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Oralism vs manualism deaf education

Deaf oralism. Oralism in deaf education. Oralism vs manualism. Oralism vs manualism debate. Because humans rely more on their eyes than other senses and instinctively fear darkness, people often assume deafness is an easier disability to cope with compared to blindness. However, being born deaf is much riskier than being born blind. This is because language acquisition typically occurs in early childhood, and without it, severe mental impairment can result. Are the Deaf doomed to this fate? Not necessarily. Approximately 10% of the Deaf inherit their condition from their parents, who often teach them Sign Language. As a result, these children tend not to have learning difficulties and do as well academically as hearing peers. On the other hand, those taught using lip reading fall behind with each passing year of school. The reason for this disparity lies in the fact that lip reading is designed for hearing people who are unfamiliar with Sign Language. Deaf children must spend a significant portion of their lesson time learning to read lips and speak, which hinders their academic performance. Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée was one of the pioneers of deaf-friendly education. He founded 21 schools from 1755 until his death in 1789, teaching Deaf children how to read and write using Sign Language. The movement spread to America with the founding of the Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford. However, a significant setback occurred at the International Congress of Educators of the Deaf in Milan in 1880, where Alexander Graham Bell advocated for teaching lip reading and speech over Sign Language. Despite having a Deaf mother and wife, he believed that the top priority was to teach the Deaf to speak rather than use Sign. The astonishing thing is that Deaf teachers were not even allowed to attend the congress. Only two delegates were Deaf, and the children paraded as examples of how successful oralist education had been. As a result, Sign Language was banned from Deaf schools, and by 1960, only 12% of Deaf people were literate. The trend was finally reversed in the 1960s, although pupils are often taught signed English which lacks the visual grammar of Sign Language. British Sign Language was not recognized as a language until 2003. It was technology that would ultimately liberate the Deaf. On June 1, 2016, a controversy rooted in deaf education and aural rehabilitation courses resurfaced: sign language (manualism) vs. oralism. While some believe oralism is superior, this debate has been ongoing since the 18th century when formal sign language emerged in France. Sign language offers a natural method for interaction and education for those who cannot learn verbal communication. It promotes easy family interactions and is used at university levels to achieve success in various fields. American Sign Language (ASL) and its derivatives are taught globally, even becoming a popular second language for hearing individuals. On the other hand, oralists argue that deaf individuals must integrate into the hearing world to access opportunities outside their community, requiring oral communication. Although this argument has some merit, not all deaf individuals can communicate orally, despite advancements in technology like cochlear and middle ear implants. This debate has persisted for over 150 years, with both methods yielding personal and professional successes. The First International Congress on Education of the Deaf was organized to establish a standardized approach, but it was the Second International Congress in Milan, Italy in 1880 that became the major platform for debates and resolutions. The first international conference on deaf education took place, involving representatives from France, Sweden, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and the United States as an observer. Although discussions were held, no significant progress was made due to deep-seated emotions and philosophies. The turning point came at the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan, Italy, in 1880, which saw oral methods gaining prominence over manual methods. Alexander Graham Bell and his supporters advocated for oral methods, while Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and his colleagues championed manual methods. Despite efforts to counterbalance the air of superiority, the oralists prevailed, and eight resolutions were adopted, including two that had a profound impact on deaf education. These resolutions declared the superiority of articulation over signs in restoring the deaf-mute to society and advocated for the pure oral method. The conference concluded with the oral method being recognized as the officially accepted approach to teaching the deaf. This development led to immediate consequences: deaf teachers lost their jobs, the National Association of the Deaf gained support as deaf people fought to preserve their language and culture, and Gallaudet College decided to maintain sign language on its campus, which contributed to the survival of American Sign Language. In the late 19th century, the decision-makers in deaf education faced significant challenges. At that time, hearing aids were primitive and unreliable, while cochlear implants were unimaginable. Moreover, sign language was not widely known or used by the general population. Deafness was also more prevalent due to the lack of antibiotics, infection control measures, and effective surgeries for curing deafness. The situation called for innovative solutions to facilitate education, leading to two distinct approaches. Some proponents believed that the oral method, which relied on speech and lipreading, should be prioritized over manual methods involving sign language. However, others felt that this approach was unfair, as it excluded many deaf educators and professionals from the discussion. The controversy surrounding the Milan Conference of 1880 continues to resonate in modern times. Critics argue that the conference was biased towards oralism, leading to a "war of methods" between manualists and oralists that lasted for over a century. Today, both approaches coexist, allowing the deaf community to decide which methods are most effective. Sources: Burke, J. (2014). Deaf History- Milan 1880: Event with powerful repercussions. Retrieved May 31, 2016, from www.verywell.com. Gallaudet University (2005). Collection of International Congress on the Education of the Deaf, 1880. Gallaudet University Deaf Collections and Archives. Retrieved June 1, 2016. Jowers-Barber, S. (2011). The complicated history of deaf education. New York Times: Opinion Pages, Room for Debate. Retrieved May 31, 2016. After the Civil War, education reformers sought to overhaul teaching methods at schools for deaf children. They aimed to eliminate manualism and replace it with oralism. Residential schools initially taught sign language, fingerspelling, and written English. Lipreading and speech lessons were added in the 1860s, but advocates of oralism opposed sign language, believing it hindered speech development and isolated deaf people from society. Oralists believed that signing oppressed and isolated deaf individuals, making them vulnerable to discrimination. They advocated for speech as a means of "emancipation" for the deaf community. Many deaf leaders disagreed, portraying oralists as oppressors of deaf people. At the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind, students use mirrors in articulation classes to learn proper pronunciation. This educational institution, the Clarke School in Northampton, Massachusetts, holds a special significance. A prominent figure's name is prominently displayed on the wall of this very classroom. The school was at the forefront of innovative teaching methods, specifically focusing on oral education as its core principle.