

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a large, tangled mass of thin, colorful string. The string is in various colors including blue, green, yellow, and red, and is completely entangled, forming a complex, chaotic shape. The background is dark and out of focus.

Accessibility is not a choice. It is the person's right to be visible

Raising awareness and learning from the
Deaf community

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An abstract network diagram featuring a complex web of thin grey lines connecting various circular nodes. The nodes are color-coded: green on the left, red in the center, and blue on the right. Some nodes are solid, while others have patterns like stripes or concentric circles. The background is a light grey grid of dots.

Icebreaker

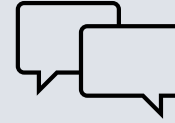
Deaf Awareness

Can you think about the answer to the following questions?

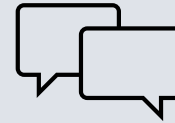
- Is Deafness an invisible disability?
- What are the words you associate with deafness?
- How can you tell if a person is Deaf?
- Can Deaf people Drive?
- Do Deaf people have poor writing skills in comparison with hearing people?
- What is the difference, according to you, between the word **Deaf** and the word **deaf**?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lecture you will be able to



Challenge **assumptions** and misconceptions about deafness.



Develop **awareness** of Deaf identities, culture, and BSL.



Foster **acceptance** of Deaf people as a linguistic and cultural community.



Promote **adaptation** through inclusive and accessible practice.

Deaf Awareness Week

4th – 10th May 2026

Right to understand- Together, we break barriers.

Beyond accessibility: visibility, inclusion and rights

Breaking down barriers to full accessibility for people with hearing loss.

Celebrates the richness, resilience and visibility of Deaf culture and communities.

Highlights challenges faced by Deaf people, including communication barriers, social isolation and unequal access to services and employment.

Calls for greater access to interpreters, captioning, inclusive communication tools and improved public awareness.

Promotes communication access as a fundamental human right for everyone.



welkom

witaj

Bienvenue

velkommen

hoşgeldiniz

salve

добро
пожаловать

Welcome

wilkommen

välkommen

bonveno

willkommen

ようこそ

benvenuto

vitajte

bienvenido

Welcome!





The story of your name

Does your name tell something about you?



My sign name is



Key Aspects of BSL Sign Names

Types: Descriptive names (e.g., "curly hair," "dimples") or Initialized names (e.g., the letter 'M' signed in a special way).

Purpose: To make communication faster, more familiar, and less formal than constant fingerspelling.

Cultural Context: They are usually given to you by a Deaf friend, teacher, or community member.

Can a sign
language
name for a
person
change over
the time?

Change in physical appearance

Personal achievements or new roles

Life transitions

Respect and community acceptance

The person's own preference

Avoiding duplication

Can you fingerspell your name?

BSL Fingerspelling Alphabet





Let's reflect for a moment

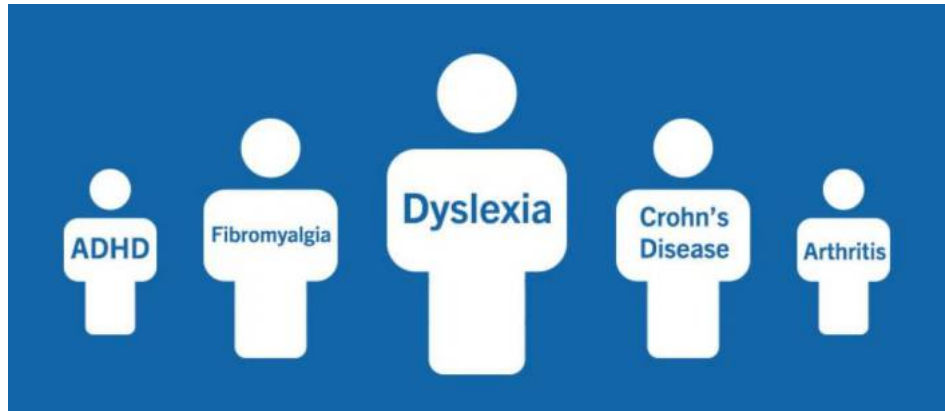
What are the words you
associate with
“disability”?





Not every disability is visible..

Not every disability is understood



Is Deafness an invisible disability?

- How can you tell if a person is Deaf?
- They don't respond or notice when you try to talk to them.
- Their voice and speech may sound different
- They study your mouth whilst you talk to them.
- Some of them wear hearing aids or cochlear implants
- Some of them have a hearing dog for the Deaf
- A good number use sign language

The four A's

1.Assumption

2.Awareness

3.Acceptance

4.Adaptation

To which “A”
each of
these
sentences
refer to?

- Talk to the Deaf person rather than to the interpreter
- Every Deaf person know sign language
- Communication with a Deaf person without an interpreter might not be possible
- A Deaf person is able to talk
- The interpreter for the Deaf should wear a black top to be more visible
- Deaf people can see better then hearing people
- Every Deaf person can lip read well
- Speak slowly when you are with a Deaf person
- Misunderstanding are part of the communication (especially during online meetings)
- Sit in front of the Deaf person and the interpreter during a meeting
- Turn on live captions during online meetings without the interpreter
- Written communication in English with Deaf people is not always clear
- A sign language class with more than 20 students is not effective

In UK -

54,321 Deaf children born to
hearing parents



Mainstream school pros and cons

Pros	Cons
Great education, i.e. more variety of subjects like creative writing, drama classes and more emphasis on maths and science.	Usually, deaf children will have to study longer and harder than their hearing peers because they have to double check if they understood everything that was said in class.
More opportunities to socialise with both deaf and hearing peers.	Your child might miss out on experiencing the deaf culture. They might also be the only deaf person in the school and may need an interpreter or assistive technology to facilitate communication.
Might boost their self-esteem knowing they are in “regular” education classes and motivate them to speak up for themselves.	Having special communication needs that need to be addressed might cause feelings of embarrassment and result in isolation. Most deaf people are visual, so they might also be easily distracted in mainstream schools and then miss important information.
Many mainstream schools are very accommodating, helping create a deaf-specific educational programme with teachers and administrators, designed to meet your child’s specific needs.	There is no distinction between varying levels of deafness or ability. In turn, students’ vocabulary and grammar suffer, because they could not hear to learn.





Deaf school pros and cons

Pros	Cons
Easier communication. No language barrier to overcome. Meaning, your child does not need to figure out what the teacher is saying.	Some deaf schools aren't necessarily offering the same level of vigorous and challenging education, some even reporting lower reading levels.
More unity among peers. Children can often relate easier to others that are more like themselves.	Limited exposure to the hearing world and less socialising with their hearing peers. This might impact your child's social growth and cause them to be more withdrawn from new experiences.
Usually a more individualised approach to deafness, based on your child's level of deafness and communication abilities.	Oral communication might be stunted if the deaf school only incorporates signing.
Improved participation in after school activities, for example, playing sports and participating in choir and theatre productions.	Many deaf students have had difficulties adapting to the integrated environment of university when only exposed to deaf schools.
Classrooms are smaller to better fit deaf student's needs. Fewer distractions and interruptions.	The availability and location of these types of schools are often the biggest barriers.



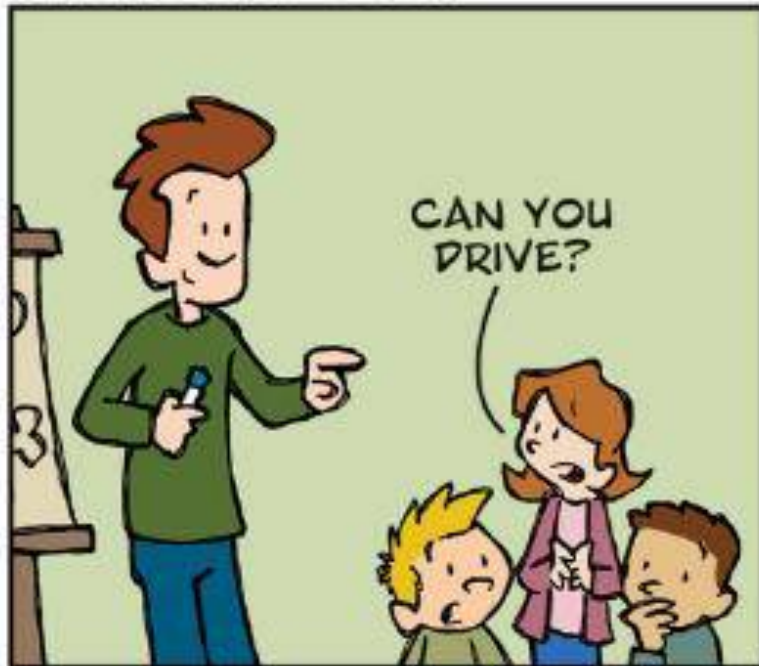


Social differences between deaf and hearing people

DEAF CULTURE	HEARING CULTURE	
Information is shared	Talking about other people is rude	A ↓
Can discuss money	Money is a private matter	
Personal remarks shows a caring attitude	Personal questions = nosy	A ↓
Normal conversation	Taboos	
Clear and direct in criticism	Use 'sandwich approach' feedback	A ↓
Stamping on the floor to get attention	Lost their temper or they are angry	
Waving hands (or approval)	Clapping (approval)	A ↓
Pointing is allowed.	Pointing is considered to be bad manners	
Over-staying your welcome and long good-byers are acceptable	Leaving promptly is considered to be good time keeping	A

CAN DEAF PEOPLE DRIVE?

THAT DEAF GUY

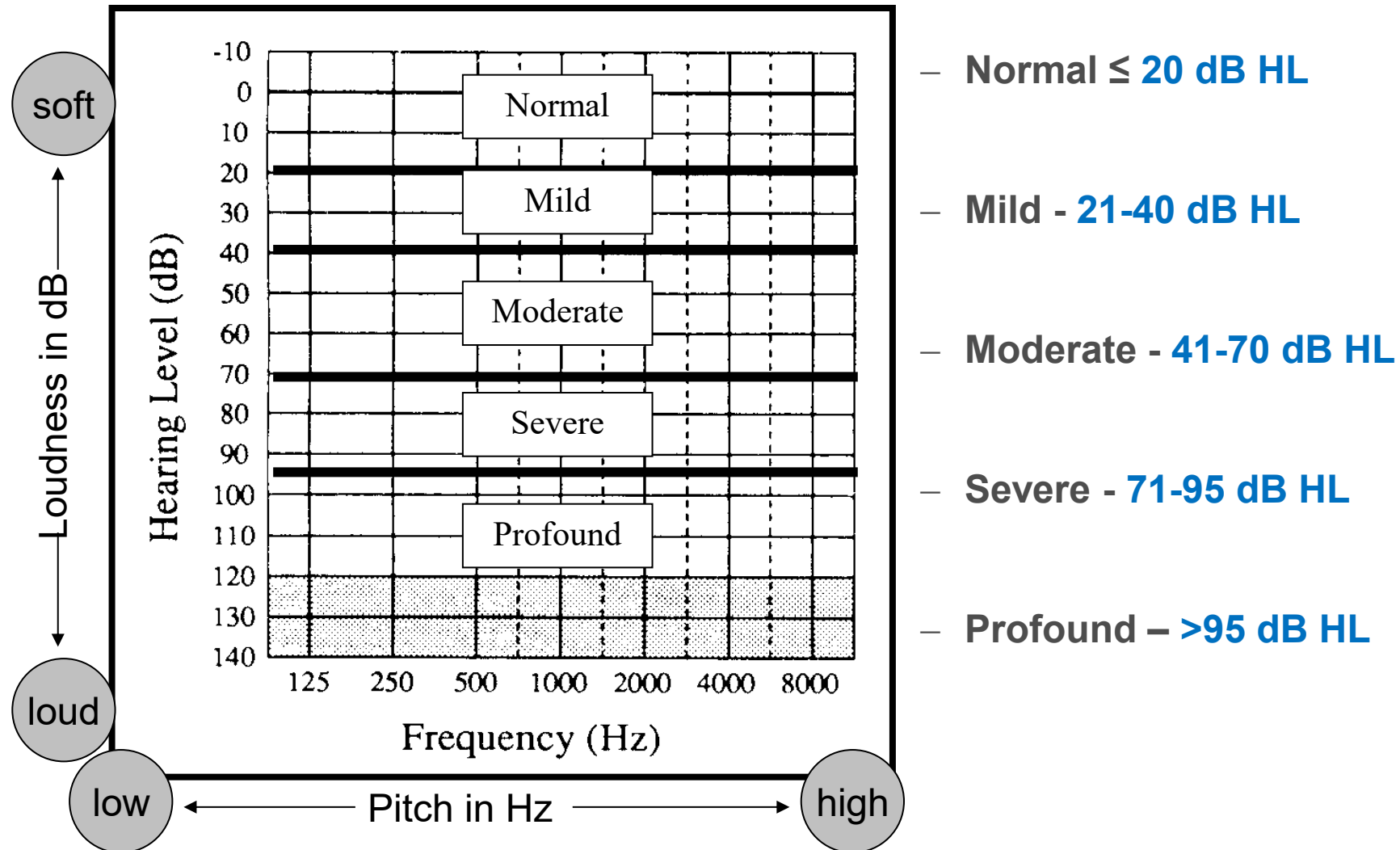


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BY MATT & KAY DAIGLE



Degrees of Hearing Loss



Is there a universal sign language?

- ISL – Irish Sign Language
- LSF – Langue des Signes Française
- LIS - Lingua dei Segni Italiana
- DGS - Deutsche Gebärdensprache
- LSE - Lengua de Signos Españoles
- ASL – American Sign Language [also used in Canada except for Quebec]
- LSQ – Langue des Signes Québécoise
 - etc., etc.,
- IS – International Sign Language → not a proper language (!)

TERMINOLOGY OF DEAFNESS

Deaf and Dumb

Deafened

“The Deaf”

Deaf

Deaf as a post

Deaf Mute

deaf

Deafblind

Hearing Impaired

Hard of Hearing

Which terms are appropriate within the deaf/Deaf Community?

A large orange circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

Rules of the Deaf Community- communication

- Approach and stand in front
- Wave
- Tapping
- Finger pointing
- Flash lighting
- Stamp/bang



How a Deaf person better understands you

- No bright background
- Don't wear sunglasses
- Don't cover your mouth
- Don't obstruct your mouth with an object (book)
- Speak clearly and a bit slower
- Do not mumble
- Eye contact
- No need to shout
- Repeat and write if necessary



Break



BREAK



Deaf identity
and belonging across a lifespan
(learning from the community)

Early Childhood – Cultural Disconnect
Challenges with Hearing Peers
Growing Awareness
Social Exclusion
Identity Development
Confidence & Advocacy

Reflections on cochlear implants
(learning from Omar, our Deaf student)

Early Hearing History

Childhood Experience

Adaptation Over Time

Changes During COVID & Sixth Form

Personal Perspective



OFFICIAL TRAILER

Current and future developments
at the University of Reading (UK)

BSL Student population profile



Year	Stage	Students	Departments	Staff
2025-26	1,2&3	126	All departments	3
2024-25	1,2&3	118	+ new departments	5
2023-24	1,2&3	117	+ new departments	5
2022-23	1,2	77	+ Film and TV	5
2021-22	1,2&3	92	+ Institute of Education + Maths	5
2020-21	1,2&3	137	+ Applied Linguistics	5
2019-20	1,2&3	110	+ Speech Therapy	6
2018-19	1&2	90	+ Education	5
2017-18	1	47	Psychology/English Lit	4
2016	Free course	16		2

Why our students choose BSL?



British Sign Language to be introduced as GCSE in England

🕒 21 December 2023 · 💬 133 Comments



GETTY IMAGES

| GCSE pupils will be able to choose to study British Sign Language from 2025

Rollout
delayed...planning
now for 2030
(originally Sept
2025)

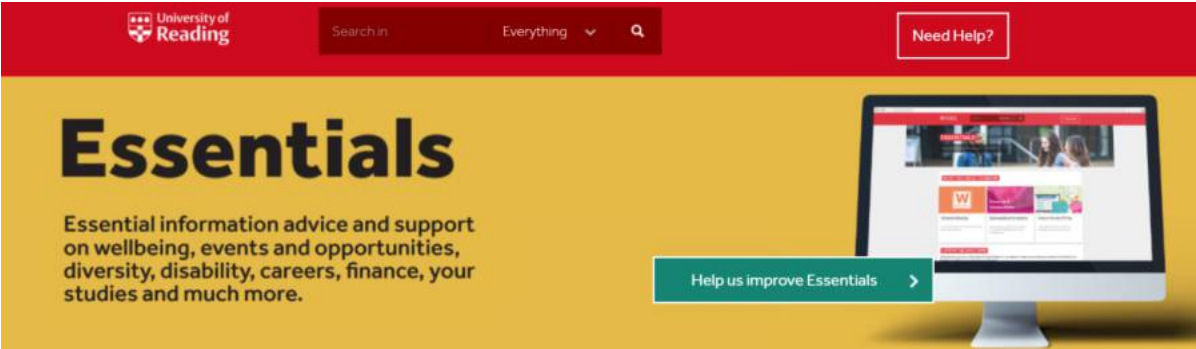
Supporting your students (UoR examples)

- BB Ally (accessibility indicator)
- Reasonable adjustments – DAS
- Green stickers. Sign language/spoken language
- Engage and include – University-wide initiatives (i.e. hearing dogs for the Deaf event)
- Co- curricular activities – Languages for All- BSL Student-led club
- BSL Society
- Extra-curricular activities – Languages for All Sign Language film club
- Deaf awareness events and training for students (DHM)

Current project @UoR and extra-curricular initiatives



The BSL Student-led club and BSL Society

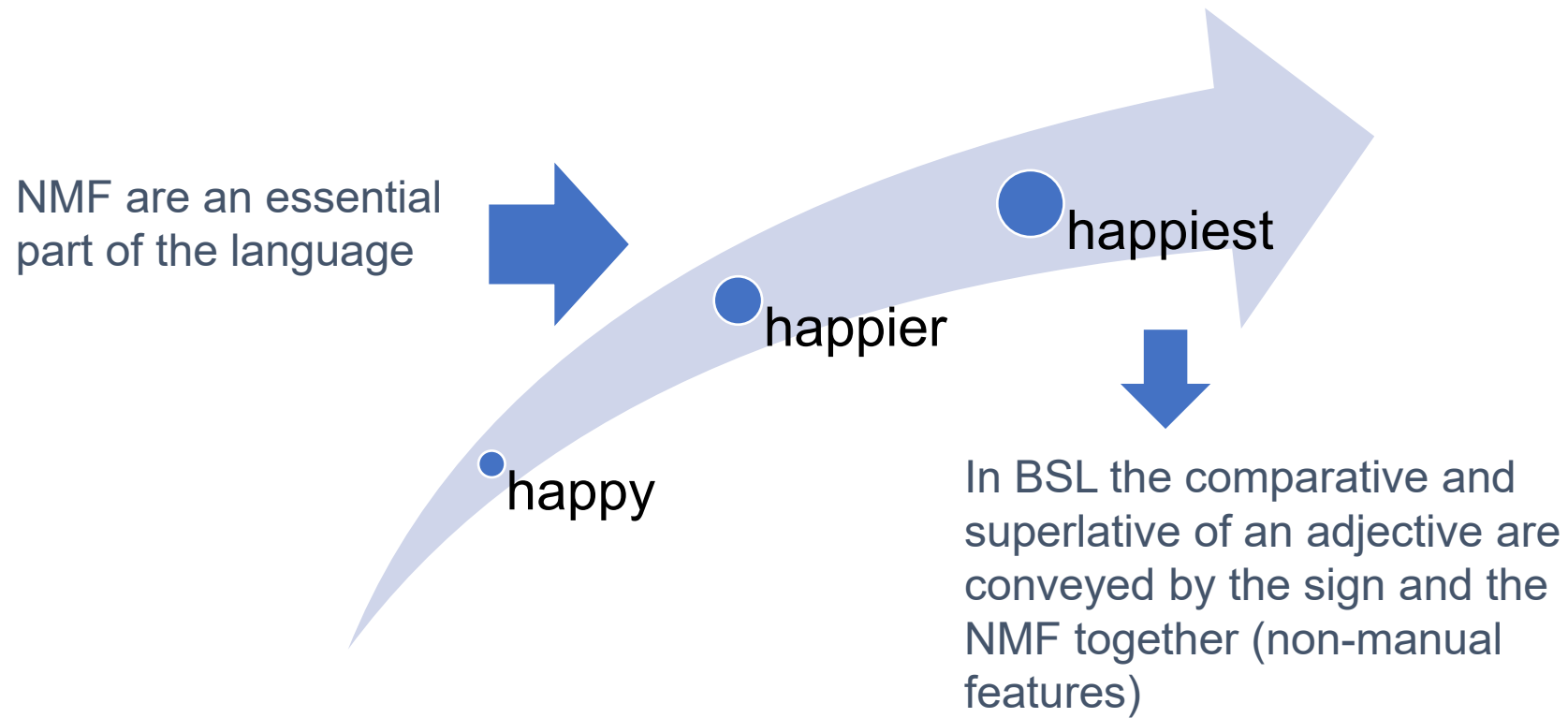


Combining signed and spoken language studies

Comparing visual and spoken languages in terms of:

- Expressing and convey emotions
- Enhance student interactional skills
- Reinforce vocabulary retention
- Comparing syntaxes and grammar
- Learning about culture

Wheel of emotions



It's not just about the hands...

(some examples)

Sign language	Spoken languages
Eyes	Mood/feeling(adj)/questions
Non Manual Features (NMF)	Intonation/question words/feeling (adj)
Signing space	Formal informal
Signing pace	Fluency
Mouth shape	Superlative
Tongue	Negation
Waving	Turn taking
Eye brows	Hypothesis/conditional

Writing skills

Do Deaf people have poor writing skills in comparison with hearing people?

BSL vs English language: a different structure

English Language	British Sign Language
SVO (Subject Verb Object) A man walks over the bridge	1.SOV – Man over bridge walk 2.OSV – Over bridge man walk 3.VOS – Walk overs bridge man
Question words in English	Question words in BSL
Who ate the cake?	Cake ate who?
Where is the shop?	Shop where?
When were you born?	Born you when?
How did it happen?	Happen how?

The question words in BSL to be fully conveyed need the sign, placement and the NMF (non manual features)

Learning about culture

Slang

Gender division

Politically correctness

Inclusion

Vulgarism

Technology

Irony

New signs



Hi all. You will see various signs on this website that the LGBTQ+ community is currently using.

The language changes. New signs and old signs



Skills
Development
Scotland

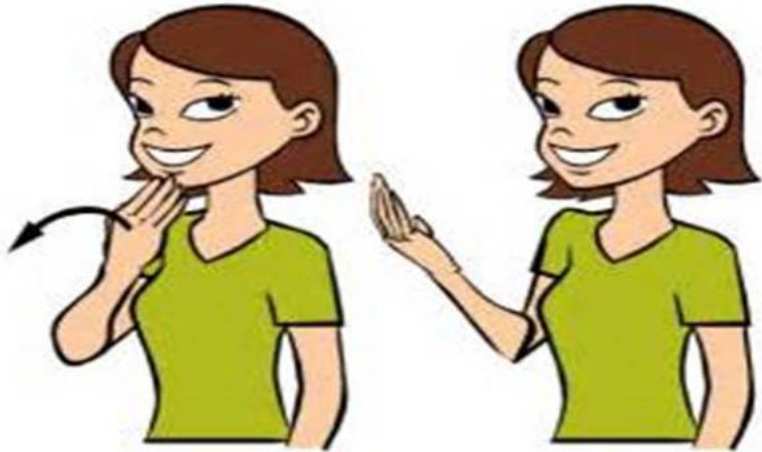


Cyber Security

But in practice?? Interactive scenarios

1. Missed Announcement
2. The Doctor's Appointment
3. The Group Conversation
4. The Emergency Situation
5. The Workplace Meeting
6. The Phone Call Barrier
7. The Classroom Struggle
8. The Cinema Experience
9. The Simple Interaction
10. The Yoga class scenario

Thank you!



Any questions?



Resources (1)

Chris Fonseca – Follow the signs

[Follow The Signs | Chris Fonseca & Harry Jardine](#)

The enchanting music of sign language – Christine Sun Kim (TED talks)

[The enchanting music of sign language | Christine Sun Kim](#)

Name me Lawand (2022) - Trailer

[New trailer for Name Me Lawand - in UK/Ireland cinemas 7 July 2023 | BFI](#)

CODA

[\(30\) CODA — Official Trailer | Apple TV+ - YouTube](#)

Sound of Metal

[\(30\) Sound of Metal – Official Trailer | Prime Video - YouTube](#)

Children of a lesser God

[Children of a Lesser God \(1986\) Trailer #1 | Movieclips Classic Trailers](#)

Sorda (Deaf)

[Trailer SORDA, von Eva Libertad \(OV/de\), ab 6. November im Kino](#)

Resources (2)

[Essentials](#) (section Opportunities)

[The Student-led British Sign Language Club](#)

[British Sign Language Video Dictionary](#)

[New British Sign Language allows people to talk about climate change](#)

[Basics of BSL: Empowering Neurodiverse Individuals](#)

The University of Reading's Winter and Spring 2024 Children's
Lecture with BSL Interpreters:

[The Magic of Languages](#), [Imagining the Imaginary with A.F. Harold](#)

[British Sign Language to be introduced as GCSE in England - BBC News](#)

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