd, "Inside we are deaf. Our minds are deaf. This has come from seeing the world in a different way". The medical view that sees deafness as something missing is a limited one. A more accurate way to view deaf people is as a "Linguistic Minority".

The four-year-old National Union of the Deaf (NUD), London, of which Ladd is a cofounder, is a deaf activist group that has directed much of its energies to lobbying the British Government on improving the situation for deaf people. The top priority for the NUD is to restructure deaf education in England which is still strongly oral.

"We always failed under Oralism and we got used to that (failing)". Ladd stated. "Deaf education (in England) has been run by a bunch of criminals for the last 100 years!" Things are now beginning to improve, he explained, in that sign language has finally been allowed in the classroom at some deaf schools. According to Ladd, the present status of deaf education in England was analogous to "rebuilding a country after a devastating war", in this case the devastating war representing the damage done by staunch Oralism.

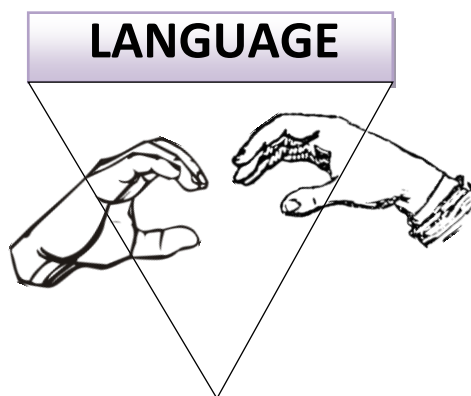
According to Ladd, about 50% of the deaf schools in England now embrace total communication (TC), while the rest remain oral programs. But even with TC, he said, "There is again that problem of the teachers signing skills which are limited and often very weak. TC is better than what we had before. It's a step in the right direction." But it is not enough for Ladd and the NUD. They want to see bilingual education in British Sign Language made available to deaf children. In England, he said, there is still no trace of bilingual curricula in deaf education.

Ladd said he strongly supports bilingualism because it recognizes the existence of what he called the 'deaf mind' of the deaf child. "When we (deaf children) are small, he said, "our brains compensate. They make sense of the world in a different way, a visual way." He pointed out how sign languages all over the world share very similar spatial grammars, even though their vocabularies may be vastly different. When a teacher is signing and speaking at the same time, Ladd said, then he or she is automatically signing in English word order and following the rules of English grammar. Using TC, he lamented, it is impossible for deaf children to take advantage of the remarkable features of a visual, spatial grammar-the most natural way for the "deaf mind" to learn.

Ladd also spoke of the need to rebuild deaf culture in England. He suggested that "deaf culture will be much stronger when we are filled with love of deaf people rather than dislike of hearing people." He added, "Proof of a deaf culture will only come when we are prepared to march and fight for the rights of deaf children!"

In numerous small sessions during the week, people from many countries described the lives of deaf people. Thailand, said Kampol Suwanarat, General Manager of the National Association of the Deaf there, has been known as the 'land of smiles'. But Thai deaf people are different," he said, "We don't smile as much. We haven't been given the opportunity. We haven't received an education." Few deaf Thais can read or write, he said, and there is little support for deaf children.

Other presenters discussed areas including political action, legal issues, advocacy, interactions between deaf and hearing people, deaf professionals and parents, mainstreaming, and various subcultures within the deaf culture.



Language-in all its visual and aural forms-was a key player here and throughout The Deaf Way. Researchers, educators, deaf people, and parents and deaf children addressed the intricacies of language at 33 conference sessions during The Deaf Way. Topics ranged from how children acquire language, bilingual approaches to teaching deaf children, how to develop dictionaries of natural sign languages, and the grammatical structures of various sign languages training interpreters etc.

Bilingual education for deaf children was a major focus of a number of presentations. One plenary session concentrated on the Swedish National Organization of Deaf's victory in 1981 when the Swedish Government recognized Swedish Sign Language as an official language. At the University of Stockholm today, "sign language is established as an academic subject of its own", said Dr. Brita Bergmann, a faculty member in the Department of Sign Language at the university's Linguistics Institute. Deaf students can earn a doctoral degree in sign language through courses taught in Swedish Sign Language.

In a symposium on bilingual education for deaf children, Britta Hansen, director of the Center of Total Communication in Copenhagen, Denmark, explained that various studies conducted by the Centre revealed that the simultaneous method (using signs and spoken Danish simultaneously) did not give deaf children a visual version of Danish. "Instead they quite often understood neither the signs nor the spoken words" and tended to become "half lingual," she said.

Hansen described a model program in which Danish deaf and hearing parents urged that their deaf children be taught all subjects in Danish Sign Language (DSL). "Whereas 10 to 15 percent of deaf children used to learn to read for meaning, we now see 55 percent of them being able to do this", she said. Since that first group, the bilingual approach has been accepted by the Ministry of Education, schools for deaf students, and parents associations, said Hansen. "Most parents of deaf children start learning DSL when their child is diagnosed as deaf," she said.

In another symposium on bringing up children to be bilingual and bicultural, Michael Tillander, a hearing parent who is president of the Finnish Association of Parents of the Deaf, echoed one of Hansen's statements. When people try to speak and sign in Finnish simultaneously, he said, "most hearing people succeed in breaking all the rules of both languages." Hearing parents must communicate with their children in sign, however, even though they may never reach fluency in Finnish Sign Language, he said. "Deaf children will forgive their parents a lot of mistakes in sign language. You must try. You must have some signs to communicate," said Tillander.

"We have to work for a general recognition of sign as a true, distinct language; the primary language of deaf people. The spoken national language has to be taught as a second language, using methods appropriate to foreign language teaching," he said. He stressed that while most parents, first information about deafness comes from doctors and audiologists, audiogram will not tell your child's future linguistic capacity.

Roberta Thomas, a hearing parent and executive director of the American Society for Deaf Children, who moderated the symposium, said that her deaf son reads at twelfth-grade level but doesn't speak. "Learning English does not mean speech," she said. It means reading and writing. It means literacy. All presenters stressed that speech, reading and pronunciation should always be taught separately from academic subjects. Teachers should not waste class time correcting speech of a student.

A second language plenary session on language and education featured Serene Corazza, a child of Deaf parents and sign language researcher from Trieste, Italy and Sam Supalla, a deaf doctoral student and research assistant at the University of Illinois, U.S.A. Supalla echoed the bilingual theme in his presentation as analyzed the Education of the Handicapped Act (P.L. 94-142) and Bilingual Education Acts of 1968 and 1974 and found that neither adequately addresses the linguistic needs of deaf children. An ideal bilingual education for deaf children would guarantee them the right to ASL both at home and in school, said Supalla.

Speakers at the plenary session entitled 'The Study Sign Language Society' jolted many in attendance by confirming that Sweden is the leading country in the world with respect to that government's official acceptance of Swedish Sign Language (SSL) as the native language of deaf Swedes.

Lars Wallin, the nation's first deaf doctoral candidate in linguistics at the University of Stockholm, described how this official recognition has led to dramatic, positive changes in deaf education, particularly the development of bilingual education.

The bilingual curriculum

The bilingual curriculum, developed in large part by deaf people, requires that:

- All academic subjects be taught in SSL;
- All aspiring teachers of the deaf must be first fluent in sign language before being accepting to training programs.
- All preschools for deaf children have signing staff; and
- SSL be used to teach children to read and write Swedish.

Positive results

Wallin credited this bilingual approach for many of the exciting changes he said he was now seeing among deaf youth. "I can see how these deaf children are growing up. They can talk about anything world problems, pollution, and so on. And on the TTY, their writing is astonishing".

Factors leading to reforms

According to Wallin the dramatic reforms in deaf education in Sweden were possible because of three factors working together. 1) sign language research which proved that SSL was as rich and valid a language as Swedish; 2) the mobilizing role of the SDR, Sweden's National Organization of the Deaf and 3) the strong cooperation of the parents organization in joining forces with deaf people to fight jointly for these reforms.

"The recognition of sign language (as a bonafide language) had a great impact on us," Wallin explained. As sign language researchers were analyzing the linguistics of SSL in the late 1970s they began giving workshops to deaf people around the country and explaining the validity of sign language. To people who had previously considered their language inferior, "this has greatly improved self-esteem." Previously, he added, many deaf Swedes seemed only able to feel good about themselves if they succeeded in mastering spoken Swedish.

Secondly Wallin said, the SDR organized itself to fight for government recognition of SSL and didn't give up until it had won. Wallin spoke of the difficult period of the early 1970s when deaf people in Sweden mistakenly embraced Signed Swedish. "But Signed Swedish only made us more oppressed. It showed deaf people how to oppress other deaf people." It is to SDR's credit, Wallin added, that the organization's leaders were able to admit that they had been wrong in endorsing the use of Signed Swedish in deaf education. They were able to say, "We are on the wrong track."

Today, he said, SDR is stronger than ever.

Role of parents

The third critical factor was parental cooperation. "I think, sign language research helped us reach the parents." Understandably, Wallin said, most hearing parents had been in favor of mainstreaming so they could keep their children at home. "But they were not thinking of the children's self-esteem." We tried explaining to parents, he said, why deaf children must meet other deaf people, including deaf adults, in order to feel satisfied about themselves and to see what the future can hold. "Children can't get this in mainstream programs and they become depressed," he maintained

"It took a while for parents to change their attitudes," Wallin said, but they have. "Today it is the parents who are fighting to keep the deaf (residential) schools open!" He said, "Now we (hearing parents and the Deaf Community) are working together. Our motto is: 'United we stand; divided we fall.'"

"At the deaf school", Wallin told "Swedish Sign Language (SSL) is used as a tool to achieve Swedish in the written form."

How does it work? According to Wallin, the bilingual method in Sweden follows a three step approach: first and foremost, the deaf child learns SSL as his/her native language; second he/she learns to read and write Swedish via the use of SSL; and thirdly, for those who want to learn speech, training is available.

Swedish language classes are taught using SSL, Wallin explained. For example, students will read a text in written Swedish. Then the students and teacher discuss it using SSL. During this discussion the teacher can explain various grammatical features of written Swedish, such as why a sentence follows a particular word order or how the meaning of the sentence might change drastically if the word order is altered. All the grammatical elements of Swedish can be conveyed using sign language, Wallin emphasized.

What about the role of speech? "There is a place for it in deaf education," Wallin said, "but not in the bilingual classroom. "Instead speech training is done separately and on an individual basis. Sign language is used to teach speech too. For instance, Wallin said through sign language it is possible to explain that different letter combinations have "different tones and different tongue movements." The prevailing attitude about speech training in Sweden, Wallin said is: If a deaf person wants to learn how to use his or her voice, then speech is readily available. But there is no across the board pressure that all deaf people should learn speech.

The sessions on language gave deaf people renewed vigor and confidence that they can fight a frontline battle for their language, that they can win this battle, and that with such a victory they may one day echo Wallin's statement when speaking of their own country, "I do not exaggerate, if I say that Sweeden has become a model society for deaf people in many countries".



The hundreds of artists who gathered for 'The Deaf Way' included actors, poets, painters, architects, mimics, writers, television and film producers, illustrators, dancers, story-tellers, graphic and interior designers, art educators, cartoonists, and photographers. For them all the world was a stage for one week, and everyone was a star.

While evening festival performance showcased the talents of performers from around the world, day-time sessions provided a forum for those in the arts to present their views on myriad topics of interest to the deaf community. Conference attendees learned about problems faced by deaf actors in the Soviet Union; the use of poetry in classrooms for American deaf students, a project in France to open cultural events to deaf people and promote deaf artists; and the use of pantomime and psychotherapy with deaf people in Czechoslovakia.

Many presentations focused on the need to develop equal opportunities for deaf people in the arts and to eliminate discrimination. A panel discussion on deaf people in the entertainment industry in the United States was so well attended that it was extended to a second session two days later. The week provided an opportunity for international professional actors, deaf architects, interior designers, and architectural draftspersons to learn about the activities of the Hearing Impaired Architectural Network - a chance to interact with each other.

Everywhere during the week there was an abundance of creativity, talent, originality, determination, ingenuity as deaf people in the arts spoke of their professions. Their words revealed a commitment that to them was more like a calling, a summons, than simply a job.



Dr. Dilip & Mrs. Ranjana Deshmukh in front of the work of Sculptor Guy Wonder

Representing hands that show the experience of moving from emptiness to fullness.

The Deaf Way also brought to the campus the works of two deaf artists who were commissioned to create pieces for the event. Sculptor Guy Wonder produced a four-part work representing hands that show the experience of moving from emptiness to fullness.

Chuck Baird, who has worked as an actor, set designer and painter with the National Theatre of the Deaf for almost nine years was commissioned to create a mural for the Deaf Way. This mural shows a man and a child sharing the common bond of deafness.

The message of the week, though, was not one of discouragement but of certainty that deaf people are making their way in the arts and optimism about the future.

"Dialogue between deaf and hearing people is absolutely necessary, if we are to work together on an equal basis," said Ann Silver in her address. "With common sense, cooperation, and understanding, we can break down the barriers that stand in the way."



During March 1988, students, faculty and staff of Gallaudet joined together with the local community and the wider deaf community to form the weeklong DPN - 'Deaf President Now' movement which culminated in a march in the US capital. This movement, which gained worldwide attention, resulted in the selection of Dr. I. King Jordan as President of the University. Since that historic day, the level of awareness of deafness, deaf people and Gallaudet University has soared. Since then Dr. Jordan has become a symbol of hope for deaf people around the world. His success is an evidence that the barriers to full participation of deaf people in society can and will be broken. The movement proved, perhaps for the first time in history, that deaf people can command the world's respect.

Gallaudet's former student Body Government President Greg Hillock told the deaf people in the audience that when they went back home, they should remember "The three R's - Recognition, Respect and Responsibility."

Deaf rights advocate Dr. Mary Malzkuhn, referring to the DPN movement, said, "American deaf people have spoken up! It's time for deaf people in other countries to say the same thing."

The Deaf President Now movement at Gallaudet proves that the deaf can "do anything except hear," but they are a long way from being able to rest on their laurels.

Lecturers cited countless examples of injustices against deaf people still practiced in many parts of the world:

- ❖ The birth of a deaf child is considered God's punishment for sin in some South and Central American countries. Many parents abandon deaf infants on the streets.
- ❖ There are 70 million deaf people in the world, yet only a fraction of them are receiving any education..
- ❖ In most countries, deaf people are discouraged from using their native sign languages.
- ❖ In many Third World countries, deaf people are forbidden from marrying.
- ❖ Deaf people cannot obtain driver's licenses in many parts of the world..
- ❖
- ❖ The career opportunities for most deaf people are bleak, and the chance for advancement is practically nil. At best, deaf people in most parts of the world are limited to doing work requiring skills with the hands, not the mind.
- ❖
- ❖ In many developing countries, deaf people are forbidden by law from marrying each other. Deaf men can marry hearing women, but deaf women, as custom dictates, usually stay single.

Eminent author & lecturer Dr. Harlan Lane said, "Another way for the world to work toward providing equal rights for deaf people is by making the world aware of deaf culture and deaf people's needs by studying deaf history."

Lane told a cheering crowd that "the field of deaf studies has grown up and lost its taste for fairy tales. It now knows that a first priority is to acquire a wider social, historical, and political perspective on deaf education."

Deaf people, too, "must know their history if they are to draw up an agenda for reform," said Lane, adding that "deaf leaders are crucial consumers of deaf studies for they must provide the intellectual leadership of the deaf minority." His message to deaf leaders is that "if you are oppressed, you have a special responsibility - learn, teach, act on behalf of social reform. Oppressed people are capable of improving their a lot."

Lane encouraged more deaf scholars to take the lead in studying and writing about deaf history, and not leave the task to hearing scholars, who he said, have produced the most irresponsible and insulting claims about deaf people" in scientific journals.

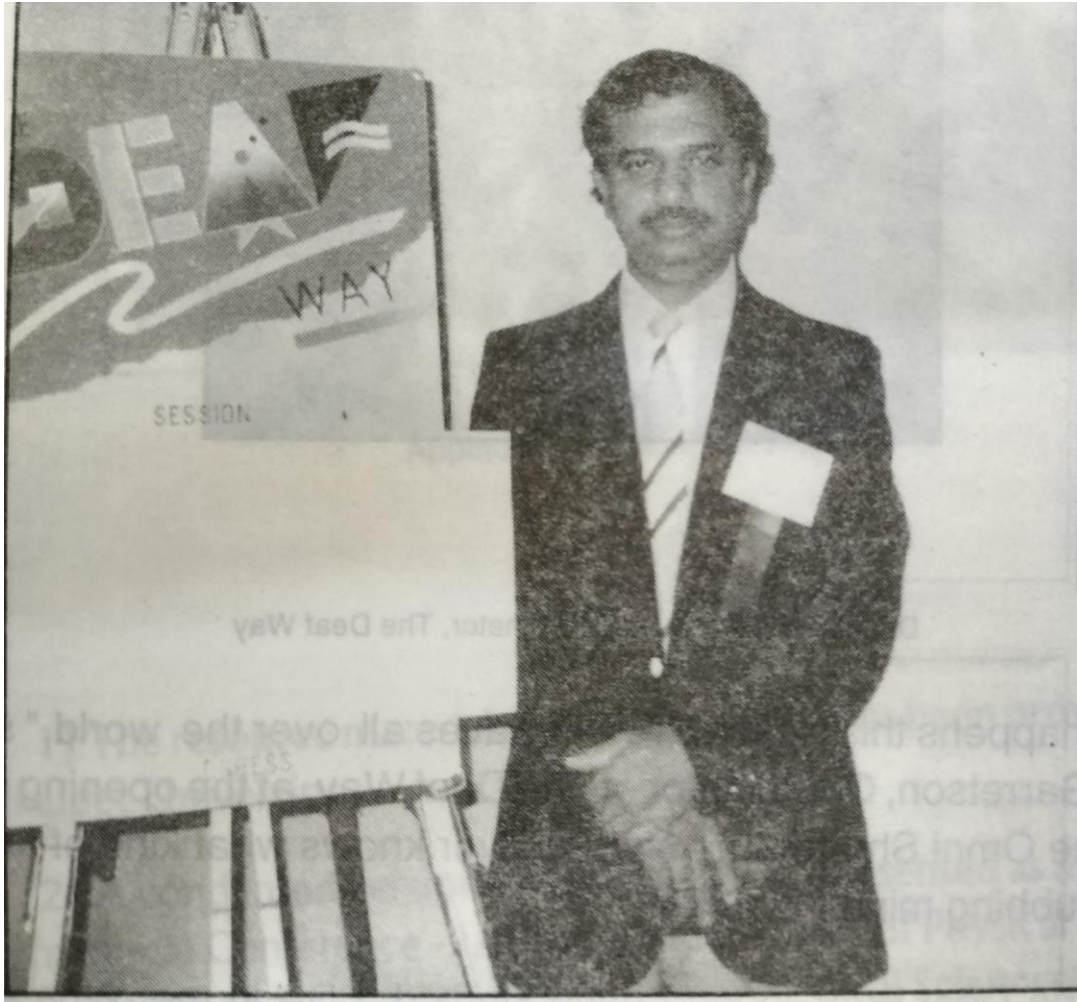
Lane commended 'The Deaf Way' for being a forum where the world can learn more about deafness. "There are those who say, 'you cannot celebrate deafness - you can only regret it' There are those who say, 'It's hearing world'. Let them come here and learn. Let them come here and see that it's a deaf world too."

Also on the Gallaudet campus, behind the football field, was the 'International Deaf Club Tent' which was open every evening. Appearing on stage in the tent were deaf storytellers, jugglers, folk dancers, musicians, magicians, and even a fashion show featuring the creations of deaf designers.



TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) with printer.

There were more than 100 exhibits including those of useful devices viz. TDDs (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf), TDDs with printer, Closed caption decoders, computer programs, speech viewer, flashing or vibrating systems for alarming people to sound, etc. I had an opportunity to visit the booth of NIDCD (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, Bethesda, Maryland) who sent me the Report of the Task Force on the National Strategic Research Plan. This incidence was responsible to initiate the Indo- USA Clinical Research Project entitled 'Non syndromic Hereditary Hearing Impairment - Gene Mapping.'



Dr. Dilip Deshmukh at 'The Deaf Way'

This is a glimpse of The Deaf Way. But The Deaf Way is not finished. It lives on in the hearts and minds of the more than 6,000 people who attended the history-making event. And its effect has the potential to change the lives of deaf people around the globe.



Dr. Mervin Garretson, Coordinator, The Deaf Way

"What happens this week will send waves all over the world," said Dr. Mervin Garretson, Coordinator of 'The Deaf Way' at the opening ceremony at the Omni Shoreham. "No one ever knows what kind of fire is kindled by rubbing minds together."

Yes, 'The Deaf Way' indeed have kindled a fire in me. Whatever small work I am doing, I attribute it's all credit to 'The Deaf Way'. Hence, while writing a congratulatory letter to the organizers of 'The Deaf Way', the following lines just flowed from my pen, "The Deaf Way have kindled a fire in me to serve more & more for the deaf in my country; so that one day, they will also enjoy the life like The Deaf Way!"



Applause – ‘The Deaf Way’

- 1) The resource material used in this article has been provided by the Gallaudet University.
- 2) A condensed version of this article was presented as a paper at the International Conference - IAPMR (Indian Assn. of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation) held at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, on 27-30 January 1991.



BILINGUALISM IN DEAF EDUCATION

**A study on the issues confronting the education system.
An analysis of the current and its alternatives**

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

For more than 100 years, 'Oralism' in deaf education has been implemented through which attempts were made to teach the deaf child the spoken language during 'Critical Period' (early years of childhood) with the help of speech therapy, a hearing aid, a group hearing aid, auditory training, lip reading etc. But the majority of deaf children didn't acquire adequate social, academic and cognitive skills.

Various studies in different parts of the world have recommended 'Bilingualism' in deaf education for all round development of the deaf. Bilingualism means teaching two languages to the deaf. The first language is Sign Language (SL) and the second one is the spoken language. Sign language is the mother tongue of the deaf. Moreover, it is proved that sign language is also a natural language with phonological, morphological and syntactical rules.

In 'Oralism' or 'Oral-Aural Method of Education', it is presumed that a deaf child has some residual hearing and therefore when sound is amplified by the use of a hearing aid or a group hearing aid, it becomes audible to him. Hence teachers speak as they teach. also they lay emphasis on speech training. It is assumed that with the help of a hearing aid through his residual hearing and lip reading, the deaf child can learn the spoken language and thus he can become a fully integrated partner in our society. In other words, the basic idea in 'Oralism' is to enable the deaf child to listen and to speak and thus to make him as normal as possible. And this result is sought to be achieved by exposing him to spoken language only - that language being the language of the majority of people. In fact, people's ignorance in this respect is embedded in the notion that speech is supreme. One who doesn't have speech and doesn't learn to speak is left outside the norm. But speech acquisition presupposes the sense of hearing. Moreover, speech development is equated to language development.

However this approach has proved a failure with a majority of deaf children. The aim of giving the child a full spoken language, that is, the speech of other people, has been only exceptionally accomplished. Also the reading abilities of the child who has been educated by the 'Oralism'. have proven to be far below average reading level.

Material presented in spoken language is inaccessible to any deaf child, including even those with less than profound hearing loss.

Teachers have struggled, but they have never been able to teach the average deaf child the language of the majority i.e. spoken language to a level where he could use it satisfactorily for his daily communication with hearing people in general. As a result, deaf people didn't acquire the social, cognitive and academic skills which are needed to become fully integrated partners in society. They have been excluded and isolated and their potentials were neglected. And the major reason for its failure is that this educational system mainly focussed on their disability, their weakness i.e. loss of hearing.

Since 1960, educationists have started assessing the academic performance of deaf students, when the following facts were revealed.

The education given to deaf students all over the world is not as it should be. It has been documented time upon time that deaf children lag substantially behind their hearing age mates in virtually all measures of academic achievements. Gentile (1972) found that the deaf student's achievement on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) was markedly depressed in spelling, paragraph comprehension, vocabulary, mathematical concepts, mathematical computation, social studies and science.

These documentations represent a failure of the system i.e. 'Oralism', which is responsible for educating deaf children. This needs changes in the system which recognizes deaf children's need for early natural language competence and for communicative access to curricular material.

It is seen that whenever the deaf come together, they don't use their voice or spoken language among themselves for communication, but they use their fingers, hands, facial expressions etc. And the interesting fact is that these are not merely signs, but natural languages in signs. having grammar independent of spoken languages. They develop naturally over time among a community of users. They are acquired through an ordinary course of language acquisition by children exposed to them and they are grammatically organized according to principles found in all other human languages but exhibit independent patterns of organization that make each sign language unique.

It has been observed that just as hearing people have spoken language; the deaf also have natural sign language in which they communicate among themselves. And the interesting fact is that this sign language is also a real language with phonological, morphological and syntactical rules.

That 'Sign Language is the natural language of the deaf' is a point of controversy only for those, who are not prepared to accept the fact that the sign language is the first language of the deaf. Sign language is considered as the natural language of the deaf as it is the language which the child prefers to use, is easiest for them to acquire and is the basis of his cognitive growth. In fact, the problem of the deaf is not really their lack of hearing, but rather the lack of understanding by the hearing people that the deaf also have their own natural language.

It is a repeatedly observed fact at different places in the world that a group of deaf children whose deaf parents use sign language with their children was superior to a group of deaf children whose hearing parents provided them with early and intensive oral training in communication and language. The superiority was evident in (1) linguistic skills, (2) academic skills, (3) maturity, responsibility and independences, (4) sociability & popularity, (5) appropriateness of sex- role behavior and (6) ability to react appropriately to any situations.

While implementing 'Oralism', it was expected that during early years of life i.e. during 'Critical Period', if a deaf child is exposed to spoken language, he will acquire it early and naturally. Critical period refers to the early years when children's minds are considered ripe for acquiring a first language, simply by being in the environment where the language is used. Oralists believe, during this critical period, a deaf child should be introduced to the world of sound with a hearing aid, auditory training, speech therapy etc. In other words, they presume that by creating an environment of a sound for a deaf child, he will acquire the spoken language naturally.

Linguistic researchers are convinced that the critical period theory of language acquisition doesn't apply to deaf children so far as spoken language is concerned. Because a deaf child doesn't acquire the spoken language but he has to learn it consciously.

These linguistic researchers believe that the process through which deaf children have to go through in learning a language, they cannot hear, is largely an 'intellectual task' possibly even a memorization task. Therefore, early exposure to spoken language is not considered as critical as cognitive readiness. However, it is proved that a deaf child acquires a sign language in the environment supporting it in a similar way in which a hearing child acquires a spoken language. Children exposed to other deaf children (or deaf adult) who use sign language, acquire their first language-sign language quite naturally. No special teaching is required: only interaction is sufficient. That's why sign language is called as the mother tongue/natural language/first language of the deaf. And on the strong foundation of this first language i.e. sign language the deaf can later learn a spoken language easily and well. This method of teaching the deaf is called as 'Bilingualism'.

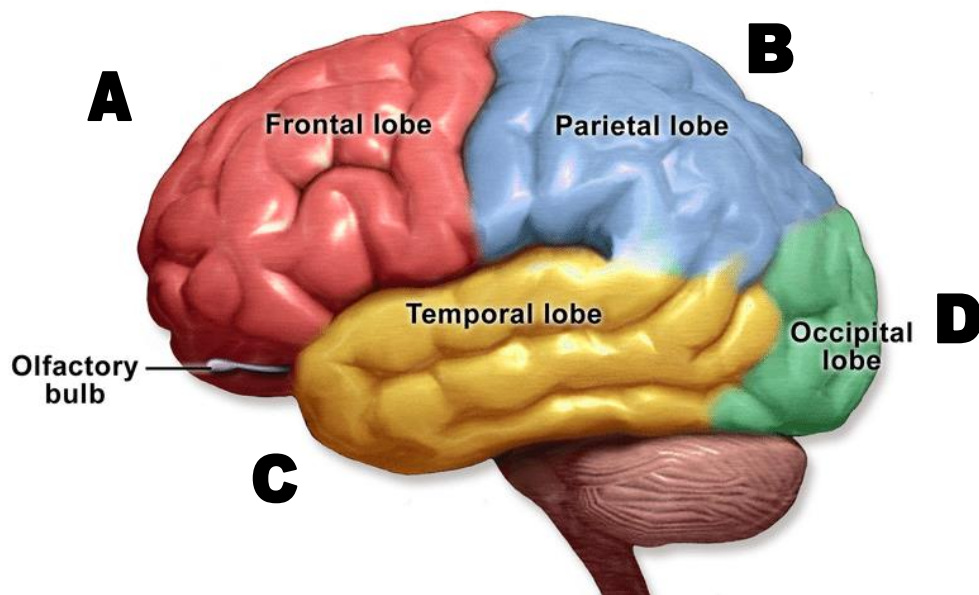
'Bilingualism' in deaf education means teaching two languages to the deaf. The first language is the sign language as it is the mother tongue or the natural language of the deaf and the second language is the spoken language. By using sign language as the first language, teaching becomes accessible to deaf pupils i.e. the deaf pupils can understand what the teacher says and they can ask questions and discuss subject matters freely.

The nature of 'Bilingualism' where deaf children are concerned is unique in that the children don't have auditory access to the spoken language, hence they can't acquire it through a natural process. Instead the language of the hearing majority must be consciously taught to them.

It is a widely accepted premise that one's native language is the springboard for comparison when learning parallel structures in a second language, and that our first language provides us with a framework for organizing information about all subjects.

The evidence is perfectly clear that one's proficiency in his own mother tongue facilitates his learning of a second language, and there are serious implications that without such development neither language may be learned well, resulting in semilingualism. This semilingualism is an important reason of failure of "Oralism"

Let me quote here a recent research finding by Dr. Brigitta Soderfeldt. She had already taken a master's degree (M.Ph.) in psychology and a doctoral degree in medicine. Later in November 1994, she defended her doctoral thesis titled 'Sign Language' perception studied by neuroimaging techniques from the institute of clinical neuroscience of Linkoping university hospital.



(Courtesy WFD News, December 1994)

A = Frontal lobe

C = Temporal lobe

B = Parietal lobe

D = Occipital lobe.

Older studies of patients with brain damages show that the frontal and temporal lobes of the left cerebral hemisphere have important speech functions. Damages to these areas will result in loss of speech or incapacity to understand speech.

Recent studies of healthy persons prove that language competence activates larger areas and that also the right side of the brain is important to language competence.

This is where research into sign language comes into the picture. Comparing sign language with spoken language we can now study how languages stimulated by auditory or visual perception cause different or similar activation of the brain.

The doctoral thesis has four test series which compare how the spoken language and sign language activate various areas of the brain. Different groups of sign language users were studied: those deaf persons with early deafness and deaf parents, hearing persons with deaf parents, and deaf or hard-of-hearing persons who have acquired a sign language at a later stage.

Her findings state that there are many similarities between the spoken language and the sign language. Both seem to activate about the same areas of the brain. It's probable that a person's language competence does not depend on the language system.

Despite similarities in language systems there were, however, some differences. Sign Language activates to a higher degree those areas of the brain which code and decode visual perception. This holds true even when sign language was compared with spoken language with simultaneous visual stimulation (a speaker on video).

Moreover, the test group 'deaf persons with deaf parents' is different from other sign language users. Their right cerebral hemisphere showed a higher degree of activation. An explanation to this can be that they really are genuine sign language users and utilize localization information better than other test groups. Thus the thesis strengthens the available information about sign languages and presents reasons for early contacts with sign language users for deaf children.

The studies about hard of hearing persons revealed that those who are skilled signers are also good at lip reading. This finding disproves the statement that sign language destroys lip-reading skills,

Now a word about 'Total Communication. It is a philosophy and can be defined as 'The use of any and all modes of communication. This Includes speech and finger-spelling, lip reading, amplification, gestures, facial expression and body language. Sign system and sign supported speech viz. SE Signed English and Sign Supported English can be considered as specific examples of Total Communication. However, sign language, by its very nature, cannot be considered an example of Total Communication. Specifically, sign language is not a spoken or written language and is therefore in no way 'Total'.

In the late 1960, the philosophy of Total Communication came into existence. It was observed that, although the communication between deaf children and their hearing surroundings improved drastically, their spoken language skills did not improve to the same extent. Above all, they continued to communicate among themselves and with deaf adults in a sign system completely different from the one their hearing parents and teachers were used to. Later, after due study and research, it was proved that this visual system of gestures was actually a language in its own right with phonological, morphological and syntactical rules. Thus the hearing world came to know regarding the existence of sign language. And later 'Bilingualism' in deaf education is propagated.

The bilingual approach is in fact based on a fundamental re-evaluation of the deaf experience, in which the deaf child, like any child, is seen as having a need to establish a strong sense of identity as a whole child, with a confidence built on a rich cognitive, linguistic and affective experience, with a cultural heritage, and with a sense of continuity with an adult world into which she/he will grow. In bilingualism sign language as a first language offers all this through a medium which deaf children have been found to learn naturally, easily and fluently, even when they have so often been discouraged from doing so. The bilingual approach is bilingual because, if all the literature on bilingual hearing children is to be believed, strength in a culturally relevant first language will facilitate the learning of a second language, and the end result is a linguistic enrichment which actually gives bilingual children cognitive advantages over their monolingual peers.

There is a fear that it is more difficult for an adult learner (parent or teacher) to acquire communicative competence in sign language than in sign system or sign supported speech. In fact the evidence is that genuine communicative competence in sign system or sign supported speech may be an unattainable goal, since the signed and spoken components rarely complement one another and frequently contradict one another, leading to communication breakdown. Furthermore neither sign system nor sign supported speech can be seen as a complete rendition of spoken language. Both lead to distorted speech rhythms and neither provides a signed equivalent to the vital intonation patterns of spoken language. By contrast sign language is a complete natural language which should be learnt with as much ease or difficulty as any other second language. Whether it is easy or difficult depends on motivation and attitude.

How bilingualism influences the deaf children's sense of their own identity and self-esteem can be appreciated by the following conversation published in British Deaf News (March 1994) by the Bilingual Research Group of the Open University, U.K.

"When asked what being 'deaf' meant the children's answers included: Brilliant signer but cannot hear."

"Deaf people are lucky, if there is noise like shooting, deaf people stay calm but hearing people is frightened. There are lots of noisy things, arguments, bombs, lighting, crashes, and other people shouting".

A question was asked the children whether deaf or hearing people were cleverer.

"Deaf people have sharp eyes, hearing people have sharp ears, so it's the same really." "Deaf is best because hearing people talk and it hurts their jaw. Deaf people sign and nothing hurts."

Hence it can be safely said that the first language of deaf children should be a sign language. When children are born, they are predisposed to learn a natural language. Natural sign languages are learned easily through normal language acquisition processes by deaf children who are exposed to them at an early age. (Bellugi, et al 1964.) Therefore, a deaf child's natural sign language is the best vehicle for providing him access to socio-cultural information during his early childhood and to the curricular content of education at all ages. There is no evidence to support the notion that early sign language acquisition inhibits or otherwise interferes with the acquisition of literacy or speech in spoken language. On the contrary, there is clear evidence that early sign language exposure promotes the later academic and linguistic advancement of deaf students. Therefore, both sign and spoken languages should be respected, valued and used by all.

Let us understand what a deaf child is. He might have lack of hearing, but still his emotional and cognitive potential is just like that of any other child, and he still has his un-impaired sense-VISION. So, if a language is presented to him through signs, he acquires it as easily as a hearing child acquires a language presented through sounds. This is the basic idea behind using the sign language as the first language in deaf education. By doing so, we rely primarily on the strength of the child - his unimpaired vision, instead of relying primarily on the weakness of the child-his impaired sense of hearing, as is wrongly done in Oralism.

The life of deaf person builds on visual means. They use sign language not only to communicate but to build up an identity. Through sign language, the deaf learn who they are; they gain confidence as deaf persons and become active members of the deaf community and of larger community too. Sign language gives the deaf an unique dignity and importance.

In short, Oralism is based on assumptions, while bilingualism is based on actual truths. Oralism is created by the hearing lot and is centered on deafness - their inability, while bilingualism is accepted and supported by the deaf as it is centered on their assets.

Another important issue of Human Right i.e. the Linguistic Human Right is also involved in this subject. Human Rights are everybody's irretrievable birth right, not something that can be earned later in life. As members of mankind, everybody is important, everybody is unique. This difference makes Deaf people interesting, creative and valuable.

The most basic human right of any person is his right to his language. Therefore, the world must accept the fundamental right of the deaf to use their own language. If a society suppresses sign language, it oppresses deaf people. That's why the deaf are fighting for their language.

The Article number 1 of United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphatically states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Its Article number 2 states that a language should not be a subject of discrimination. The right to use sign language is crucial for the deaf as they have been denied this right for so long.

Its Article 19 declares the right to freedom of expression and opinion. But due to oppression of sign language, deaf people do not enjoy this freedom of expression and opinion. As they cannot use their own language, they cannot express their opinion to family, community and the government. Moreover, without the use of sign language at school, deaf children cannot communicate with teachers and teachers cannot communicate with deaf children.

Conclusion:

Sign Language is the first language of the deaf and Bilingualism in deaf education facilitates and enhances their social, cognitive & academic skills.

Fundamentally deaf children are able to learn the same skills as hearing children, only if they are offered communication on their own terms that is if the instruction is given to them in their mother tongue.

The oral teaching method is slow and below standard, while instruction in Sign Language is faster and up to standard. The deaf children learning through Sign Language are able to keep up and receive an all-round education which is age appropriate.

Similarly teaching subjects like geography, biology, history, mathematics etc. in Sign Language, will definitely give the children an all-round education up to standard. Not only are the teachers easier to understand and the children more relaxed, but also the children get a possibility to learn a fluent multi-way communication, i.e. that the children have a possibility to exchange opinions, comments and views both among themselves and with the teachers

Thus Sign Language can be called verily "the saviour of the deaf." Therefore, the need of the hour is to adopt 'Bilingualism' in deaf education instead of outdated 'Oralism'.

**SIGN LANGUAGE :
AN INALIENABLE
RIGHT**



Rtn. Madhav Prasad Goenka
Chairman, Rotary's Institute of
Speech & Hearing, Kolhapur

It was indeed a wonderful experience to attend the first ever seminar in Asia on Sign Language & Bilingualism in Deaf Education' organized by the Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji. It was held on 13th & 14th December 1994 at Ichalkaranji and attended by Ms. Liisa Kauppinen, General Secretary of the World Federation of the Deaf. In this Seminar I had the rare opportunity to hear the experience of persons directly working in this field. It was emphasized that sign language should be recognized as the mother tongue of the deaf as it is the only language in which the deaf can express themselves naturally. It was also learnt that It is advisable to promote sign language as the first language for deaf students and teach other languages through sign language only. Most of the deaf schools in India, however, are not teaching sign language at all, or even if it has been introduced, the said language is being taught through spoken language only.

It was also stated at the seminar that the latest research in the field has established that those deaf students who have an exposure of sign language from early childhood, and also learn other spoken languages through sign language (called 'MULTI-LINGUALISM') acquire a far superior knowledge of spoken languages as compared to normal hearing students. Another interesting fact disclosed was that where a deaf child who is learning sign language and a normal hearing child grow together, the normal hearing child also naturally learns sign language owing to the association with the other child, and it was found that his skill of learning spoken language also increases thereby.

I also had an opportunity to personally meet Liisa at a lunch party and talk with her on a variety of subjects through her interpreter. Ms. Liisa was speaking in Finnish sign language (she is deaf since the age of five), and I was speaking in English spoken language. I was really amazed to see the capacity of 'sign' language to express even philosophical abstract thoughts. I also learnt from Ms. Liisa that 'sign' language is in a sense even superior to the 'spoken', as spoken language is only one dimensional, being dependent on words, whereas sign language has another added dimension called 'space' by which one can express himself more profoundly & pointedly. I was indeed deeply moved and also opined in my speech at the seminar that a living example of the efficacy of sign language was Ms. Liisa herself.

I also recollect my interactions with some proponents of 'ORALISM'. They believed that a hearing impaired child should be taught through auditory method only with the help of hearing aids, and not through sign language. Their arguments were as under:

1. If a hearing impaired child is first trained in sign language instead of being first exposed to sounds with the help of a hearing aid, his inclination towards learning to speak vocally gets affected. That is to say that use of sign language hinders speech development for the deaf.

2. There is a particular age when a child's ability to acquire a language is at its peak. This critical period should be utilized to expose the deaf child to the world of sound, by helping him to learn a language based on sound by scientific methods like auditory training, speech & language therapy etc. Wasting this critical period in trying to teach him sign language will mean that the chance of his acquiring a spoken language later will become bleak indeed.

3. A deaf person might learn sign language, but if others in the society does not know the language used by him, then communication will not be possible. So, in order to help a hearing-impaired person live a near-normal life in society, teaching him to speak orally with the help of hearing aids and auditory training is a must.

4. Therefore, sign language can be adopted in deaf education as a secondary or auxiliary mode of teaching only: the primary emphasis should continue to be on the traditional way of teaching through hearing aids and speech therapy.

There is an apparent fallacy in these arguments, as they are based on ignorance. It may be recalled that it was only due to such a mental make-up that a total ban on the use of sign language in deaf education was imposed by the infamous congress at Milan in the year 1880. 'ORALISM' was strictly implemented in the following years, but with disastrous results. The deaf children educated in the oralist method, lagged behind their hearing age mates in every way. And when they reached adulthood, they could not become integrated partners in society like other hearing people. The reason is that 'ORALISM' focussed on the disability of the deaf i.e. their difficulty in hearing, instead of their ability i.e. the ability to see through their eyes and express their feelings through signs. As a result, their nature-given potentials remained neglected and their mental, cognitive and academic development was stagnated.

This situation has changed during the last 30 years. Intensive research by the linguistic scientists, psycholinguists and educationists has led to certain conclusions as under:

1. For a deaf person, sign language IS the only natural mode of expression. It may be quite fittingly called his 'mother tongue'. A deaf child learns his academic subjects in sign language just as easily as a hearing child learns through spoken language. Forcing him to learn through vocal methods only by the use of hearing aids is synonymous to creating an artificial disability for him. It is like forcing a person with good eyesight to see through a pair of spectacles having blurred glasses. Evidently, if a deaf child has to develop his potentials best, he needs to learn through the language in which he is naturally at ease... a language which suits his cognitive abilities. Sign language admirably fulfils this requirement.

2. To think that teaching a deaf child through sign language will impair his ability to learn spoken language is a totally false impression. As far as written language is concerned, it is also 'signs', what else? An idea expressed in written language can be easily co-related by a deaf child to his own sign language, as both can be perceived through eye sight, and this co-relating when further co-related to sound of the spoken language with the help of hearing aids, can only help in understanding or learning to speak a spoken language. Learning a spoken language through the medium of the sign language cannot therefore be a hindrance; it can only be immensely helpful.

3. The question that 'if other persons in the society do not know sign language, how communication will be possible?' is best answered by saying that the deaf should be most appropriately & respectfully considered as a 'Linguistic Minority'. It is their basic human right. Instead of being despised or pitied as a group of second grade or disabled persons, communication with them should be done on equal terms as we do with any other minority people. The communication can be done through an interpreter just as I talked with Ms. Liisa, or it may also be done through written words. Further, in spite of learning sign language well, those amongst the hearing-impaired, who are able to learn spoken language with the help of a hearing aid, may also talk in spoken language, albeit with a self-respect, as they will no longer be suffering from an illusion of disability.

Thus the conclusion from the above discussion is that not ORALISM, but BILINGUALISM, i.e. teaching of sign language as the first language and that of other languages through sign language only, should be adopted for deaf education everywhere. Sign language is the mother tongue of the deaf and learning through one's mother tongue is everybody's inalienable right.

As long as there are Deaf people on earth, there will be signs.

- George Veditz (1913)



ORALISM AND SIGN LANGUAGE

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

The staunch supporters of 'Oralism' make the following arguments. 1) Use of sign language will hinder the speech development. 2) Critical period will be wasted. 3) There will be difficulty in communication with the hearing society.

In spite of implementing 'Oralism' for more than 100 years since 1880 (the infamous congress of Milan when use of sign language in deaf education was totally banned), deaf children lag substantially behind their hearing age mates in spelling, paragraph comprehension, vocabulary, mathematical concepts, mathematical computation, social studies and science. They did not acquire the social, cognitive & academic skills it takes to become fully integrated partners in society. They have been excluded and isolated with their potentials remaining neglected, because 'Oralism' mainly focussed on their disability, their weaknesses.

In the light of research papers, observations, experiments and analysis during the last 30 years, the linguistic scientists, psycholinguists, educationists etc. have come to the following conclusions: (These have since been strongly supported and recommended by all Deaf Associations.)

1. Material presented in spoken language is inaccessible to any deaf child, including even those with less than profound hearing loss. One should keep in mind that the deaf will never be a hearing person.

2. Wherever the deaf come together, they don't use their voice or spoken language among themselves for communication but they use their fingers, hands, facial expression etc. These are not merely signs but these are Sign Languages which are natural languages with grammars. They develop naturally over time among a community of users. They are acquired through an ordinary course of language acquisition by children exposed to them, and they are grammatically organized according to principles found in all other human languages but exhibit independent patterns of organization that make each sign language unique.

3. Recent research findings have revealed that the spoken language and sign language activate about the same areas of brain. And skilled signers are also good at lip - reading which disproves the statement that sign language 'destroys' lip - reading skills. (Birgitta Soderfeldt, MD., M.Ph. 1994)

4. The following finding is regarding the 'critical period' which refers to the early years when children's minds are considered ripe for acquiring a first language, simply by being in the environment where the language is used. Oralists believe that during this critical period, a deaf child should be introduced to the world of sound with a hearing aid, auditory training, speech and language therapy, etc. In other words, they expect that by creating an environment of sound for a deaf child during this early period, the spoken language will be acquired by him. But linguistic researchers have found that this hypothesis is not applicable to a deaf child as far as spoken language is concerned. Unlike a hearing child, a deaf child doesn't acquire a spoken language: it has to be learnt by him consciously. The process through which a deaf child has to go through in learning a spoken language (which he can't hear), is largely an 'intellectual' task for him - possibly even a 'Memorization Task'. Therefore, early exposure to spoken language is not considered congenial for a deaf child. It is too stressful. On the other hand, a deaf child exposed to other deaf children (or to deaf adults) who use sign language, acquires the sign language quite naturally, easily and in a similar way in which a hearing child acquires a spoken language. No special teaching is required; only interaction is sufficient. And on the strong foundation of this acquired first language i.e. sign language, a deaf child can learn a spoken language easily afterwards and quite well, and also academic educational subjects. This method of deaf education is called "Bilingualism".

5. Now the factor of speech for communication. The act of talking is extremely complex, probably the most intricate of all human behaviors. There are at least one hundred muscles which must work together with precise timing to produce speech. Thus speech is a very rapid, complex motor act and requires very finely tuned neurological regulation. The speech is acquired primarily through ear. Due to hearing loss, a deaf child cannot acquire speech in a natural way. However it has been proved that early acquisition of sign language doesn't hinder the acquisition of speech. The difficulty in learning to speak remains the same whether it is Oralism or Bilingualism.

6. Now the last important point - Integration of a deaf person in the hearing society. If we can just look towards the 'Deaf as a 'Linguistic Minority', having sign language as their mother tongue, we can get the answer automatically. Education through mother tongue is a linguistic human right. To prohibit the use of sign language in a group or in education is therefore a crime (Linguistic genocide). And it should also be realized that a deaf fluent in sign language doesn't really have any insurmountable problem of communication. With the help of an interpreter, a deaf can have a dialogue at equal status. If the services of an interpreter are not available, he may communicate through written form.

I conclude this article with the following quotes.

"The schools should not be a place to make deaf children hearing. but to make them human".

Dr. Carol Padden, (Deaf)
Asst. Professor,
Department of Communication.
University of California, U.S.A

"Sign Language is no longer regarded as a threat to the normal development of deaf children but rather as the best possible guarantee for normal development."

Inger Ahlgren
Ph.D. in Psycholinguistics

"Sign Language be accepted as deaf people's first language. The Language is an important part of a person's identity. If the society accepts sign language, it also accepts the deaf person as a human being." (Working Programme for the Northern Council of the Deaf, 1987)



BILINGUALISM - A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**(A Report of the International Conference
on Bilingualism In Deaf Education)**

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

When I heard the term 'Bilingualism' for the first time at 'The Deaf Way' (International Conference & Festival) organized by the Gallaudet University at Washington DC on July 9-14, 1989, my instant reaction was, when a deaf child finds difficulty in learning one language, how can we burden him with two languages? Well, that was past. Bilingualism and Sign Language (SL) stirred my curiosity. During last 4 year's time, I was fortunate enough to study details of Sign Language and to have many interactions and exposures on this subject, which not only cleared my misunderstandings and misconceptions, but motivated me to propagate 'Bilingualism' vigorously. And after attending the 'International Conference on Bilingualism', I am convinced that Bilingualism will open a new era in Deaf Education.

'The International Conference on Bilingualism In Deaf Education' was organized by The Swedish National Association of the Deaf, SDR, in cooperation with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and Stockholm University at Forestay Conference Centre Stockholm on 16-20 August 1993. The Conference had received financial support from the Swedish Government, Swedish Organization of Handicapped International Aid Foundation, SHIA, and Swedish Committee for Rehabilitation, SVCR and UNESCO

The aim of the Conference was to make an international contribution to a positive development of the educational conditions and general living conditions for deaf people and to spread knowledge of the importance of sign language for deaf people. The Conference was attended by 285 participants from 70 countries and 32 sign language interpreters.

The Conference was inaugurated on 16 th August at 9.30 a.m. by Mr. Bengt Westerberg, the Minister of Health & Social Affairs. He presented a brief account of contribution by Swedish Government in promoting deaf culture and Sign Language. In 1981, the Swedish Parliament recognized Sign Language as the first language of deaf in Sweden. Thus Sweden was the first country in the world to take such a bold step, which stirred curiosity all over the world. In 1993, sign language was added as a new subject in the National curriculum. Thus Bilingualism concept was introduced. In 1989, Sign Language was introduced as a subject of teaching and research at the university level. The Swedish Government amended the law of health and medical services to provide interpreters for deaf. Soon families of deaf will receive text telephone.

This makes Sweden as one of the most advanced countries in the world in deaf culture, education and sign language. That is why; Sweden was privileged to be the host of this conference.

Mr. Lars Ake Wikstrom, President of the Swedish National Association of the Deaf, SDR, extended a cordial welcome to all the participants and presented the following speech.

"Before 4 years Ms. Liisa Kauppinen, General Secretary, World Federation of the Deaf, suggested such a conference. We turned to Ministry of Social and Health Services. This struggle is not solitary, but we received support from Nordic Countries, SHIA, UNESCO etc. and they co-operated in all kind of ways. We always had contact with Government authorities. Good education for deaf is our foremost goal. Knowledge is power / strength. Education and knowledge increase person's self-esteem and instills courage to fight against injustice in the society. We would like to impart our knowledge and strength to deaf in developing countries. The hearing society should give a choice to deaf for medium of instruction for education. It will be a rewarding week for all of you. The struggle to have adequate education of deaf will be continued."

Dr. Yerker Andersson, President, WFD, in the beginning thanked SDR and Swedish Government for organizing the Conference. Later he said. "Since the infamous Congress of Milan in 1888, Oralism dominated all over the world in deaf education. But we are not satisfied. Deaf studying in university and researchers have confirmed that sign language is the natural language of deaf. In Sweden, deaf who has learnt through sign language has same intellectual development and same identity as hearing. Bilingualism in deaf education means learning sign language as Primary Language and this primary language is used to teach spoken language. This Conference will spread the importance of Bilingualism. Sign Language is the natural language of deaf. It should be respected. It must not be manipulated by hearing persons. Sign Language is the language of free expression and communication."

Ms. Inger Ahlgren, PhD., is Associate Professor of Sign Language and Head of the Department of Sign Language within the Institute of Linguistics at Stockholm University. While presenting her speech at the Opening Ceremony, Ms. Inger said, "There are a striking similarity in general issues and the issues in the education of deaf. There is growing respect for minority languages and cultures. Sign Language though oppressed, has survived and will survive as long as deaf are there. But local spoken languages have perished."

Dr. Yerker Andersson presented his talk entitled 'Deaf People-A Linguistic Minority. He said, "Still there is some confusion regarding the words - Deaf and Mute. Many dictionaries in the world don't contain these words. e.g. in German, 'Deaf' is not included in many dictionaries. Deaf function well when they are treated as 'Linguistic Minority'. All should respect deaf and their language. Deaf children from deaf parents have better proficiency in reading, writing and speaking because flow of signs - words is constant. On the contrary, hearing parents expose their deaf child to only one word. While preparing Sign Language, deaf must be consulted. In USA, about 95% children belong to

hearing parents. Such children of hearing parents are isolated. WHO (World Health Organization) assume that hearing people are perfect animals, but it is FALSE. There is no perfect animal in the world. We are not robots. We are human beings. The pathological perspective, which states that deafness means something missing, should be changed; for this, WFD can give some suggestions. Deaf are different from other disabled. Human diversity should be valued. We are not homogenous group. There are different perspectives of linguistic minority. Deaf population is having one of the multiple diversity cultures."

Dr. Tove Skutnabb - Kangas (Department of Languages and Culture, Roskilde University) addressed on the subject 'Linguistic Human Right-A Prerequisite for Bilingualism' as follows. "All minorities in the world are deprived of their rights. Mother tongue can be defined on the basis of origin, identification, competence and function. Mother tongue can be changed in course of life. Mother tongue is also a relation. Mother tongue needs external validation. But Sign Language is not recognized and it is invalidated. Deaf doesn't get any formal education or they are submerged in 'Oralism'. They don't meet any competent signers. Oralism is still predominant in underdeveloped countries. Since 90-95% deaf are borne to hearing parents, they don't learn sign language in infancy. Bilingualism should be the goal for deaf education. There should be positive identification of both languages. To learn mother tongue is the Linguistic Human Right. We take it granted that the mother tongue is taught to deaf children as the official language. But it is not true. It is a genocide crime against humanity. To prohibit the use of their language in a group or in education is a LINGUISTIC GENOCIDE. At many international conventions, it is loudly stated that nobody should be discriminated on the basis of language. But educational clauses are in contrast with general clauses. Most European countries commit linguistic genocide. Deaf community should be considered as linguistic national community in the world. To prevent linguistic genocide, universal declaration of linguistic human right should be done. Recognition of sign language is the basic need for bilingualism. DISMANTLE MONOLINGUAL MYTH. It is not beneficial even for majorities and world peace. Monolingual stupidity is the most dangerous illness in the world."

Ms. Lissa Kauppinen (General Secretary, WFD) addressed on the subject 'Sign Language and Deaf Culture - the Cornerstones of Sustained Development'. She said, "Baby's growth depends on environment. Similarly deaf child's growth depends on deaf culture and sign language. Deaf education is quite young - just 200 years old. It has experienced both sign language and Oralism. And it is proved that sign language is the natural language and mother tongue of the deaf. Majority of deaf in the world have no access to education. Only 1% schools in world are using sign language. There are lots of dangers in deaf education. In Europe, before few years, the deaf schools were closed and integrated education was promoted. But it has caused immense damage to deaf education. Also, we have positive experiences. WFD has 93 member countries. None of them are promoting better hearing. They all are promoting the improvement in status of sign language. In spite of suppression by Oralism, deaf culture has survived. The sociocultural view of deaf can be described as follows: Knowledge-Beliefs, Feelings -Values, Behavior - Customs. Deaf & hearing should share the same goal of education. But hearing community have no value for deaf. Culture transfers from one generation to another. Deaf culture is a process which depends on deaf people using different sign languages creating different cultures and customs. Deaf immediately understands signs. The vibrator, blinking light or alarm for deaf have been developed by deaf through their contact among themselves. Deaf culture depends on positive self - image. One can find the difference in culture of two children - one who is following Oralism and the other who is following sign language. The child who is following Oralism is without identity, resources, and energies. He is always insecure. He had many psychological disturbances. Even with interpreter in integrated school, there is no positive development of a deaf child. The child following sign language shows positive development. Better skills and competency in sign language strengthens deaf culture. The support of sign language in deaf culture can be aptly described by the example of a trapeze artist, who performs life threatening and dangerous acrobatics with the support of net below. This net provides the trapeze artist the physical and psychological support. Similarly sign language protects deaf without being injured or disabled. At all planning levels of UNESCO, deaf culture should be included. Sign Language should

be accepted and some practical steps should be taken to improve status of sign language. Deaf should be encouraged to participate in politics. The subject of deaf history, culture and traditions should be included in curriculum. This will help in building of deaf individual's identity. If educational curriculum is not based on deaf culture, the goal of education is not achieved. The educational training of teachers of deaf should be changed. The Deaf Life should be seen in a positive way."

In the evening of 15th August, all the participants from Foresta Pier and Ariadne Pier went by boat to Stockholm City Hall, where a buffet dinner was hosted by the City of Stockholm and Stockholm Country Council.

Mr. Okoth Okombo (Professor of Linguistics, Kenyan Sign Language Research Project, and University of Nairobi) addressed on the subject 'Kenyan National Sign Language: Some Attitudinal and Cognitive Issues in the evolution of a Language Community. In the beginning Mr. Okoth explained the definition of 'Diglossia'. He said, "Any two languages can be used at any time, as per convenience. Some languages can be used at any time, as per convenience. Some languages are used in some specific conditions, e.g. religion work. Deaf don't use sign language as a written language. They need two languages - one for written communication and the other for face to face communication. For implementation of 'Bilingualism', there should be discussions with teachers, parents and policy makers. People don't accept sign language because of their prejudices of deaf and their sign language. These problems can be divided into Attitudinal problems and Cognitive problems. While tackling such problems, we had to convince the people that Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) is in real sense a language. Sign language is without mouth and tongue. Here sound is not the media for language. Also we had to convince the people (teachers, parents, policy makers etc.) that KSL can be used as a language of medium of instruction. Any language in the world, used by the society, has potentiality to accommodate the needs of the society, which they are using. Give exposure to deaf regarding their needs. Deaf forms the signs; even they see it for the first time. Teachers or concerned people should respect those signs. It doesn't need intelligence. Many a time's children have created those signs. All human beings are borne with capacity to develop any language. Just stimulate them. It doesn't need any laboratory or great intelligence. We have learnt foreign language. Even English is taught. Everybody needs to learn the foreign language. Similarly teachers of the deaf have to learn KSL. Also deaf people should be included in teaching of sign language. Certificate trained deaf teachers are not available. But positive attitude should be developed. At least one generation should be allowed of deaf teachers without certificates, otherwise there will be a vicious circle, because hearing teachers can't be fluent signers."

Sven Stromqvist (Associate Professor of Linguistics, University of Gothenburg, Sweden) addressed on the subject 'First Language Acquisition. Sven said "The rate of conveying the message by producing sounds/words and by producing signs is almost same. Language acquisition is a complex process." Sven discussed speech, sign and writing in a contrastive perspective, emphasizing the difference between spoken and signed language on the one hand and written language on the other. As a conclusion, she pointed to a major common denominator to the three. To travesty Paul, the apostle: And now abideth spoken language, signed language, and written language, these three : but the greatest of these is Language.

Inger Ahlgren addressed on the subject, 'Acquisition of Sign Language as the First Language'. She said, "For children contact with deaf adult and children is important to get acquaintance and fluency in sign language and to promote deaf culture. At Sweden, all parents are advised to go to Sign Language Centre. Children rejected Signed Swedish and accepted Swedish Sign Language. There is a special preschool for deaf children only. There is a big difference in children of hearing parents and those of deaf parents. Children of deaf parents are fluent signers because of early exposure to sign language. As a conclusion she said, "If hearing parents are taught sign language and have social contacts with deaf people and if young deaf children can spend time with each other and deaf adults, then sign language can develop as a mother tongue for the deaf and as a second language for their hearing parents."

During the floor discussion, one participant 'Rony' from Hongkong, who became deaf due to accident before 4 years confessed that she is enjoying the thrilling experience of being deaf. She adored sign language. She told that eyes are having more faith and they are more genius. The spoken words can deceive but not the signs, which are read/heard by eyes. The deaf children are lagging behind in language development. The (spoken) language development is retarded/delayed. Hence Bilingualism in deaf education is successful. The deaf can be a confident and literate youth. He can be confident and fluent in both the languages. One should realize that the deaf will never be a hearing person. He will never chat at dining table. In Bilingualism, both the Languages are equally important. The knowledge in written language is lasting. But for deaf, it is difficult to understand. Through sign language deaf can get explanation and he can discuss how reading can be done. By using sign language, one can promote learning of second language. Sign language can be a method of instruction. It helps to develop personality. That is why Swedish deaf are able to appear for public service examinations.

Christian Mas addressed on the subject, 'Bilingual Education in France: Success, Failure or Pyrrhus-like Victory.... And what about Tomorrow?' Christian said, "Deaf are capable of taking education. They have right for education. They are also entitled to enjoy same experiences as hearing. The first bilingual class in France was opened in 1984. SEA (Special Education Allowance) was given to parents. But there was open confrontation with educationists following Oralism. There was no recognition by public authorities. There was criticism from Parents Associations. There was increasing lack of understanding of deaf. There were financial as well as educational difficulties viz. Lack of training for teachers of deaf, lack of proficiency of sign language by hearing teachers, small number of children, inadequate standardization of sign language etc. Above all there was philosophical difficulty too, i.e. dilemma of authorities. But in 1988, there was reopening of Bilingual schools. In 1988, DPN (Deaf President Now) Movement at Gallaudet University; in 1989. The Deaf Way and Centennial Celebration encouraged reformation. In the beginning, oralist accepted sign language as a fashion. But now in Europe sign language is accepted and recognized officially. But the National Associations should be active and they should play a vital role in implementing Bilingualism."

During the Closing Session, Mr. Lars Ake Wikstrom, President SDR, told that there is a great difference between majority and minority languages. The gap is large. The attitudes, prejudices and misconceptions towards sign language have to be cleared. The money spent for education is the investment for population. Its cost has to be borne by the society. The resources of minority are limited. The aim and goal of deaf education is Bilingualism. The ways may be different. This Conference must have given new knowledge and insight to improve educational standard of deaf. But one has to be patient. It may take many, many years. Mr. Lars expressed his deep concern as 80% deaf in world do not get formal education.

Dr. Yerker Andersson, President, WFD, thanked SDR, Swedish Government, SHIA, Stockholm University, Inger Ahlgren, Gunnel String, Anna Heim and organizers of the Conference.

Ms. Liisa Kauppinen, Secretary, WFD; commented that the Conference went on like a dream.

It is the glimpse of the Conference on Bilingualism. My first hand impression about the Conference is as follows:

"The Deaf Way was celebration and it gave me a cultural shock. The conference on Bilingualism is Education and it gave me new vigor, confidence, guidance and direction to propagate Sign Language and to implement Bilingualism."

In the light of this Conference, one question crops up in my mind. Can we implement Bilingualism in India? And the answer immediately comes-Yes, we can. It is indeed difficult but not impossible. First of all, we have to improve the status of Indian Sign Language (ISL). For this, the assistance of local Deaf Clubs/Associations should be taken. A dictionary of ISL should be compiled. Such dictionary should be regularly updated. The deaf must be involved at all stages of preparing and updating of ISL. Borrowing of signs should be discouraged. Even though help of hearing person may be taken, preparing and compiling of signs should be exclusively done by deaf persons. About 1000 signs are necessary for primary school education. Additional 1000 signs will be sufficient for secondary school education. Thus while strengthening the status of ISL, the following measures should be taken to promote ISL.

Form the survey, we had conducted, it is evident that not a single school in India is following ISL. Hence vigorous efforts should be taken to convince educators, parents, and concerned government officials. First of all, teachers of deaf should be convinced regarding the importance of Sign Language. All the institutions too in country which are imparting education to teachers of deaf should be convinced regarding the importance of ISL. At present, none of the institutions are in favor of Sign Language. Naturally, the teachers also follow and support Oralism. National level and State level seminars and workshops should be conducted for ISL. The Social Welfare Ministry, which is financially assisting the deaf education, should be taken into confidence and through such Government agencies and with the help of voluntary organizations, ISL should be propagated.

DDI-Delhi Doordarshan (TV) of India can play a very important role in the propagation of ISL. The news for the deaf which are broadcasted on every Sunday must be presented in ISL. Instead of weekly, it should be presented daily. The lessons of ISL can be presented on TV. It will paly a vital role in increasing the status of ISL.

The National and State organizations of the deaf, Associations of ex-students of deaf schools, local deaf clubs and other such organizations should be involved and encouraged in the promotion of ISL and Bilingualism.

Thus Bilingualism can be implemented in India. Of course, it will take some time. But with the concrete and concentrated efforts of all concerned, the era of Bilingualism will start. And the deaf in my country too will enjoy life like "The Deaf Way."



Courtesy WFD

**The Deaf are human beings.
Respect them & their Language.**

INTERVIEW

(This 'Interview' was telecasted on Bombay Doordarshan (TV) on 2nd July 1994 during the program 'Dnyandeep'. Hope, this question answer format will help in making clear the concepts of Sign Language and Bilingualism.)

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh is practicing 'General Medicine' at Ichalkaranji, popularly known as 'Manchester of Maharashtra', since last 18 years. In 1981, the 'International Year for the Disabled', he started Rotary Deaf School and Institute of Speech and Hearing with the help of Rotary Welfare Trust, Ichalkaranji and since then he is actively involved with the deaf education. To date he has presented 4 papers on Deaf Education at various international conferences. His efforts resulted in the Indo-US Collaborative Research Project for Gene Mapping which causes 'Nonsyndromic Hereditary Hearing Impairment.' Presently, he is working as a Co- Investigator of this Research Project. His work has been appreciated in 'Gallaudet Today' and 'WFD News' quarterly magazine of Gallaudet University, Washington DC and publication of World Federation of the Deaf, Helsinki, Finland, respectively.

At the International Conference on Bilingualism held at Stockholm, Sweden, in August, 1993, Dr. Deshmukh, presented his paper titled, 'Status of Sign Language in Deaf Education in India'. His paper was published in the spring issue of Signpost 1994, the publication of 'ISLA' -'International Sign Linguistics Association' (Deaf Studies Research Unit, University of Durham, England).

The concept of Bilingualism in Deaf Education is a new one. Not a single school in India is implementing 'Bilingualism'. Let us have some information on this important subject - "Bilingualism".

What is Bilingualism in Deaf Education?

Bilingualism in Deaf Education means teaching two languages to the deaf. The first language is the Sign Language (SL). It is the mother tongue or the natural language of the deaf. The second language is the spoken language e.g. Hindi in India, Swedish in Sweden, Marathi in Maharashtra, Gujarati in Gujarat, etc. It means that the first language the sign language is used in teaching a second language-the spoken language.

In Bilingualism, why SL is considered the first and spoken language as the second?

Because SL is the mother tongue of the deaf. Since childhood, the deaf tries to communicate with the help of signs and gestures; hence SL is regarded as the first and primary language for deaf children and the language for instruction in the schools for the deaf, as it is used for explanations and discussions in all subjects. The use of SL as the first language means that the teaching is accessible to deaf pupils i.e. the deaf pupils can understand what the teacher says and they can ask questions and discuss subject matters freely.

What is meant by Sign Language?

Sign Language is the language of signs. The Deaf communicate with one another through movements of fingers, hands, face and body.

Well, you can just call it 'Signs'. Why are you using the term 'Sign Language'?

I appreciate your question. The scientific evidence on Sign Language research from many countries have proved that sign language is a language with its own structure and grammar. It has its own linguistic symbols, which can be combined into utterances according to the rules of the language. Sign language can fulfill the human need of communication and can be used for acquiring knowledge as well. A great many people have reacted to, and found difficult to accept it, as the sign language is neither produced nor perceived like spoken language, which have constituted the norm. According to this view a language should be vocally produced and aurally perceived which not the case with sign language is. It is gesturally produced, with movements of the hands, body, head mouth and eye-brows and visually perceived. A language is not determined by its production and perception, however, by being a system for communication developed by humans consisting of signs or signals and rules for their combination (Sjogren, 1979). Research has shown that sign language is a system of communication developed by deaf people and it consists of signs and rules for their combination.

When and how the world came to know regarding the existence of SL

Thirty years ago a comparative study was undertaken which revealed that due to 'Oralism', deaf people did not acquire the social, cognitive and academic skills it takes to become fully integrated partners in society. Hence, the Total Communication Method was introduced in which spoken language was supported by visual means, e.g. signs, finger spelling and the mouth-hand system. It was observed that, although the communication between deaf children and their hearing surroundings improved drastically, their spoken language skills did not improve to the same extent. Above all, they continued to communicate among themselves and with deaf adults in a sign system completely different from the one their hearing parents and teachers were used to. Later, after due study and research, it was proved that this visual system of gestures was actually a language in its own right with phonological, morphological and syntactical rules. Thus the hearing world came to know regarding the existence of SL.

How and when, you came in contact with SL?

'The Deaf Way' was the international conference and festival organized by the Gallaudet University at Washington DC during 9-14 July, 1989. Before attending 'The Deaf Way' as a paper presenter, I was the staunch supporter of 'Oralism'. Hence I had stated two important points in my paper. (1) The constitution of India has recognized 18 languages. (II) There are 1652 spoken languages in India. So it is difficult to implement one sign language all over the country. But this statement was based on the assumption that sign language is dependent on spoken language, which is false. But my misunderstanding was cleared at 'The Deaf Way' and got acquainted with SL in the real sense.

What's 'The Deaf Way'?

'The Deaf Way' was the international conference & festival organized the Gallaudet University. It is the world's only liberal arts university for deaf students. In addition to offering on-campus educational programs from the pre-school to doctorate level, Gallaudet is an internationally recognized center for research, program development and consultation related to deafness and hearing loss. Prior to 'The Deaf Way', over a dozen international conferences on special topics had been held under the auspice of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). But all of them focussed on deafness-related problems. 'The Deaf Way' was the first conference to include a celebration of deaf culture, art, sign language and deaf history. It was a first of its kind - a celebration of the deaf, for the deaf and by the deaf people from all parts of the world. More than 6000 delegates most of them deaf, from 81 countries gathered for a week of scholarship, friendship and cultural sharing. 'The Deaf Way' stirred curiosity in me for sign language and after deep study for last 5 years, I am convinced that 'Sign Language is the natural language of the deaf' and therefore it qualifies to be 'the mother tongue of the deaf'.

What are the methods of deaf education implemented in India?

Broadly speaking, there are 3 types of methods of deaf education.

(1) Oralism (Oral Method of education).

(2) Total Communication.

(3) Sign Language.

In recent past, we had conducted a survey on this subject, which revealed that most of the deaf schools are implementing 'Oralism' and few others are using 'Total Communication'. But not a single school is using SL.

Are you happy with the present method of education? Do you think that the present method of education is satisfactory?

With the aid of prevalent method of education i.e. Oralism and Total Communication, the deaf do acquire knowledge but there are lot of limitations. To emphasize this point, let me explain these methods in a little detail.

In Oralism, most of the instructions are given through speech. It is expected that with the help of hearing aid or group hearing aid, the deaf child would listen, learn and speak. In short, 'Oralism' is centered on speech, residual hearing and untiring efforts of parents, teacher and the child. Although Oralism is in use since last 100 years, this approach has proven to be a failure with a majority of deaf children. It has been documented time upon time that deaf children lag substantially behind their hearing age mates in virtually all measures of academic achievements viz. vocabulary, spelling, grammar, mathematics concepts, mathematics computation, social studies and science. The aim of giving the child a full spoken language, that is, the speech of other people, has only exceptionally been accomplished. As a result, deaf people did not acquire the social, cognitive, and academic skills it takes to become fully integrated partners in society. They have been excluded and isolated, and their potentials have been neglected because the 'Oralism' mainly focusses on their disability and their weaknesses.

It is said that if a deaf child is exposed to sign language, he will not speak. Is it true?

Well, it is a very important question. Since last 100 years, through 'Oralism', vigorous efforts were made to develop speech in the deaf but it has failed in majority of cases. By teaching signs, it is assumed that the deaf child will not speak. Yes, the deaf too desire to speak. What they are opposing is the suppression of sign language. After learning the sign language, deaf tend to possess better skill and potentiality of speech development. It has now been scientifically proved that 'Sign Language is no longer regarded as a threat to the normal development of deaf children, but instead is the best possible and guaranteed method for normal development'.

If deaf won't speak, will the objective of education won't be fulfilled?

The objective of education for a hearing child is not to make him speak. Similarly the objective of education for a deaf child is not to make him speak, but to develop his cognitive, social and academic skills so that he becomes fully integrated part of the society. Schools should just not be a place to make deaf children speak but to make them normal human beings.

Why the objective of education is not fulfilled through present method of 'Oralism' ?

The 'Oralism' is centered on the disability of a deaf child i.e. deafness. All instructions are conducted in speech and hence students must 'lip-read' the teachers all day in order to learn anything. Frequently they fail to perceive the main part of the subject. Knowledge of the subject is neglected because teaching to speak is favoured. If the pupils want to express or ask something, it has to be done with the aid of speech and pronounced correctly before the teacher is satisfied. A question will not be answered until it is pronounced correctly, and hence he is deprived of clearing his doubts or expressing himself. Actually, only the pupils who can pronounce spoken words best get the advantage of acquiring knowledge, whereas those who fail to do so have to give up after trying for a while, and thenceforth ask no questions, thus they are indirectly denied access to knowledge. Hence, the objective of education is not fulfilled by 'Oralism' alone.

Will the objective of deaf education be fulfilled through 'Bilingualism'?

Yes, certainly. The first reason is that the present method of education i.e. Oralism and Total Communication have been designed/formed by the hearing lot, while 'Bilingualism' has been formed/invented by deaf educators, accepted by the deaf and it is strongly recommended by the World Federation the Deaf.

The second reason is that Oralism is centered on deafness that is their deformity while Bilingualism is centered on what the deaf have i.e. their assets. Sign language is learned naturally and spontaneously. It is part of a deaf child's normal/natural development. The signs make it easier for the children to grasp words and conceptions. Thus Sign Language is very successfully used for explanations and discussions in all subjects.

Since 1981, Bilingualism is implemented in Nordic countries and it is proved that the objective of education is successfully accomplished. To impart this information to all concerned and connected with deaf education, 'International Conference on Bilingualism' was organized by 'The Swedish National Assn. Of the Deaf' at Stockholm in August, 1993.

Will you please give some information on 'International Conference on Bilingualism'?

Sweden is the first country to recognize 'Sign Language' way back in 1981. Since then, they are implementing Bilingualism successfully. Hence Sweden was privileged to host the first international conference on this subject. The aim of the conference was to make a universal contribution to a positive development of the educational conditions and general living conditions for deaf people and to spread knowledge regarding the importance of sign language for the deaf.

Don't you think that due to sign language, the deaf will be isolated from hearing community?

No, not at all. If you will look towards deaf as a 'Linguistic Minority', you will get the answer of this question. Have you ever heard or seen a deaf person or a group of deaf people, either addressing a gathering or attending and participating in a seminar? But it is possible with the help of an interpreter.

What do you mean by 'Linguistic Minority'?

If we look at the deaf with positive attitude as a 'Linguistic Minority' having sign language as their mother tongue, we will be able to understand their creativity and potentiality. We should not look at the deaf with negative attitude focussed at their disability. With the help of sign language and interpreter, the deaf in developed countries have successfully entered in the field of medicine, engineering, architecture, education, photography. etc. Recently, two deaf persons have become pilots. Such examples will be rarely seen in countries where Oralism is still implemented. Thus due to sign language, deaf will not be isolated form the hearing community but they will be properly assimilated in the community. They will play a vital and productive role in the hearing community.

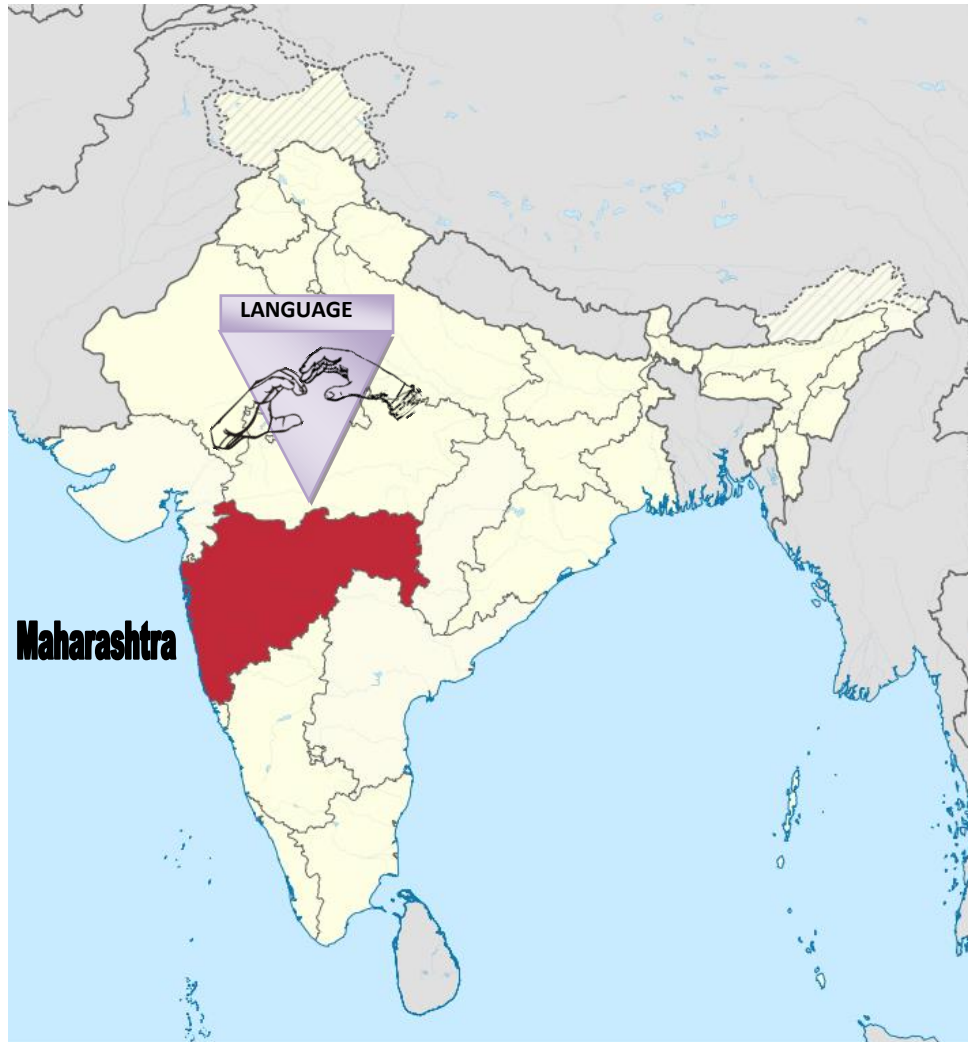
What do you think regarding role of 'Television' in propagating deaf culture?

Certainly, Television can play a vital role in propagating deaf culture as it is a visual medium. Almost all the deaf are watching the news on DDI on Sunday at 1 P.M.. Television and video are important visual media which offer a lot of exposure and future possibilities for deaf. Unfortunately, there is not a single programmer for deaf except the news on Sunday. In Western countries, the deaf have access to many TV programmes with Sign Language or subtitles. Academy Award winning actress Marlene Matlene, who is deaf, says, "If a TV programme or movie is without captioning or signing, for us, it amounts to a censorship". Hence Television is a very important medium to propagate deaf culture.

One last question - What are your suggestions to implement Sign Language?

The teachers of the deaf, their parents and everybody who is involved with deaf education should realize that Sign Language is the mother tongue of the deaf. The next step will be to form India Sign Language with the help of deaf. And once National Sign Language is formed, it should be propagated through TV and in due course of time, 'Bilingualism' should be implemented in deaf education.

- ❖ Deaf Awareness and Sign Language work are the bases for any real improvement in the situation and living conditions of the Deaf persons.
- ❖ Communication and interaction are, however, essential human needs. Through them an individual learns the basic social skills.
- ❖ One of the most important factors affecting the life of Deaf citizens in any society is the status of Sign Language,
- ❖ Deaf are perhaps the most misunderstood language minority anywhere in the world.
- ❖ The only satisfactory solution to improve the quality of education of the Deaf is the use of Sign Language as the language of instruction in the schools of the Deaf.



THE STATUS OF SIGN LANGUAGE IN DEAF EDUCATION IN INDIA

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

Attending 'The Deaf Way' in 1989 the international conference and festival in Washington. D. C. proved to be a turning point in my life. Previous to this eye opening meeting I had harboured the same misunderstandings, misconceptions and ignorance about the deaf so common in my country and presumably in other places as well. Even though the focus of this international conference and festival was on deaf art, history, culture and sign language, I was totally ignorant about all of this. However, I was aware of something of deaf art from the drawings, paintings, handicraft of our students. But I had never imagined that deaf people could present a drama. Indeed, 'The Deaf Way' was for me a cultural shock. It created an urge to know more and more about deaf culture and sign language. Moreover it inspired me to spread its message across my country. So I started propagating sign language and bilingualism, but I have been facing strong opposition and criticism. Yet with every attempt I find new vigor and instinct because I am confident this opposition and criticism arises merely out of misunderstandings, misconceptions and ignorance. Since returning from this conference, I have enrolled as a 'Rotary Volunteer' and have been organizing a series of one day seminars on orientation on this subject.

As a first step, I decided to take up a survey of the status of sign language in deaf education in India, which revealed certain interesting facts. First, let me give a little statistical background information about India and my region of Maharashtra, based on the 1991 census. India covers an area of 3.3 million square meters, with a population of 843,930,861. The province of Maharashtra covers 0.3 million square meters, and has a population of 78,706,719. Literacy levels are 52% (male 64%; female 39%) in India and 63% (male 76%; female 51%) in Maharashtra. In terms of population size, India is the second largest country after China. It contains 16% of the world population, while it has only 3.42% of its area. This population is distributed over 32 States and Union Territories. Maharashtra is the third largest state in India, both in area size and population.

Ichalkaranji

Let me now give a brief introduction of our township and our institute. Ichalkaranji is located 200 miles south of Bombay. In 1981, the International Year for Disabled Persons, the very first deaf camp was organized here. After the success of the camp we established the Institute of Speech and Hearing for the diagnosis, counseling and treatment of speech and hearing problems and a school for the deaf. In 1983, both of these institutions received the FIE Foundation National Award. The state government of Maharashtra donated one acre of land upon which a prestigious school building has been constructed. On January 20, 1989, at the inaugural ceremony of this school building, Sue Ann Thompson, a sign language interpreter from Flagstaff, Arizona, USA, was the chief guest. In spite of her busy schedule, we were able to arrange for her to meet with our students. It was my first exposure to sign language.



Ms. Sue Ann Thompson, ASL Interpreter, lighting the lamp at the inaugural ceremony of school building of Rotary Deaf School, Ichalkaranji Rtn Hariprasad Bagdia & Rtn. Mahendra Mutha are on the side (January 20, 1989)

We were implementing a 'Peripatetic Teacher's Scheme'. I was privileged to present a paper on deaf education about this scheme at 'The Deaf Way' conference. There, I experienced the all-around development and progress of Deaf people in developed countries and I realized that its main cause was the implementation of sign language. After returning from 'The Deaf Way', I started proclaiming the importance of sign language, but I faced strong opposition. Therefore I started clearing up the misunderstandings and misconceptions regarding sign language, with the help of information and knowledge provided by the World Federation of the Deaf, Gallaudet University, the University of Stockholm and other sources. In order to propagate the importance of sign language, I also presented a paper at the Indian Association of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation conference in New Delhi in 1992; wrote articles for the press; gave broadcast talks

and a number of lectures at various meetings and seminars. At the Inter District Sports Meet of the Deaf schools in September 1992, I arranged a special meeting of the teachers and explained the importance of sign language. Thereafter the ISS (Indian Sign System) workshop was organized with participation from 45 teachers from 11 schools for the Deaf.

Whilst struggling to propagate the importance of sign language, we thought that it would be appropriate to undertake a survey of schools for the deaf in India in order to get a glimpse of the status of sign language in our country. Hence a questionnaire was sent to all schools for the deaf in India. But despite our vigorous follow-up by way of two reminders, responses to the questionnaire came from 66 of the 106 schools in Maharashtra and only 64 of the 269 schools in the rest of India. This means that the percentage of schools responding was 62% in Maharashtra and 24% in the rest of India, or 35% overall. This reflects the status of Deaf education in India. Compared to other states, we have detailed information of Deaf education in Maharashtra; therefore I have given two sets of information (1) relating to Maharashtra schools, and (2) relating to all schools in the rest of India.

Results of the Questionnaire

Seventy-seven percent of the schools for the deaf in Maharashtra and 73% in all of India affirmed that preschool education is provided for deaf children. Similarly, 95% in Maharashtra and 50% in India stated that they provide primary school education. But only 5% of the schools in Maharashtra provide secondary education, as opposed to 38% in India. No school in Maharashtra admits deaf students to higher secondary education, whilst in India the percentage is 11. There is only one three-year Degree College for the deaf in India. In other words, although Maharashtra contains 28.26% of the schools in India, the status of secondary education and higher education is poor in Maharashtra. Similarly, for 10,880 deaf students, there is only one degree college. This in itself indicates the dark future awaiting the ambitious and competent students wanting to go on for higher education studies.

Fifty-five percent of the schools in India stated that they are following the 'oral method' of education. To be more precise, 58% of all schools in Maharashtra and 30% of those in India (overall 44%) are supporting the philosophy of 'Oralism'. Total Communication (TC) was listed by 23%, 12% combined oral and TC; and 9% combined oral and sign language methods of education. A point to be noted is that not a single school is using pure sign language. In Maharashtra 77% and in India 89% of all schools expressed satisfaction with present methods of education.

However, very noteworthy were the responses to the questions "Do the teachers use signs?" and "Do the students sign?" which showed that an astonishing 93% of the teachers and 97% of the students are in fact using signs. Is this an indication that sign language is somehow being suppressed when 90% of the schools in Maharashtra and 66% of the schools in India say that they are not using sign language. This shows the present poor regard for sign language in India.

When asked whether ISS/ISL was useful or detrimental, 60% of the responding schools stated that sign language would be useful in Deaf education, 20% indicated that sign language is detrimental, and 10% of the schools expressed an inability to comment on this subject. From these findings, it may be assumed that there could be a good future for the use of sign language in India. However, the indications are not to be considered as uniformly positive. Mentioning the World Federation of the Deaf and its members in developing countries, asked whether people knew about the WFD. Only 7.5% of the schools in Maharashtra wrote that they were aware of the WFD, compared to 58% for the rest of India. I wonder if this helps to explain why a larger number of schools in India are using sign language, as compared to Maharashtra. In a similar vein, when information was sought concerning links to local Deaf communities, only 27% of the schools stated

that they have deaf clubs in their town, while 63% gave a negative reply. Deaf clubs and associations play a vital role in the propagation of deaf culture and sign language. Since there are no Deaf clubs, no Deaf culture exists and therefore there is no propagation and implementation of sign language.

Many schools wrote comments on sign language, which have compiled under two headings - Misconceptions and Hope.

Misconception

Here is one interesting reference from the Indian Journal of Pediatrics, which clearly indicates how even the medical faculty have misconceptions. The report says: "Total hearing loss is rare, hence most children can hear at least some speech patterns if sound is adequately amplified for them" (v.59, May-June, 1992, P. 367-371). Training courses for teachers of the deaf are based on such misconceptions conducted at all institutes. Naturally teachers carry these misconceptions and therefore a poor educational system for deaf children is undergoing implementation.

Schools implementing and supporting 'Oralism' have the biggest misconception-that the objective of deaf education is nothing but speech development. Their remarks in response to the questionnaire showed that they believe sign language hinders speech acquisition and lip-reading skills, and results in isolation from the community.

Let me share here a detailed remark written by the Parent Association of Deaf Children in Mysore. To the question about 'Methods of Education' utilized in his school, the principal responded that it was the 'aural method'. He added:

We have 60 children with an equal number of mothers attending our 'Institution of Mother and Deaf Child'. Sign language is the enemy of the oral method. As sign language is based on regional language, it is not useful in India. A poor country with a number of problems, India cannot afford sign language. As we don't encourage sign language, none of our teachers/mothers have attended a sign language course. If we can improve, counsel, motivate and guide mothers to train the child before 1 year of children have been mainstreamed in regular schools and are doing very well

Some schools offered the following comments: Sign language 'is based on spoken language'. Sign language 'is based on English'. 'It is difficult to provide a sign for every spoken word.' Oralism 'is the prescribed method' and 'has proved its efficiency'. These are the kinds of misconceptions have encountered in my feedback.

Hope

But there is hope. I have also received encouraging feedback from some schools. Some remarks were 'Sign language is the mother tongue of the deaf and is the best for deaf people.' 'Children enjoy signs', wrote two correspondents. Another wrote, 'Through sign language, there is free and easy communication among students and between students and teachers'. Further, one reply said, 'We are not satisfied with the oral method because it needs maximum audiological support like appropriate hearing aids, repair and maintenance of the machine along with other ongoing audiological management. Parent's support is also very much essential, but is not available for our students, who come from low income group families. We encourage your efforts and wish you every success.'

One school from Madras wrote: 'We have been using signs since the opening of our school in 1962. Most of the institutions for the deaf in South India are not in favor of using signs. The ISS... has a limited vocabulary. Hope you will take the initiative to prepare a comprehensive set of signs for the use of children in different Institutions in India.'



Dr. Dilip Deshmukh presenting this paper at the 'International Conference on Bilingualism' at Stockholm, Sweden. Interpreter Ms. Jean Lindquist from Gallaudet University.

Photo: Dr. Dilip Deshmukh presenting this paper at the 'International University on Bilingualism' at Stockholm, Sweden. Interpreter Ms. Jean Lindquist from Gallaudet University.

The education system is currently lacking in a number of respects. There is no recognized syllabus. There is a lack of co-ordination among institutes and schools (marks of the same subject vary from year to year). There is no supervision from any Government body. There is a general apathy towards sign language. And finally there are poor outlets for higher education. What, therefore, will the fate be for the 32,000 recognized students seeking higher education?

Yet, 93% of our teachers and 97% of our students apparently use signs. Moreover, 60% of the schools are in favor of implementing sign language. It follows therefore that if we eradicate misconceptions regarding sign language by proper guidance and further research on ISS/ISL, deaf students in India will have a bright future in education through sign language. You will all agree that education is not just a matter of information or learning about how to read, write and count. Instead, it should be recognized as a transformation into the infinite for the total development of an individual. Only sign language, not Oralism, has the potential for such a transformation in Deaf education.

This is a glimpse of the status of sign language in India. I still remember the words of Dr. Mervin Garretson, Coordinator of the Deaf Way. At the opening ceremony, he said, "What happens this week will send waves all over the world. No one ever knows what kind of fire is kindled by rubbing minds together." And how true that was! While writing a congratulatory letter to the organizers of the Deaf Way, these lines just flowed from my pen: "The Deaf Way has kindled a spark in me to serve more and more, so that one day the deaf in my country too will enjoy life as presented by participants of 'The Deaf Way'."

This paper was presented at the conference on the topic of 'Bilingualism in Deaf Education' which was held in Stockholm, Sweden, in August 1993. It was published in 'Sign post' (quarterly periodical of the International Sign Linguistics Association, spring 1994) and in 'A Deaf American Monograph 1995'.

**The task of the revolutionary is not to take power,
But always to reinvent power.**



DEAFNESS IN MAHARASHTRA

(Sample Survey of 115 Deaf Students
Belonging to Consanguineous Married
Couples from 4 Deaf Schools.)

Dr. Dilip Deshmukh

In the year 1981, the International Year for Disabled Persons, the first Deaf Camp at Ichalkaranji was organized. Ichalkaranji is located 200 miles south from Bombay. After the success of the Camp, Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji started the Institute of Speech & Hearing for diagnosis, counselling & treatment of speech & hearing problems and Deaf School for deaf children. In 1983, both these institutions received the FIE Foundation National Award. The State Govt. of Maharashtra have donated one acre of land on which a prestigious school building is constructed. On Jan. 20, 1990, at the inaugural ceremony of the school building Ms. Sue Ann Thompson, ASL – American Sign Language Interpreter from Flagstaff, Arizona; was the chief guest. She visited Ichalkaranji on behalf of Rotary Foundation as a GSE (Group Study Exchange) Team Member. Being my guest, I had a discussion with her regarding my paper to be presented at 'The Deaf Way'. She was the first person who encouraged me to compile a data of deaf students belonging to consanguineous married (CM) couples. 'The Deaf Way' - the international conference & festival organized by Gallaudet University at Washington DC in 1989, established a new direction for meeting of deaf people by focusing on the ability, diversity & richness of deaf culture & heritage rather than on the limitations of deafness. At 'The Deaf Way' many delegates were curious to know the data that 46.62% of total students belong to CM couples.

I had an opportunity to visit the booth of NIDCD (National Institute of Deafness and other Communication Disorders, Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.A.) at 'The Deaf Way' who in turn sent me the Report of the Task Force on the National Strategic Research Plan. On the page no. 11 of that report, under the title 'Major Clinical Research Opportunities - Genetic Hearing Loss, it was written: Localize & characterize the genes responsible for deafness & conduct population studies to identify the epidemiological factors of genetic deafness. Hence I submitted the collected data to NIDCD. In turn NIDCD suggested a Collaborative Project & thus as a first step, today's Workshop is organized.

Maharashtra is the third largest state in India both in area & population. A questionnaire was prepared to understand the deafness pattern of deaf students as follows. It was sent to 86 deaf schools in Maharashtra.

Total No. of deaf students

No. of deaf students belonging to Consanguineous Married couples

Out of these, how many students have

Sensorineural/conductive/mixed deafness

castes of these students

However the desired response was only from 9 schools. Hence a revised simplified questionnaire was prepared & sent i.e. Total No. of Students in the school & the no. of students belonging to CM couples. The response was encouraging, which revealed that

Total No. of students in 62 deaf schools = 4278

Total No. of Students of CM couples = 900 = 21.04%

Hence a sample survey of 4 deaf schools in District Kolhapur and Sangli was done and detail history of students of CM couples was taken. The details are as follows.

Deaf School	Total Student	Students of CM Couples
Kolhapur	77	22
Ichalkaranji	78	36
Miraj	103	56 (38)
Shirala	57	23 (19)
	315	137 (115)
		43.49%

Total No. of Students = 115 (M 68 + F 47)

Total No. of Families = 92

Total No. of Relatives =1389

Thus for analysis, the data of these 115 students is taken into consideration. These students & their families have been selected for early acceptability & availability of data in all respects.

1) No. of Siblings (Brothers & Sisters)

Total No. of Students	= 115	Family	= 92
Siblings	= 46	Family	= 22
	=40%		= 23.91%

2) Age Group of Students:

4-8 yrs. of age	=	29
9-15 yrs. of age	=	75
16-20 yrs. of age	=	11

3) Annual Income Status of Families

Upto Rs. 6000	=	47
Upto Rs. 12000	=	22
More than Rs. 12000	=	23

Many parents and even educated people are not aware of the close relation of speech and hearing i.e. deafness is the cause of inability to develop speech. Most of the parents neglect deafness and feel that it is due to a sin or a God's curse. Many a times, family doctors give false assurance and don't send the parents to competent place. Thus most of the precious time of early years of the deaf child is lost by the parents in hoping a 'miracle' for their deaf child.

4) When Deafness was first Recognized & Consultation Sought?

Age of child	Parents	
	Deafness Recognized	Consultation Sought
1 st year	31	7
2 nd year	23	31
3 rd year	34 =76.52%	27 = 56.52%
4 th year	19	25
5 th year	3	15
6 th year	3	7
7 th year	2	3

5) Education of Parents:

Literacy Rate India	=	42.91%
Maharashtra	=	63.05%
Total Families	=	92
Literate Father	=	82.60%
Literate Mother	=	51.08%

6) Castes & Subcastes

Total Families	=	92
Hindu	=	74
Muslim	=	11
Jain	=	6
Buddhist	=	1

7) Hearing Loss

60-80 db. = 19 Students

80-100 db. = 96 Students

8) Obstetrical History

1) Deliveries in Hospital = 63

Deliveries in Home = 52

2) Caesarean Operation = 1

3) Forceps Delivery = 3

9) Antenatal History

1 Mother - h/o eczathematous infection during 5th month of amenorrhoea

1 " -h/o jaundice from 6th month of amenorrhoea till delivery of a deaf child.

1 " - h/o bronchial asthma.

1 " - h/o general debility.

1 " -h/o hypertension, but delivery was normal.

10) Birth History of Students:

a) Premature Birth - 28 wks. of IUL = 1

32 " =3

b) Premature Baby - 8

(Low Birth Weight 2.5 kg.)

(IUL - Intra Uterine Life)

11) Major Illnesses: a) Neonatal Age (28 days)

1 = Kept in incubator for 36 hrs.

& Jaundice on 3rd day.

1 = Cleft Palate

1 =Conjunctivitis

2 = Fever - one baby - 7th day

& other - 22 nd day

11) Major Illness: b) Infancy Age (upto 1 yr.)

3 = Measles 3 = Accidental fall

2 = Meningitis (? Head injury)

2 = Typhoid 1 = Recurrent URTI
(Upper Respiratory Tract Infections)

1 = Diarrhea with Dehydration

2 = Febrile Convulsions (7 months & 2nd yr.)

c) Under 5 yrs. of age

21 = Measles 5 = Jaundice

4 = Otitis Media 2 = Malnutrition

2 = Typhoid 1 = Chickenpox

1 = Rickets 1 = Meningitis

1 = Head injury 38 = Total

12) Delayed Milestones = (Growth & Development) = 19

All these findings are suggestive of 'Consanguinity' as important etiological factors.

All these 115 students are grouped under 17 pedigree charts.

MI (a) Mother's Brother = 29 (M 16+ F 13)

(b) Mother's Cousin Brother = 1(F)

(c) Grandmother's Sister's Son = 1(F)

MII (a) Father's Sister's Son = 34(M25+F9)

(b) Grandfather's Brothers Grandson = 5(M3+F2)

(Daughter's Son)

MIII (a) Mother's Brother's Son = 22 (M13+ F9)

(b) Grandfather's Sister's Son = 1 (F)

MIV Mother's Sister's Son/Daughter = 4 (M)

MV Grandmother's Brother's Son = 1 (F)

(Father's Mother's)

- PI (a) Father's Sister's Grand-daughter = 3 (M1+ F2)
- PI (b) Grandmother's Brother's Daughter = 4 (M3+ F1)
- (c) Father's Sister's Grand-grand-daughter = 1(M)
- (d) Grandfather's Brother's Grand-daughter = 1 (F)
- (Mother's Father) (Son's Daughter)
- PII Grandmother's Brother's Daughter = 3 (F)
- (Father's Mother)
- PIII Grandfather's Sister's Grand-daughter = 2 (M1 + F1)
- (Son's Daughter)
- PIV Grandfather's Sister's Grand-daughter = 2 (M1 + F1)
- (Son's Daughter)
- PV Grandmother's Sister's Grand-daughter = 1 (M)

Family History of Deafness:

Total No. of Students = 39 (M16 + F23)

Relatives having Deafness = 28

Available for study = 21

Expired = 5 & Absconded = 2

After seeing the pedigree charts, let us have a glimpse of statistics of marriages in our country. The Government Department 'Anthropological Survey of India' have undertaken, The People of India Project'. They have collected statistics from 4403 castes & drawn the following conclusions:

87% marriages occur in castes

60% castes follow the tradition of marriage in relation.

51% castes follow the tradition of marriage between maternal uncle
& niece (sister's daughter)

41% castes follow the tradition of marriage with father's sister's

Progeny

Tamilnadu 97%, Karnataka 95%, Kerala 91%, Andhra 90%, Maharashtra 75%, Uttar Pradesh 26%, & Punjab 4.8% castes follow the tradition of marriages in relation.

It is indeed unfortunate to note here that, consanguineous marriages are common even in educated families

In the ancient Vedic literature it is stated that "Endogamy is conservative while exogamy is progressive."

Dr. P. V. Kane (Gotra & Pravara in Vedic Literature)

The prohibition of consanguineous marriage is a negative eugenic measure which would have no effect on the actual frequency of undesirable genes, but would diminish the proportion of persons who show certain undesirable traits.

About one in 1000 children suffer from deafness, and of these, approximately one-half owe their handicap primarily to hereditary causes. Thus we should make every attempt to prevent consanguineous marriage.

Right now is the Time

We are guilty of many errors and many faults,

But our worst crime is, abandoning the children

Neglecting the fountain of life.

Many of the things we need can wait,

The child cannot.

Right now is the time his bones are being formed,

His blood is being made

And his senses are being developed.

To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'

His name is 'Today'.

Gabriela Mistral

Chilean Poetess

Noble Prize Winner.

(This paper was presented at the 'Indo - USA Workshop on 'Mapping Genes of Deafness' organized by All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, on January 8 & 9, 1992.)



STATE LEVEL SEMINAR ON 'SIGN LANGUAGE & BILINGUALISM'

A state level seminar on 'Sign Language and Bilingualism' promoted remarkably the use of sign language in the education of deaf people in India. The seminar was organized by the Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji and Rotary Welfare Trust and it was held 13-14 December 1994 at Shrimant Narayan Rao Ghorpade Natya Gruha at Ichalkaranji (Dist. Kolhapur, Maharashtra State, India.) Ms. Liisa Kauppinen, General Secretary of the WFD, was one of the guest keynote speakers at the seminar.

The seminar attracted more than 350 teachers and parents of the deaf from different corners of the Maharashtra State. The seminar dealt with the latest trends in deaf education, such as bilingualism. Language acquisition and language learning were also on the programme. Ms. Kauppinen lectured e.g. about the following topics: recommendations of the WFD and the UN regarding Deaf education, latest results of research done in Deaf education, especially bilingualism, the positive environment for language acquisition of a deaf child. Other keynote speakers dealt with the following topics: Dr. Dilip Deshmukh, Chairman of the Rotary Deaf School of Ichalkaranji: The Deaf Way, Bilingualism, Bonaventura Model; Dr. D. K. Patil, Principal of the Night College of Ichalkaranji : Language Acquisition and Language Learning, Mrs. Rajani Apaté, Principal of the Hellen Keller Institute for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind, Bombay: My Experience of the Indian Sign System (ISS), Mrs. Minaxi Saravate, Principal of the Deaf school of Nagpur: Importance of Sign Language.

The Seminar paved new ground for the use of sign language in India. "We are confident that with united efforts we can promote the use of sign language and bilingualism in Deaf education. We also call for the official recognition of sign language in our state and all of India, says Dr. Dilip Deshmukh, who was the main coordinator of the seminar.

The hosts of the seminar introduced Ms. Kauppinen to local institutes. Cultural programme was performed by the Rotary Deaf School Ichalkaranji, Tilawani. Moreover, Ms. Kauppinen's lecture at the English Department of Shivaji University in Kolhapur had as theme Research on Sign Language at University Level

Courtesy: WFD News, June 1995



Closing Ceremony

From Left:

Rtns. B. S. Muradande, Ajit Kurade, Dr. Suresh Negandhi,
Rishi Mohanka, Ms. Kati Marjanen, Om Patni, Dr. D. K. Patil,
Dr. D. K. Gosavi (President, All India ENT Association), Mahendra Mutha,
Ms. Liisa Kauppinen (General Secretary, WFD), Govardhan Bohara,
Dr. Dilip Deshmukh, Madhav Goenka, Mrs. Abha Dhandhanika.



RYLA - The Deaf Way

Beginning of Another New Era

(Rotary Youth Leadership Award Camp for the Deaf)

The unique 'RYLA - The Deaf Way' (Rotary Youth Leadership Award camp for the deaf) was organized by Rotary Club of Ichalkaranji on 11-14 January 1996 at Mangaldham. It was a multidistrict event (R.I. Dist. 3030, 3130, 3140 & 3170) in which 109 deaf youths, 41 teachers & 50 parents from 14 deaf schools from different parts of Maharashtra, viz. Bombay, Sangli, Kolhapur, Satara, Ratnagiri, Solapur, Amravati & Pune participated. During the camp, personality development programmes, vocational demonstrations, slide shows, exhibition & guidance, visit to industries, sports, drawing & cultural competitions & entertainment programmes were organized. The eminent keynote speakers dealt with the following topics: Mr. R. Narasimham (Senior Superintendent, Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for Handicapped, Bombay) - Trades & Vocations available for deaf youth, Mrs. Usha Dharmadhikari (Secretary, Deaf Youth Foundation, Bombay) - Personality Development, Mr. Abhay Bapat (Deaf) (Sadhana School for the Deaf, Bombay) - Personal experiences of a deaf teacher and Rtn. Dr. Dilip Deshmukh (Chairman, Rotary Deaf School, Ichalkaranji) - The Deaf Way - A Memorable Experience, Sign Language & Bilingualism. A demonstration of ISS (Indian Sign System) was conducted by teachers from our School. The highlight of the event was attendance & participation by Dr. Onkar Sharma (Secretary, All India Federation of the Deaf, New Delhi). He appreciated various projects especially the propagation of Sign Language & Bilingualism undertaken by our School for all round development of the deaf. During the camp, he addressed on 'Deaf Culture' in Indian Sign Language.

The Camp was inaugurated by Mr. Kallappana Awade (Ex-State Minister of Industries). On Thursday the 11th January 96 at 5 p.m. this inaugural ceremony was presided by District Governor (87-88) Rtn. Sanatkumar Awade. Mr. Vasant Rao Datar (Chairman, The Deccan Cooperative Spinning Mill) attended the event as a chief guest. The Closing Ceremony took place on Sunday the 14th January 96 at 2 p.m. at the hands of Mrs. Usha Dharmadhikari (Secretary, Deaf Youth Foundation, and Bombay) and Ms. Naseema Hurzuk (Chairman, The Helpers of the Handicapped, and Kolhapur). It was presided by Mr. R. Narasimham (Sr. Suptd, Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Handicapped, Bombay).



The unique feature of this Camp was 'Interpretation in Indian Sign Language' of all the programmes by deaf interpreters viz. Mr. Ulhas Gogate and Mr. Abhay Bapat. Above all the deaf couple Mr. Ulhas & Mrs. Lata Gogate, the deaf teacher Mr. Abhay Bapat and Dr. Onkar Sharma (Secretary, AIFD) was the role models. Hence this Camp must have soared the confidence & pride of deaf campers regarding deaf culture. 'Mr. RYLA' & 'Ms. RYLA' award was secured by Mr. Amar Patil (V.M. Lohiya Deaf School, Kolhapur) and Ms. Rameshwari Kulkurni (R.V. Bhide Deaf School, Miraj) respectively.

A questionnaire was circulated amongst the participants. Its response has revealed certain interesting facts. Through interpreters, deaf campers could participate in all the programmes. In other words, all teachers experienced the environment of Sign Language. Hence it was not a surprise that everybody agreed that SL is the natural language of the deaf.

Many teachers recommended arranging such camps in various schools to present the live demonstration of 'The Deaf Way'. It was the first occasion when student from different parts of Maharashtra gathered together in the environment of Sign Language. So that everybody could understand the deliberations. It was a homely atmosphere, where deaf culture was evident at every step. Many schools have decided to arrange such camps in future. Rotary Deaf School Ichalkaranji is responsible to initiate and enhance the movement of Sign Language & Bilingualism. Hence it won't be an exaggeration, if we will say, 'RYLA - The Deaf Way' has marked the beginning of another new era.

- ❖ One major prerequisite for education to be successful is communication when it comes to education of the deaf, be it small children or school children, communication is equivalent to sign language.

- ❖ Like spoken languages, sign languages have evolved naturally.

- ❖ It is very important for a deaf person to have a support of his/her family.

- ❖ Sign Language is a language in every respect but one
 - it is not spoken.
 - Xyle & Woll, 1985.

- ❖ In order to improve the educational system for deaf children, we must first re-educate the teachers and reduce the prejudice that leads to oppression of sign language.
 - Stevens (1988:181)



ROTARY VOLUNTEER

SIGN LANGUAGE

AND

BILINGUALISM

ORIENTATION SEMINAR

AND

EXHIBITION



Rtn. Dr. Dilip Deshmukh, Founder Member and Chairman of the Rotary Deaf School, Ichalkaranji; is actively involved with Deaf Education since last 14 years. Till now he has presented 4 papers on Deafness at various International Conferences. In August 1993, he presented his paper at the 'International Conference on Bilingualism' held at Stockholm, Sweden. He was the main coordinator of the 'State Level Seminar on Sign Language' held at Ichalkaranji in December 1994, which was attended by Ms. Liisa Kauppinen, (the then General Secretary) President WFD (World Federation of the Deaf). The deaf in the developed countries have successfully entered various fields as Doctors, Engineers, Professors, Mathematicians, Architects, etc. These achievements were possible only with implementation of Sign Language & Bilingualism in Deaf Education.

The opposition to Sign Language is because of misunderstandings, misconceptions & ignorance, which is prevalent in the present educational system of the deaf i.e. 'Oralism' and in turn in community too. This Seminar will be useful in clearing these amongst teachers, parents and family members of the deaf as well as in people working with the deaf in any way.

It is expected that at least 4-5 deaf schools should be involved at a time or a Regional/State Level Seminar should be arranged, so that teachers, parents, family members and people working with the deaf receive the necessary information on Sign Language so that this movement of Bilingualism can be successfully initiated. The local Rotary Clubs should be involved and an invitation should be sent to us through the Club to confirm the dates. No honorarium is expected, however to and fro travelling expenses and local lodging-boarding accommodation for 2 persons will be appreciated.

It is very easy to organize this Seminar. Just contact the local deaf school, its teachers, parents and organizations working for the deaf. The local Rotary Club may assist you for the Seminar. The language of the Seminar can be English, Hindi or Marathi.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME - 11 A. M.TO 5P. M

11-00 To 11-30 A.M.	: Inauguration
11-30 To 01-00 P.M	: The Deaf Way: A Memorable Experience.
01-00 To 01-30 P.M	: What is Sign Language?
01-30 To 02-00 PM.	: Tea Break
02-00 To 02-45 P.M.	: Bilingualism in Deaf Education
02-45 To 03-30 P.M.	: Bonaventura Model
03-30 To 05-00 P.M.	: Questions & Answers

All these lectures will be presented with slides; hence this Seminar should be arranged in a good hall having proper sound system, adequate darkness and screen. It is desired that the participants should attend the Seminar from beginning till the end. For more details please contact on the following address.

RTN. DR. DILIP DESHMUKH
ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 3170
SANGRAM CHAUK,
ICHALKARANJI-416 115
DIST. KOLHAPUR, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA
CellPhone: +91 9326695940 / 9822295940

THINK & ACT

We can do anything except hear.

-The Deaf Way

No one ever knows what kind of fire is kindled by rubbing minds to gather.

- Dr. Mervin Garretson, 'The Deaf Way' Coordinator

The handicapped child may be a victim of fate but he must not be a victim of our neglect.

- John F. Kennedy.

There is not such thing as disability but only different degrees of ability.\

- Dr. Henri Viscardi

Our life is a mixture of necessity and freedom, chance and choice.

We may not change events but we can change our attitude and approach to events.

- S. Radhakrishnan.

Schools should not be a place to make deaf children hearing but to make them human.

- Dr. Carol Padden

Sign language is no longer regarded (in Sweden) as a threat to the normal development of deaf children, but rather as the best possible guarantee for normal development.

- Inger Ahlgren

Education through Mother tongue - Linguistic Human Right.

The task of the revolutionary is not to take power, but always to reinvest power.

Change is very difficult, but it is possible.

The deaf can only be reached either by learning their language or by the use of an interpreter.

Education and knowledge increases a person's self-esteem and instills courage in him to fight against injustice.

Sign language is the language of free expression and communication for the Deaf.

The Deaf are human beings. Respect them and their Language.

A Deaf will never be a Hearing person.

To prohibit the use of Sign Language in a group or in education is a Linguistic Genocide.

Human diversity should be valued, the Deaf are diverse.

- Dr. Yarker Andersson

Dismantle Monolingual Myth. The stupidity of Monolingualism is the most dangerous illness in the world.

Sign Language supports the Deaf just as the net supports the trapeze artist.

-Liisa Kauppinen

The attitudes, prejudices and misconceptions towards Sign Language have to be cleared.

Ignorance is not Defense.

Deaf children will learn if they have access to the things we want them to learn.

The first language of deaf children should be Sign Language.

The acquisition of a natural sign language should begin as early as possible in order to take advantage of critical period effects.

The best models for natural language acquisition, the development of a social identity, and the enhancement of self-esteem for deaf children are deaf adults who use the language proficiently.

The natural sign language acquired by a deaf child provides the best access to educational content.

Sign language and spoken language are not the same and must be kept separate in use and in the curriculum.

The learning of spoken language for a deaf person is the process of learning a second language thought literacy.

Speech is not the primary vehicle for the learning of a spoken language.

The development of speech-related skills must be accomplished through a program that has available a variety of approaches.

Deaf children are not defective models of hearing children.

There's nothing wrong with being deaf.

The least restrictive environment for deaf children is one in which they may acquire a natural sign language, and through that language achieve access to a spoken language and the content of the school curriculum.

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

- Hennery David Thoreau

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead.

There is much more to deafness than loss of hearing.

All languages are systems but not all systems are languages.

As long as there are Deaf people on earth, there will be signs.

- George Veditz (1913)

A people without culture are a people without soul.

If there is no fight, there is no life, no progress, no development. Crises create development.

There is a need for you in your own culture. If you don't want to be a nobody in your own culture you must believe that you can offer something to the culture. We deaf shall not break down but break out.

The Folk High school for Deaf, Castberggard, Denmark.

Any sign language does not obey the syntax rules of any spoken language.

Health is fundamental because it is not only the basis for development but is pre-requisite for development.

The right to communicate is a natural right of the human person.

Human beings cannot be deprived of their **right to live** and neither can they be deprived of their **right to communicate** without diminishing their human dignity and denying their very humanity.

- Aldo Armando Cocca (1983), Human Rights Specialist

The attention to cultural and linguistic minorities now apparent in many parts of the world constitutes an effort to preserve the rights of minorities in balance with their access to society at large. (1983, 190)

- Tonkin, Human Rights Expert.

Linguistic disadvantage can be exploited by the other half in the communication process to oppress, isolate or discriminate against an individual, a community or state.

- Tonkin.

Deaf communities whatever form they take are a **MUST** for the development of sign language.

The full human potential of the Deaf can be realized only if they are allowed to develop **languages and cultures in which sound plays no significant role.**

The problem of the deaf is not their lack of hearing, but the lack of understanding by the hearing people that Deaf have a language.

We must solve the communication problem between teachers and deaf children/students.

In 'Bilingualism in Deaf Education', the national sign language should be taught as a school subject and, at the same time, be used as the medium and instruction in the teaching of other subjects, including spoken language.

Deaf people have the right to a quality education throughout their lives, which accepts who they are linguistically, culturally and socially, which builds positive self-esteem, and which maximizes their potential for learning.

- British Deaf Association.

...you can be advantaged or disadvantaged not just socially or aesthetically, but also cognitively, i.e. intellectually, by the accident of which language or variety of a language you happen to speak (or use).

-Wardhaugh 1986

We cannot teach a language for long without coming face to face with social context factors which have bearing on language and language learning.

- Stern 1983

It is more 'Interesting' to begin by analyzing the complete social phenomenon of communication.... especially if it is borne in mind that language is for most people 'a magical and subjective affair inseparably connected with their thoughts, ideas and feelings.

- Aranguren 1967:15

ANNEXTURE



(Courtesy - WFD News)

Lars Wallin of Sweden has become the world's first Deaf Professor who has defended his doctoral thesis on sign language using sign language. The defense was held at the University of Stockholm, Sweden, on March 25, 1995. By studying polysynthetic signs, Wallin has opened up a new area in sign language research.

His paper titled 'Deaf People and Bilingualism' has played a key role in clearing my misunderstandings and misconceptions about Sign Language. Indeed it informative, interesting and inspiring. I am confident, after reading it; you too will get convinced that 'Sign Language is the mother tongue of the deaf.'

DEAF PEOPLE AND BILINGUALISM

Lars Wallin, B.A.
Department of Sign Language
Institute of Linguistics
University of Stockholm
Stockholm, Sweden

In 1981 the Swedish Parliament passed a Bill stating that in order to function in society and among themselves deaf people must be bilingual, meaning that they have to be fluent in both Swedish Sign Language and Swedish (Prop. 1980/81:100). Passing this bill meant that the Swedish society acknowledged Swedish Sign Language as our own language and that Swedish is to be regarded as our second language. In 1983 a new curriculum for the deaf schools was issued (Special School Curriculum). It states that in the subject 'language' Deaf children should be taught both Swedish Sign Language and written Swedish, and that both these languages should be used for instruction. Deaf children are to be ensured a development towards bilingualism. These facts indicate the position of sign language in Sweden today.

The bilingualism of deaf people is nothing new as such. The deaf community has always been bilingual, as regards using Swedish parallel to Swedish Sign Language. This is most apparent when looking at the work in the deaf-clubs, news-letters, minutes, letters to authorities, the use of TTY's etc. The Bill was a confirmation of our language situation, the deaf community is bilingual.

1) Published in R. Ojala (Ed), *Proceedings, X World Congress of the World Federation of The Deaf, 1988. The Finnish Association of the Deaf.*

Translated by Anna-Lena Nilsson.

Main Issue: How to learn the language of society?

The main issue for centuries of discussion concerns how deaf people should learn the language of the surrounding society, may it be Swedish, German, French, English, Swahili, Arabic, etc. This question has been debated for centuries and is still very controversial. The recurrent problem is that we, for natural reasons, cannot learn Swedish (which here represents all the spoken languages of the world) the way hearing people do. They acquire it 'for free', so to speak, in their early childhood through hearing it spoken around them. This is not possible for us since it presupposes one important thing, perfect hearing, which we do not have. We are dependent on instruction for learning the language. What is the best method of teaching us the language of the surrounding society, so that we can live and work on an equal basis with hearing people?

The oralist answer is speech

According to the oralist tradition all instruction should be based on speech. The view maintained is that a deaf child has no language when starting school. 'Language' here referring to spoken language, since 'language' is defined as a vocal system for human communication; a definition based on speech and sound. As sign language does not meet with the requirements it cannot be regarded as a proper language. This being so, a deaf child with a fluent sign language is still regarded as having no language.

Another widely held opinion among oralist is that the child is congenitally retarded when starting school. The child is supposed to suffer from inadequate capacity for thinking, due to not having a language. Erroneously, thought and language have been equated. Since, according to the oralist view, language equates spoken language and as the deaf child cannot speak, consequently it cannot think or is severely hampered in thinking.

A similar oralist misconception regards the connection of the concept 'verbal' with languages with a vocal system only. The connection made is that thinking and expressing oneself is done through words, and as a deaf child cannot acquire spoken language, the inference made is that the child cannot think verbally or express itself verbally. According to that line of thought the primary aim for the deaf schools is to start the child's language acquisition. At the same time the concepts necessary for language acquisition have to be taught. The aim is to give the child a language, the necessary tool for thinking and expressing oneself verbally. And a language, according to them is spoken.

Concentrating on teaching the child to speak and lip – reading, speech serves another purpose as well. It is through speech the child will be able to learn how to read and write. According to the oralist view reading requires a vocal representation of the written word, and the ability to read is seen as secondary to the ability to speak. Therefore, before teaching the deaf child to read and write it is necessary for the child to receive instruction in how to articulate the individual speech sounds, postponing work on other aspects of the language until the child has acquired as correct a pronunciation as is possible. The child's ability to pronounce a word correctly has become more important to the teacher than making sure that the content is understood. All instruction is subordinated to the language drills. Learning how to read and write and other areas of knowledge come secondly. The ability to speak is valued much higher than the ability to read and write or what other knowledge the pupil has. A child who has a good knowledge of geography and is skilled in writing Swedish e.g. will get less praise from an oralist teacher than a child who speaks well but has a poor knowledge of geography and cannot write Swedish so well. The ability to speak has become a measure of how gifted the child is and everything else is of a lesser importance.

The oralist 'no' to sign language

Sign language has no place whatsoever within traditional education of the deaf. According to the definition of 'language' as a vocal system, sign language is no language. It is seen as a natural system of gestures with no internal structure and with limited areas of use. It is not possible to think or express oneself verbally by means of sign language; on the contrary, sign language would impair the child's chances considerably. According to the oralist, if a child of normal intelligence was to use sign language would severely impede the child's capacity for thinking as no abstract concept can be mediated by signs. This view is based on the assumption of iconicity as a characteristic of sign language, making it impossible to express abstract matters, which means a considerable impairment of the child's capacity for thinking. This is why the oralist keeps sign language outside the deaf education.

Another reason for banning sign language is the view that it will prevent the deaf child from learning to speak. Sign language with its primitive, unstructured system of gestures would be detrimental to the speech and lip-reading skills, and restrict the child's ideas to concrete concepts only. Therefore the advocates of Oralism feel that the deaf child has to be protected against sign language, in order to have prospect of becoming an adequate human being. In their view sign language "prevents complete humanization" (van Uden, 1974), and so they act accordingly.

Oralist consequences for deaf children

The oralist standpoint on language and deafness has severe consequences for the deaf child already from the day deafness is discovered in the child. The parents are dissuaded from or forbidden to use sign language. The child is denied the possibility of meeting a visual language. Instead, parents are encouraged to use a vocal language which presupposes perfect hearing. Of course there will be no real communication. The parents will produce long stretches of words whereas the child will produce separate words, in fortunate cases sentences. These words or sentences will not always be pronounced correctly and often it is only the parents who are able to understand the child. The child's possibilities of communicating with others than the parents become very restricted or non-existent. No acquisition of spoken language will occur, but according to the oralist view this is something quite natural and to be expected. It is maintained that the deaf child's language acquisition has to be delayed, but to make the delay as short as possible it is necessary to speak to the child as much as possible. Because of this view deaf children, quite needlessly, live their pre-school years as hearing children, but without the means of hearing the language spoken around them. At the same time they are denied access to another language, based on vision, which is often 'just around the corner'. With a spoken language forced upon them and denied a signed language deaf children grow up with no language at all, and this without a proper reason. The oralist view is that this is something natural and acceptable. The deaf child is expected to have language and be cognitively retarded when starting school.

Oralism limits access to knowledge.

The oralist view on language has led to poor reading and writing skills for most deaf people. All instruction is conducted in speech and as students we must lip-read the teachers all day in order to learn anything. Frequently we fail to perceive the main part of what the teacher has said. Knowledge of other subjects is neglected and teaching us to speak is favored. If the pupils want to express something it has to be done with speech and pronounced correctly before the teacher is satisfied. A question will not be answered until it is pronounced correctly. Actually, the pupils who can pronounce Swedish words best get advantages as to the acquisition of knowledge, whereas those who fail give up trying after a while and ask no questions, thereby denied access to knowledge. The former chairman of Sveriges Dovas Riksförbund (The Swedish National Association of the Deaf) has made the estimate that approximately 10 percent of the deaf population is able to read and write Swedish, 40 percent can barely read newspaper and 50 percent can hardly cope with written Swedish at all.

Oralism impairs the relationship between deaf children and their parents

The oralist view also has consequences for the child's upbringing. During the first year of a child's life the need for a means of expression increases steadily. If this need is not met the child will become restless, disharmonious, frustrated and have frequent tantrums. This is something that a great many deaf people remember vividly. Without access to a language the child will experience difficulties in communicating feelings. It will be hard to tell the parents the reasons for feeling sad or happy, and it will be equally hard to receive answers to all questions. If the parents become happy or angry the child will frequently not understand why. When e.g. the child has done something wrong there will be no or very meagre explanations as to what was wrong. Their very important conveyance of values and social norms is hampered due to the oralist view on language and thought. This has ruined the childhood of many deaf children.

Deaf people are at a disadvantage due to oralism

What oralism has meant to deaf people is that it has forced us to start our lives from an inferior position. All our assets and resources, which would have enabled us to grow up to a life of dignity, were disregarded. Worst of all, they took away our chance of early communication through sign language, thus bereaving us of a normal development. From this position we have had to struggle our way through life, trying to attain a life in harmony. Many of us have succeeded in this, but the price we have paid is high and it has been more thanks to ourselves than thanks to oralism. The solution offered to our problem with learning the language of society has been of a negative character, based on what we do not have and what we cannot do.

Sign language gives deaf children a normal development.

With the decision in Parliament and the new curriculum for the deaf schools, both of which are deeply rooted in the deaf community, Swedish society has opted for sign language as the language acquisition of Swedish should be based on. This philosophy of bilingualism is based on the assets of deaf children, what deaf children have and what they can do, Apart from not hearing,

deaf children are like other children. Deaf children should be offered optimal chances to grow up as adequate human beings. In our view a deaf child has a normal cognitive capacity, which can be developed on normal lines. The conditions held to be important for a normal personality development should be valid for deaf children as well. A prerequisite of this is that the child meets sign language as early as possible, and that society accepts sign language as an adequate human language.

Normal development for deaf children is not necessarily dependent on the absence or presence of hearing. A development similar to that of hearing children is possible, provided that they meet sign language early. If they do, parallels with hearing children's speech development can easily be made. To make this natural, spontaneous language development possible it is essential that the parents use sign language. This may sound obvious, but it has to be remembered that 90-95 percent of the parents of deaf children are hearing and do not know sign language. They therefore have to learn sign language to make communication between parent and child possible. The parents have to constitute the source of understanding and linguistic stimulation the child needs. It is not the quality of the parents' signed communication that is important. The main point is that they should sign readily and understand the child's signs. The attitude to the deaf child and to sign language is more important to the language development of the child than the degree of fluency in the parents signing (Ahlgren, 1979). This positive attitude is also expressed in the close cooperation between the organization of parents and the deaf association. The matter of attitudes is equally important outside the immediate family. It regards relatives, friends and others who meet the child as well. There has to be a spontaneous and active signing environment. Then the child can feel like any other child, being able to express feelings and ask questions and obtain response from parents and others. Using sign language it is simple to explain feelings like anger and happiness and the reasons for experiencing them. It will also be possible to explain what the child can and cannot do in different situations. Many questions will be answered and the natural curiosity of the child will be satisfied numerous times. Through sign language a deaf child can grow up like any other child.

Meeting deaf peers and deaf adults.

Meeting other deaf children and adults, as a complement to the environment at home, constitutes another vital part in the general development of deaf children. Many deaf children live in an environment where they are the only ones who cannot hear. Most of the time they will meet people who, unlike themselves can hear and this may affect their self-esteem. Since, unlike others around them, they cannot handle situations which require perfect hearing they may feel inferior. There is nobody for them to identify themselves with. It is therefore important that deaf children are given the opportunity to meet each other, thereby experiencing the feeling of kinship and identification. They can then feel that they are normal children, using their own language. A possibility for identification with other deaf people is important for their self-esteem, which influences their language development. Besides, deaf children can play on equal terms.

Deaf children need deaf adults as role models and to identify themselves with. Among deaf adults they will encounter a culture that is connected to deafness and sign language. They can see that there exists culture which is based on their possibilities and easily accessible. Aware of what they have and what the future will bring they can grow up as confident human beings. Deaf adults are an important source of knowledge for parents as well. They need to know what it is like to live as a deaf person; education, career, marriage, leisure time activities etc. It is comforting for them to know that deaf people lead perfectly normal lives. Parents are often worried about what life is like for somebody who cannot hear; both for children and adults, and this may affect the relationship they have to their child. Knowing that life for deaf adults is no more difficult than for others will make them more secure in their relation with their child, which in turn will make the child feel secure.

Sign Language

Considering sign language an adequate language is not something that is done solely due to the fact that it has been accepted by the Swedish Parliament and In the Special School Curriculum. There is also scientific evidence from many countries where sign language research has been carried out. A great number of articles and reports show that sign language is a language with its own structure and grammar. It has its own linguistic symbols, which can be combined into utterances according to the rules of the language. Sign language can fill every need of communication for a human being and be used for acquiring knowledge. What a Great many people have reacted to, and found difficult to accept, is that sign language is neither produced nor perceived like spoken languages. which have constituted the norm. According to this view a language should be vocally produced and aurally perceived, which not the case with sign language. It is gesturally produced, with movements of the hands, body, head, mouth and eye-brows, and visually perceived. A language is not determined by its production and perception, however, but by being a system of communication developed by humans consisting of signs or signals and rules for their combination. (Sjogren, 1979.) Research has shown that sign language is a system of communication developed by deaf people and it consists of signs and rules for their combination.

Starting School

With a normal childhood and normal cognitive development deaf children possess concepts and a language as well as knowledge about the world when they enter the deaf school. These skills should be further developed in the deaf school and the instruction in sign language and Swedish should be based on what they have already acquired.

"A person's language is closely connected with his personality and situation in life. If that connection is severed, the development of both language and personality is blocked. An important objective in the teaching of sign language and Swedish therefore, is to strengthen the pupil's self-confidence so that they will have the courage to express themselves and stand up for their opinions. Work should therefore be based on the language and the experience which the pupils have already acquired." (Special School Curriculum, 1983, pp.7-8)

For deaf pupils this implies starting from sign language, but also making the most of any knowledge of Swedish that they may have acquired

Bilingualism: Swedish Sign Language and Swedish

According to the Special School Curriculum, ensuring deaf children development towards bilingualism means that they are to be given the opportunity to learn both Swedish Sign Language and Swedish. This is what the curriculum states regarding bilingualism and the two languages:

"Bilingualism does not occur spontaneously. Sign language is learned naturally and spontaneously, as part of the child's general development, in the environment where it is used, while acquisition of the second language Swedish is more dependent on instruction. The two languages Sign language and Swedish - perform different functions for the pupil. Sign language is the deaf pupil's primary means of acquiring knowledge and is the language used by him in direct communication with others. It is by way of sign language and in his contacts with parents and others that the pupil develops socially and emotionally. Swedish has primarily the function of a written language but lip reading and speech of course, are also important elements of this subject.

In the course of teaching, names and contexts which are important in order for the pupil to assimilate the content of reading passages must be given both in sign language and in Swedish. Information about the Swedish language, however, must not be given such prominence as to relegate the content of subject teaching to second place. The pupil's language learning must be supported by comparisons between the various linguistic expressions of sign language and Swedish and must be based on language being an implement used in handling perceptions, experiences and knowledge etc." (pp. 6-7)

Studying Sign Language

In school pupils should receive instruction in the subject 'sign language.' According to the Special School Curriculum the instruction should cover the following aspects of the language:

"The pupils must develop their ability to penetrate other people's conditions, understand their purposes and adapt their own language and behavior to the requirements of different contexts. They must learn to study other people's opinions and values, to stand up for their own and to subject their own arguments and other people's to critical scrutiny. The pupils must also acquire a knowledge of the structure and grammar of sign language. They must learn the rules applying to different conversational situations and they must also learn that these be influenced and improved."

"They should also acquire knowledge of the international sign alphabet and sign language in other countries, especially within the Nordic area. General information on national and international organizations of the deaf should be included." (pp. 9-10)

Learning Swedish

The learning of Swedish should be based on comparisons between the various linguistic expressions of the two languages. They can both convey the same content in all situations, but following their separate inherent rules and structures. Some similar phenomena may occur but there are many differences. The pupils will receive explanations and descriptions of how the Swedish language is structured, what grammatical rules there are etc. in sign language. Having read Swedish texts they will retell the content in sign language, showing the teacher that they have understood it. If they are able to do this it could be argued that they have learned to understand and interpret the texts well, including all the formulations and nuances. If problems should arise the teacher is there to help with explanations and translations in sign language. Here it is not a question of a mechanical reading of the texts, which is often the case within the oral schools system. The bilingual approach allows the pupils the opportunity of trying to interpret a text they have read, then retelling it in sign language. When the teacher is convinced that the pupils have understood the content of the text he will work through it, using sign language to discuss the linguistic structures in it. Reading could be seen as a tool for the pupils to arrange the knowledge of Swedish they have gradually acquired, which at the same time displays the various ways of expression available in Swedish.

Writing gives the pupils the chance of putting their knowledge into practice. They practice formulating themselves, applying the grammatical rules they have learned: rules for spelling, inflection, sentence structure, choice of vocabulary items etc. If something is not correct they will receive explanations in sign language regarding what is wrong and why. The pupils can write about their own observations, experiences, fantasies etc. Learning to write should be based on the pupils own experiences, making them feel that they have created the texts themselves. The teacher has only assisted them; correcting grammar mistakes and explaining other linguistic problems. This is not a mechanical drill, as opposed to the common oral method of letting the pupils copy the teacher's ready-made sentences. With the bilingual approach it is the pupils who make up the sentences, and the teacher assists with the grammatical knowledge.

Teaching pupils to read and write Swedish via sign language is done with a method similar to that used when hearing children are taught a foreign language. Hearing Swedish pupils learn to speak, read and write English via Swedish. They may e.g. translate English texts into Swedish, and certain linguistic and grammatical structures are explained in Swedish by the teacher. Written English produced by the pupils is corrected and commented in Swedish by the teacher. Both these methods imply learning a new language by means of the pupil's native language.

Instruction in all the remaining subjects, such as mathematics, religion, biology, geography etc. should be conducted in sign language. Here the pupil's acquisition of knowledge should be of primary importance and no language drills occur. If there are any problems for the pupils to understand the texts the teacher should provide a translation into sign language. The main concern is to give the pupils the knowledge necessary to become competent citizens. The teaching of Swedish should be restricted to the language lessons.

Speech constitutes a complementary aspect of the bilingualism of deaf people, and instruction should be in the form of pronunciation teaching.

The Special School Curriculum states the following:

"The pupils must acquire a basic knowledge of the workings of speech, lip reading and the organs of speech. Pronunciation teaching forms part of the teaching of Swedish and must be based on each individual pupil's aptitudes, must have individualized objectives and must emanate from the concepts and the language which the pupil has mastered. It is important that other teaching items, e.g. the reading of texts for the sake of their content, should not be combined with pronunciation practice." (pp. 16-17)

Pronunciation practice should aim at teaching the pupils to pronounce Swedish words and sentences which they have learned during language lessons. It is easier to master the pronunciation of words and sentences, where the content is understood, than mimicking words which have no meaning. The students should be allowed to work with rhythmical units of speech.

A better future for deaf children

The aim for the teaching of sign language and Swedish, according to the Special School Curriculum is:

"By the time they leave compulsory school, pupils must have achieved the confidence to express themselves in the linguistic situations confronting them in the family, together with their friends, in voluntary associations, at work and in subsequent education. They must have had the opportunity of meeting and using official written language. They must be given preparation to read well enough to have a solid foundation on which to acquire knowledge, information and experience for themselves through the medium of newspapers and periodicals, reference works, and works of fiction and nonfiction." (p. 8)

The objective is to give deaf children a wider base of knowledge, concepts and language than was ever the case before. They will have a more solid foundation to build their lives on after school, and a stronger self-confidence. The lives of deaf people will be more equal to those of hearing people.

The results are beginning to show

We can already notice that the Swedish approach to sign language and bilingualism is a step in the right direction. Young deaf children get answers to their many questions. They have explanations to all the various things going on around them, something that would have been impossible during the oralist era. Sign language has made it much easier for parents to bring up their deaf children. They can behave as ordinary parents, instead of acting language teachers, which was often the case when oralist methods were employed. Another advantage is that deaf children no longer grow up without a language. Meeting deaf adults will assure parents that the future of their children does not vary significantly from that of any other child. The oral view, besides reducing the child's human dignity, created unnecessary concern regarding the future. Advocates of sign language allow deaf children to be like other children, and their parents to be like ordinary parents. Many deaf

children in Sweden attend special nursery schools for the deaf, where a number of deaf adults are employed. This is of great significance to the children, since it provides them with role models and a wider social network. But, most important of all, they do not have to feel different, and they achieve a positive self esteem

When starting school deaf children behave like any other beginner. They are inquisitive and eager to learn. Their language is rich and varied, and they are very eager to demonstrate their skills. I have seen pupils in the first grade write Swedish sentences of their own. May be not perfectly, but still with a content, which is more than was ever achieved with the oralist method. Reading skills have developed in a positive direction as well. Many of the deaf schools have been forced to make use of material from ordinary schools, to keep pace with the increasing knowledge of deaf children. The special material developed for deaf schools no longer matches the widened notions and higher degree of consciousness that deaf children of today possess. Their sphere of knowledge is not as limited as that of deaf children during the oralist period. Of course, the change that has taken place in society, with steadily increasing information through video and television may have played a part in this development. But we are convinced that none of this would have reached deaf children without communication in sign language.

The methods for making deaf children bilingual have not been fully developed yet, but we are closer to the goal: Giving deaf pupils an education equal to that given in other schools, thereby providing them with the skills necessary to live up to the demands of society, as equals of hearing people.

Deaf adults and society

The acceptance of Swedish Sign Language in Swedish society has not only resulted in improved deaf schools and a better childhood for deaf children, it has also rendered it possible for deaf people to take a much more active part in society. All of the seven deaf schools have at least one deaf member on the school board, who can influence work in the school. There are some forty qualified deaf teachers working on all levels of education, from nursery schools to university. (There are approximately 8000 deaf people in Sweden and a total population of approximately 8 million.) The main part of these teachers teach Swedish Sign Language and Swedish, mainly in the deaf schools and in Upper Secondary School. We took part in shaping the new Special School Curriculum and we are involved in improving the methods for making deaf children bilingual. The plan for a new education for teachers of the deaf has been referred to us for consideration.

Sveriges Doves Riksförbund (The Swedish National Association of the Deaf) in close cooperation with the parents association has become an institution which cannot be disregarded when matters concerning deaf people are discussed, on the national as well as the municipal level. We are now a powerful factor, and this is mainly advantageous for society. There is practically no limit to our access to higher education. We have our own "folk high school" with a deaf principal. Many courses are given in sign language, and if they are not, sign language interpreters will be

employed to enable us to attend. The access to sign language interpreters forms part of the reason for our increasingly active part in society. It is owing to them we can have representatives in all groups discussing matters concerning deaf people. At the Institute of Linguistics at Stockholm University there is a Department of Sign Language, where deaf people can study sign language and where sign language research is carried out.

Thus it is the Government that defrays the costs, not private institutions. There is also research into the skills in Swedish of deaf people, from a bilingual point of view. Apart from deaf teachers and a deaf principal there are also deaf psychologists, deaf researchers, deaf nurses, who take care of mentally retarded deaf people and deaf pensioners, deaf actors, deaf volunteers working in third world countries etc. This will suffice to show what it is like to be deaf in Sweden.

The struggle of deaf people made it possible.

The acceptance of Swedish Sign Language has made life a great deal easier for deaf people. It would not have been brought about, however, without our incessant struggle for the acceptance of the true value of sign language and its reinstatement in the deaf schools. Development has shown that we were right, and oralism was wrong. Our common experiences of being deaf have helped us in finding the right solutions to various problems. This is something that Swedish society has realized, and therefore begun to listen to us. Our ideas, based on our experiences, have been much more realistic and true to life than the oralist views ever were. The oral tradition was based on misconceptions about deaf people and our lives. We were never consulted and our experiences were always disregarded. Oralism was based on a vision, not on actual facts. This is why the goal has not been reached, despite trying for 100 years with massive financial resources and a large staff at their disposal. On the contrary, they have created gaps and thwarted communication between deaf and hearing people. From the moment Swedish society started to pay attention to deaf people this gap has started to close and the possibilities for communication have increased.

Added possibilities for deaf people

Today, deaf children can start their lives on an equal basis with hearing children. Through sign language, all their abilities and talents can be utilized, enabling them to grow up as competent human beings. They are given the opportunity of normal development and a life in harmony, without having to struggle for it.

Figuratively speaking our bilingual model can be said to be model where possibilities are added. We add sign language, and through it a possibility for acquiring knowledge and having free communication with the immediate surroundings. When starting school, deaf children are taught to read and write the language of the surrounding society, thereby adding the possibility for them to obtain knowledge by themselves through printed material. Finally, based on their own aptitude, they are instructed in speech, thus adding another means of communication. Our model makes use of the child's abilities and potentials.

The oralist model is model of deprivation. Denying deaf children sign language and emphasizing speech means depriving them of all possibilities of development. Emphasis is put on what the child does not have and cannot do instead. Therein lies a major part of the disparity between the two models. This is also why our model has great prospects of succeeding, whereas the oralist model is still groping in the mist of its visions.

In Sweden, deaf people have taken over the responsibility from the oralist, and we have done so successfully. This development must continue throughout the world. It is the best guarantee for deaf people to obtain independence and dignity.

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THE BONAVENTURA MODEL FOR THE CONDITIONS OF DEAF CHILDREN IN 1990-2000

Bonaventura is an association for parents with deaf and hard of hearing children, who either already possess or are expected to have Sign Language as their primary language, or possibly would be in need of Sign Language either as a social language or as an educational language using an interpreter. Bonaventura means "Good future" or "one, who will do good". The Parent Association works to obtain the best possible conditions for deaf children and their families during the upbringing of the children.

In order to preserve the knowledge, the basic attitudes, the experiences and visions of deaf children, collected over many years, the following memorandum has been written. It does not confine to the knowledge of Bonaventura. Also the knowledge of adult deaf, of The Center for Total Communication (KC), The Schools for Deaf etc. is included. The memorandum has two different target-groups. The first group consists of parents with deaf children, including active parents in Bonaventura, committee-members and representatives, for whom it is necessary to keep up to date in the daily work.

The second group consists of the other persons remaining, who have an influence on the daily life of our children through the decisions they make big as well as small. It could be social workers, politicians, people appointed in the ministries, but it could also be employees in kindergartens and day nurseries, in which one or several deaf children are integrated.

The memorandum does not relate to deaf children only. Many of the acquisitions gained in the area of deaf and hard of hearing children are to a large extent relevant for children with more or less residual hearing left. Today many of the children with minor hearing losses are losers. In the following text the term 'deaf children' means all children with a significant hearing loss.

The Committee, 13th of April 1991

Susanne Klim
Glenn Andersen
Orla Bryld Mortensen,
Erik Dyer, Torben Pedersen

THE BASIC ATTITUDES OF BONAVENTURA

The primary goal of this memorandum has been to maintain the basic attitudes, which have passed from mouth to mouth from 'old parents' to 'new parents' within Bonaventura. The reasons for the activity of The Parent Association politically and socially are the basic attitudes, the attitudes, we wish parents with deaf children to understand and deal with in order to create the best conditions for their children.

Deaf children are deaf children.

Deaf children language is Sign Language.

Deaf children are not ill.

Deaf children become deaf adults.

Deaf children should be together with deaf people.

Deaf children should be together with hearing people.

Parents of deaf children need each other.

The impact of a deaf child on the family.

Deaf children are children.

The basic view of Bonaventura is that deaf children are normal children, who cannot hear. Typically they have a normal intelligence, and they should have the same opportunities as hearing children to play and learn, to grow up and to become complete and well-functioning adults. Options-both technically and socially-corresponding to their age should be available during their upbringing. Parents should be allowed to be parents as well. They should not just be teachers and speech-therapists. The Parents must understand their continuous right to make decisions concerning their child, and not allow external experts to take over just because of the deafness.

Deaf childrens language is Sign Language

It is important for the self-image and identity as human beings to focus on what the children are able to do, and not on their hearing loss or difficulties in speaking Danish. Hearing handicapped children who speak insufficient Danish may easily look upon themselves as less valuable human beings. Sign Language is the language of deaf people. Sign Language is just as genuine language as Danish is, but it is a visual language, where all the language - informations are visual. It is the firm attitude of Bonaventura, that all children with a hearing loss and their respective families should be taught Sign Language. Formerly many people believed that teaching signs would make it more difficult for the deaf child to learn proper Danish. More likely the opposite is true-the signs make it easier for the children to grasp words and conceptions. Sign Language makes it easier for the parents to fulfill a great part of their natural wishes concerning the childhood of their child and future - wishes which parents with hearing children take for granted.

Sign Language gives the parents the possibility to communicate with their deaf child in the same way as parents talking to hearing children about practical subjects, small-talk, comfort, wisdom, upbringing etc. Thereby the world of conceptions and social behavior is developed corresponding to the age of the child.

Sign Language makes it possible for the deaf children to play on equal terms, to make friends, to compare experiences and to develop socially.

Regardless of their degree of hearing loss, Sign Language can be used by all hearing damaged children. By being together the deaf children give strength to each other, and because of that, they dare to join activities for normal hearing children.

Sign Language makes it possible for deaf children to communicate with deaf adults. It is depressing to witness hearing damaged children and adults speaking together orally having immense troubles in understanding each other.

Sign Language makes it possible for the child to learn Danish as far as conceptions and speech are concerned. Important elements in future educational possibilities for deaf children are the newly-gained experiences in the field of bilingual education, the Experimental class at The Deaf School, Kastelsvej, Copenhagen e.g.

Sign Language makes it possible for deaf children to receive normal school teaching on the same level as hearing children, and to sit for the necessary examination.

Sign Language makes it possible for young deaf to get an education by help of an assigned interpreter.

Sign Language makes it possible for adults to get further education and to actively participate in conferences e.g. It requires an interpreter if they are together with hearing people. The Norwegian psychiatrist Terje Basilier once declared in a Television Program:

"If I accept another person's language, I have accepted the person.... If I refuse the language, I thereby refuse the person, because the language is a part of the self."

Deaf children are not ill.

Very rarely deafness is a kind of disease, which can be cured in a hospital. Bonaventura takes the same lines as many deaf: they might be impaired, but they are not HARD of hearing people, and they are not DEFECTIVE hearing people. They have another language: Sign Language and that is why they look upon themselves as a language minority group. Our deaf children are either weak or ill-provided they are given the right conditions during the upbringing. It also means that we as parents must protest against our children being tested checked up, observed again and again by different professional people, just because they are deaf.

Deaf children become deaf adults.

Deaf children should be viewed upon in the light of their lifetime and therefore it is essential, that Bonaventura and The Danish Federation for the Deaf have a close relation, so by that the parents can realize the kind of needs their children will have in the future. Furthermore it is very important that all deaf children and their parents should have personal contacts with adult deaf.

Deaf children should be together with deaf people.

It is the definite attitude of Bonaventura that deaf children should be together with other deaf, children as well as adults. That means Bonaventura oppose individual integration of a deaf child or some frail arrangement based upon a few children. Bonaventura advocates The Central Deaf School-as a center of energy power. Here small children with their families will have counselling, and here the children will be together in school. There ought to be deaf adults employed in all the environments which deaf children are frequenting.

Deaf children should be together with hearing people.

There are only few deaf people, and therefore deaf children must know how to manage in society. There are more possibilities for spare time activities, if they can be together with hearing children, and later on most likely our children are going to work among hearing colleagues. But it is hard for a deaf person to be among hearing people, and it is Bonaventura's firm belief that the strength which the deaf children will need for that is acquired through building up a strong identity as deaf and by having a good social relationship with the deaf community. Furthermore is required an obvious - but unfortunately not a natural - consideration from the society in the form of a text - telephone, interpreters etc.

The parents of a deaf child need each other.

In order to believe in their own intuition and common sense the parents of deaf children need each other's support. The intuition and the common sense are also valid for their deaf child-even if the experts the parents meet on their way should disagree. One should think that there were objective, identical instructions for what parents with deaf children should do, instructions they just could carry on. But it is not like that. There are several views on what is good for deaf children, and even professional advisers don't agree on their message.

Like all other groups professional advisers are influenced by their working field. Audiograms, the anatomy of the ear etc. are in focus if the counselling is at a Hearing clinic situated at a hospital. At another counselling situation they will focus primarily on the care for the parents and the speaking skill of the child. It is rare to meet a counselling, which apply to the ENTIRE child in the ENTIRE family, with the ultimate purpose that the deaf child and its surroundings should have a good life also when the child becomes an adult.

Talking to the parents a large group of professionals never use the word DEAF as a diagnosis. They cling to whatever might be left of the hearing and use a lot of different names, which from a distance seems as irrelevant: Slight hearing damage, marked hearing handicap, hard of hearing, a severe hearing loss, and they try to handle it with hearing aids, speaking-to-the-ear-technique etc. "If you as a parent keep on practicing, surely the child will learn to speak." "Oh, Sign Language, the child is not that bad." By doing so they maximize the existing communication disability and convey to the parents a negative attitude towards deaf, the language and the culture of the deaf, instead of advocating just accepting the deaf child and overcoming the communication disability by the use of the child's new mother tongue Sign language.

Therefore it is important that each parent know, that they are the ones to choose, what they want for their child. 'Old parents' possess a wide ranging knowledge and a lot of experiences. Of course the knowledge is subjective, but by collecting informations from different sources. new parents can find a standing platform. The important thing is that the choice of the parents is based on a comprehensive and solid knowledge.

The impact of a deaf child on the family.

It is a major change to get a deaf child in the family. It puts a heavy burden on parents, the hearing siblings, friends and acquaintances, and it is obvious that these families need all the support they can get.

It cause the families grief and suffering what they have to get through and also it entails an enormous amount of hard work. Theoretically all family members ought to lean Sign Language, but very seldom all of them acquire such a high skill in Sign Language for the daily communication to proceed satisfactorily. A lot of impossible situations emerge, where parents have to consider both the deaf child and the hearing children and survive as human beings at the same time.

Parents of a deaf child can also expect a daily fight to ensure the child an appropriate school attendance and appropriate activities in the spare time. They must also secure their rights as regards covering additional expenditures, different kind of aids etc. Public authorities can be tough to deal with.

In return a new and exciting world is opening, a highly promising world for the future of our deaf children and adult life, and on our way there are a lot of wonderful events with new people, whom we otherwise never would have met.

TRENDS IN THE DANISH SOCIETY

In this chapter we will look at the trends in the development in the Danish society. There are changes caused both by economy and attitudes. Concretely we can mention the following indicators for changing:

A decrease in the total number of children and consequences of closing down schools

Expensive economical cut backs

Decisions delegated to the local municipalities

Influence of the consumers

Payment by the consumers

Those trends affect the interpreting of the existent arrangements for deaf children. Several of those trends are contrary to the interests of deaf children, and Bonaventura must fight this development.

Are deaf schools and centre schools to be closed?

The number of children generally is decreasing in our society, but there does not seem to be a similar evident trend for the number of deaf children. Most often fluctuations from year to year from place to place are inexplicable, but the number of deaf children seem to be more constant than that of the number of slight hearing damaged children, and under no circumstances it can justify the closing down of large deaf schools and centre schools.

Expensive economical cut backs.

In these years the society has to cut expenses all over. Parents with deaf children are taxpayers too, and they are entitled to their fair share of the public money.

However we should be aware of, that from a pure economical point of view tempting shortsighted cut backs in the childhood of deaf children may create adults who cannot participate proper in the public system and thereby are expensive for the same society. Furthermore the most expensive solutions are not always the best ones for the child. Following are a couple of examples of what Bonaventura thinks are short sighted solutions:

`Placing in a normal kindergarten having a supporting teacher [2] for many hours instead of being integrated in a group in a special kindergarten.

Infant-counselling in groups of 2-4 children within in a county [3] instead of counselling 10-20 children from a larger region.

Paying of horseback riding lessons in the local municipality, where the deaf child is put together with physically handicapped children instead of paying for the transport of the deaf child to an activity in common with other deaf children.

The above mentioned decisions are shortsighted and made only out of ignorance, because the options thus given to the children are not socially satisfactory. Furthermore all experience show difficulties in establishing and maintaining knowledge about deafness and deaf children, when the local group only consist of a few children.

[2] a qualified person, who is employed to support the integration, to help the deaf child, the teacher and the rest of the group.

[3] Denmark is divided into 12 counties.

The municipalities cannot take up the task by themselves.

The ministries are working hard to decentralize the authority to make decisions to the municipality. The decentralizing of section 19.2 in The School Law is one point, which have a big influence on deaf children. This section concerns children, who need an extensive specialized teaching. The consequences will be that the municipalities get the right to make the decisions as they are going to pay for deaf children school attendance - up till now it has been paid by the county.

That can cause certain municipalities to offer counselling and school arrangements themselves instead of sending the children to the central and immediately more expensive institutions. However, it is impossible to establish and maintain the expertise in a municipal as there are too few deaf children to form a social unit, which if big enough to secure a deaf child's normal development.

According to Bonaventura's opinion a rational local municipality will seek information regarding the conditions of deaf children in central expertise-centers, and if the parents agree for that matter send the child to the regional counselling and school. In the long run it is the most inexpensive and best solution. Opposite it could be expected that the municipalities, which are consumers, too, get a contributory influence on the regional institutions.

Attitudes of integration

Generally in the society there is a clear wish that all children should attend the local school. It is a positive thought and it is understandable that many parents think it is a good idea, and are induced to believe in normalizing through individual integration. It is frightening to send small children over great distances to kindergarten and school classes at the deaf schools.

However it is not so simple to integrate deaf children and Bonaventura honestly believe it is not desirable either. With the help of extensive and expensive support arrangements the children might manage in the lower classes, but increasingly they end up getting more and more isolated and as teenagers the problems often get beyond repair, since, as mentioned before, they have by being isolated lost the opportunity to develop a natural identity, and have failed in building a strong social relationship to other deaf children in this age group. Thereby they could have achieved a real possibility of choosing among the deaf community and the hearing community. Additionally deaf children from schools of the deaf achieve an essential security in society and a larger language instrument-basic for learning and continuous accept by the surrounding hearing society.

Influence of the consumers

There are clear messages in the news media that public institutions are obliged to actively show consideration for the wishes of the consumers. For one thing that means they will listen to a consumers organization as Bonaventura. But it implies that Bonaventura's work is visible and the members actively bring forward their point of views.

In practice we already see the effect of the consumers influence through the new school-boards, which are established at all Danish schools. Bonaventura plays a role in this by - through its council - to secure contact between the various boards of the deaf and centre schools and to secure that special informations reach the school-board members.

The influence of the consumers also apply to the individual child and it's parents. Bonaventura is of the opinion that the parents should have the final word, not only when to choose between the different institutions, but also in relation to the substance of the options (the teaching e.g.) Of course it should be in cooperation with the institution, but generally we need a change in the attitude away from our children treated, tested and observed just because they are deaf.

Payment by the consumers

In Denmark a handicapped child is not only the parent's problem, but also a responsibility for the national society. And it must continue like that. When a family have a deaf child the additional expenses must be covered by society, and this covering should be independent of income. Unfortunately in our small country, it varies how the municipalities are interpreting The law of Social Assistance' and thus how the families are supported. Furthermore there is a tendency that the support once obtained by a hard struggle gradually is withdrawn, especially if we not all the time are ready with our arguments.

THE CONDITIONS OF DEAF CHILDREN

Now, on basis of Bonaventura's basic attitudes and the trends we experience in the Danish society, we will describe Bonaventura's model for the conditions of deaf children in the years to come. We will try to answer the following questions: What kind of offers does the Danish Society provide for the deaf children and their families? What kind of offers does Bonaventura want? Where should Bonaventura concentrate it's efforts?

Below we have tried to outline the frames for deaf children's conditions. The upright columns for better and for worse play a role for the child's upbringing. That is

The family situation
 Spare time
 Deaf environment
 Counselling

In the middle we have the child's development from nursery to occupation:

Nursery and kindergarten
 Pre-school up till grade 10
 Grade 10 up till grade 12
 Further education

The Famil Situation	Nursery and Kinder garten	Spare Time	Deaf Environments	Counselling
	The School Pre- 10			
	The School 10 -12			
	Further Education			

The following is a description point by point of these frames.

The family situation

The parents, the family situation of the deaf child on the whole play a decisive role for the upbringing of the child. Not the whole world's experts can substitute it. However, as already mentioned it is a major change for a family to get a deaf child, and they will need much support from the surroundings. But we must also strengthen the parents of the deaf child to dare to believe in their own intuition and common sense. That is valid for their deaf child, too—even if the experts, they meet on their way, disagree. We must also strengthen the family network for instance by letting the grandparents and siblings play the same role as in other families.

Counselling to the whole family.

Most of the hearing people know nothing of the problems concerning deaf children. The counselling ought to include everybody in the family not only the father and the mother give information about - deafness and how to react to the deaf child, and thereby creating a family environment with a reasonable consideration, but also with the possibility to function as a normal family. As soon as the hearing loss is diagnosed the counselling should start automatically, and as a matter of fact it ought to continue until the child leaves home.

Sign Language to the whole family.

The most important thing is, that the family can communicate with each other. The law should secure Sign Language courses for

- Father and mother
- siblings at any age
- relatives (e. g. cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents)
- close friends (both of the parents and of the child)

Including covering of lost earnings and support arrangements, which make the courses possible, e.g. babysitting. It must be remembered that Sign Language is a language, it takes a long time to learn to master sufficiently. English cannot be learnt by joining a course for one week a year. Also Sign Language cannot be learnt once and for all, as it is a language in progress.

Support to the family.

There are good possibilities of getting support under the provisions of 'The Law of Social Assistance'. It can be concrete things in form of aids: an illuminating attachment for the doorbell, wake-up alarm etc., but also in the form of compensation for shorter working hours or arrangements of relieving. It is important to understand that social support should be given in relation to the single family in order to meet the precise needs of that family. However, for most of the families there are some common features in form of additional expenses. Bonaventura has started a project to describe these in a separate document

Spare time

Often deaf children live geographically scattered, and it is important to overcome the distances by partly to support the children to visit each other and partly to get spare time activities corresponding to the children's age established.

As there are so few deaf children the spare time activities are very limited compared with activities for hearing children at the same age.

Comparatively there are quite a lot of sport activities and many young deaf spend happy hours together making sport, but there ought to be alternative activities as well.

Television and video are important visual media with a lot of future possibilities for deaf adults as well for deaf children and young ones. Unfortunately the range of transmissions for deaf is extremely poor. There are only a few programs, which deaf children have access to either by Sign Language or by subtitling. Deaf Film Video has so far broadcast a little less than 2 hours for a whole year for children. Denmark's Radio are producing more, but the programs are broadcasted at the poorest transmitting time and the content leaves much to be desired. Channel 2 does not broadcast programs for deaf children at all.

Deaf environments

Deaf people have their own culture and their own values. It naturally follows that the parents cannot convey those to their child, just as it can be difficult for hearing parents to convey the more delicate shadings of moral and ethics to their deaf child. Consequently it is of great value that deaf children are allowed to meet deaf adults - not only one - but are allowed to frequent contacts with many adult deaf.

In connections with the conditions of deaf children we often talk about Sign Language environment for example in schools and kindergarten. At some places they claim they have a Sign Language environment just because of one hearing adult, who have followed a basic course in Sign Language. A true Sign Language environment requires the daily presence of at least two deaf adults. Only then, we can secure that Sign Language do not yields to Danish (when the adults are speaking together) and we secure the deaf children the possibility of familiarize themselves with the talking subjects of adults.

Counselling

In Denmark the term 'Counselling' normally stands for counselling for small children. Actually the parents also need counselling through the child's whole upbringing.

New parents need urgent counselling. It is important, that the parents promptly start to get counselling at an Institute for Infant's Counselling. Very rare deafness is a disease, which can be cured at a hospital - instead it calls for immediate pedagogical and sociological support, Sign Language plus the greatest possible amount of informations for better and for worse. The counselling play decisively an important role on how the parents are taking off.

New parents need other parents. With all due respect for the professional experts in the treatment-system, other parents with deaf children are a very important group of experts in deaf children. New parents need an urgent contact to these parents. That means both parents to children at the same age, from whom they can learn in the years to come, and also 'old' parents from whom they can get information's about pitfalls, possibilities, alternatives etc. An Infant's Counselling play an important role for the family's possibilities to build up a network of contacts as it is necessary for families to meet regularly for a longer period and thus get opportunities to exchange experiences.

Parents and children need contact to deaf adults. Parents to a small hearing child have a picture of, or have a dream of how the future will be for their child. Parents to a deaf child have difficulties to imagine how its future will be. Therefore they need to meet deaf adults, who can reestablish their belief that their child can get a good life. Furthermore hearing adults need to use Sign Language outside courses and in communication with deaf adults.

It can be confirmed by personal experience that Deaf children love to be together with deaf adults. Also it is necessary for the children to get Sign Language inputs from other than hearing people, who seldom master a sufficient Sign Language. The parents need contact to a deaf school. The parents will get a confident view at the future, if they from the very beginning frequent a deaf school. Our vision is that an Infant's Counselling is an integrated part of the power centers at the 'old' deaf schools. As mentioned before Bonaventura must strongly oppose the society's efforts to decentralize, which just now draw the counselling into the child's county. That is a shortsighted and untenable solution

All hearing impaired children should learn Sign Language.

Basically the counselling shapes the new parents view on deafness, deaf people and the deaf culture. It ought to be quite natural that all children with a hearing loss as well as their families learn Sign Language to some degree.

Good hearing tests.

The Infant's Counselling has a great expertise in making good, reliable hearing tests, even on very small children. They are experts in many things, but when we especially mention this, it is to emphasize the importance to maintain the expertise thus to make it unnecessary with unpleasant hearing tests at the hospital, anesthesia etc.

Day nursery and kindergarten

Uptil now it has been common for deaf children to be individually integrated into the local day nursery or kindergarten, but in the recent years special institutions with deaf children integrated in groups, have been established. So far there is 'Bambi' at the deaf school in Aalborg [4] plus a number of kindergartens in the Copenhagen area. In practice we talk about regular kindergartens with 30-40 children altogether and out of this a fixed group of 6-10 deaf children. So far we have very good

experience with these basic institutions. The deaf child is now together with other deaf children instead of being isolated with one supporting teacher among hearing children. Because the kindergarten continuously have deaf children, the hearing staff becomes rather good signers and very often, it is also possible to have several deaf colleagues attached.

In this way deaf children get options corresponding to their age, they have a language, conceptions and a social behavior corresponding to their age, when they start pre-school.

The children are having a good time with the new day institutions, but the parents are increasingly getting into a difficulty. Formerly they came regularly for counselling and thereby met other parents, now they do not do that anymore, and it is a big task for The Parent Association, the old counselling-institutions and for kindergartens to adjust themselves to this new structure.

[4] Alborg, Fredericia and Nyborg are cities in Denmark with Schools for Deaf.

Pre-school up till grade 10

The deaf schools our deaf children attend, should be regional centres of energy power. Comparatively there are few deaf children, and these children need visual communication in the form of Sign Language, and they need friends. That can only be done, if there are several others (teachers and friends) who master the language. As parents to deaf children our wishes are that on national basis there will be 3 deaf schools and a minor numbers of centre schools (2-3). The deaf schools expenses should be paid by the government. The parents shall not beg the municipalities to be allowed to send their child to a deaf school.

The deaf school ought to be a bilingual school, where both Sign Language and Danish have a high priority. There should be exactly the same curriculum for deaf and hearing children and also the same demands to the children. In a segregated deaf school there is always a risk of the teachers of the deaf loosing touch with which demands - technically and socially- they can make to the children, and they resign themselves with the children learning slowly. A lesser curriculum and a longer period of learning cannot be justified by deafness alone. Bonaventura wish, that more children finish the school sitting for the required examinations.

Continuously it is a big problem that many teachers do not master Sign Language at such a level, that they can convey technical knowledge and solve ordinary conflicts, but now this problem is taken so seriously, that we have reasons for optimism. Denmark's Post-graduate Training College has started a post education and so far the results are encouraging. After finishing in Frederica the education will continue in Aalborg and Copenhagen. Another encouragement in the school field is The Ministry of Education's recognition of Sign Language and publication of a syllabus in Sign Language. We await with excitement the next step - the carrying into effect of Sign Language as a subject in our children's school.

Compared to a regular school the deaf schools have extended responsibility, as it is necessary to consider the child's entire life. The Infant's Counselling ought to have a very close relation to the school, thus it becomes natural for the parents and the children to be there. It is necessary with boarding homes attached to the schools as the school children come from far away. Furthermore there should be spare time activities equal to them which hearing children are offered, if desired in cooperation with a nearby regular school, and there should be activities which imply deaf adults, to whom the children can relate.

There have been a positive development in the school field, but it is difficult to accept a snail's pace. To the Ministry of Education 10 years isn't a long period, but for a child it is the entire school-period.

Grade 10 up till 12

After finishing school it is common that deaf children proceed at the college in Nyberg, where they meet other young ones from all over the country. Today there are about 100 students in Nyberg. There are opportunities here of both practical and theoretical learning, and some are sitting for the school's final examinations here.

Probably Nyborg will play another role in the future caused by the new generation of deaf children and young ones. In the society the conditions become still more difficult, especially if they don't have further education, and there will arrive several young ones, who already have sit for the final examination, just as there will be more young ones, who will make additional demands and can cope with them. At the same time we must not forget that the young ones emerging into real life should bring along self-reliance and zest for life, too.

Further education

Bonaventura has to a great extent concentrated its efforts about infants, children in the school and the young ones in Nyborg. These are the years of a child's life, where the parents are playing an active role and have a voice what to do. But of course deaf children should have further education that means first EFG, HF, 'Gymnasium' [5] and subsequently either a short or a longer education. To deaf people education and interpreting are bound together by unbreakable ties. Traditionally deaf people have been trained in different trades, but now even those are to a great extent theoretical. To use an interpreter might be more difficult than one should think; often situations in modern teaching are difficult both for the interpreter and for the consumer because of many debates and group work. The change from the deaf school to the regular education system is tremendous, and it isn't caused by language problems only. Experiences from DLF [6] show that it takes 2-3 years to pass into the system. The conclusion of experiences gained up until now concerning the young ones in the education system, show that making use of an interpreter is to be learned in the upper classes in school and in Nyborg. Besides that the deaf schools and the college in Nyborg must make an effort to meet the great difficulties, deaf encounter in hearing system.

Today young deaf can have a stay at the Folk High School for Deaf at Castberggard, and just like the hearing young ones use the Folk High Schools, Castberggard is functioning as a springboard to further education.

[5] EFG: vocational training Gymnasium the upper classes in a grammar school. HF almost the same subjects as in a grammar school and at the same level, but they can be taken one by one and are mainly for adults

[6] DLF: The Danish Federation for deaf.

ROUNDING OFF

In the recent years there have been many improvements for deaf children, but still there are new paths to go in the years to come.

It can be difficult for both parents and professionals to see through the complex of problems concerning our deaf children. Who of us haven't thought: "If only little Peter learn to speak, it will be all right." Or " If only little Liza could attend the school around the corner, she would be able to play with the neighbor's daughter."

It isn't that simple. Bonaventura hopes this memorandum can maintain and convey 'old' experiences about deaf children and by that contribute to secure favorable conditions for deaf children in spite of economical cut backs, and the wishes of decentralizing from the Government to the Municipalities, which characterize our society at the moment.

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YOU HAVE TO BE DEAF

TO UNDERSTAND

By William J Madsen

What is it like to "hear" a hand?

you have to be deaf to understand

What is it like to be a small child,

In a school, in a room void of sound-

me with a teacher who talks and talks and talks :

and then when she comes round to you,

she expects you to know what she said?

You have to be deaf to understand.

Or the teacher who thinks that to make you smart

you must first learn how to talk with your voice

So mumbo-jumbo with hands on your face

for hours and hours without patience or end

Until out comes a faint resembling sound?

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be curious,

to thirst for knowledge you can call your own

with an inner desire that's set on fire –

and ask a brother, sister, friend

who looks in answer and says, "never mind?"

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like in a corner to stand
though there's nothing you've done really wrong
other than try to make use of your hands
to a silent peer to communicate
a thought that comes to your mind at once?
You have to be deaf to understand

What is it like to be shouted at
when one thinks that will help you to hear:
or misunderstand the words of a friend
who is trying to make a joke clear
and you don't get the point because he's failed,
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be laughed in the face
when you try to repeat what is said:
just to make sure that you've understood,
and you find that the words were misread
and you want to cry out, "please help me, friend?"
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to have to depend
upon one who can hear to phone a friend:
or place a call to a business firm
and be forced to share what's personal, and,
then find that your message wasn't made clear?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be deaf and alone
in the company of those who can hear
and you only can guess as you go along
for on one's there with a helping hand,
shop as you try to keep up with words and song?

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like on the roads of life
to meet a stranger who opens his mouth
and speaks out a line at a rapid pace:
and you can't understand the look in his face
We because it is new and you're lost in the race

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to comprehend
some nimble fingers that paint the scene
and make you smile and feel serene
with the "spoken words" of the moving hand
that makes you part of the world at large?

You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to "hear" a hand?
Yes, you have to be deaf to understand.



WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international, non-governmental central organization of national associations of the deaf. It has a B-category status in the United Nations system where it is represented at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Office at Vienna, but also Unesco, ILO, and WHO are of special interest to the WFD. The WFD also cooperates with other international organizations and professional groups in matters related to deafness.

The World Federation of the Deaf was established in 1951 during the first World Congress of the Deaf held in Rome, Italy. The early date makes it one of the oldest international organizations of disabled persons in the world. By 1995, the number of its ordinary members (the national associations of the deaf) had reached 103 representing all five continents. The WFD also comprises associate members, individual members, and correspondents active in the sphere of deafness. The legal seat of the Federation is Rome.

In the present work of the Federation, emphasis is placed on removing barriers to communication; on language policy, or more specifically on improving the situation of sign language. Better education of the deaf and improved access to information and services are other major concerns. Programmed for better living conditions for the deaf in the developing countries have a high priority in the work of the Federation. The Federation gives its member organizations encouragement and support in their efforts and offers its expertise when the organizations are launching new projects. In order to reach the goals, the Federation makes such policies to involve its member organizations actively into closer interaction so that overall work can be based on the views of the deaf from planning up to implementation and follow-up.

The Federation shares information mainly in its official organ called the WFD NEWS, its Bulletin, and other circulars. An effort is made to keep the public regularly informed of the deaf community, and of deaf people's achievements and concerns.

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WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

Sign Language Recognition

Whereas : Recent research both in linguistics and in neurobiology has firmly established the spatial languages of deaf people as fully expressive languages which not only exhibit complex organizational properties, but also display grammatical devices not derived from spoken languages. Distinct sign languages are now seen as fully developed languages with complex rules of grammar, with a rich variety of inflectional processes and an extensive variety of derivational processes, built from both a vast vocabulary base and sophisticated grammatical devices from lexical expansion. These are also autonomous languages comfortably capable of intellectual wit, conversation, evocative disputation, and poetry.

Deaf people who are advanced native speakers of their national sign language should also be recognized as the legitimate arbiters in the correct usage of the indigenous sign language, and should hold significant positions in research efforts to develop graphic educational materials in the sign language.

Be it adopted: The distinct national sign languages of indigenous deaf populations should be officially recognized as their natural languages of right for direct communication.

Be it further considered: In all legal settings and situations involving basic human rights, the provision of competent interpreting is required. In situations in which competent interpreting is unavailable or the deaf persons involved are uneducated non-signers, clear efforts at basic gestural communication should be made to inform all involved of important rights and legal issues.

Early intervention in the provision of meaningful communication opportunities to deaf children is key to their cognitive and emotional development. Pre-school options should be developed and provided to the maximum extent possible. Deaf teachers should be employed in all such programs, even when teacher training for deaf adults is unavailable.

Teachers of the deaf are expected to learn and use the accepted indigenous sign language as the primary language of instruction.

For advanced and specialized instruction, classroom or tutorial interpreters are necessary. While recognizing such may not be available for all advanced training and instructional settings, interpretation is a necessary condition for success.

Formal resolution adopted by the X World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf. Presented at the closing ceremony 28th July, 1987 Helsinki, Finland.



**International Conference on Bilingualism in
Deaf Education, August 16-20, 1993,
Stockholm, Sweden**

RESOLUTION

To the World Federation of the Deaf

Based on of current Sign Language research, we have come to the following conclusions;

-having recognized the status of Sign Language as a visual gestural language, acknowledged as a language by linguists, that is based on the hands, arms, eyes, face and body.

- having recognized the fact that Sign Language is the first language of the Deaf people.

- having recognized the fact that Deaf people should have the same right as other people to use their first language for participation in and contribution to all aspects of economic, educational and social life.

- having recognized the fact that the national language is the second language of the Deaf people as they do not acquire this language spontaneously. They acquire it mostly by education.

-having recognized the fact that Deaf are bilingual as they use mostly Sign Language and both the written part and spoken part of the national language/-s in everyday life.

- having recognized the fact that Deaf students learn all subjects in school, including the national language/-s, best by Sign Language.

-having recognized the fact that the written variant of spoken languages is fully accessible to Deaf people. Therefore, Deaf students learn their national language/-s best by the written form. In order to effectively teach and explain how to use and understand the written variant of the language, how to write it, the Sign Language should be used as a teaching language.

. -having recognized the importance of Bilingualism, we encourage the implementation of the statements above.

We are deeply concerned that any positive step has not yet taken to follow up and implement these statements.

❖ Every sign language evolves as a response by a given community of deaf people to the stimulation its members get from their immediate environment. What all the deaf people of the world share is their natural human ability (i.e. their innate capacity) to learn a language, and to contribute to the continuous enrichment of whatever language they use. This natural human ability ensures that every language that evolves in a community of human beings has the general properties of a human language.

❖ All human beings are born free
and equal in dignity and rights.
They are endowed with reason and
conscience and should act towards
one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article I



RESOLUTION

of the XII World

Congress of the

World Federation of the Deaf

The XII World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf was held in Vienna, Austria on 10-15 July 1995 with the theme "TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS". There were over 2,000 participants, Deaf and hearing people from 97 countries to present 200 papers and discuss issues concerning Deaf people. As a result of the work of the scientific commissions the Congress is presenting the following resolution:

Human Rights in the lives of Deaf people are fulfilled only in a small way in a few countries. In the fields of deaf education and medicine a Deaf person is viewed as deficient. The objective has been to change a Deaf person to become like a hearing one. This has led to 'solutions' such as forbidding the use of Sign Language in education and in other interaction. This is one reason why Human Rights cannot be fulfilled in the life of Deaf people. The fulfillment of Human Rights requires that every human being at birth is seen as a possibility, and not a problem.

Everywhere in the world Deaf people have proved that Sign Language and the culture, art and traditions of the Deaf Community, and the solutions how to manage as Deaf people, are the resource, the basis for normal language development, access to information, balanced social and emotional development, and control of the environment for a Deaf child.

Every paragraph and every sentence of the International Human Rights Conventions and other legal documents also apply to Deaf people as such. Articles which concern the right to make decisions by oneself, to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life as well as access to information and services, as almost all the articles in the declaration, presuppose that governments recognize national Sign Languages and give them the legal status which ensures the equal fulfillment of all Human Rights and civil rights in the lives of Deaf people.

Thus so far 12 countries have given official government recognition to Sign Language. Beside the Human Rights Declaration we also have the United Nations Standard Rules and Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education where Sign Language and functioning solutions for Deaf people, which lead to the fulfillment of equal opportunities, are clearly noted. With the help of these documents organizations in cooperation with authorities and politicians can promote Human Rights for Deaf people. The responsibility for the realization of the proposals in these documents lies on every one of us.

The congress would like to draw attention to the following points:

- 80% of Deaf people in the world do not receive any basic education at all. The situation is the most difficult in developing countries. Receiving education is one of the most important Human Rights. We should join our resources all over the world to ensure both the basic education as well as adult education for deaf people in developing countries. During the Congress there were no arguments about whether the use of Sign Language or other methods was best, but discussions concentrated on presenting information about which way high level education can be offered for Deaf children for them to acquire bi- and multilingualism. This information should be distributed all over the world.

-The Congress does not recommend Cochlear Implant operations for Deaf children because Cochlear Implants will not help the language acquisition of a Deaf child and can harm the emotional/psychological personality development and physical development. On the contrary Sign Language environment strongly supports the whole development, both linguistic and otherwise, of the Deaf child.

-The parents of Deaf children need all the support required in order for Deaf children to have the ability to communicate in a natural way, in Sign Language, with their families. Society should not treat children in a way which hinders their natural development.

-The fulfillment of Sign Language interpreter provision and training of professional Sign Language interpreters is of utmost importance in order to prevent isolation and to reach full participation and equality.

- Deaf professionals are also needed in different professions to provide services in different fields for Deaf people, for instance to look after Deaf children, as teachers, and workers in the field of Mental Health, so that Deaf people have the possibility of receiving services in their own language.

Elderly Deaf people whose communication skills have been weakened, and other people who need special support, should be taken into consideration in all countries by providing sufficient services according to their Human Rights. Services within the Deaf Community should, as well, be in the reach of Deaf-blind people, and Deaf people with Usher syndrome. Their participation in activities, training and social interaction should be secured.

Unemployment among Deaf people is high everywhere in the world. The right to independent livelihood and work should be carried out by programs which support Deaf people in finding jobs.

-The possibilities modern information technology, especially those which enable information in text-form and in Sign Language as well as interaction with the environment, should be put in use when services for Deaf people are developed. This applies also to deaf education and in enlarging possibilities for participation for Deaf people.

- The Congress emphasizes promotion of equal possibilities for all groups of Deaf people. The activities of Deaf women in the promotion of their equality should be taken into consideration in all the proposals above and in special programs for different spheres of life.

-The promotion of the rights of Deaf people in developing countries is our first priority.

With the values of Deaf culture, human rights and the desire to join our resources as a base we can build a better tomorrow to all Deaf people in the world.



(Courtesy: WFD News)

Sign Language is the language of free expression and communication for the Deaf.

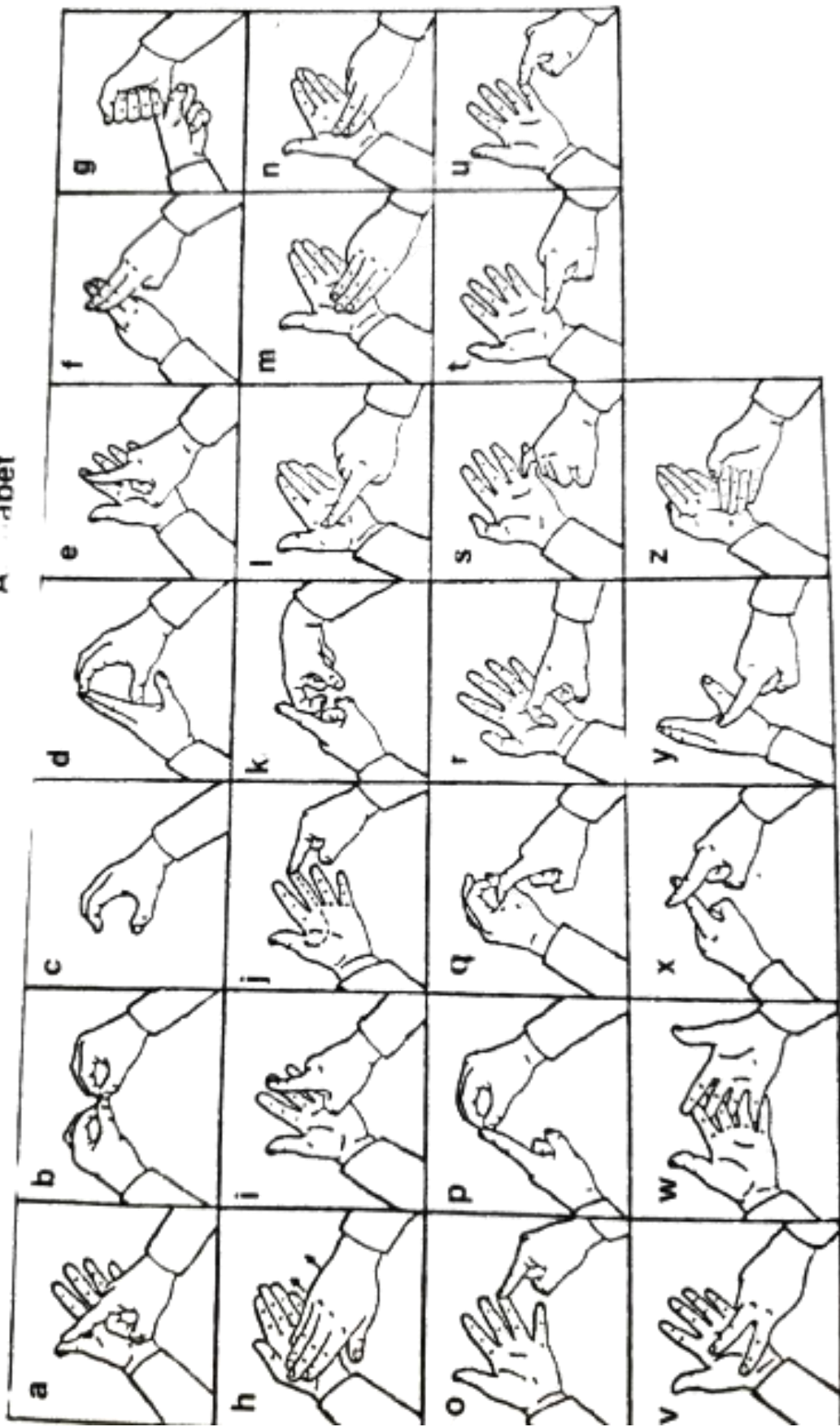
The

Alphabet



अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ए	ऐ
ओ	औ	क	ख	ग	घ	च	छ
ज	झ	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	त
थ	द	ध	न	प	फ	ब	भ
म	य	र	ल	व	श	स	ह
ळ	क्ष	ज्ञ	ए	ओ	ळ	र	

Alphabet



The International Manual Alphabet





Sign Language and Bilingualism in Deaf Education

Dr Dilip Deshmukh

This article promotes an understanding of how deaf people live in a bilingual-bicultural society.

Introduction

Demographic trends indicate that the Asia and Pacific region account for the largest number of persons with disabilities. This segment of society was not perceived as a potential contributor to economic and social development, resulting in its exclusion from mainstream community life and deprivation of the right to equality.

It is estimated that there are about 13 million deaf persons in South Asian countries, and almost three-fourths live in rural areas where proper facilities for health care, education, training and employment are scarce. Poverty is the main cause of their continuing suffering and backwardness. Unemployment and over population also add to their misery. Yet another difficulty is the lack of awareness about the legal provisions they are entitled to. Further, the rural deaf are often not properly organized to look after their own interests. The plight of deaf females is even worse as traditional barriers create more difficulties in their social upliftment.

Neglected by society, ignorant of their own potentials, and deprived of facilities of education and training, the lives of many deaf people are often an ordeal. The absence or limitation of support or cooperation in today's highly competitive world means that many deaf people are at a disadvantage.

History of Deaf Education

Throughout the world, hearing communities use spoken languages as their primary system of communication, and most have developed writing systems that are based on the spoken language. However, profoundly deaf individuals, especially those who become deaf early in life, do not acquire spoken language

through normal immersion, and therefore have great difficulty in mastering the written language as well. These deaf individuals usually develop or learn sign languages, which are different from the surrounding spoken languages in structure as well as vocabulary. In many countries, great controversy has arisen, particularly within institutions of deaf education, concerning the use of spoken language, written language and sign language. For example, the 1880 International Congress on Deaf Education,

held in Milan, Italy, voted that henceforth all deaf education would be conducted in oral (spoken) language, and that sign language would be prohibited in the classroom. This decision was enacted throughout the systems of deaf education all over the world, and led to limitations of opportunities for deaf people to learn or use their natural sign language. For school-going children sign language became an underground language, used secretly, and often with punishment if discovered. But within the adult deaf community, sign languages continued to be widespread, used for everyday communication and for arts and culture. National Associations of the Deaf (NADS) were formed around the world in an attempt to establish and protect the rights of deaf individuals to use sign languages.

The prohibition of the use of sign language either within education or in social activities led to young deaf children being deprived of the early language experience so vital for language acquisition. Over 100 years since the resolutions of the Milan Congress, it is evident that very few pre-lingual, profoundly deaf people acquire normal language and speech. This is so despite great advances in teaching methodology, research and technical know-how. Moreover, as 90% of deaf children are born to hearing families, they do not learn sign language at home (unless, of course, their hearing parents learn it themselves). Thus, without the facility of learning a well-developed and fluent sign language in schools or without adequate exposure to adult deaf individuals who sign, most deaf children will have limited early language experience. NADS around the world have made great strides in maintaining and strengthening the use and development of sign language for the deaf.

Linguistic research on the natural sign languages used in deaf communities has shown them to be fully expressive with complex rules of grammar and expansive vocabularies, capable of being comfortable vehicles of everyday conversation, intellectual discourse, rhetoric, wit and poetry. The natural sign languages of deaf communities are therefore languages that must be accessible to deaf children, and whose full usage by deaf adults should be supported and promoted.

Since the Milan resolution, more than a 100 years of 'oralism' in deaf education has been implemented. Accordingly, attempts were made to teach the spoken language to the deaf child during the 'critical period' using speech therapy, hearing aids, a group hearing aid, auditory training, lip-reading, etc. It was presumed that the deaf child can learn a spoken language with the help of a hearing aid through his residual hearing and lip-reading. Thus he can become a fully integrated partner in the hearing world. In other words, the basic idea of oralism is to enable the deaf child to listen and to speak and thus make him as 'normal' as possible.

Linguistic researchers are, however, convinced that the 'Critical Period Theory of Language Acquisition' does not apply to deaf children as far as the spoken language is concerned, because a deaf child does not acquire the spoken language naturally; he has to learn it consciously. These linguistic researchers believe that the process deaf children go through in learning a language they cannot hear is largely an 'intellectual task', possibly even a 'memorization task'. Therefore, early exposure to spoken language should not be considered as critical for a deaf child as cognitive readiness. It is proven beyond

doubt that a deaf child acquires a sign language in the environment supporting it similar to a hearing child acquiring a spoken language. Children exposed to other deaf children (or deaf adults) who use sign language acquire their first language (sign language) quite naturally. No special teaching is required; interaction is sufficient. This is why sign language is called the 'mother tongue' or 'natural language' of the deaf. On the strong foundation of this first language, i.e. sign language, the deaf can later learn a language well.

Now a word about 'Total Communication'. There are a few schools in India that are adopting this method. Total Communication is a philosophy defined as 'the use of any and all modes of communication'. It includes speech and finger-spelling, lip-reading, amplification, gestures, facial expression and body language. Sign system and sign-supported speech, viz., sign English and sign-supported English, can be considered as specific examples of Total Communication. However, sign language, due to its very nature, was not made a part of Total Communication because it was neither a spoken nor written language.

This philosophy of Total Communication came into existence in the late 1960s. It soon became the method of teaching language as well as social and academic skills to deaf children. Parents and teachers generally claimed that their communication with deaf children improved tremendously. Suddenly through visual means-deaf children were able to participate in conversations and were able to communicate their questions, emotions and needs

through created linguistic Although the communication between deaf children and hearing surroundings improved greatly, their spoken language skill improve the extent. Above all, they to communicate among themselves and with deaf adults in system completely different from the used their hearing parents and teachers system that teachers and parents could not understand. Deaf children felt ease with visual language Later, after study and that this visual system actually language its right, with phonological, morphological Thus, the hearing world came a deeper understanding respect of sign language, which bilingualism deaf be propagated.

Bilingualism

For the majority deaf children, oralism a failure and consequently they did not acquire social, academic cognit skills. has been documented repeatedly deaf children substantially behind their hearing age mates virtually measures of academic achievement. Gentile (1972) found the performance of deaf students the Stanford Achievement (SAT) was markedly less in spelling, paragraph comprehension vocabulary, mathematical concepts, mathematical computation social studies and science. Such documentation represents failure of oralism.

It is also repeatedly observed that group deaf children whose deaf parents use sign language are superior deaf children whose hearing parents provided with early and intensive oral training in communication and language. The

superiority was evident in:

- (1) linguistic skills,
- (2) academic skills,
- 3) maturity, responsibility and independence,
- (4) sociability and
- (5) appropriateness of sex-role
- (6) ability to react appropriately any situation.

A recent research finding Birgitta Soderfeldt in her thesis titled "Sign Language Perception studied Ne Imaging Techniques', there many similarities between the spoken language and sign language. Both seem acti almost the same areas of the brain. Probable that language does depend on the language system she also found that despite similarities language systems were, however, some differences. Sign language activates to higher person's there were however, some difference, Sign language activities to a higher. Degree those areas of the brain which code and decode visual perception. This holds true even when sign language is compared with spoken language with simultaneous visual stimulation (a speaker on video).

Moreover, the test group 'deaf persons with deaf parents' was different from other sign language users. Their right cerebral hemisphere showed a higher degree of activation. An explanation for this is that they really are genuine sign language users and utilize localization information better than other test groups, as they get natural language immersion from their parents. This hypothesis strengthens the available information about sign language, and presents reasons for early contacts with sign language users for deaf children. Hard-of-hearing persons included in the study revealed that those who were skilled signers were also good at lip-reading. This finding disproves the statement that sign language destroys lip-reading skills.

Considering all these facts, should not the aim of deaf education be that the deaf student leaves school with the same amount of knowledge, the same degree of personal maturity and self-confidence, and the same level of social adjustment as is expected for a hearing student?

To achieve this aim, the bilingual approach is recommended. The bilingual approach means that deaf children have sign language as their primary language. Later on they will learn spoken language as their second language, which will be taught using principles similar to teaching a foreign/second language. Here sign language is used as a medium of instruction in teaching the spoken language. Sign language and spoken language are given equal status. However, it is important that people are aware of the differences between the two languages.

In the bilingual approach, speech is regarded not as a means of learning the language of the society, but as a means of facilitating everyday interaction with it. It is good to remember that the linguistic functions that speech can fulfil for the deaf are very restricted. All pupils acquire a basic knowledge of the workings of speech. Actual speech-training is individualized and based on each individual pupil's aptitude and interests, as well as on the language mastered by the individual.

Mere language teaching, of course, is not enough. It is very important to impart knowledge about the cultures that are closely tied to the languages, i.e. deaf culture with its rich history and the culture of the child's second language related to the home, district, parents, family and country. Both give children valuable information, ingredients for their identity and tools to live fully as equal citizens later on in their lives. That is why some schools for the deaf prefer to use the term bilingual-bicultural approach.

Let deaf children be children. Deaf children are ordinary children who cannot hear. They are not 'abnormal' or 'deviant'. They have normal intelligence, and should have the same opportunities a hearing children to play and learn, grow up and become complete well-functioning adults. Emphasis should be

on the surrounding of the deaf child and not on the child itself. It is important to give the child an environment where language can be freely and spontaneously used from birth and where everyone treats him/her as valuable person and accepts him/her as such. Parents should be allowed to be parents as well. They should not just be teachers and speech therapists. They should have faith in their deaf child's ability and potentiality. Parents must understand their right to make decisions concerning their child, and not allow external 'experts' to take over because of the deafness.

Bilingualism in deaf education facilitates and enhances social, cognitive and academic skills. Fundamentally, deaf children are able to learn the same skills as hearing children only if they are offered communication on their own terms, i.e. if instruction is given to them in their mother tongue.

The oral teaching method can be slow and below standard, while instruction in sign language can be faster and up to standard. Deaf children learning through sign language are able to cope and receive an all-round education which is age-appropriate. Oralism is based on assumptions, while bilingualism is based on actual truths. Oralism is created by the hearing and is centered on the disability of deafness their inability, while bilingualism is accepted and supported by the deaf as it is centered on their assets.

The following four-point programmer for 'Bilingualism in Deaf Education' can be implemented:

(A) Orientation: There is opposition to sign language because of misunderstandings, misconceptions, ignorance and prejudice Hence, 'Orientation' is a first step which plays a key role in implementation of bilingualism'. The 'Orientation' programmer should deal with the following key areas:

(1) The deaf are not defective models of hearing persons. (2) A deaf person will never be a hearing person. (3) Sign language is the language of free expression and communication for the deaf.

their language.

human right.

(6) To prohibit the use of sign language in a deaf group or in

(4) The deaf are human beings. We should respect them and (5) Education through the mother tongue is a "linguists

deaf education is linguistic genocide. (7) The deaf can only be reached either by learning their language or by the use of an interpreter.

Sign Language and Bilingualism in Deaf Education

(8) There is nothing wrong with being deaf. (9) There much more to deafness than loss of hearing.

(10) As long as there are deaf people on earth, there will be signs.

(11) The problem of the deaf not their lack of hearing, but lack of understanding by the hearing people that the deaf have a Language.

(12) 'Deaf Awareness' and 'Sign Language Work' are the basis for any real improvement in the situation and living conditions of deaf persons.

(13) Communication and interaction are, however, essential

human needs. Through them an individual learns the basic social skills. (14) One of the most important factors affecting the lives of deaf citizens is the status of sign language.

(15) The only satisfactory solution to improve the quality of education for the deaf is the use of sign language as the language of instruction in schools for the deaf.

(16) Sign language should be the parents' life-line for communication with their children.

(17) The deaf should be encouraged to recognize their potential and thereby believe in themselves as individuals. The slogan of 'The Deaf Way' is 'We Can Do Anything Except Hear'.

(B) Research: The efficient utilization of sign language is a powerful weapon in the fight against discrimination. For that, knowledge is necessary. Hence, research on sign language - the native sign language - will certainly improve its status and in turn will also improve the life of the deaf. The following programmer executed successfully by many developed countries can be implemented with modifications as per local requirements:

(1) To come up with ideas, produce and publish material in the field of sign language research and also dictionaries.

(2) To follow up and promote sign language work throughout the country.

(3) To cooperate with different universities and research centers.

(4) To follow research done in other countries.

(C) Recognition: Official recognition of the native sign language helps in elevating its status and thereby also helps to strengthen deaf culture. It is also recognition of the linguistic human right. It boosts the morale of the deaf, facilitates free access to communication and thereby enhances human dignity. The recognition gives them legal entitlement to the freedom of communication, i.e. to give information, express thoughts, opinions and feelings and to obtain and receive information. Thus the demand of an interpreter legally and socially justified.

Internal motivation is necessary. External motivation comprise advice, suggestions and assistance from agencies like UNESCO, WFD, Internal motivation means pressurize Government authorities regarding the recognition of sign language which external motivation will supportive. The internal pressure should create National Deaf Organizations, Parent Organizations, Service Organizations and schools/institutions educators supporting language. Continuous efforts made convince the concerned authorities and institutions about the need for its speedy implementation.

Not only bilingual strategy but also early natural language exposure, support sign language from birth, language subject, and sign language instruction for parents and teachers are some of factors influencing the child's overall positive development and achievement. After all deaf children are children just like any other children.

The socio-cultural view deafness is in line principles of human rights, UN recommendations as Standard and the Salamanca Statement and, above all, the very important view on human beings equal but different persons. The multi culturalistic movement in the education of children is one example of this philosophical and ethical principle.

World-wide, there is still very little education for deaf children in their own sign language. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) has drawn up an education policy programmer that encourages governments to recognize sign language as a language of instruction. This is one of the basic human rights of deaf children: to receive education in their own language!

In conclusion, a statement by Harlan Lane: "As I am not less but more when I recognize that the earth revolves around the sun and that man has evolved from the apes, so I am not less but more when I recognize that there are other languages, manual or oral, on a par humility is the enemy of forced assimilation; it is the friend of bilingualism with and mutual respect; it is the only sure guide to a better day for the deaf and their friends." myoum. This

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Dr Dilip Deshmukh, a medical doctor by profession, runs his own private clinic. However, his personal mission in life is the promotion of opportunities for deaf people. This led him to start a school for the deaf near Ichalkaranji, Maharashtra. Through his work in the Rotary Club, he has been able to fund-raise and further develop services for the deaf in this area. He is now an active promoter and Rotary volunteer teacher on the promotion of bilingualism in India.

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An international non-governmental organization
in official liaison with the Economic and
Social Council of the United Nations, UNESCO, ILO
and WHO.



Organisation internationale non-gouvernementale
pour les relations officielles avec le Conseil Economique
et Social des Nations Unies, l'UNESCO, l'OIT
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From 6th January 1997

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Helsinki, 22 January 1997
LK/ro

Dear friend,

First of all I would like to wish you all the best for the new year. Thank you for your letters dated 30 August and 12 December 1996 and especially for enclosing a copy of your book "Sign Language & Bilingualism in Deaf Education" for me. I was **very impressed by your book**. I especially enjoyed the examples you had chosen because I would have used just the same ones myself. You really have internalised issues connected with bilingualism.

I would like to include information on **your book and work in India in the WFD NEWS** and also in our Circular letter to our member organisations because I am sure many other countries and educators in Asia would benefit from your example. I have told about your book to **WFD experts who are distributing the information in Europe**, too.

I do value the work you are doing. It makes me very happy. By distributing information we can improve the situation of Deaf people.

Have you come across a book called Educating Deaf Children Bilingually by Shawn Neal Mahshie with Insights and Applications from Sweden and Denmark. I am enclosing some extracts from the information the book contains. I will send you more information on the latest on bilingualism in the near future.

Thanking for your wonderful work and wishing you the best of success in your work,

With warm regards,

Liisa Kauppinen
President

cc: Carol-lee Aquiline, General Secretary
Eiichi Takada, Regional Director
Markku Jokinen, WFD expert on education

PS. WE WILL SEND THE MATERIALS BY POST.
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