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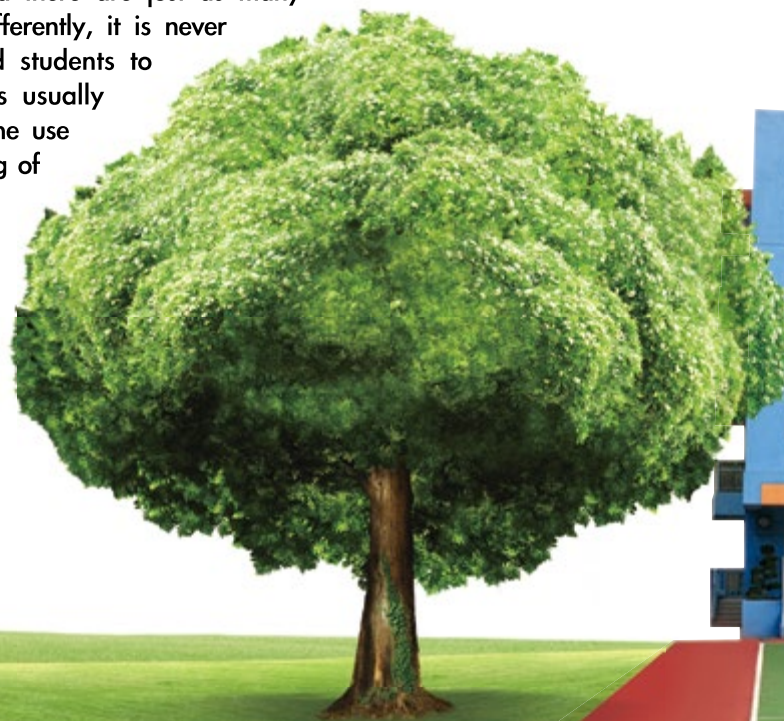


1. Preface

Lutheran School for the Deaf was established in 1968 to create a unique campus environment with the aim of promoting an all-around development in hearing-impaired students through fostering the spirit of holistic education and caring for their diverse learning needs. Over the years we have been the provider of educational services that cater to the different needs of students with serious to profound hearing loss. It is our experience that a hearing impediment does not only hinder the reception of sounds, but also affects the learning of language in severe cases. If language is not well-developed, not only do hearing-impaired students find it difficult to hear and speak with other people in their daily lives, but the development of their reading and writing skills is also adversely impacted, thereby affecting the effectiveness of learning. As a result, the enhancement of their language proficiency has been the primary goal of the school.

As there are many homonyms in Chinese, and there are just as many words that look the same on the lips but mean differently, it is never easy for the severe to profound hearing-impaired students to learn through their residual hearing. Our teachers usually apply visual strategies to reinforce their teaching. The use of sign language helps students to grasp the meaning of words more quickly and easily.

To cater to the needs and abilities of students, the school uses sign language, speech or an integrated communication mode in teaching nowadays. Generally speaking, in addition to the use of speech as the main medium of instruction, sign language is also used in classroom teaching. The use of sign language makes the subject matter of the lessons easier for students to understand. In a few years' time, the Lutheran School for the Deaf will become the only school for hearing-impaired students in Hong Kong. Today is the right time for the school to develop sign language through integrating the different varieties of sign language in use so that arrangements for the implementation of sign-assisted instruction may be worked out among the school, the teaching staff, students and parents.



2. An Introduction to Sign Language

Hearing-impaired communities around the world have developed unique language systems based on their needs. Sign language, a communication method whereby messages transmitted by hand movements are perceived visually, has naturally become one of the commonly used media of communication adopted by hearing-impaired groups. In this context, the umbrella term "sign language" is used to refer to the different varieties of sign language in use. The following is a brief introduction to sign language.

2.1 A Brief Description of Sign Language

- 2.1.1 A sign is a notice, a signal or a symbol. Although in Chinese, sign language is literally translated as 'language by hand', it does not only rely on hand movements, but also on lip movements, facial expressions and body movements to express meaning. The sign language of Hong Kong is expressed in a similar way. When hearing-impaired people use sign language, they generally do not speak at the same time. Many of them vocalize while they sign, but their vocalizations do not necessarily constitute meaningful speech.
- 2.1.2 Sign language is a kind of language, of equal status to the spoken language used by hearing people. According to a study by William Stokoe, the classification of American Sign Language (ASL) as a natural language has been validated by other linguists. Common to the hearing-impaired communities in the United States and Canada, ASL uses gestures, body movements and facial expressions for the transmission of messages (Stokoe, 1976). Although sign language is not a global language, sign languages in different communities can still evolve continually in step with their own cultural developments. From this, it can be seen that sign language has existed all along in different hearing-impaired communities and is one of their main media of communication.

2.2 Sign Language Syntax

The common syntactical structures are classified according to the ordering of sentence elements: subject (S), object (O), and predicate (V). Six arrangements, SOV, SVO, VOS, VSO, OSV, and OVS can be identified. The same arrangements are present in the spoken languages of the world as well. SOV is the main syntactical structure in sign language. Although there are different sign languages in different countries, the syntax of all sign languages is roughly the same.



2.3 Three common varieties of sign language

- 2.3.1 Natural Sign Language
This is the medium of communication being used by the majority of severe-to-profound hearing-impaired persons. All natural sign languages have a unique syntax, so that even though sign languages in different communities have their own conventional syntax rules, hearing-impaired communities in different localities can still communicate with each other through sign language because natural sign language is strongly pictographic and ideographic.
- 2.3.2 Sign-supported Chinese (SSC)
It is also known as grammatical sign language, and as Chinese Sign Language in Hong Kong. At the present school it is known as Sign-supported Chinese. It is a mode of communication used by hearing people in Hong Kong whereby speech and signs are used at the same time. The syntax used is similar to that of spoken Chinese.

2.3.3 Finger Spelling

It is variously known as the manual alphabet, spelling sign language, phonetic sign language, or writing through finger spelling in different countries. In some countries, words and phrases can be shown through the use of finger spelling. Borrowings from the American manual alphabet have been incorporated into Hong Kong Sign Language. However, as people in the streets do not know how to spell Cantonese, Chinese words and phrases cannot be finger-spelt.



3. Language Barrier for Hearing-impaired Students

Language is the most important communication tool for people to exchange experiences, thoughts and feelings, and for facilitating mutual understanding. At the same time, human thinking can only be done through language. Therefore, the failure to establish an effective language system will affect the linguistic, cognitive and social developments of students with hearing impairment. The effects are as follows :



3.1 Impact on Language

3.1.1 As hearing impairment can be congenital or acquired, moderate or severe, the language development of hearing-impaired students may be influenced by a number of factors, namely, the degree of hearing impairment, knowledge of language before the onset of deafness, effectiveness in the use of hearing aids and cochlea implants, follow-up speech and auditory training, and the main language used in the home.



3.1.2 As the speech reception capabilities of hearing-impaired students are limited, especially those who are severely- to- profoundly hearing-impaired, even students with the assistance of hearing aids or cochlea implants cannot rely on hearing alone for the reception of messages, they must also rely on a wide range of visual media, for example, lip reading, body language, sign language, images, visual signals, etc. in order to receive information accurately.

3.1.3 If the parents of hearing-impaired students are also hearing-impaired and using sign language, sign language would then become the mother tongue of hearing impaired students. However, most parents of hearing-impaired students are hearing people who do not understand sign language. In the case of some severely hearing-impaired students who rely on the use of sign language for communication, if their parents use only speech for communication with them, they may not be able to acquire

language directly and personally from their parents, then they have to learn it at school or from their peers instead. In this situation the process of establishing a language system becomes more complicated and is slower than that of their hearing peers.

3.2 Cognitive Effects

The lack of an effective language as a learning medium in the long term will affect the development of abstract thinking, concept formation and analytic skills of hearing-impaired students. As there is a significant gap between their own and their hearing peers' awareness of things and happenings around them, their mastery and consolidation of abstract words, of the deeper meaning of words, and of structurally convoluted sentences and unfamiliar concepts, become much more difficult than those of their hearing peers. Failure to give timely and systematic assistance with language will directly affect their abilities to understand things and to express themselves, as well as their reading and writing skills.



3.3 Social Impact

Most hearing-impaired students pronounce words incorrectly, use wrong words and phrases, make incomplete statements, and make statements that exhibit faulty syntax or whose meaning is obscure, thereby hindering them in their communication with hearing people. As a result, some hearing-impaired students who are weak in expressing themselves orally may have to resort to using pen and paper to communicate with hearing people in everyday life.



4. Sign Language Promotes the Language Development of Hearing-impaired Students in the Early Stages

As early language development has a profound effect on students' learning and development, it is absolutely necessary to give timely and systematic language training to help them learn effectively.

- 4.1 For the majority of severe-to-profound hearing-impaired students, as the use of hearing devices may not satisfactorily resolve the impediment that arises from the difficulty in auditory reception, they resort to the use of sign language for help in expressing themselves and in facilitating communication with other people. Therefore, they tend to use a more convenient sensory modality, vision, to help them learn. They think that communicating with sign language, a mode of communication that is pictographic, is faster and more convenient than using speech.
- 4.2 Proficiency in the use of sign language makes it easier for hearing-impaired students to form concepts and establish language in the early stages, as well as to promote the development of cognition and logical thinking for the mastery of complex subject matter in the academic subjects.
- 4.3 Sign language is systematic and has to be learnt. Generally speaking, hearing people who have not received training in it would find it difficult to sustain in-depth communication with hearing-impaired students using sign language. Therefore, family members of hearing-impaired students should learn sign language systematically, in order to effectively communicate with them and help them with their studies.
- 4.4 Since the 1980s, many scholars have conducted research into the communication mode that effectively promotes learning in severely-to- profoundly hearing-impaired students, but results remain inconclusive as to whether speech, sign language, or a combination of both, is the most effective. Despite the uncertainty, the school will continue to explore into the effectiveness of using sign language to support teaching.

5. Development of Sign Languages Internationally

Sign language is not a global language. Local sign languages have evolved as a result of the social and cultural backgrounds in different countries. With the development of a variety of sign languages, hundreds of sign languages are in use in hearing-impaired communities around the world at present. Certain circumstances that relate to the development of sign language internationally are as follows:

5.1 Traditionally, hearing-impaired people tend to live together in communities, thus forming a very strong culture of the hearing-impaired, as in the United States, where the majority of hearing-impaired people use American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is the language with the third largest number of users in the United States (Nakamura, 2003).



5.2 At present, countries in which sign languages have acquired legal status and have been in formal use in education for the hearing-impaired, are as follows: Sweden (1981), Finland (1995), Netherlands (1996), Thailand (1999), Brazil (2002), Iceland (2004), Austria (2005), Belgium (2006), New Zealand (2006), Spain (2007) and Japan (2007). New Zealand is the first country in the world where sign language has the same statutory status as English.

5.3 On July 20, 2010, the International Conference on Education of the Deaf (ICED 2010) announced that resolutions denying the use of sign language in educational settings for hearing-impaired children adopted at the Milan meeting (ICED 1880) were annulled, expressed regret for the serious injury that meeting had caused, and called on countries of the world to ensure that all languages and modes of communication were to be accepted and respected in the education of hearing-impaired children.



6. Hong Kong Sign Language: Origins, Development, and the Present Situation

For more than 50 years, most schools for the hearing-impaired in Hong Kong encouraged students to learn through speech. However, the present situation in Hong Kong, as in the majority of countries and regions, is that sign language has been in existence in hearing-impaired communities. The circumstances that relate to the development of sign language are reported in documents of the local government and social organizations as follows:

- 6.1 The Hong Kong Government has been concerned all along with the development of sign language for the hearing-impaired. In the 1981 Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan, the Government proposed to look into the methods of communication for the deaf. In 1982, the Education Department established a working group to begin research into sign language and published 〈香港聾人手語字彙〉 in 1990 (Special Education Section, Education Department, 1990).
- 6.2 Some schools for hearing-impaired children and training institutions for the hearing-impaired sponsored by the Social Welfare Department in Hong Kong used sign language as the medium of communication with the hearing-impaired. The Social Welfare Department recognised sign language as a bridge to the edification of deaf people and that its use could facilitate teaching and learning for both teachers and students. (Social Welfare Department, 1972).
- 6.3 In 2008, China signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹ and the Convention applies to the Hong Kong

¹An outline of part of the Convention:

Article 2 "Languages include spoken and signed languages and other forms of non spoken languages."

Article 9 "To provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters."

Article 21 "Recognizing and promoting the use of sign language," and "accepting and facilitating the use of sign language."

Article 24 "Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community" ; "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education."

Article 30 "Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture."

Special Administrative Region as well. Article 21 of the Convention stipulates that in addition to the rights accorded to hearing-impaired persons to learn and use sign language, service agencies and organizations must recognize the status, and promote the development, of sign language. Article 30 clearly points out that sign language is a language, and has equal status as a language to the spoken language of hearing people.

- 6.4 Hong Kong does not have a unified sign language. Hong Kong Sign Language has become more diversified with the evolution of history, culture and the modes of communication of the hearing-impaired.
- 6.5 Hong Kong Sign Language is mainly derived from Chinese Sign Language. The sign language in China is divided into the variety used in the South, such as in Guangzhou; and that used in the north, such as in Beijing. In the 1950s some people from Shanghai started schools for hearing-impaired children in Hong Kong - the Overseas Chinese School for the Deaf and Hiu Chong School for the Deaf.
- 6.6 During the 1960s, four schools for children with hearing impairment were established in Hong Kong. Adhering to the prevalent trend for the education of hearing-impaired children, the four schools used spoken Cantonese as the main medium of instruction. As sign language had not been systematically developed at that time, the present school fell back on using Cued Speech to assist students in learning to speak. Although there were no formal sign language courses for students in the schools for the deaf, hearing-impaired students tended to use sign language as the medium of communication in their daily discourse.



- 6.7 In the 1980s, as more and more hearing-impaired people came back to Hong Kong from overseas, many new service centres for the hearing-impaired and churches sponsored by hearing-impaired people abroad were being established in Hong Kong; and as more and more hearing-impaired people in Hong Kong participated in activities held internationally, sign vocabulary words from abroad entered Hong Kong Sign Language, gradually evolving it into a more diversified sign language.
- 6.8 Hong Kong Sign Language and the sign language in the Mainland have a lot in common. Since the handover, as more contacts are being made and closer ties forged between Hong Kong and the Mainland, Hong Kong Sign Language has become more heavily influenced by the sign language in the Mainland.
- 6.9 Over the years, with the improvement in technology for hearing devices, the development of auditory rehabilitation and speech therapy services, the ability to make better use of residue hearing on the part of hearing-impaired students, and an increasing number of hearing-impaired students mainstreamed in ordinary schools, opportunities for contact and communication with hearing students have increased. As a result, as the opportunities for using speech in communication increase, the necessity to use speech and sign language at the same time has become more common. Whenever the interlocutors encounter unfamiliar vocabulary they do not know how to express, they resort to using speech, exaggerated lip shapes and signs to facilitate communication. In this way, Hong Kong Sign Language has evolved in its vocabulary, syntax and application.



- 6.10 Due to changes in society over the years, and that no organization has been in charge of collating information on Hong Kong sign language, the original sign language vocabulary has long been inadequate for the following reasons:
- 6.10.1 As the majority of sign language vocabulary has been created by different hearing-impaired communities, a sign can sometimes be expressed in five to six different ways.
- 6.10.2 Though sign language booklets have been produced by some local social welfare organizations, the vocabulary is limited mostly to describing things in everyday life, and as such is insufficient in meeting the needs of teaching, such as in Mathematics, Liberal Studies, Information and Communication Technology, Visual Arts, General Science, etc. There is no sign language equivalents for the terminology in these subjects.
- 6.10.3 The creation and publication of certain sign language vocabulary, such as names of people and places, coinages and trendy expressions, do not usually catch up with the brisk pace of the times. Additionally, as sign language is unlike Putonghua or English, in which new words may be pronounced and spelt, it has no such means for making up for the lack of vocabulary, as new signs are mainly based on the actual images of things.

In view of the above reasons, we believe that the school needs to develop a uniform set of sign language vocabulary for use by teachers and students in order to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning.



7. Theory and Practice of Teaching at LSD

The vast majority of the students of the school are severely to profoundly hearing-impaired. However, as there are differences in their language development, the school will not only have to actively develop their ability to speak and write and to speech-read, but also to teach them to use sign language as a medium to help with their learning, so that they may communicate with other hearing-impaired people and hearing people in different ways to achieve lifelong learning. Some of the school's theories about teaching hearing-impaired students are as follows:

7.1 Communicating with Hearing-impaired Students

We recognize that Total Communication (TC)² is favourable for learning by hearing-impaired students. The majority of researchers in education for the hearing-impaired agree that it is a diversified and flexible method of communication that can help hearing-impaired students to continually develop language and to enhance the effectiveness of learning, so that students and their families may be able to communicate effectively (Baker, S., 1994).



² Total Communication is a set of theories developed for teaching hearing-impaired children by David Denton at the Maryland School for the Deaf in 1967, and later christened by Roy Holcomb. The central idea is a multi-sensory method of communication using spoken language, sign language including facial expressions and body movements, and writing and visuals including pictures, videos and actual objects. It is generally adopted in the education for the hearing-impaired in various parts of the world including the UK, USA, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Scandinavian countries such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. For detailed information please refer to: Total Communication Learning to Use Different Communication, <http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/tc.jsp>

7.2 Strategies for teaching hearing-impaired students

Depending on the abilities and diverse needs of students, speech, sign language, or sign-supported Chinese is used appropriately in classroom teaching. In all learning activities including classroom teaching, morning assemblies, weekly assemblies and extra-curricular activities, both speech and sign language with accompanying facial expressions and body movements, as well as writing and visuals including pictures, videos and actual objects, are used to support student learning, minimizing the obstacles they encounter and making it easier for them to master and consolidate the subject matter of their lessons.



8. Application of Sign Language at LSD: The Current Situation

Since the school's inception in 1968, the number of new students who relied on sign language for learning has varied from year to year, and sign language proficiency of staff has varied from person to person as well. The present situation of the application of sign language is as follows:

8.1 Teaching Staff

When new staff are first inducted into the school, they usually have had little contact with sign language, but they will pick up some signs in daily use through contact with students and staff who are hearing-impaired, so that even though they have no formal training in sign language, they can sign at various levels of proficiency. Whenever teachers try to explain the meaning of words or concepts in sign language and encounter difficulties, they resort to using different methods, including lip shapes, body movements, facial expressions, demonstrations, and even creating their own signs to help students understand and remember. The following is a rundown of how sign language is used by teaching staff in classroom situations:



- 8.1.1 In the Chinese classroom, when a hearing teacher is teaching, he uses speech and sign language³ at the same time if the situation calls for it. Sign-supported Chinese is used when explaining the meaning of a piece of writing.

³ Main reasons for teaching staff of the school to use Sign-supported Chinese in teaching:

- As the ways in which students learn and their levels of hearing impairment differ, some students can only learn and communicate effectively through listening to the teacher's speech and speech-reading, and as the majority of students respond orally and in signs at the same time during learning activities, the teacher has to speak and sign at the same time to cater to the different learning needs of students.
- In an actual teaching situation, even when a sign language interpreter is hired for collaborative teaching in the classroom, if he does not know the subject being taught, he can only express the general ideas of the subject matter under discussion in sign language. As a result, a teacher has to speak and sign at the same time.
- As most teaching staff of the school are hearing, they usually use speech as the medium of instruction, and when they sign at the same time, they are subconsciously influenced by the Chinese narrative sequence and rules of syntax to a greater or lesser extent, thus the sign language used in the classroom develops in the direction of Sign-supported Chinese.
- Use of speech by teachers in classroom teaching facilitates the learning of Chinese by hearing-impaired students. In this way students should have a better grasp of written Chinese, and write fewer confusable sentences.
- As the opportunities for hearing-impaired people and hearing people to come into contact increase, more and more hearing-impaired people mimic the lip shapes of actual speech and in some instances, even emit the sounds of speech, while signing. For this reason, the use of Sign-supported Chinese at school will help students interact with the outside world.

- 8.1.2 In the English classroom, the teacher uses finger spelling. When he teaches new vocabulary, he uses the American manual alphabet to spell the new words.
- 8.1.3 In teaching mathematics and other academic subjects, whenever teachers explain certain concepts of a subject, analyse word problems, teach new knowledge and interact with students in discussions, the majority of staff will summarise the contents of the lesson in sign language, rather than glossing word by word in signs.

8.2 Students

Most of them have had no exposure to sign language before admission, and the school has made no arrangements for them to learn sign language systematically. However, students do pick up some sign language by themselves, or learn through watching their peers sign. Although it is quite easy for them to learn and use simple sign language to express themselves, in fact their knowledge of sign language is quite limited, and what they do know about it is inadequate to meet their communication and learning needs.



8.3 Parents

The majority of parents of the school are hearing people with no formal training in sign language. They tend to think that the learning of sign language hinders their hearing-impaired children from learning the spoken language so that they may have difficulty interacting with the outside world in the future. As a result, they expect their children to communicate exclusively with speech, and when they see their children use only sign language in their communications, they refuse to accept it. However, some parents give approval for their children to learn sign language, and they learn it too in order to communicate with their children.



9. Adoption of Sign-assisted Teaching: Some Viewpoints

As most students of the school are severely to profoundly hearing impaired, and some of them are special-needs students as well, it may not be feasible for them to receive and understand messages through hearing alone, and reliance on the visual modality for support may be needed. Since the founding of the school, the use of various strategies such as text, visuals, actual objects, body language, sign language and gestures by the teaching staff to realise the learning potential of students has been encouraged. Teachers may use sign language as a supplementary medium of instruction or a communication tool, subject to the sign language proficiency of the individual teacher and the individual differences of students and the nature of the learning activities. We recognise that:

9.1 Total Communication can help hearing-impaired students of the school learn in an environment where there are the fewest barriers. Therefore, in all learning activities including classroom teaching, morning assemblies, weekly assemblies and extra-curricular activities, teaching staff are encouraged to, in addition to using speech and sign language simultaneously, make use of texts and visuals including images, actual objects and videos to assist in teaching.



9.2 In teaching and learning, teachers may, according to the needs of students, use sign language and other visual strategies to develop their learning potential. Students of the school may use sign language as a basis, an intermediary, or a tool for learning and the mastery of language.

9.3 Whenever hearing-impaired students of the school learn, the use of the visual modality to complement their hearing handicap, and the use of sign language to complement the insufficiency of speech, may help them to build concepts and language systems. Therefore, the

earlier they learn sign language, the more beneficial it is for their learning and their intellectual and language developments.

9.4 Sign language helps hearing-impaired students of the school to learn. As it is a visual-gestural language, staff use it in addition to speech in teaching activities to help students understand, absorb and consolidate knowledge.

9.5 Sign language can help hearing-impaired students to express emotions. As it is a visual-gestural language, students use it in addition to speech at the same time when they communicate with people, particularly family members, teaching staff, classmates and friends, to reduce the chances of being misunderstood, to promote mutual understanding, as well as to establish friendly relationships.



9.6 When used as a medium of instruction and a communication tool, in situations where certain sign vocabulary items do not exist in hearing-impaired communities, sign language can help students learn. A teacher may suggest a similar sign that students can understand, create a new sign or paraphrase the intended sign on the basis of context so that the meaning of the vocabulary item in question may be understood.

9.7 Sign language, like spoken language, needs to be mastered through studying it. As most hearing-impaired students cannot learn sign language from their hearing parents, so the school, as a school for children with hearing impairment, will provide opportunities for them to learn sign language, and also promote the use of sign language, so that the public have the opportunity to know about it.

10. Using Sign Language at LSD: Recent Trends

In view of the continuing development of society and the present needs for teaching, a committee for sign-assisted teaching has been set up to plan a series of projects for developing sign language and to actively promote the development of sign-assisted teaching. Members of the committee will hold joint meetings with officials of the Education Bureau to discuss and formulate school-based policies and measures to promote learning in regard to the education and language development of hearing-impaired children. Committee members include the principal, administrators, primary and secondary teaching staff including hearing-impaired teaching staff, hearing-impaired teaching assistants and social workers. In order to make staff of the school understand clearly the theory and practice of sign-assisted teaching, the committee is preparing an instruction manual for them. Contents of the manual include: the school's vision and mission, the teaching mode adopted by the school and guidelines on sign-assisted teaching.



In addition, the school has applied for a grant from the Quality Education Fund to implement a three-year plan: The Development of New Sign Language Vocabulary for Special Education Needs for NSS Curriculum, briefly referred to as the Sign-Assisted Instruction Programme, to address the needs of basic education and the new senior secondary curriculum. Items for development under the Programme are summarised as follows:

- 10.1 The school must collate information on the sign language vocabularies used by the teaching staff to communicate with students inside and outside the classroom so that a unified sign vocabulary may be developed for common use to help hearing-impaired students acquire a systematic knowledge of sign language for enhancing their communication proficiency and learning efficiency.

At the same time, as students have to face the rapid changes in information and cultural developments in modern society, the school has to aim at building a rich sign language vocabulary so that students can master enough vocabulary to cope with the social changes and new things as they emerge. The tasks of collating data for a common sign language vocabulary and providing examples for the use of sign language in communication are as follows:

- 10.1.1 Collect the sign language vocabulary in common use and the ways they are signed idiomatically;
- 10.1.2 Set down the principles for creating new signs;
- 10.1.3 If a common vocabulary item is realised by more than one sign, representatives of agencies serving the hearing-impaired will be invited to form a sign language development panel to settle on a unified sign to be used by teaching staff of the school after careful deliberation in accordance with the principles laid down in 10.1.2.
- 10.1.4 If a sign for a particular vocabulary item is not available from local hearing-impaired communities for use in communication, the Sign Language Development Panel will carry out research and create a new sign in accordance with the principles above-mentioned.
- 10.1.5 Videotapes of signs adopted after consultation will be made for use in teaching. After post-production processes such as editing and compiling into a suitable format, the recorded video clips will finally be uploaded to the intranet and internet.



10.2 Developing sign language vocabulary needed for teaching various subjects in the school serves the purpose of helping students understand the subject matter taught and consolidate what they have learnt. In order to fulfil the needs of teaching nowadays, such as to cope with the changes in academic subjects and subject matter in the new senior secondary curriculum, the school must adapt to changes in the curriculum, by developing new sign vocabulary used in teaching, in order to enhance communication and teaching effectiveness. The procedure for developing sign language vocabulary needed for various subjects within the school, and providing illustrations for use in teaching the subjects, is as follows:

- 10.2.1 Subject panels collect vocabularies needed for teaching various subjects at different levels. The Sign Language Development Panel would then investigate whether there are any idiomatic signs for the vocabularies in the hearing-impaired communities.
- 10.2.2 If a common vocabulary item is realised by more than one sign, the Sign Language Development Panel will process it in accordance with the procedure outlined in 10.1.2 above, finally settling on a unified sign for adoption by the teaching staff.
- 10.2.3 If a sign for a vocabulary item in a particular subject is not available from the local hearing-impaired communities for use in communication, the Sign Language Development Panel will consult different subject panels, carry out research and create a new sign.

10.2.4 Videotapes of signs adopted after consultation will be made for use in teaching. After post-production processes such as editing and compiling into a suitable format, the recorded video clips will finally be uploaded to the intranet and internet.



10.3 Training and upgrading of staff sign language proficiency, and enhancing the effectiveness of teaching:

10.3.1 Provide sign language training for new teaching staff through hiring outside service agencies to run sign language courses for them every year, so that they may have an understanding of basic sign language and a mastery of the techniques of sign-assisted teaching to support their adoption of sign language for communication and as a medium of instruction;

10.3.2 In an analysis of the sign language courses offered by agencies serving the hearing-impaired in Hong Kong, it was found that sign language courses can be divided into four levels: elementary, intermediate, advanced and interpreter⁴. The school plans to provide a range of sign language courses at different levels for all staff, and expect them to attain the intermediate level of proficiency within three years⁵.

10.3.3 Promote an atmosphere for learning sign language at school so that teaching staff of the school can come to a common understanding about the application of sign language.



⁴ Sign language courses offered by service agencies of the hearing-impaired are divided into four levels: elementary, intermediate, intermediate and translator:

- Elementary level (approximately 15 hours of training): Mastery of about 500-800 basic vocabulary items is expected;
- Intermediate Level (approximately 15 hours of training): Mastery of 800-1600 basic vocabulary items is expected. Participants are also expected to combine words into sentences and dialogues for daily communication.
- Advanced Level (approximately 20 hours of training): Mastery of 1600-2400 basic vocabulary items is expected. Participants are also expected to combine words into sentences and situational dialogues for daily communication.
- Interpreter level (approximately 20 hours of training): Participants are expected to function as a sign language interpreter with the ability to interpret a stretch of conversation fluently.

⁵ Sign language courses held at school are divided into four levels: elementary, intermediate, advanced and professional. For details please refer to the Appendix.

- Elementary level (approximately 20 hours of training): Mastery of about 500-1000 basic vocabulary items is expected;
- Intermediate Level (approximately 20 hours of training): Mastery of 1000-2000 basic vocabulary items is expected. Participants are also expected to combine words into sentences and dialogues for daily communication.
- Advanced Level (approximately 20 hours of training): Mastery of 2000-3000 basic vocabulary items is expected. Participants are also expected to combine words into sentences and situational dialogues for daily communication.
- Professional level (approximately 20 hours of training): Mastery of 3000-5000 basic vocabulary items and the vocabularies used in teaching various subjects are expected. Participants are also expected to use sign language fluently to assist teaching.

10.3.4 In all school activities, sign language interpretation will be arranged whenever necessary. This arrangement provides opportunities for students, teaching staff and parents to come into contact with sign language through different channels so that they understand that sign language is a mode of communication for the hearing-impaired.

10.3.5 Implement the programme "Sign Language for All" at morning assemblies in the primary and secondary sections, where the teaching staff in charge provide sign language training for students and staff of the school by teaching them about oral and sign language vocabularies.



10.3.6 Organize the activity 'Sign A Story' during the morning assemblies in which students are encouraged to participate. Through telling a story in sign language, the expressive skills of students will be enhanced.

10.3.7 "Sign Language Week" is to be held through a variety of activities, such as games, performances and competitions to encourage students and teaching staff to use natural sign language at the activities.

10.4 Provide support for and give encouragement to parents of hearing-impaired students of the school to learn sign language in order to help them communicate with their children, and raise their awareness of how their children are doing at school:

10.4.1 Hold seminars for parents of new students so that they have a full understanding of the policy and methodology of using sign language to assist teaching, and how sign-assisted teaching can benefit their children linguistically, cognitively, socially and academically.

10.4.2 Every year hold sign language classes for parents. Subject matter may be adapted to the developments in school, for example, names of new teaching staff in sign language, vocabulary of a new academic subject;

and to social developments, for example, the news, trendy expressions, new people and things. The class can be held at elementary and intermediate levels to enhance parents' knowledge of sign language.



10.5 Promote developments in sign language education to the general public so that hearing people get to know about sign language and the needs of hearing-impaired people, and encourage interaction between the able-bodied and the handicapped so that the barrier between them may be broken down, thus paving the way for building an egalitarian and integrated society. The school plans to hold a wide range of activities to promote sign language:



10.5.1 Promote sign language through organizing sign language workshops and lectures for hearing-impaired students and their teachers in ordinary schools;

10.5.2 Organize sign language fun fares and Culture Days of the Hearing-impaired;

10.5.3 Arrange a round of sign language mini-classes at integrated activities;

10.5.4 Publicize sign-assisted teaching through e-mail, letters, faxes, displaying banners, or contacts with the media;

10.5.5 Convert an existing classroom into a sign language resource centre to store teaching resources and materials on the latest developments of sign-assisted teaching.

10.5.6 Collect and arrange the materials on sign language (see Appendix). Mount a display, produce teaching CDs, and print sign language booklets and pamphlets on sign-assisted teaching achievements for sharing;

10.5.7 A website production company will be contracted to build a website for using sign language in teaching. The website permits uploading, searching, editing or deleting video/audio/text data, testing and assessment. Digital audio and video data of sign language vocabulary will be uploaded to the internet by grade level and academic subject. Users may access the website to obtain the English and Cantonese pronunciations of sign language vocabulary, their pinyin, glossary and illustrations, etc. They may also make use of the test and assessment component to evaluate the extent of their knowledge about sign language. As well, the cross-platform sign language vocabulary database may be updated at any time to allow sustainable development for the reference of students and teachers as well as the general public, and as a channel for the public to get acquainted with sign language.

11. Summary and Conclusions

Sign language is a pictographic language which relies on vision for the transmission and reception of messages. Explanations of subject matter in sign language in class by teachers of the school can enhance students' knowledge and understanding of vocabulary, facilitate communication and promote learning efficiency, so that they gain a sense of success from the process of learning. In the next few years, we will focus on promoting and integrating the sign language in use by teaching staff to enable students to use Chinese, English and sign language effectively. We will strengthen their speech training to enable them to attain mastery of both spoken and written Chinese. And, in order to bring about an egalitarian and integrated society for the hearing-impaired, we will endeavour to do the best we can to break down the barrier between them and their hearing peers.

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- Nakamura, K., Monaghan, L., Schmalting, C., and Turner, G. Many Ways to Be Deaf : International Variation in Deaf Communities. Washington, DC : Gallaudet University Press, 2003.
- Stokoe, W.C. A Dictionary of American Sign Language on Linguistic Principles. Linstok Press, 1976.
- 香港聾人手語字彙 Special Education Section, Education Department, Hong Kong, 1990.
- Speaking with Signs. Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong, 1972.

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Appendix: Reference materials in Chinese on teaching sign language held by school: Hong Kong Sign Language

- 聾人手語 Speaking with Signs (香港政府, 1972)
- 香港聾人手語字彙 (香港教育署特殊教育組, 1990)
- 香港手語圖例入門 (王繼鋒, 2000)
- 香港手語小手冊 (電影雙周刊, 2001)
- 香港手語 1 (香港聾人協進會, 2004)
- 香港手語課程 初級 (香港聾人福利促進會, 2005)
- 香港手語課程 中級 (香港聾人福利促進會, 2006)
- 手語翻譯員資格評核 法庭專用詞彙光碟 (香港社會服務聯會, 2006)
- 香港手語課程 高級 (香港聾人福利促進會, 2007)
- 香港手語詞典 (香港中文大學, 鄧慧蘭編撰, 2007)
- 日常手語應用字彙篇 第一冊
(香港中華基督教青年會聯青聾人中心, 2009)
- 日常手語應用字彙篇 第二冊
(香港中華基督教青年會聯青聾人中心, 2009)

Chinese Sign Language

- 中國手語 (華夏出版社, 1990)
- 中國手語 續篇 (華夏出版社, 1991)
- 中國手語 教學輔導 (華夏出版社, 1992)
- 中國手語系列 聾校手語詞匯手冊 一二三年級 (華夏出版社, 1999)
- 中國手語系列 聾校手語詞匯手冊 四五六六年級 (華夏出版社, 1999)

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- 中國手語系列 計算機專業手語 (華夏出版社, 2005)
- 中國手語 修訂版 上冊 (華夏出版社, 2007)
- 中國手語 修訂版 下冊 (華夏出版社, 2007)
- 中國手語系列 北京奧運會和殘運會常用手語 (華夏出版社, 2008)

Taiwanese Sign Language

- 手語大師 1 (現代經典, 1997)
- 手語大師 2 (現代經典, 1997)
- 手語大師 3 (現代經典, 1997)
- 手語大師 4 (現代經典, 1999)
- 手語大師系列 文字手語典 (現代經典, 1998)
- 手語大師系列 我的第一本手語書 (現代經典, 1998)
- 手語教材 (教育部特殊教育工作小組, 2006)

International Sign Language

- 世界手語入門 (大展出版社, 1991)
- 多國手語拾掇 (上海教育出版社, 1996)
- 國際手語 常用基本詞匯 (上海市聾人協會, 2004)
- 手語 / 七國手語 (世界聾人聯合會 聯合製作, 2005)

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