

TEACHING SIGN LANGUAGE TO CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

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Abstract: *This manual highlights the role and importance of Uzbek sign language in the lives of preschool and school-aged children with hearing impairments. General information is provided about the linguistic structure of sign language and its types. Methods and forms of mastering dactylology and sign language vocabulary are presented.*

Keywords: *dactylology, cognitive, accumulative, nominative, association, significative, manual signs, visual, verbal, calqued signing.*

Purpose: *To develop a sign communication system in teaching children with hearing impairments. It is not a tool for “decorating” speech, but the fundamental fabric of communication and thinking.*

INTRODUCTION

The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 20, 2022 (No. PQ-407) “On additional measures for the development of Uzbek sign language and Braille alphabet,” as well as the Order of the Ministry of Public Education dated October 26, 2022 (No. 333), defined tasks for modernizing educational content and providing methodological and didactic support for the process.

To increase literacy among persons with visual, hearing, and speech impairments, protect their rights and legitimate interests, improve the quality of educational services provided to them, and ensure implementation of the Law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” several responsibilities were assigned. Scientific research in special pedagogy and inclusive education in Uzbekistan, along with achievements and set objectives, contribute to developing inclusive education and improving educational systems for children with special educational needs.

This manual helps overcome language barriers that complicate communication and upbringing processes with children diagnosed with hearing impairments.

Ensuring access to education for persons with disabilities, including children with hearing impairments, is one of the priority directions of Uzbekistan’s social policy in education. According to surdopedagogical principles, oral speech has traditionally been considered the primary means of teaching and upbringing deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The formation of oral speech directly influences personality development, social adaptation, and integration into society.

At the same time, the scientific community and the Deaf community recognize sign language as a unique and essential means of communication for deaf individuals. Sign language contributes to fuller child development and serves as a “bridge” for understanding the environment at an early age.

Sign language is a unique linguistic system with its own vocabulary and grammar. It involves exchanging ideas through hand movements, body gestures, and other visual signals.

Communication enriches any child's worldview, helps them better understand parents, relatives, peers, teachers, and caregivers, and supports expression of thoughts and expansion of knowledge about the surrounding world. Hearing loss disrupts natural communication and affects speech development.

These communication limitations are compensated through sign language, enabling interaction with family members, peers, school and preschool communities, and society in general.

Legally, the right of hearing-impaired citizens to use sign language is guaranteed by the Constitution of Uzbekistan, the Law "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," and international conventions. Every individual has the right to use their native language and freely choose the language of communication, education, upbringing, and creativity.

Surdopedagogy and typhlosurdopedagogy provide for the use of alternative communication methods in special education. Uzbek sign language is recommended as an auxiliary means in teaching children with hearing and hearing-visual impairments.

At early stages of teaching deaf children, dactylology — finger spelling — is used. Dactyl speech resembles written speech because sentence formation follows grammatical rules. Oral speech is introduced gradually alongside oral-dactyl articulation.

II. LANGUAGE AND SPEECH

Concepts of Language and Speech

Language is the most important means of human communication. Without language, communication is impossible; without communication, society cannot exist. Therefore, without society, a thinking individual cannot fully develop or understand reality. Language is unique to humans and represents the second signaling system, distinguishing humans from animals and reflecting physiological, psychological, and social development.

Language and speech are distinct concepts. Language is a complex system with its own vocabulary, phonetic system, and grammar. Its main unit is the word, whose function is to carry meaning. Speech is the practical use of language — oral communication through linguistic means. It is linked with learning, work, social interaction, and coordinated activity.

Functions of Language and Speech

Language performs several functions:

- Communicative — a means of interaction between people;
- Cognitive — connected with intellectual activity (attention, perception, memory, thinking, imagination, speech performance);
- Accumulative — storage and transmission of information (chronicles, documents, literature, folklore);

- Nominative — naming objects or phenomena.

Speech performs three main functions:

- Significative — mutual understanding based on shared designation of objects;
- Generalizing — a word represents both a specific object and a class of similar

objects;

- Communicative — transmission of information, emotions, and attitudes.

Role of the Significative Function

Language operates as a system of signs:

- a word signifies a concept;
- a gesture signifies a visual meaning;
- a symbol generalizes meaning.

Example:

- “tree” refers not to one tree but the general concept;
- “house” means any dwelling.

Development in Children

Stages:

1. The child sees an object;
2. Names it (nominative);
3. Identifies features;
4. Generalizes (significative).

Example: apple → red, green, sweet, edible → fruit.

For children with hearing impairments, the significative function develops through visual-motor experience. Sign language and finger spelling carry meaning.

Example:

- sign for “red” → color concept;
- signs for “big-small” → quantity and quality concepts.

Connection with Cognitive and Accumulative Functions

- Cognitive — understanding and analysis;
- Accumulative — storage of meanings;
- Significative — attaching meaning to symbols.

Together, they form conscious speech.

III. Types of Speech.

Communication of Deaf Individuals Through Sign Language

Speech activity includes oral and written forms. Oral speech may be dialogic or monologic, while written speech represents sounds through written symbols. Communication involves speaking and listening; if hearing is absent, speech development may not occur naturally.

When deafness arises before speech acquisition, secondary speech impairments may occur. Therefore, speech must be taught in specialized settings such as corrective kindergartens and schools using modern surdopedagogical methods.

For hearing individuals, speech is the main tool of expression; for deaf individuals, sign language serves this function. Manual signs visually represent objects and phenomena.

Sign language also performs communicative and cognitive functions. As noted: “Speaking with hands is, to some extent, thinking with hands.”

Thus, sign language compensates for absence of auditory perception, serving the same primary purpose as spoken language — communication.

Sign Language Systems and Types

Deaf individuals use two distinct communication systems:

- dactylogy (finger spelling);
- sign language lexicon.

Both rely on visual transmission of information. Dactyl speech represents alphabet letters through finger positions and follows spoken language grammar, making it closer to written speech.

Sign communication includes:

- calqued sign speech;
- Uzbek sign language (analogous to spoken conversational language).

Uzbek sign language is an independent linguistic system with its own structure and vocabulary. Articulation is usually not used during signing.

UZBEK DACTYLOLOGY

Concept of Finger Alphabet

Teaching deaf children includes using finger spelling at early stages. Dactyl speech resembles written language because sentence construction follows grammatical rather than phonetic rules. It accompanies oral articulation and functions as an auxiliary teaching tool.

The term “dactylogy” comes from Greek daktylos (finger) + logos (word, teaching). Finger alphabet signs represent letters rather than objects. These letters form elements of written speech.

Related terms include dactyl alphabet, dactyl sign, dactyleme — finger representations of letters.

Conditions for Finger Spelling

- Use the right hand;
- Hold the hand at chest level;
- Keep the elbow close to the side;
- Mainly move fingers, not the whole hand.

This resembles writing and reading processes: spelling corresponds to writing, perception corresponds to reading.

Rules of Finger Spelling

1. The hand is bent at the elbow and positioned at chest level without blocking articulation.
2. Finger spelling accompanies articulation for better comprehension.
3. The palm faces the interlocutor.

4. Spelling follows orthographic norms; punctuation is not shown.

5. Double consonants are indicated by shifting the sign sideways.

Uzbek finger alphabet contains 29 signs corresponding to Uzbek letters.

Representation occurs through finger configuration or hand movement.

Technique Guidelines

- Usually performed with one hand (right hand).
- Palm faces the interlocutor.
- Arm slightly forward and bent.
- Hand remains mostly still; fingers move.
- Movement should be smooth and continuous.
- Follow orthographic norms.
- Signs must be clear.
- Combine with articulation.
- Maintain pauses between words and phrases.

Importance of Dactylology and Sign Language in Teaching Deaf Children

Knowledge of sign language enables educators, parents, and caregivers to:

- establish communication with children despite differing language systems;
- support overall development;
- clarify lexical meanings and language functions;
- expand knowledge and environmental understanding;
- instill cultural and moral values;
- assist in career orientation and social integration;
- foster socially active citizens with national values.

Using both spoken and sign languages in education creates favorable conditions for successful learning. This supports effective professional education in secondary specialized and higher institutions where sign language interpreters are involved.