



S, M, L, XL DEAF

Paal Richard Peterson from Norway discussed his thesis about Deafness and Deaf Culture that was completed in 2001. He sent out questionnaires to the Deaf Community and collected approximately 300 replies; the thesis is based on information from this research. Paal was able to determine Deaf Identities based on questions relating to background and behavior.

Background: belonging to a Deaf organization or club, attended a Deaf school, fluent in Sign Language and have family members who are Deaf.

Behavior: read Deaf Magazines regularly, active in the Deaf Club and have Deaf friends.

Using a points system, Paal determined if a person's Deaf Identity is **S** (1-2 points) all the way to **XL** (7-8 points). He cautioned that the results may be different now than in 1999 where there was less media, less internet use and limited texting. The Deaf Community depended more on the Deaf Club as an information centre in the past.

The Deaf Identity and Politics

Paal discussed the different ways we are involved in politics: election, organizations, media and protest actions. In today's age, media is involved in all aspects of politics and is usually the best way to get "attention" about an issue. In 1949, the UN Human Rights convention included the freedom of opinion and expression and the right to receive information from more than one source.

- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1949

Do the members of the Deaf Community enjoy this privilege? Compared to the majority, Deaf people tend to receive less information because of problems with captioning/subtitles, interpreters and not getting the whole information. As a result of this, less Deaf people participate in the elections and voting. Other factors such as employment and education also have an impact. Paal found that Deaf people with **S** and **XL** identities have the highest percentage of voting.

Compared to the majority, as well as other minorities, the Deaf Community has the highest percentage of participation in Deaf organizations. A higher percentage of Deaf people are also involved in activism and protests.



Paal concluded that Deaf people who are involved in organizations and activism are more likely to vote. He also stressed that the Deaf Community is still very much involved in politics but in mediums where we have control. Deaf organizations and protests allows more authority and control for the Deaf while elections and media still exclude us.

Communication and information are very important for Deaf people to become involved in the general society. If we can improve access to communication and information, such as interpreters and more sign language usage, we will be able to participate more as natural citizens.

GOALS

Paal discussed with us our goals after completing the Frontrunners programme. Many of us are interested in working with Deaf youth and strengthening their participation in the Deaf Community. In doing so, we need to increase awareness, networking, membership and teach leadership, provide more information and improve the education system. All this needs to be done within the Deaf Community as well as in the general society.

In determining and achieving goals, the following steps should be followed:

1. Find out what you want

Determine what is most needed and what goals you need to make.

2. Find out where you stand

Using the new goals you made, see what aspects you need to focus on.

3. Find out what you need to do to reach the goal

Create steps in determining how the goal can be achieved.

4. Do it!

Take action and complete all the steps for achieving your goal!

LANGUAGES

We were shown a Danish documentary on languages. The programme explains that there are about 6,000 known languages used by national and tribes, better known as minorities. It states that in 100 years' time, half of those known language will eventually disappear. From a statistic view, one language will disappear once a fortnight (2 weeks/14 days). This hour-long documentary contained Danish and International sign language.



The documentary prompted us to think about the national sign languages, are these recognized officially by governments? We are sure that many countries' sign languages have not been recognized or known to be part of those 6,000 languages mentioned in the documentary.

Relating to the documentary, we focused on sign language naturally. Ole discussed with us about the Frontrunners' use of sign language. Where did we obtain some signs from? How has ASL influenced us and using lip movements of the English language. We were split into 3 groups; we obtained the theory of SWOT from Asger Bergmann in Week 2 to determine the current situation of national and international sign languages.

It was agreed that we all influenced each other with some international and national signs. We also agreed that in the first 2 weeks we did not understand each other clearly, as time went by, we picked up each individual's strengths in sign language and used each other's signs.

We discussed about the strength of sign language and the threats with cochlear implants; refusing to include sign language in the CI programme.