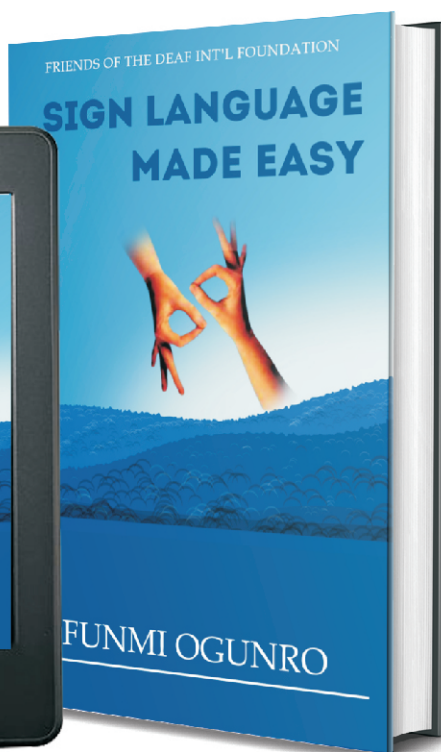




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By Funmi Ogunro



Contact

Friends of the Deaf Foundation (FDF)
34, Adamo-Agunfoye Road, Ikorodu, Lagos.
+2348032223015, +2349077576100
friendsofthedeaff@gmail.com
Facebook: Friends of the Deaf Foundation (FDF)

DEDICATION



This book is dedicated God Almighty, who commissioned me to be part of the solution to the major challenge of the Deaf. He is the one who told me **“Bridge the communication gap with sign language.”**

This book is also dedicated to all who are passionate about sign language and wish to help bridge the communication gap.

APPRECIATION



I appreciate all sign language teachers and students of Friends of the Deaf Int'l Foundation (FDF) online classes. Our Basic class teachers are fantastic and our Intermediate Class Teachers are wonderful building on the basics. God bless and enlarge you all. You all made learning sign language easy at FDF.

Special appreciation also to many others who put in efforts to ensure this book is produced on time and with quality.

Special appreciation goes to Dr Magdalene Irozuru, Director of Dental Services, Plateau State Hospitals Management Board, Jos, who brought this vision to limelight and helped to get it started. I am indeed grateful Ma.

FOREWARD



Language is a tool of communication it is part of a culture of a people and a means of identification. We all need to communicate and be understood. The Deaf people are not left out. Sign language is a very vital means of communicating with the deaf. Everyone should learn it and teach others too.

Learning sign language with FDF is fun, interesting and I have met many great teachers who make the lessons easy to learn.

I encourage everyone to learn sign language, help teach the Deaf Children and most importantly, help the Deaf included into your world. This will help you enter the Deaf culture with ease.

This book **SIGN LANGUAGE MADE EASY WITH FDF** is handy, easy to read and follow. So practicing the simple steps, identifying the words and regular checking and cross checking improves you speedily.

Get the book for yourself and one for a friend. If you have to give a gift, give this book and you will be changing the life of someone for the better.

Get the book for yourself and one for a friend. If you have to give a gift, give this book and you will be changing the life of someone for the better.

I encourage everyone to learn and embrace sign language, use this book.

Dr Magdalene Irozuru.

ABOUT FDF



Friends of the Deaf Int'l Foundation (FDF) is a Non-government, Non- political, Not for- profit NGO set up by divine inspiration. Registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGOs), Lagos State Office of Disability Affairs (LASODA).

It started on 14th June 2017 at 34, Adamo-Agunfoye Road, Ikorodu Lagos and now reaching many through it's various programs particularly the fdf-on-line classes.

Vision: Connecting the world with sign language and promoting inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Mission: Teaching sign language, Educating Deaf Children and creating opportunities for empowerment and inclusiveness for persons with disabilities through training, advocacy, employability skills, inclusive mental health and counselling.

Core Values: Education, Equal Rights, Empathy and Engagement

Beyond teaching Sign Language, we have a school for the Deaf and Deaf-blind children in Ikorodu, for we believe Education should be affordable and accessible for these children, (FDF ACADEMY), which started running online during the Coronavirus Pandemic. We hope to do more to support these children as we have engaged the service of Odaja Kiddies Academy.

We are opened for supports to ensure the Children get quality Education and be able to stand tall and independent in the society.

PREFACE



About two years after the death of my younger sister; Olushola Abidemi Shenkoya (Shollyz), who died in her final year at the University of Ilorin, I still felt so much pain of losing her 2 weeks to her wedding. I prayed to God to help take the pain and burden away, but I got the inspiration for FDF, but I didn't know how to go about it, but thank God for giving me a great mentor at EI Academy; Dr Rotimi Akinlesi (Less Privileged Children Encourage Initiative, EI). The vision was better sharpened and guided at my training experience at EI Academy which started in May, 2017.

Before her death, I didn't know the sign language and we had crude means of communicating with her at home. I had believed sign language was for her and I saw no need to learn it. Communication was difficult and anytime I met a deaf person, communication was usually a barrier. I was usually drawn to the deaf and I had always wanted to help. Her death was caused by Communication barrier at the hospital.

She could still be alive if there was someone who would help bridge the communication gap when she had typhoid, not knowing she was hiding her drugs and I remembered the nurses mentioned that they needed an interpreter at that time. I saw a need to learn the sign language and to encourage many others to embrace it after her demise on August 27th 2015.

It was not easy finding a teacher at that time and learning materials were not readily available. I searched and searched for a teacher. I finally got one anyway. I would go to her and after 2 days, I would be back again, but then, I would have forgotten all I learnt. So, rather than progressing, I would have to start afresh again and my money and precious time was usually not paying off. I decided to teach others online the little I have learnt.

Due to this challenge, I decided to make learning easy for many others who would want to learn the Sign Language by Setting up a Whatsapp group on my birthday, June 14 2017. Many Deaf and Interpreters and some who wished to learn joined FDF's Whatsapp group and that was how it all started.

I was surrounded with good teachers who volunteered to help teach Sign Language. And from time to time, we have been teaching Sign Language and connecting the world with sign language on FDF.

Together with my team, at various levels we have so far trained over two thousand people the Basic Sign Language. Many pupils I teach as I work as a Phonics Teacher on part time in different schools have also benefited from my teaching on school assembly. I am really amazed how the hearing children come to love Sign Language. Many of them can sing the National Anthem in signed language and also sign and sing many other choruses.

Also, our Intermediate Sign Language Class students are now well able to communicate with the Deaf. Lessons taught the students are what I have compiled into the book in your hand hoping you will learn Sign Language with ease.

God bless FDF

Funmi Ogunro

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CHAPTER 1

BENEFITS OF LEARNING SIGN LANGUAGE

One of the best decisions in my life was learning the Sign Language. I am proud I can hear with my eyes and talk with my hands.

Acquiring Sign Language skills has benefits for hearing, children and adults as well, and some of those benefits might surprise you. It requires a slightly different learning process but still comes with a rich learning experience and it is a fantastic skill to have.

Too many times people reach out to me saying “I would love to learn Sign Language” or “I wish I can communicate in Sign Language”. Well, here are some of the benefits of learning Sign Language:

1. Sign Language introduces you to the Deaf Culture and community. When you learn a new oral language, you get to learn a lot about the country, the culture and the people of the country of that particular language. It's like a by-product of learning a language. It's the same thing when it comes to learning sign language, as there is such a thing as a Deaf culture and Deaf community with its own rich history too.

2. You meet people and make new friends. And as part of being involved with different individual within the Deaf community, you can also build relationships with new people. If you are learning sign language with other people, you can learn together and get to know each other, online and offline. That is one of the benefits of being a part of FDF.

3. It gives your brain a good workout. Learning any languages will help to stimulate your brain and give it a good workout. Sign languages are no different. It can enhance its cognition, your creative thinking, brain functionality, memory, spatial awareness, mental rotation skills and so much more.

4. It's around us all the time: Do you know how many people communicates in their regional sign language? There are over 300 sign languages in existence. Conversations conducted in sign languages are happening around us all the time.

According to Modern Language Association, American Sign Language is the 3rd most studied modern/foreign language at colleges and universities in the U.S. It is also the 3rd or 4th most popular language in the U.S. after English and Spanish.

I bet you've never thought about that sign language as being a “competition” with the spoken languages. The Deaf community sometimes goes about their business unnoticed, but it is present throughout the world and around us.

5. It improves your peripheral vision and reaction time. According to a study by University of Sheffield, sign language users have better peripheral vision and reaction time. Because it's so visual-focused, you are more alert and your “visual field response” will benefit from this, something which is highly beneficial in many sports and even driving activity.

Scientists have found that “deaf people have exceptional visual abilities that hearing adults do not”. This is so because the deaf hear with the eyes. When speaking in sign language, it's not just about looking at the hand gestures but it's also about the facial expressions, lip reading and also observing the body language. But you can't watch that all at the same time, hence why your peripheral vision is important and is exercised frequently.

6. Learning sign languages is beneficial for children. You can't expect babies to talk to you, but it is easy to have some basic communications with the help of sign language.

Infants from the age of 6 months of age can begin to grasp the basic signs and research have shown that demonstrating basic signs to hearing babies can enhance their cognitive development, may lead to a richer, more positive interaction and bond between parent and child. And many scientists believe that learning multiple languages at a young age will allow your brain to make room for more languages too.

7. Sign language boosts your communication skills and help overcome the communication barrier. But if you are still in the learning phase, you can still overcome the communication barrier, provided that you are patient.

8. Helps you to become a better listener. Speaking in sign language requires you to fully focus and concentrate on the person speaking to you. Not only eye contacts is very important but you can't possibly sign words without physically looking at that word. By constantly focusing on the person speaking to you in sign language, it will make you a better listener.

9. You become more diverse. If you have knowledge of sign language, you will reach more people and your connection will extend to the Deaf community. Sign language can help you and your workplace to become more diverse.

Learning Sign language can boost your business and create more opportunities. Even basic sign language can go a long way to serve your customers.

10. It introduces you to the issue of deaf awareness. Learning sign language will naturally connect you to Deaf people and will give you a better understanding of the challenges that they face. And that naturally means you will learn more about deaf awareness and perhaps be interested in raising deaf awareness too.

11. It can be used all the time. If you are in somewhere noisy, like a bar or a nightclub, you can communicate in sign language. if you are underwater with a friend, you can just sign to each other. Those days of needing to shout in your ear above a noisy environment is potentially over.

12. Be able to help when required. Deaf people face daily challenges in the hearing world that we all live in. So, if you happen to be at a restaurant or a shop, and you spot a possible communication barrier between two people, you could assist.

If you are volunteering at an organization and you spot someone who is alone because they are the only deaf person, you can make them feel comfortable. Even in your own job, you can overcome any communication barriers with your deaf customers by speaking in sign language.

13. Helpful for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Some children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) struggle developing verbal communication. Learning a sign language can be a helpful communication tool for some children with ASD. Many children with ASD have demonstrated higher quality communication when using a sign language instead of or in addition to a spoken language.

14. You get to enjoy the beauty of communication. It's a beautiful language. It's expressive. It's fascinating. It's unique. It's graceful. It's beautiful.

15. Improves spelling – Research is showing that children who learn the basic sign language skills of signing the alphabet can have improved spelling skills. Signing helps to give kids another tool for remembering spelling words and leaves a larger imprint on the brain. Our muscles have their own mini-memories, so when we add signing a word to orally spelling the word it is easier to remember.

16. Improves classroom behaviors – Some teachers who have incorporated sign language into their hearing classrooms are finding that they have better classroom management. Using signs for things such as toilet and question can reduce interruptions and help keep students on track during lessons

17. Improves small motor skills – Sign language helps to develop small motor skills because of the dexterity required for communicating with hand gestures. Those who struggle with small muscle strength and coordination can build these skills as well as learn to communicate more efficiently with another language.

18. Builds overall communication skills – When you think of “language” you might just think of your spoken native language, such as English. However, language involves many other aspects including body language, emotional language, and more. An interesting study shows that people who can sign have improved abilities to read general body language – an integral part of communication.

Think of the other ways you communicate beyond spoken words, such as sending someone red roses because as a message that says love, because you have learned that different flowers have different emotional messages. Sign language also helps communicate emotions and sometimes allows people who can't express their emotions in words easily to still give voice to their feelings.

I'm sure there are many more benefits to explore.

CHAPTER 2

ALPHABETS, THE BUILDING BLOCK

The building blocks of any language are the words. And for sign language, the alphabets are the key to word formation. The first thing to master is the alphabets when learning the Sign Language. It can be learnt in less than an hour, but there's a need to constantly practice the fingerspelling exercise for good mastery.

People with deaf family members are expected to embrace sign language, for the sake of their deaf relation.

The Sign Language is a system of symbols and grammatical signal. Members of the Deaf community share and use this language to interact and to transmit culture. The deaf community consists not only the deaf, but also the hearing family, relations, children and ultimately friends of the deaf who identify with them.

There are over 300 sign languages currently existing worldwide. Each country generally has its own native sign language, and some have more than one. Sign language is a full-fledged natural

language completely separate and distinct from English. It contains all the fundamental features of language, with its own rules for pronunciation, word formation, and word order.

It is important for a learner of sign language to realize that a slight alteration of one of the parameters of sign language can automatically generate another meaning, which is unintended. So, it is important to pay rapt attention to the teacher. Sign language is so much interesting and fun to learn, if only you can pay attention to it.

The 5 parameters (Components of Sign Language) are:

1) Hand shapes: These are the shapes that the hand and fingers adopt. There are different hand shapes.

2) Location: This is the place where the signs are articulated on the body. It changes from sign to sign.

3) Movement: The direction that the sign moves (away from the body, towards the body, carrying specific information. It could be circular, quick or slow. Repetition of movement can have grammatical information.

4) Palm Orientation: This is the direction the palm faces. Each hand shapes can change orientation, and the palm facing out, down, up etc.

5) Non-Manual Components: They are the non-manual signal which includes facial expressions, body movement, the position of the head and any oral and spoken components to match the meaning the signer is trying to convey.

Basic Sign Language Handshapes:

1 Open hand/open five hand

2 Flat hand/ close five hand

3 Curve hand

4 Bent hand

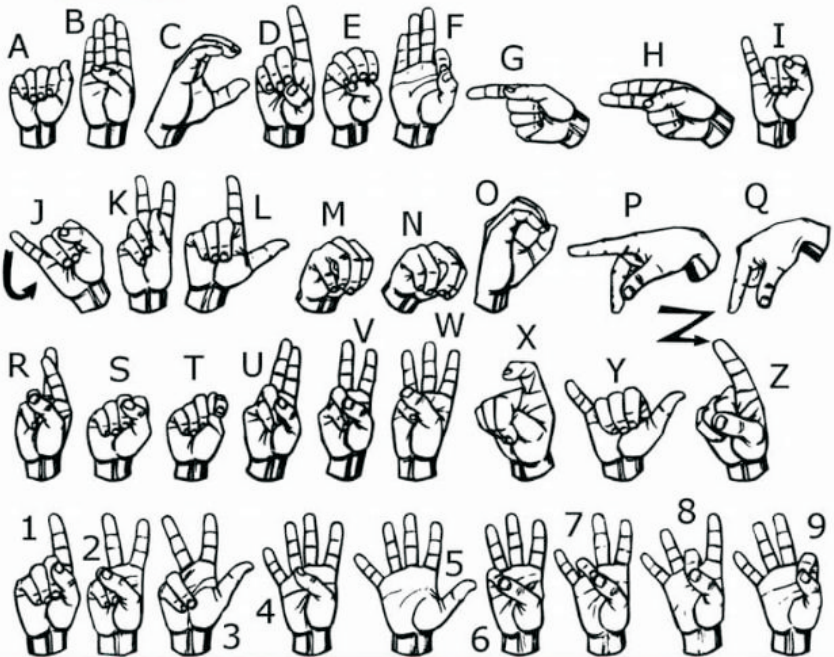
5 Claw hand

6 One hand

Now let's learn the Alphabets with the image in the next page.:



FRIENDS OF THE DEAF FOUNDATION (FDF)



Tel: 08032223015 e-mail: friendsofdeaff@gmail.com

CHAPTER 3

LETTER AND WORDS

Signing is not difficult if you put your mind to it. You need to be imaginative and imagine signs in a way that you will understand.

Once you have perfected the alphabets, its time to start word formation. The knowledge of the alphabets will help a great deal. Remember, the letters are the building blocks.

In English language, Verbs are action words. It is so also in sign language, but you must ensure that your body language matches what you sign with the hand. It is not just the hands talking when it comes to sign language.

Don't sign without any facial expression and you shouldn't cram sign language. Let it flow as an expression. Be free and don't freeze. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. The facial expressions help the recipient understand you better.

Let's look at these few imaginative examples:

1. Walk: Here, you imagine your hands are your feet. So, when you are walking, as you bring each foot forward, so also you do your hands in the air.

2. Dance: Now imagine your fingers are your legs and dance with them on your palm.

3. Eat: This is a common sign already. It is same with the next,

4. Drink: Take your imaginary cup and drink water.

5. Know: Since the brain is the center of all thinking and mental functions, so you gently touch you head.

6. Learn: You can just imagine that you are putting stuffs on the brain to show learning.

These few examples will help you understand how to sign easily.

TIPS FOR LEARNING PRONOUNS

I) Male related words are usually signed on the upper head.

When you watch our video tutorial on family related words, you will notice that words like "father, grandfather, boy, etc) are signed on the forehead.

II) Female related words are usually signed on the *cheeks and the chin*

These signs are derived from the age long tradition that males are the head of the family and females are the subordinates (male words signed on the upper head and female words signed on the lower head i.e cheeks).

III) Different alphabets being used for different signs.

For example:

i She is signed with the first letter "S"

ii His is signed with the last letter "S" but different sign space i.e forehead

iii Her is signed with the last letter "R"

iv He is signed with the last letter "E"

v Him is signed with the last letter "M"

IV) Whenever you are talking about yourself, ensure you point at yourself. Whenever you are talking about another person, ensure you sign towards that person. And when you are talking about a number of persons, ensure you move your hands to ensure that the receiver knows that you are talking about more than one person.

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING WITH SONGS

When I started learning sign language, I usually forget what my teacher thought me. But I remember my first time of signing a song was when Mr Samuel James and Olaoluwa Bayonle added me to a particular song they were recording in 2017 RCCG convention. It happened that the person to help them hold the phone camera was not available. I volunteered to help, and so, I was taught to sign the chorus; Amazing Grace.

After a long time, I noticed I never forget the chorus and whenever I have to sign a word with any word in the chorus, it would come just naturally for me. Unlike the ones I usually forget. This made me realize that learning with songs really helps.

I began to practice the simple chorus I sing regularly. I would sign them and whenever I see the words I don't know in the songs, I'll just write them out in my little jotter I carry around. Anytime I meet my teachers, Deaf or Interpreter, I would just ask them to teach me and they were always happy to see me eager to learn.

I found unusual favour with Pastor Mummy Olulaja of Talking fingers. She is the National Coordinator of Deaf Ministry at RCCG. She joined FDF Whatsapp Group and when I finally met her in person, she embraced me with an open arm and introduced me to the Deaf Brethren that I'm one of them. She would permit me to sit with them and this opportunity availed me the chance of improving my sign Language skills.

The best time I enjoyed most at our camp meetings were the praise and worship sessions. Bro Ayo Adeiza would dance like no tomorrow, making the atmosphere so friendly and for me, signing and singing became a something I always looked forward to. This helped me a great deal in improving my sign language skill.

Up till today, I still sign and sing and I have done so very many videos to help teach others out there on our social media platforms. There are so many other people doing this also in recent times and it's all on the social media. Infact, permit me to say that it has become like pure water.

I recommend learning with songs for a beginner. It will help you a great deal. Think of your favourite song. Sign it everywhere and especially to the mirror. Don't be shy to sign your songs even in public places.

Sign and sing in the shower in shower.

People who can hear like to sing in the shower because the acoustics can make even the worst singer sound pretty good. Signing to your favorite song in the shower gives the whole experience that extra edge. It promotes use of non-manual features like expression and body language and makes the signs easier to learn because the chorus gets repeated a few times.

Our YouTube channel (FDF TV) has plenty of signed songs for you to have a look at and take some inspiration.

CHAPTER 5

SIGN LANGUAGE

Sign Language is not English Language. It is one of the most notable factors that give raise to poor English usage among Deafies. For most Deaf, just as they sign, they write. This is what my friend, Douglas Izuu calls Deafglish. It does not mean such Deaf who writes poor English is a moron.

For a learner, the easier you get your brain thinking about the structure of sign language, the easier flowing conversation becomes. It's not hard, just requires practice.

Contrary to what many people believe, sign language is not universal. There are over 300 sign languages in the world. Some countries have more than one type of sign language. Sign language is a visual language and does not lack grammar; it has a grammar of its own that is different from that of English language. It uses “different system of syntax.” It is a living language that grows and changes over time. It is not English on the hands.

American Sign Language (ASL) is very popular in many different countries. It is mostly used in Nigeria because Deaf education was brought to us by an American Missionary; Late Andrew Foster. But due to the peculiarity of our various cultures in Nigeria, there is need to develop the Nigerian Sign language (NSL). And just as English Language is not sufficient for some words in our native languages.

ASL is predominant in the United States and in many parts of Canada. It is accepted by many high schools, colleges, and universities in fulfillment of modern and “foreign” language academic degree requirements across the United States.

It is a common misconception that American Sign Language is a derivative of English, and therefore not a language by itself. However, the truth is that ASL originated independently of English linguistic influence, and is in fact its own language with its own set of rules. Part of this misunderstanding can be explained by the translation method of glossing ASL signs with English words, and the practice of Signed English to communicate with those not familiar with ASL. However, because of its differences from spoken English, ASL is a unique language whose communication style must be understood independently.

ASL can trace its origins back to the first school for the Deaf in America, the American School for the Deaf, which was founded in 1817 by Thomas Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc. Clerc was a teacher of French Sign Language brought to America by Gallaudet in order to educate American students. The school was fundamental in the development of ASL, which emerged from not only the teachings of Gallaudet and Clerc, but also from the Deaf students who attended there (Stewart, Stewart, & Little 2007).

Due to their historical relationship, French Sign Language and American Sign Language actually have more in common than ASL and British Sign Language (BSL).

Because of their distinctly separate origins, the methods ASL utilizes to convey meaning are entirely different from the methods employed in English speaking. Some who have not studied ASL may mistakenly think that its sign sequences are patterned after spoken English sentences, but since the two languages are independent of one another, they are entirely unique.

In spoken English, meaning is produced by a series of words “produced by actions within the vocal tract that result in sounds perceived through audition,” whereas in ASL, meaning is produced

by using signs “produced by actions of the hands, arms, face, and head that produce signs perceived visually.” Because of this distinction, ASL is able to express meaning in ways that spoken English cannot. This has lead ASL to develop different methods of expression (Liddell 2003).

These differing methods have manifested themselves in many facets of dialog. For example, pluralization is often expressed in spoken English through the adding of prefixes and suffixes. While this does occur in ASL, it is very rare, as it can also be done so many other ways, such as signing a quantifier sign, reduplicating the sign, or incorporating a number directly into the sign. Time is also expressed differently in ASL. In English, tenses are amended to verbs to indicate when they occurred; in ASL there is an “imaginary time line running from behind the speaker's body (the past) out away from the body stretching into the future.” This line can be used to demonstrate that the sign being performed relates to a specific point in time (Costello 1994).

Signed English is a way of using gestures and signs to “represent specific English words.” It closely follows spoken English syntax and style; incorporates ASL signs wherever possible; and invents signs for words that don't exist in ASL such as “the,” “an,” and “a.”

Any other word can be communicated through the use of fingerspelling. Signed English is frequently used as a way for ASL signers to communicate with others who may be less familiar with ASL and its divergent syntax. While Signed English and ASL share many of the same signs, there is a distinct difference between the two: Signed English is a variation of English expressed visually, while ASL is its own language (Bornstein, Luczak, Saulnier, Hamilton, and Miller 1983).

While Signed Exact English (SEE) and ASL share many of the same signs, there is a distinct difference between the two: Signed English is a variation of English expressed visually. Many hearing people signs the exact English words, using SEE, while Deaf people use the sign language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information.

Many people, when they begin learning sign language, wonder about the differences between American Sign Language and Signing Exact English or Signed English. They usually translate word-for-word, what an English speaker says.

One sign in ASL may be used for a number of English words that are synonyms.

Signing Exact English (SEE) was developed by Gerilee Gustason and Esther Zawolkow in the 1970's to help deaf children learn English, which is a foreign language for those whose first language is ASL. Signing Exact English is a manual expression of English, in the same way written English is English represented by a written code.

In SEE, each sign represents only one English word, and the word order is exactly as it is spoken in the English sentence. SEE uses over 80 signs for English prefixes and suffixes so that a sign such as climb can become climbing or climbed by the addition of the affix signs. In the same way, neighbor can become neighborhood, king can become kingdom, and form can become reform, transform, transformation, etc.

CHAPTER 6

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

Most times, learners of sign language complain of not being able to understand what a deaf person signs and that its difficult to receive from them when they communicate. Usually, the deaf sign fast just as the hearing communicate fast when fluent with a language.

Anyway, I have listed here some tips that would help you to improve on your receptive sign skill:

1. Find a friend to practice with, preferably a Deaf person. Practice and keep practicing because practice makes perfection.
2. Learn with FDF online Intermediate sign language classes. Some of our Teachers are Deaf.
3. Don't get too obsessed with catching all the letters. You might not be able to receive some of the letters but keep your eyes opened and grasp as much as you can.
4. Have a sense of closure in the conversation. Most Deaf do not sign using the Sign Exact English SEE, but the meaning is what you should focus on, in order to understand the conversation.

5. Just keep hanging out with deaf signers as much as you can.

Learning via socializing is better than any class when it comes to sign language. Yes, our classes are a great way to get a head start but to become completely fluent, it is best to immerse yourself in the community of the Deaf.

You just have to keep relating with the Deaf and that's where FDF online platform comes in.

Feel free to ask for Deaf Persons in your Community and relate with them and build friendship.

Fluency does not come out of a classroom of Language learning. The classroom is great for getting the basics and building a vocabulary, but until one actually gets out in the real world and starts using those skills in real life situations, fluency is difficult to develop.

6. Teach your family members and friends the Sign Language. Thereby, surrounding yourself with sign language users. You don't have to be deaf or have a deaf relation, before you create a Community of sign language users for yourself.

7. If you don't catch a fingerspelled word, ask if it is the name of a person, place, or thing. This information, along with the context in which the word was spelled, will often help you to understand the word much quicker than having it respelled several times before you can understand.

8. When there is a portion of a message you miss, paraphrase for the deaf person what you have understood up to that point. This demonstrates that you are not totally lost, but just looking for a certain piece of information.

9. Another strategy is to ask questions about what you do understand. For example, if you miss a part of a message relating to a person's work, ask if the part you missed was about their job or something that happened at their place of employment. Often by asking questions, you will more readily get the context and details you missed. This also indicates to the deaf person that you share in the responsibility for negotiating understanding.

10. Ask questions about what you missed, based on the context you have understood so far. Ask whom, what, when, where, why and how questions as a starting place. Also, try to predict possible relationships between pieces of information and suggest them to the deaf person. They will guide you into the right answers when they see you are committed to helping yourself UNDERSTAND.

7 Ways to keep Sign Language learning fresh in your memory

The brain works in such a way that the less you do something, the less good you are at it. Sign Language is no exception to this. Unless you can find ways to keep practicing when you are done with the lessons, you don't have to keep saying 'my signing is not good' or 'I'm a beginner when you meet deaf people.

Here are some tips for keeping your hand in, keeping it fresh and increasing the fluency of your sign skill. Sign language is such a beautiful language and you should keep a life-long relationship with it.

Please ensure you do the following:

1. Do a bit of signing when you're talking to your friends and family even when they don't understand sign language yet.

If you've got an understanding family and friends, they'll tolerate you occasionally signing when you're talking. Yes, you may also get some banter but what the hell, you're practicing a beautiful skill.

Some will think you are crazy, but don't give a hoot! Keep practicing and don't stop improving on your skill.

Don't worry about the structure, because practicing the signs and increasing vocabulary is the aim. You'll quickly identify what signs you don't know. Then, you can go and find out what they are. Learning one sign a day is a great way to keep improving on what you have already learnt.

Keep a jotter for new words you wish to learn. Keep writing them down

2. Sign and sing your favourite songs to yourself and to others.

3. Text or email friends using Deafglish

Mix-up your written electronic communication occasionally and adopt Deafglish in your messages. This will help you consider the differences between sign language and English language, and how you might structure something if you were going to sign it rather than say it. It's great practice between friends who know what's going on!

4. Watch sign language videos. There are loads of this online. You can make friends with interpreters and learn some new vocabulary or even see how much you understand. It helps having subtitles or the sound on to work it out and it's interesting to see how the interpreter restructures the information to make it flow in sign language. The odd deaf film here and there will do your sign language skill some good.

5. Watch people signing on social media

Since posting video on Facebook became easier, deaf people and interpreters have taken full advantage. There are groups on Facebook such as Friends of the Foundation (FDF) Facebook page and many others alike.

6. The vocabulary learning possibilities are endless let alone the interesting and sometimes controversial opinions expressed. The beauty is you can pause, rewind and watch again to figure it out. The comments posted below can also help you work out what the video was about if you weren't so sure.

7. You don't have to be perfect before you start communicating with the Deaf. Nobody is perfect so don't beat yourself up or throw in the towel if you think you're getting it wrong. That's all part of the process of learning and expanding your horizons. Mistakes are nothing to be afraid of and an integral part of developing a new skill. The important thing is to keep it up.

A few minutes of concentration or practice here and there mean that you'll learn something new and keep what you already have fresher in your memory. You'll be better next week than you are this week and that's all the progress you need.

CHAPTER 7

HALL OF FAME FOR FDF TEACHERS

FDF started teaching sign language on a WhatsApp group I created on 14 June, 2017 to mark my birthday, in order to make learning easy for people who loves to embrace the Sign Language. This was even at a time where no such existed before, though many argued it could not be done as sign language learning has to be physically and not virtually, but Many thanks to the teachers who believed in me and the vision. They volunteered and made learning take place and we had another group as staffroom where Brother Ayodele Afrika Lateef was our Cordinator, he helped design the timetable and assign teachers to class.

Among the Teacher were some Deaf friends who stood by me all the way even when I knew nothing. They welcomed me into the Deaf Community and made FDF a Community where Deaf and Hearing coexist harmoniously. Some of them are Queen Janet Mohammed (that was she became Queen Miss Philanthropist), Mr Daniel Adejuyigbe (Mighty D), Mrs Joke Adejuyigbe, Olufemi Adeosun (FFF), Abiola Adenunuga, Abayomi Salako (my late sister's fiance, it was he who copied the WhatsApp group link and sent to all Deaf groups on WhatsApp. This brought me lots of Friends and sisters).

Mr Samuel Ogundare all the way from America, also helped in teaching sign language at the early time we start. Despite the fact that I never met him, due to distance, we relate as close friends and I marvel how sign language is really connecting me with people of like minds.

Funmi Obasa was one of our virtual teacher who took the passion so highly and was the 1st to set up FDF Class at Ijebu-Ode. There we used a class at Adeola Odutola College and people joined the class. Today, she is the CEO of Deaf Girl-Child Initiative (DGCI).

We later had Mr Micheal Akin Iye, Who came on board much later. He set up FDF branch in Mowe and started teaching the brethren in church the Sign Language. His first set of Students graduated on 19th June, 2019. Many of the students now help teach others, making the class waxing strongly in the Lord.

Bro Ayo's brother; Bro Idowu was one of our online teachers back then and this brother and sister Bunmi were serious noise makers on the group. The bond we shared then was great and superb, even when I have not met many of them. I finally met them all at RCCG camp, during convention and together we would lodge with the Deaf brethren at the hall Mummy Olulaja had prepared for the Deaf.

Bro Tobi Makinde was one of our teachers. He came all the way to see me in the month FDF started. He saw advised me and encouraged me in the tasks ahead. He is now the official Interpreter at Lagos State Office of Disability Affairs, LASODA. He is the Secretary for the Association of Sign Language Interpreters of Nigeria, ASLIN (Lagos Chapter).

Mr Samuel James came on board and joined the team and has been committed to the classes till date. He is the Lagos State Chairman for ASLIN. He is an advocate for the Deaf, and a Sign Language Artist. He is married to a very beautiful Deaf Queen.

He is the Director of Seams Consults: a consult which serves as a communication conduit between two worlds (Deaf and the hearing respectively). We bridge cultures, facilitate equal access to information and exposure. We disseminate daily information to the Deaf community through various means: educational programs, seminars, Sign Language music entertainment, dramatization, organizing healthy competitions that positively impact the Deaf community among other things.

He is the brain behind DEAF CANDANCE.

Interest is the key to learning sign language; you must have a specific need for it and work with this to be better sign language user. You improve more by interacting with the Deaf people. They are also very good teacher of sign language. You should worry less about speed of signing as this comes with time and practice. Concentrate more on signs' clarity and facial expressions.

Olaoluwa Bayonle Emmanuel was then the youngest teacher at the staffroom, but he was so committed to the class. Whenever any of our Teachers was not available, he was my go to guy. He never said no to me and would always encourage me. He would advise and I always listened to him. He was and still is my right hand man in this journey in the Deaf Community. He picks interest in the Education of the Deaf. He is an Advocate for Inclusion of the Deaf and other cluster of persons living with disability, and also a Human Rights Activist.

He holds a certificate in Education (Special Education) from Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo State, where he specialized in the Education of individuals with Hearing Impairment. And presently pursuing a degree at the University of Ilorin. He is a lover of equality, a social media Inclusion Campaigner and a growing Administrator of repute and a member of National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET), PRO, (ASLIN).

He is an Interpreter for Nigerian Television Authority (NTA Lagos Channel 10), and a Teacher at Wesley Schools for the Hearing Impaired. He has rendered interpreting services on platforms likes Lagos State Press briefing on Covid 19, (State House, Marina Lagos), Lagos State Ministerial Press Briefing Y2020 (Alausa Lagos), Wazobia Max TV, TVC, Youth Enterprise Conference (YECO 2018), and lots more.

He currently interprets as a volunteer and work with The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Olive Tree Parish, Banana Island Ikoyi Lagos; The Redeemed Christian Church of God National Programmes and at Friends of the Deaf International Foundation (FDF), Most Beautiful Deaf Girl in Nigeria (MBDGN) and Ability Plus Initiative (API).

Sosanya Oluwadaisi Oluwaseun came on board when we started a new series of Basic Sign Language class in 2019 and has since been committed to the classes.

He holds a degree in Mass Communication. He is a P.R strategist, Media consult, Sign Language Interpreter & a very passionate Deaf Advocate. He is a Teacher at FDF Academy for Deaf Children.

"Teaching Sign language has been fun to me and the students. My teaching experience at FDF Basic Sign Language Class gave me the oppourtunity to improve on my signs, just as every teacher will like to be ahead in class.

I feel very happy sharing the gospel of Sign language to bridge Communication gap through FDF's Platform.”

Damilola Adebuseye Is a child of encouragement. She encouraged me to start the new series of Basic Sign Language, when I was almost losing hope of it.

Many people joined our group and would not bother to take lessons serious. I felt bad thinking it was because I made it free of charge and did all to ensure many find learning easy.

Dami helped correct Students assignments and kept records of those who submitted assignments and from there, we started graduating those who qualified. And as at today, we have graduated class 6.

Class 7 is starting to commemorate International Day of sign Languages 2020.

Aanuoluwapo Omoleye is Deaf and a teacher at FDF Intermediate sign language class. She is a 400 final year Student of Special Education, University of Ibadan and a resident of Ekiti State, Nigeria. She is an active volunteer, a basic graphics designer and a sign language user.

She is the Disability Projects Lead of Volunteers Hub Africa, the Media Design Lead of Heroes and Heroines Initiative and the Engagement Lead of Foundation for Rural Education and Empowerment.

She currently serves as the new Project Director of Olusegun Aluko Foundation, an organization that is geared towards the academic and career pursuits of young Deaf students in Ekiti State primary and secondary schools.

She is the Finance Director of the Deaf Youth Association of Ekiti State under the Ekiti State Association of the Deaf (EKSAD)

She is a Cowrywise Campus Ambassador, a World's Largest Lesson Volunteer, a Nigerian Youth SDGs Champion and the Ekiti State lead for NIYEAP Project. She was the short-term interim President of Special Persons' Club and the Vice President of Nigerian Association of Special Education Students, University of Ibadan, where she previously served as the Academic and Welfare Director.

She was also an active member and a committee head at Junior Chamber International Nigeria, University of Ibadan. She has taught sign language to very many individuals both physically and virtually, because she believes in the spread of sign language all over the country and beyond. Currently, she is a Teacher at FDF Academy for Deaf Children and Sign Language online classes.

It has been a good time teaching sign language to future SL professionals and even as a tutor, I have a lot of things to learn. (Yes, I learnt new signs and new methods).

It is fulfilling to see many individuals learning the beautiful language of flying hands. It also gave me a sense of accomplishment, teaching vast range of professionals including but not limited to teachers, lecturers, doctors, lawyers, etc at FDF Intermediate sign Language Class.

To readers out there, sign language is a language that is easy to learn. Embracing sign language is something to do the same way we embrace English language because the communication gap it bridges is something that cannot be over emphasized. And yes, Sign language is for everyone.

Douglas Izuu is a Deaf and also teaches at FDF Intermediate Sign Language Class.

He is a student at the University of Ilorin, currently in his sophomore year, studying Library and Information Science. He is the current Welfare Secretary of NNAD, Unilorin chapter.

He is a passionate volunteer and the Director of "NeedsEdu" under "CareerEdu" organization. He is also an SDGs advocate, once represented Republic of Sudan under "The AfricanTrust Model United Nations (TAFMUN)" He is an activist, Deaf rights advocate and disability inclusivist.

Here's what he thinks about the class:

The students made the best decision by showing interest in learning the art of signing. Through the students, one can imagine a world where everyone is speaking with hands. A world where not only the mouth can speak. A world where bridging the communication with sign language is possible. An inclusive world, notwithstanding.

FDF made it easy teaching online and the zeal that the students exhibited towards sign language couldn't be overemphasized. Their participation, submission of assignment and asking questions in class was what gladdens and serves as encouragement for the tutors.

As a tutor, tutoring them is part of education for me. One would just be surfing the net looking for the appropriate terms to use. Teaching is learning, I'll say.

To the society, I'll advice you to do the 'Deaf community a favour. The favour is very simple; embrace sign language and use it to bring Deaf community out from their state of 'unknown'. Be ready to make sacrifice for information access sake.

Sign language has been saving lives. Indeed, to be informed is to live.

* * * * *

FDF could not have achieved this success without the help of our Teachers.

CHAPTER 8

TESTIMONIALS

Some of our sign language students have these to say about FDF Intermediate Sign Language Class:

“FDF Intermediate Class delivers service worth than the fee. The teachers are great. They serve the best.”

Abdulquadri Issa,
(Undergraduate and a Special Educator, Abuja)

“The Teachers are very efficient and patient with me.”

-Dr Balqis Alatishe-Muhammad - (Medical Doctor, Kwara)

“The class is beyond expectations. Joining the class was the best thing i have done this year. Honestly, I don't want the class to end. Now, I can gladly assist and represent a deaf client's interest.”

Maryam Fulani Abdullahi
(Lawyer, Kano)

“All the Teachers were wonderful and dedicated. I can communicate with deaf patients and offer them care seamlessly.”

-Naanreng Grace Timi
(Medical Doctor, Jos)

“With FDF intermediate class, I can definitely promote an inclusive environment if Deaf clients or customer come my way.”

Saaliha Lasaki

(Clothing maker, Lagos)

“FDF Intermediate Sign Language Class is great and now I can communicate with deaf customers in my business.”

-Ikogho Oghenetega

(Heath Consultant, Lagos)

“It is a group to join so as to be a channel of blessing to the deaf world. The class has helped me gained more friends. I have up to 3 Deaf friends now. Even this morning one of them still come around me greeted me and ask about my work and family. I have started to gist with him . I ask him about his wife and children he told me the wife has packed out of his house they have issues. So i can by the grace of God give him counsel on how he needs to reconcile with the wife as we move along. I'm so glad for the opportunity of being able to communicate with the Deaf that FDF offers.”

- Mrs Abhulimhem E Juliet

(Teacher/Seamstress, Delta)

“The intermediate class is value for money. It is very Educative and Interactive.

I will like to work for FDF as a volunteer.”

- Oladipupo Bolanle Monisola

“The intermediate Class had really helped me to understand my deaf clients better, thereby increasing my proficiency. The class is quite educative and detailed.”

- Dele-Fagbohunka B. M.

(Pharmacist, Ogun)

“The teachers are doing well and the teachings are wonderful but it is left for we the students to make good use of the opportunity given us because FDF have really tried alot.” - A d e g b o y e g a E u n i c e Temilorun

“The training is as marvellous as the intentions of the organizers and the teachers are selfless, patient and efficient. May God bless them all. FDF is the best place to learn. The knowledge of sign language would help a lot when in the event of a deaf Client.”

-Daniel Abah Manaba

(Lawyer, Lagos)

“Keep up the good works. The teaching you gave us will go a long way to bridge the gap”

-Prof. Patricia Delsat Wade,
(Lecturer/Medical Doctor, Jos)

“I have never had a former training before joining FDF Basic sign language class, but now I can bridge the gap.”

-Johnson Agbolade Olaoluwapo.
(Tailor)

“This class is very informative, be sure to be part of it. The teachers are very kind and patient, the classes are organized.”

-Choice Chioma
(Linguist, Anambra)

“Organizing the class is a laudable effort and they have committed personnel. The Teachers are quite patient and encouraging while correcting.”

-FAROTIMI SOLAPE YEWANDE (mother of a Deaf Child)
(Brands and Events, Lagos)

“As a teacher, I will be able to teach deaf students if I see them around and in my school.”

-Oyekan Abiodun Michael
(Teacher, Lagos)

“I have a deaf younger sister. And as an entrepreneur, going through the class, I'm thinking of how I can help develop software that can help deafies communicate better.”

-Feranmi Ogundipe (Entrepreneur, Ghana)

FDF's Basic Sign Language Class Testimonies

I had always admired people signing songs- never knew I could do it but this course availed me the opportunity to do that. This class reignited my love for sign language. The Teachers are down to earth, lively and sound.”

-Lama Timothy Elam (Clinical Psychologist, Nasarawa).

“The Teachers are so amazing and now I'm glad I can communicate with the Deaf.”

-Oriala Emmanuel Nnamdi (Airforce Officer, Maiduguri)

“We really appreciate all of our teachers at FDF for trying to bridge the communication gap. I pray that God will raise helpers for them in Jesus' name (Amen).”

-Akanni Fatima Christiana (Student)

“FDF made Sign Language easy for communication between my self and my deaf son.”

-Oluwaseun Deji-Jayeoba (Legal Practitioner, Ekiti)

“This is a great blessing to me, I have always wanted to learn sign language, I never had the opportunity. Please keep up the good work.”
-Rwang Pam Haruna (Medical Doctor)

“This class has been a blessing to Me, the teachers were very detailed and patient with us, they make learning easy and fun. Thank you.”
-Naomi Saleh

“FDF is the best learning place for sign language in the world. I actually thought sign language would be hard to learn but with FDF it was made easy for me. The Teachers take the work very seriously to ensure we improve on our sign skills.”
-Oladipupo victoria
(Student, LASPOTECH)

CHAPTER 9



HOW TO BE INVOLVED IN FDF

- 1) Pray regularly for FDF - Be a prayer partner for FDF.
- 2) Financially Support FDF: Be a financial member
DONATE REGULARLY to help keep the good works going.
- 3) BE A VOLUNTEER
- 4) Talk about FDF on every available platform: BE AN ADVOCATE
- 5) Pick one indigent Deaf child of FDF. You can help MENTOR or SPONSOR a deaf child's Education.
- 6) Learn sign language and teach others sign language: BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS.
- 7) REMEMBER WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. Be part of FDF community and together, we help bridge the communication barrier.

GOD BLESS FDF

**For Support:
Friends of the Deaf Int'l Foundation
Zenith Bank Account
1016907109**



ABOUT THE BOOK

Sign Language Made Easy with FDF is a great book for everyone who loves to learn the sign language, but do not know how to go about it.

It is written to show you step by step guide on your learning journey as Funmi holds you by the hand, ensuring you do not fall by the way side until you become proficient and able to communicate with any deaf around you.

It is written from the wealth of her experience as a person who has lived with the Deaf for almost 30 years of her life before her sister passed on. This great book is released on the occasion of International Day of Sign Languages 2020. Theme: Sign Languages are for everyone.

The book is to create Deaf awareness and promote the Sign Language.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Funmi Ogunro is a passionate Disability Advocate and counselor to many parents of Deaf children. She is a Teacher and founder of Friends of the Deaf Int'l Foundation (FDF), set up after she had lost her Deaf younger sister due to communication gap at the hospital.

Her passion to see all embrace sign language is genuine, because it really hurts to lose an immediate younger sister, due to communication gap. She believes the world would be a better place if everyone can communicate with the Deaf.

She is the Convener of the annual Inclusive Spelling Bee (a Spelling competition for pupils (featuring Deaf, blind, Albino, Dwarf, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Hydrocephalus/Spinal Bifida and the regular children) in Lagos, celebrating Unique Difference of every child and Promoting their Educational Rights.

She is very concerned about Education for the less privileged and together with her team engaged Deaf Children online in free Tutorials. During the pandemic. She is the Head of School, FDF Academy, A school for the Deaf and Deaf-blind Children.

She is happily married and a mother of two lovely boys.



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