



Proposal



**Challenges faced by
children who are Deaf
or Hard of Hearing**

EMx 2019 Challenges

Difficulties in communicating with parents at home and their role in early intervention and therapy.





Most deaf children, especially those born to hearing parents have little or no communication with their family members.

There is no effort for Parents and Deaf Children to learn a Common Language i.e. Sign Language

Why ?

- Parents are apprehensive that if their child learns sign language, he or she will not be able to integrate well into the hearing world.
- Lack of awareness regarding benefits of sign language inhibits them from learning it and using it to effectively communicate with their child.





Hampered Learning

In absence of communication with the family, the process of learning of the deaf child gets impaired. The child has virtually no communication and language development until he/she reaches school.

Lack of bonding

Lack of communication with the family results in deaf children growing up with a

- feeling of isolation,
- lot of stress and
- low confidence in their abilities.



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Parents don't understand the importance of a bilingual education and focus only on speech acquisition.

The child misses out on crucial cognitive, social, emotional and holistic development that comes from learning visual languages in the early years.





“Attitudinal barriers are seen in educational institutions and amongst parents to introduce sign language to their child. Sign language should be introduced as a language and not a tool”.

Deaf Education Expert & Entrepreneur

“ As a deaf and parent to a deaf child , I consider myself extremely fortunate to have the understanding and experience to give my child a bilingual and bicultural exposure”.

Deaf Parent

“Lack of awareness, access, and training of parents to an accessible language are inhibitors in the support they can give their children...”

“...Lack of interpreters in all spheres of public life and the **lack of captioning in media** make information inaccessible, which leads to isolation of deaf children and (adults). Parents fail to understand the need for an accessible language for their child”

- Dr. Surinder Randhawa , Deaf Educator

This is Prashant...

Deaf Professional , Male, 28, Mumbai

Prashant lost his hearing when he was 8 months old. His parents were keen that he learn to speak, so he was put in a school with speech therapy intervention from Class 1 to 4. He could understand and pronounce a few words but couldn't follow long conversations, so he was put in a residential deaf school where he got a fully signing environment.

While signs opened up a whole new world for Prashant, it closeted him from that of his parents. His parents were not at all keen to learn the language. His parents were advised to learn signs for communication, but since the course stretched from morning to evening, his mother couldn't enrol.

With time, Prashant's mother started using a few signs but this father only wrote if he needed to communicate. This completely restricted the sharing and interactions he had with his parents. Prashant's sister is also deaf and uses lip movements and signs.



This is Raheel...

Sign Language Trainer, Female, 28, Mumbai

For almost 20 years, Raheel communicated with her parents through her brother. If she had problems, she would try and deal with it on her own, because communication with parents was limited. She tried signing with her mother, but her mother would refuse to sign. Annoyed, Raheel started pretending that she did not understand her mother when household chores such as purchasing groceries, helping around the house, etc was assigned to her. This pushed, her mother to use signs to communicate with Raheel.

As her mother started learning signs and signing, her equations with Raheel completely changed. Now, Raheel and her mom share a special bond with each other and the family. Her mother eagerly waits for Raheel to get home, so that she can share with her updates and news on TV. They bond over cricket scores and Rahul Dravid and all in sign language.



This is Raymond...

Deaf Graduate, Male, Mumbai

Raymond was 4 months old when his hearing disability was confirmed. He went for the early intervention program at NIHH, where he learned art, played with toys, etc. but no parent-child intervention method was suggested. Therefore his parents did not understand the need for sign language communication with the child.

When his school started teaching sign language to the parent and child, Raymond started teaching his mom signs at home as well. She would use a mix of home signs and ISL and this really helped them open up, communicate and share with each other. Raymond still does not communicate much with the rest of his family because even though they understand sign language, they would like Raymond to use speech..

Raymond's fondest memory of his mother is when she was at the audiography clinic with him and signed the crocodile and the monkey story to him (using home signs).

They insisted that I wear hearing aids so that he could hear them speak and would also insist that he speak full sentences. If I wanted water, they would ask me to say **“Please give me some water” and not just “water”**. Most of the times I would not be given water unless I asked for it in a complete sentence.

Deaf Professional

My parents barely understand me, so whenever I want to communicate with them, I mostly do so through my sister. If they do not understand her as well, we request our cousin to be the conduit with our parents.

Deaf Adult



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Deaf children born to deaf parents are likely to grow up different in a social, cultural, and linguistic milieu language.

More than **90%** of deaf children are born to hearing parents and most hearing parents don't make an attempt to learn sign language



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Some possible solution ideas:

1. **Informed counselling and Whatsapp/in-person support network** to help the parents understand the importance of communication with their child.
2. **Short duration sign language courses, ISL trainers across India, modules or Apps for parents** that help parents to sign with their child.
3. Applications/Games that parents and family members can use to **communicate with their infants using sign language and visual cues.**
Parent and child learn sign language together as they play and grow !