



Notes

STATUS OF USE OF ISL IN DEAF EDUCATION

In the 1880s, when the first deaf schools in India were established, schools all over the world had begun to choose an oral approach to teaching the deaf, which unfortunately still continues in India. In this lesson, you will learn how deaf children's language, literacy and academic success suffers due to a lack of early access to sign language. You will also learn about the benefits of a sign-bilingual approach to teaching the deaf and its importance of deaf teachers.



OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, learner:

- explains the importance of using ISL for deaf and hard-of-hearing learners and how this relates to the current situation in deaf education
- demonstrates an understanding of the various benefits of learning ISL in different educational situations
- demonstrates an awareness of educational policies relating to ISL

7.1 BACKGROUND: CHALLENGES IN DEAF EDUCATION

1. Most deaf children are born to hearing parents who do not know sign language.
2. As a result, most deaf children do not get any exposure to sign language in the early years (0-6 years)
3. These deaf children get late exposure to sign language, mostly through deaf schools.

Sign Language in Society



Notes

4. Some deaf children in villages never get the opportunity to go to a deaf school. They spend their entire lives using basic gestures, without any knowledge of sign language. Their communication is highly limited.
5. In deaf schools, most teachers teach using oralism, and do not sign.
6. There are many challenges in deaf education, that result in a lower quality of life for deaf people.
7. This means that deaf people's education levels remain low.
8. Therefore, their socio-economic levels also remain low.
9. Their lack of access to education means that their career options are limited to menial labour and other low paying jobs.
10. This is primarily due to the lack of sign language in deaf education.

7.2 DEAF EDUCATION IN INDIA

The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) which runs the teacher training courses, allows for three methodologies in the area of deaf education:

- Sign bilingualism,
- Total Communication
- Oralism

They also promote the use of various techniques in teaching deaf children, e.g. drama, mime and writing.

It has been found that the purely oral method of education is not successful with most deaf children. As a result, sign bilingualism and Total Communication were introduced in teacher training courses along side other literacy-improving techniques.

It is observed that deaf children are unable to understand if only speech is used. The use of sign language allows for better comprehension.

It is hoped that with the establishment of the Indian Sign Language and Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) in 2011, and the passing of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) 2016, there will be stronger support for promoting the role of ISL in deaf education. There also needs to be greater research and awareness on the topic.



Figure-7.1 : RPwD Act

7.3 SIGN LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN DEAF EDUCATION

The RPwD Act 2016 provides rights for equal access to education for persons with disabilities, and Chapter III (point 17) of the Act states that the government and local authorities must:

- a) train and employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities who are qualified in sign language and Braille and also teachers who are trained in teaching children with intellectual disabilities.
- b) promote the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes including means and formats of communication, Braille and sign language to supplement the use of one's own speech to fulfil the daily communication needs of persons with speech, communication or language disabilities and enables them to participate in and contribute to their community and society.

The ISLRTC is mandated to develop manpower for using Indian Sign Language (ISL) – interpreters and deaf teachers.



Figure-7.2 : ISLRTC

The RCI is responsible for creating and running courses for professionals including teachers in deaf schools.

The Right to Education (RTE) Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14.

Sign Language in Society



Notes

The right to education of persons with disabilities under the 18 years of age is laid down in separate legislation - the **Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act**. This Act says that:

The appropriate government and local authorities shall ensure that every child with a benchmark disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment until he attains the age of 18 years in a special school or inclusive neighbourhood schools as per his choice.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

1. Name the methodologies allowed by RCI for teacher training courses in deaf education?
2. What is the main job of RCI?
3. What is the full form of the RTE Act 2009?

7.4 BENEFITS OF ISL IN DEAF EDUCATION

1. The connection between teacher and student is stronger.

Deaf children are not able to connect with teachers who only use minimal gestures. Teachers who are fluent in ISL are able to connect better with deaf learners.

2. Students can express their ideas.

The learners are able to express themselves and share their experiences on varied topics through ISL. In classrooms with no sign language, communication and expression are often limited.

3. The learners and teachers are able to communicate from a distance.

ISL users are able to communicate over long distances, even across classrooms. Often, this is not possible with spoken language.

4. The learners can convey private messages without disturbing the class.

Using ISL, learners can convey their messages to each other without disturbing the entire class. This is often not possible with speech.

7.5 DEAF PERSPECTIVE

The challenges faced by deaf learners in education are unique and complicated and often not understood by their families. Hence, sometimes when a hearing family member tries to give advice or explain something to a deaf student, they are unable to connect with them.

However, when a deaf adult or deaf teacher tries to explain something, the deaf student is more likely to be able to understand. This is due to their shared experiences and challenges.

7.6 EASE OF LEARNING

Most deaf people go through an education system where oralism is forced upon them. However, majority of them are aware that they are unable to understand spoken language or speak in the same way as their hearing peers. Their speech is often limited to a few words.

After struggling with speech for a long time, deaf learners tend to find sign language later in their lives, e.g., through various NGOs such as the Deaf Enabled Foundation, Ishara Trust, or Noida Deaf Society. These NGOs provide short-term training courses where deaf people often experience rapid growth in their learning, as the teachers use sign language.

7.7 BILINGUALISM

ISL is a complete language in itself. It can be used to teach any other language.

Deaf children can learn multiple languages through ISL. However, deaf children are not provided with a foundation for ISL, because most parents are hearing and do not use sign language. This means that deaf children lose their chance to learn language during the important early years.

Deaf children of deaf parents who have access to ISL from birth are able to do much better in life.

7.8 STATE LANGUAGES

In India, the language medium in schools is decided by the state, e.g. South India, Maharashtra, Gujarat, or Orissa. But deaf children are mostly unable to understand these languages.

Sign Language in Society



Notes

Sign Language in Society



Notes

In some deaf schools, the teachers focus on English, because many deaf people find it easier to learn English through ISL. Knowing English is also connected with job success.

7.9 INTERPRETERS

In India, we do not have many sign language interpreters in schools. Most of the teachers and staff in deaf schools are not skilled at sign language. There is a need to change and improve the existing system.

7.10 DEAF TEACHERS

Sometimes, deaf people are discouraged from taking up training and jobs in the field of teaching. As a result, deaf children do not have deaf teachers in their lives to look up to as role models. If there were many deaf teachers, it would surely inspire deaf learners.

It is important to implement policies and laws, such as the RPWD Act and RTE Act, that encourage accessible education. There are 5% reserved seats for learners with disabilities at higher education levels as well.

7.11 CONCLUSION

It is extremely important that all deaf children get the opportunity to develop a foundation of language in their early years, so they can succeed in learning other languages later. Unfortunately, bilingual education is only offered at very few schools in India such as:

- Indore Deaf Bilingual Academy (IDBA), Madhya Pradesh
- Happy Hands School for the Deaf, Odisha
- Bajaj Institute of Learning Dehradun
- The Haryana Welfare Society for Persons with Speech and Hearing Impairment has decided to implement Sign bilingual approach in its eight centres across Haryana and has hired many deaf teachers too. Early intervention centres too have deaf teachers.
- Two schools in Punjab one in Patiala and another in Amritsar, they have started following Bilingual approach to teaching.

In most other schools, there is no bilingual education that meets the needs of deaf children. It is important to have deaf teachers in schools, because many successful deaf people credit their success to deaf mentors and teachers. When

we are able to provide a learning environment that meets the needs of deaf learners, deaf education will truly thrive.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2

1. Which method of education is not very successful in deaf education?
2. What is expected to be strong support for ISL in deaf education?
3. True/False
 - a. ISL is of no use. (True/ False)
 - b. Deaf learners can also share their ideas very well. (True/ False)
 - c. Sign Language communication is possible from a distance. (True/ False)
 - d. Oralism is not good for all deaf. (True/ False)
 - e. Educated & skilled deaf can become teachers. (True/ False)



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- More than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who do not know sign language.
- Early intervention centres and schools for the deaf still mostly follow an oral approach.
- Lack of early access to sign language, which deaf children can acquire easily and fluently in homes and schools, has a lifelong negative impact.
- In RCI's teacher training courses, three approaches to teaching the deaf are prescribed: Oral approach, total communication and bilingual approach.
- Only the Oral approach to teaching the deaf kids has not shown the desired results and literacy and academic success remain poor. It is a big challenge.
- Use of sign language in bilingual approach can give better results as there will be no communication barriers between teacher and learners.
- It is hoped that the ISLRTC and RPWD Act will support the promotion of ISL in education.

Sign Language in Society



Notes

Sign Language in Society



Notes

- ISLRTC develops manpower by running RCI approved courses to produce deaf teachers and ISL interpreters.
- The Right to Education (RTE) Act establishes education as a fundamental right for all children aged of 6 to 14 whereas the RPWD mandates free education for people with disabilities until the age of 18 years.
- RPWD also mandates to train persons with disabilities to become teachers.
- Trained deaf teachers would be a boon to the deaf learners as deaf teachers will have the deaf perspective, there will be no communication gap and learners will express themselves and learn better.
- At present, many deaf learners and adults join NGOs like the Deaf Enabled Foundation, Ishara Foundation, or Noida Deaf Society to learn and get training from deaf teachers who use sign language.
- Learners fail to learn in schools where hearing teachers only speak.
- Indore Deaf Bilingual Academy (IDBA), Madhya Pradesh, Happy Hands School for the Deaf, Odisha, Bajaj Institute of Learning, Dehradun and a few schools in Haryana and Punjab use bilingual approach and teachers use sign language to teach. Such schools are few in number.
- In Bilingual approach, ISL is used to teach as a second language and other school subjects. ISL is a complete language and can be used to teach any subject.
- In most states of India, schools prefer to use state language like Gujrati, Marathi or Hindi but most deaf people find it easier to learn English. Knowledge of English is also helpful in higher education, training and jobs.
- In India, there is no provision for using to use interpreters in schools. Hence, the majority of learners continue to suffer as teachers don't sign and there are no interpreters.
- Early intervention with deaf adults as language role models, more deaf teachers, more ISL training to hearing teachers and more use of bilingual approach to teaching deaf children can improve quality of education.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. 'The best method for teaching deaf children is oralism' – do you agree or disagree? Why?

Sign Language in Society



Notes

2. What does the Right to Education (RTE) Act say? (Tick the correct option.)
 - a. In India, every child aged 5 to 13 has the fundamental right to education
 - b. In India, every child aged 7 to 16 has the fundamental right to education
 - c. In India, every child aged 5 to 15 has the fundamental right to education
 - d. In India, every child aged 6 to 14 has the fundamental right to education
3. What does 'late exposure to sign language' mean? Explain what this is and how it affects deaf children.
4. You are a deaf fluent ISL user who has just completed a teaching course. You are applying for a teaching position at a school for deaf children. This school has never hired a signing deaf teacher before. Explain to the school board why it will be advantageous for them to hire you.
5. Explain your views about the importance of ISL for deaf education?
6. Express your understanding about the RPWD Act 2016.
7. List the benefits of deaf teachers in schools.
8. What are the challenges faced by deaf learners during their education?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****7.1**

1.
 - a. Sign Bilingualism
 - b. Total Communication
 - c. Oralism
2. RCI is responsible for creating and running courses for professionals including teachers in deaf schools.
3. The Right to Education Act 2009.

7.2

4. Pure method of oral education is found not successful for deaf Education.

MODULE -3

Structure and Grammar of ISL

You are now aware that research has proved that sign languages are as true languages as spoken languages, which means that they are governed by their own grammar rules and are not dependent on any spoken language. You are also aware that sign languages are not universal with each country having its own sign language. As a result, each sign language has its own vocabulary and grammar. In this module, you will learn about the structure and grammar of Indian sign language.

This module will cover the following lessons:

8. Manual and non-manual components of ISL
9. Word-level structures
10. Sentence types
11. The meaning of signs