



**Hellenic Mediterranean University**



**Communication challenges in inclusive education faced  
by deaf and non-deaf people**

**National Report – Greece**

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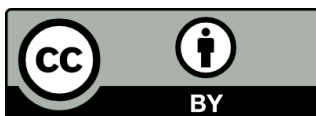
**Giorgos Papadourakis**

**March, 2021**

## Abstract

This report offers an overview and sets the scene in Greece about the way of living of the deaf people and people with hearing problems, their education according to Greek Ministry of Education, their way of communication with the other deaf or non-deaf people, the national sign language (GSL), their social and cultural life and the prospects for learning and using the International Signs.

Two surveys took place, one online and the second one in the form of personal interview, in order to find out Greek people's opinion about the communication among the deaf people and between deaf and non-deaf people in Greece and at international level as well. They reveal the opinions, the characteristics and the prospects of using Greek Sign Language and the International Signs, and the way the deaf communicate in the national sign language, the knowledge of the International Signs that they have or don't have and their intention to learn International Signs.



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## List of Abbreviations

ASL	American Sign Language
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
GSL	Greek Sign Language
HFD	Hellenic Federation of the Deaf
IS	International Signs
IT	Information Technology
ΚΕΡΑ	ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΑΝΑΠΗΡΙΑΣ - DISABILITY CERTIFICATION CENTER
SL	Sign Language

## 1. Introduction

### a. The culturally determined behavior, values and rules of the deaf people

Deaf people's culture is a more strict defined concept than the deaf community (Padden & Humphries, 1988). The members of the deaf community behave as deaf, regardless of the degree of their hearing loss; that means that they communicate using sign language and adopt common values for themselves and their environment (Lambropoulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999). Therefore, the most basic criterion for integration into this culture, is the identification with the deaf and behaving as deaf. The main features of the culture of the deaf are the cultural values that determine both their behavior and their mentality in general (Michou, 2013).

Deaf people usually sit opposite to each other and not next to each other in order to communicate. In fact, in their conversations they use to maintain a greater distance from each other than the non-deaf, because they want to watch not only the signer's face and his expressions but also the movements of his hands and the whole body. They use their peripheral vision a lot. In their outings/meetings, they choose to go to lightful places and a quiet environment in order to be seen when they speak but also understand what they are saying by seeing the lips of the interlocutors. They are more diffuse and expressive in their reactions than the non-deaf (Lambropoulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999). The extra linguistic elements of communication are more important for them rather than non-deaf. Specifically, the extra linguistic aspect is nonverbal communication consisting of gestures, movements, orientation of the body, face expressions which are essential for them in order to be understood to their interlocutors.

They draw attention by touching someone's shoulder when they want to communicate, while touching someone's back may be perceived as a calling for a quarrel. Also, holding one's hands while gesturing is considered as rude as closing one's mouth while speaking. In addition, it is considered very rude if non-deaf at the presence of deaf people cover their mouths and say something to each other, something like a secret. Isolation and confidentiality are therefore more difficult to get achieved in the deaf community (due to the visibility of the discussions, eye contact is a prerequisite for communication among deaf - through semantics, eye-rolling means indifference and rudeness) (Michou, Micro-kosmos, 2013).

### b. The ways which they seek to attract attention

A key element of deaf people's communication is eye contact. When a deaf person wants to communicate with another individual, he/she checks that his interlocutor sees him and then greets him in Sign Language.

Deaf people "touch" each other much more than non-deaf do. When a deaf person wants to participate or say something in a discussion between other individuals, he/she does



so by touching one of these individuals as in case of attracting attention. Non-deaf usually use names to get someone's attention. Invoking a name in GSL, just like non-deaf do when they want to talk to someone, does not draw the other person's attention especially when he talks in Sign Language. Therefore, they touch on someone's shoulder in order to communicate with him. When someone sits next to the person who wants to communicate, he touches his foot. Touching the front side of the body is never allowed unless the relationship is very friendly (Lambropoulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999). Touching the back can provoke an angry response, which does not happen to non-deaf. Teachers who educate deaf children should know that if a deaf child pushes another deaf person on his back, this can be seen as a provocation for quarrels (Lambropoulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999).

When a deaf person tries to communicate with a non-deaf, it is not unlikely to articulate the name of the non-deaf to his impending interlocutor, in order to attract his attention.



Figure 1: Source: <https://www.offlinepost.gr/2020/04/28/47043/>

### c. How deaf people introduce themselves and how they contact other people

The deaf introduce themselves firstly by presenting their semantic name, their "nickname" and respectively seek to learn the nickname of their interlocutor. It is a meaning with or without movement, simple or complex, that characterizes each person depending on some element of his personality. Then, they ask for other information such as marital status (free, engaged, married, etc.), professional employment and the name of their interlocutor. They also introduce themselves usually by signing their first and last name and add the hometown and the school they attended. This information is necessary to be recognized among themselves in their culture. The terms "deaf" and "hearing loss" are not used by the deaf people in the way they are used by the non-deaf. Acoustic ratings are irrelevant to deaf culture. The term commonly used in the deaf community is the term "DEAF" which means identity and not deafness. Deaf means a member of the deaf community and a friend (Lambropoulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999).

The deaf have close family and social relationships with each other. Like any minority, they need to maintain their contacts and draw strength from it. Although not everyone lives in the same area, they often hold gatherings and seek to be seen regularly. In these gatherings they have fun and relax till late, which shows the pleasure they feel from their intercourse (Lambroulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999).

## 1.1. Statistics

The Greek Sign Language is a native visual language used by the members of the Greek Deaf Community with thousands of deaf and non deaf signers. The Office for the Disabled people in Greece stretches that there are 100.000 people with special needs in Greece. About 10.000 of them are Deaf and hard of hearing. Unfortunately, the numbers of the statistics show that the disabled people in Greece deal with unemployment three to four times more often than the corresponding rate of the remaining population. Two main reasons can be pointed out for these special employment conditions: One, an insufficient estimate of the abilities of the deaf, and, secondly, since not many colleagues are always familiar with Greek Sign Language there are communicative problems between deaf and hearing colleagues.

Greek Sign Language has been recognized as the official first language of deaf people in 2000 by Law 2817/2000. According to the aforementioned law -as well as Law 3699/2008-, in order to hire young professionals in the education of deaf students the certified knowledge of the Greek Sign Language is a mandatory qualification. Law 4488/2017 (Article 65 (2)) recognizes GSL as equivalent to the Greek language. In addition, the law requires the state to undertake the promotion of the Greek Sign Language and to meet all the communication needs of the deaf and hard of hearing. (Greek government, 2000)

Despite the fact that in Greece there are about 25,000 deaf/hearing aid people and about 40,000 with residual hearing and also that the state has recognized deafness as a disability by certified centers (KEPA), its spread is limited to the groups of people with usual hearing problems. This implies a complete lack of communication with the rest of the people. From infancy, deaf people find it difficult to communicate with their parents, their relatives, and people in the family environment. This results to the isolation of the person with hearing problems. Eventually, the individual should be incorporated in society, go to school or study and be rehabilitated professionally in order to avoid facing enormous difficulties. Many people drop out of school or their studies because there is no provision for them in the educational institutions. We could say that people with hearing problems live a mediocre quality of daily life at all levels, from education to professional rehabilitation. In addition, they are socially excluded and the system needs a complete upgrading. However, nowadays with the help of technology, such as cell phones or specific devices and computer programs, the communication process between the deaf and non-deaf can be significantly improved in most cases. (Lambropoulou & Hadjikakou, An examination of the history of deaf education in Greece and in Cyprus: Determining factors for its development, 2010).

According to Mr. Gialouros, the president of Greek Federation of the deaf, the lack of an official number of registered deaf / hard of hearing people in Greece is a weakness of the state. A database with real data has not managed yet to be created. It is estimated that there are about 25,000 people both deaf and with hearing loss, maybe up to 40,000 if we include the elderly who have a hearing problem and need hearing aids or various technical aids. Federation of the Deaf of Greece has approximately 3,000 deaf people and people with hearing loss as active members (Giallouros, n.d.).

Greek Sign Language is used widely in the Greek Deaf Community and the estimation for GSL natural signers is about 40,600 (1986 survey of Gallaudet University). There are also many hearing non-native signers of GSL, such as students of GSL and families of deaf people. Although there are not any official records for the exact number of hearing students of GSL in Greece, according to the records of Hellenic Federation of the Deaf (HFD), in the year 2003 about 300 people were registered for attending classes of GSL as a second language. The fact that there has been a recent increase of deaf students in basic education, and at the same time the population of deaf students in other institutions (e.g. private tuition) can double the total number of secondary and potential signers of GSL in Greece. According to Official records, 11 Deaf clubs exist in Greek urban centers and a total of 14 Deaf primaries, secondary and tertiary educational organizations.

According to the Pedagogical Institute of the Greek Ministry of Education there are not accurate data about the deaf / hard of hearing population. According to research data from other countries the estimated number of deaf school-aged children in Greece should be about 1500-2000, distributed in special education and in general education. There are not also any data about the number of deaf children who remain outside education, mainly because of poor socio-economic conditions.

Hellenic Statistical Authority has made a research regarding the number of children that study in Special Education. According to this research there were 11542 children studying in Greek Special Education during the years 1996- 2014, and 334 of them were categorized as deaf and hearing loss children. Also, during the academic year 2015-2016, 10037 were participating the Greek Public Special Education and 320 of them were deaf and hearing loss children. The most recent research on Greek Special Education concerns year 2019, where 10956 children were in Greek Special Schools and 330 of them were deaf and children with hearing loss. It must be mentioned that many deaf and people with hearing problems do not join official special education and even do not learn Greek Sign Language due to the distance of Schools from their residence or due to the lack of parents' knowledge for suitable educational structures for their children. (Hellenic Statistical Authority, n.d.)

## **1.2. Support System**

The first Greek Association of the Deaf was founded in 1948. According to anecdotal evidence, at first the association consisted mainly of students dropping out of school in order to attend the school for the deaf in Athens, until more members gradually joined. The founders of the Hellenic Association of the Deaf contacted deaf people in other major cities and persuaded them to form their own Deaf unions. In the beginning the association played mostly a recreational role, since it was a place where deaf people could gather, communicate and socialize with each other. In addition, cultural activities and Greek language courses for deaf people were organized, and financial support was asked from the Greek government. Founded in 1969, the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf emerged from this association. Sports and cultural activities were also organized. In addition the Greek Federation of the Deaf fought systematically for the legal rights of deaf people in Greece in a dynamic way. Nowadays, 19

Deaf clubs and association can be found all over Greece (Table 1). All of these organizations are supported by the Greek Federation of the Deaf. Nine of them have been established in the last 20 years. Years passing by, the Hellenic Theater of the Deaf was established in 1983, and in 1989 the Hellenic Athletic Federation of the Deaf was formed and took charge for the development and organization of sports activities of the deaf in Greece. Today, there are eight athletic associations all over Greece and they are supported by the Hellenic Athletic Federation of the Deaf.

Some of the national and institutional associations and foundations for the deaf in Greece are:

- Deaf Hellenic Association.
- Federation of deaf Greeks.
- National Deaf Foundation.
- Pan-Hellenic Association of Deaf.
- Parents & Guardians association of deaf of central Macedonia.
- Greek Society for Mental Health and Deafness.
- Hellenic Federation of Deaf Sport of Greece.

**Table 1 Deaf Associations/ Schools/ Clubs in Greece**

<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Contact Email</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Deaf Hellenic Association</b>	Aristogeitonos 11-13, 10552, Athens	enosikofon@gmail.com	210 3242371 (FAX)
<b>Federation of deaf Greeks</b>	El. Venizelou 236, 163 41, Ilioupoli, Athens	info@omke.gr	2105233950
<b>National Deaf Foundation</b>	Zaharof 1, Athens	<a href="mailto:grammateia@idrimakofon.gr">grammateia@idrimakofon.gr</a>	2106460050
<b>Pan-Hellenic Association of Deaf</b>	Salonon 7-9-11, 11527, Athens	e.pek12@gmail.com	210 7717537
<b>Hellenic Federation of Deaf Sport of Greece</b>	S.E.F. (Peace & Friendship Stadium) – Ethnarhou Makariou Av. 1, 18547, Neo Faliro, Piraeus	hafdeaf@otenet.gr	2108829631

<b>"I MERIMNA" DEAF ASSOCIATION</b>	Keramikou 5, Athens 10437	merimnadeaf@gmail.com	210 5238491
<b>Parents &amp; Guardians association of deaf of central Macedonia</b>	Antisthenous 13 str, Charilaou, Thessaloniki	info@varikoos.gr	2310326644
<b>ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD OF THE DEAF &amp; HEAVY GREECE "EFFATHA"</b>	Menandrou 26 & Anaxagora, Athens, 10552	effatha26@gmail.com	210 5246652
<b>PIRAEUS &amp; ISLANDS DEAF ASSOCIATION</b>	Grigoriou Lambraki 231, Koridallos, 18120	skpn1966@gmail.com	210 4960473
<b>UNION OF DEAF OF NORTHERN GREECE</b>	Kallitheas Av. 3, Ambelokipoi, Thessaloniki, 56123	ekbe1969@gmail.com	2310 730332
<b>DEAF ASSOCIATION OF THESSALONIKI</b>	Soutsou 3 - Thessaloniki, 54630	skth.info@gmail.com	2310 516789
<b>ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF OF DRAMA "ELEFThERIA"</b>	Ethikis Aminis 28 (Former Customs) - Drama, 66133	<a href="mailto:somateio.dramas1989@gmail.com">somateio.dramas1989@gmail.com</a>	25210 20014
<b>DEAF ASSOCIATION OF CHANIA PREFECTURE CRETE "SAMARIA"</b>	33 Kallinikou Sarpaki - Old Town Chania, 73131	<a href="mailto:xaniasamariadeaf@gmail.com">xaniasamariadeaf@gmail.com</a>	28210 46970
<b>CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF AND HEARINGS N.RETHYMNIS CRETE "TO ARKADI"</b>	Pl. Iroon Polytechniou 16 - Rethymno, 74100	skarkadi@gmail.com	28310 28377
<b>DEAF ASSOCIATION OF HERAKLION "KANTIA"</b>	Solomou C5, Workers' Homes Ag. Catherine - Heraklion, 71307	skheraklion@gmail.com	
<b>ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF &amp; HEAVY OF SOUTHWESTERN GREECE</b>	Tempon 8, Ladopoulos area - Patra, 26333	skbnde1234@gmail.com	
<b>CULTURAL TRAINING ASSOCIATION OF THE</b>	15 Garitsiou & Episkopis - Larissa, 41222	sullar96@hotmail.com	2410 252242

<b>DEAF &amp; VARIKOON LARISSA</b>			
<b>ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF &amp; HEARING OF PREFECTURE OF MAGNESIA "ARGO"</b>	G. Dimou & Metamorfoseos, 38333, Volos (Thousands Sports Center)	deaf-magnesia@hotmail.gr	
<b>EDUCATIONAL - CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF AND VARIKOON MESSINIAS</b>		eeskvm@gmail.com	
<b>Association of Greek Sign Language Interpreters</b>	Karaiskaki 28, Athens, 10554	<a href="mailto:sdeng.gr@gmail.com">sdeng.gr@gmail.com</a>	6985880133

## 2. Greek Sign Language

Greek Sign Language is not the representation of spoken language in any other form, such as written language (Andrikopoulou, 2020). It is a complete language with its own syntax and structure. The GSL is a visual-motor language, and it is based on the movement of the hands, the posture or the movement of the body as well as the facial expressions in order to convey a meaning. It has verbal and syntactic structures to express any abstract concept (Efthimiou & Foteinea, 2017).

GSL is a natural visual language used by the members of the Greek deaf community with several thousands of native or non-native signers and it is not a representation of spoken language to another format, such as written language. Sign language (SL) is not universal since there are many SLs in the world: American SL used in the US and Canada, the British SL, the Japanese SL etc. GSL is structured by a verbal as well as syntactic structure in order to express any abstract concept. Furthermore, GSL has a set of strict grammatical and syntactical rules. GSL uses space and motion to delimit and enforce these rules. Although there is no scientific research and recording, GSL has rich vocabulary. There is no written form of GSL, but the theatrical plays and anything else they want to maintain through time on the deaf community are recorded on tape and stories are transmitted from generation to generation. (Kourbetis, Markakis, & Stainhauer, 1999).



Figure 2: Greek manual alphabet – Source:

<https://gr.pinterest.com/pin/409968372310782679/>  
[https://gr.pinterest.com/pin/409968372310782679](https://gr.pinterest.com/pin/409968372310782679/)

It should be stated that Greek Sign Language like any other language, can translate any expression of the Greek spoken language, including slangs. Socrates in his dialogue with Ermogenis in Plato's work "Kratylios" points out the usefulness of the sign language in order



to facilitate the communication among deaf people. Socrates states specifically: "If we did not have a voice or a tongue, and yet we would like to express ourselves among us, would we not, as the deaf people do, express ourselves with the hands and the head and the other body?" (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Since 2017 Greek Sign Language is acknowledged as formal language equal to Greek Language. At this moment there are approximately 2645 people in Greece who are qualified signers of GSL according to the archives of Greek Federation of the Deaf. Some of them work as teachers in Special Education for children with hearing problems. As far as teaching GSL to non-deaf is concerned, there are approximately 870 deaf teachers of GSL all over Greece. (Federation of the Deaf, 2019)

Teaching Greek Sign Language by private bodies in Greece consists of four (4) cycles of study each one lasting one hundred and twenty (120) hours and completed in eight months. By completing these cycles someone is considered to know the Greek Sign Language at a good level and has the right to take exams for the Proficiency of Greek Sign Language. (Κέντρο Ελληνικής Νοηματικής Γλώσσας, n.d.).

In order to be qualified as GSL teacher, someone must successfully pass the National Proficiency exams of GSL that the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf organizes twice a year. Typically, deaf people teach GSL to non-deaf because they are native speakers of GSL and for moral reasons in order to have an occupation as teachers.

## 2.1. Characteristics

Key components of GSL are the hand elements. These are the different shapes that a palm can take as well as the arrangement of the fingers which in combination with the orientation of the palm (right/ left/ towards the body/ towards the interlocutor), the movement of the hand (direction, circular movement etc.), the facial expression, the posture and movement of the body and the position of the palm-shape (on the body or in space) can give any meaning. An important role also plays the position in the space or body where the palm-shape is formed, as well as the orientation of the fingers (University of Patras).

Signs can be categorized into a) motion signs, b) pause signs, c) signs that start with motion and end with pause and d) signs that start with pause and end with pause (Kourmpetis, 2007).

In sign language communication it is important to pay full attention to the interlocutor (hands, face, expressions, movement and posture) in order to understand the whole message. Deaf people use their eyes differently than those who listen to communication. They constantly look at the face of the one who makes signs, while the non-deaf turn their eyes away from the speaker somewhere. Taking your eyes off the person who signs is considered disrespectful to the deaf or an attempt to ape the non-deaf. It is worth noting that facial expressions, eye and head movements play a crucial role in meaningful communication in sign language. As they typically say, it is the "spelling" of GSL, therefore they are necessary, while for the non-deaf they are limited (Lambropoulou, 3ο Εκπαιδευτικό πακέτο Επιμόρφωσης. Εκπαίδευση και Κωφό παιδί., 1999).

The declaration of time is made at the beginning of the sentence and binds the space of meaning for these declared actions until a new declaration or pause. Regarding the declaration of space, sign languages -as considered opto-spatial languages- first dictate the location of the larger or immovable object and afterwards the identification in the space of the smaller or movable object (Andrikopoulou, 2020).

The syntax of a sentence in the GSL usually places firstly time, place, subjects, objects and finally verbs (Andrikopoulou, 2020).

Another important element in the structure of language is the classifiers. They are at the same time a type of verb or verb phrase, pronouns and symbols for grouping objects. They are used after the classified object is first declared (Andrikopoulou, 2020).

Finally, there are many idioms that serve to quickly express comments and feelings (Andrikopoulou, 2020).

## 2.2. Policies and Legal Status

In 1981, for the first time in Greece, the special education law was voted. In 1985, with the law 1566/1985 special education was integrated in a structural and functional system of pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Greece. However, great process was made when Law 2817/2000 officially recognized the Greek Sign Language in public education.

This helped deaf people to communicate with each other and escape isolation due to communication failure. In addition to education, a large and comprehensive legislative status is needed to protect and facilitate deaf's community needs. This includes rules concerning job security, medical care, allowances, travel cards, interpreting programs, tax breaks and more. All these regulations are set in order to ensure that people with disabilities can claim as many opportunities as possible without discrimination in all areas of their lives. Thus, they will not feel cut off from the rest of the world.

The Greek Sign Language had not been extensively used in education of deaf children in Greece and until 2004 was not even a part of the curriculum of schools where deaf children were attended. In the short history of deaf people's education in Greece, the GSL has been either banned or marginalized and only in recent years has increased its use in the education system gradually. Published and experimental programs were taken into account for the development of the Curricula of GSL. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

However, three programs have been used as a basis for the development of the final program: The "Comprehensive American Sign Language Curriculum for Deaf Students" of Hoffmeister, Greenwald, Czubek και Di Perri (2002), the "Kindergarten Language Arts Curriculum Guide" of Di Perri και Hoffmeister (2002) and the "Deaf Studies Curriculum Guide" of MillerNomeland and Gillespie (1993). In addition, the new Language Curricula (Greek), the Curricula of Foreign Languages (English, French and German), the Experimental Teaching Program GSL as First Language of the Pedagogical Institute were taken into consideration, as well as the Curriculum for Greek Language Education concerning Greeks who lives abroad. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

The main goal of the Greek Ministry of Education is to provide equal opportunities to all students. In this context, special care is taken for the equal integration of Special Education in the general school. Therefore, there is a common project for education for all groups of students. The aim of the Curriculum of GSL is not only to learn GSL as a first language but also to learn Greek Language, mainly in its written form, as a second language. For this purpose, Curriculum of GSL is structured in such a way that all grammatical phenomena of GSL are taught before teaching of the corresponding phenomena of Greek. The comparative analysis of the linguistic structures of the languages and the use of the first language for learning the second language will lead to the acquisition of both languages naturally and comfortably. A basic principle for effective implementation of the Curriculum of GSL is the excellent knowledge by the teachers of GSL and Greek Language, as required by the implementation of bilingual education programs. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

In recent years, the software "Learning the Meanings" has been created, which was guided by the age of the students, the peculiarities of their language development and the coverage of as much as possible of the requirements of the Curriculum for the Kindergarten and the first three grades of Primary school. In particular, a key role was the requirement for the use of GSL at all levels of communication with the student, the requirement for the same type and content of education provided to all students, as well as the requirements for individualized learning and the possibility of combined learning with simultaneous presence of a deaf and a non-deaf teacher in the classroom, without having less value the activation of students in interactive groups through the supplementary material offered for this purpose (Efthimiou & Foteinea, 2017).

## 2.3. Learning

### a. Issues that are covered at this level

During basic education deaf students are required to be taught grammar and syntax rules of both Greek and Greek Sign Language. Also, the teaching of vocabulary is a keystone in the teaching of Greek Sign Language. For student assessment, emphasis is placed on the ability to recognize vocabulary in an environment as well as the ability to receive information from a GSL semantic. The student's ability to select and use the correct classifiers in a "story retelling" is also assessed using appropriate techniques (body rotation, maintaining a suitable reference space for each character, narration with reference to principle, characters, background, sequence, order of the plot, end) and more generally the narrative structures of the student in a story retelling. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

The topics the students work on are the daily greetings, the questioning, the furniture, the means of transportation, the geographical areas, the time, the calendar, Christmas, the life in the city, the life in the village, Easter, clothing, characterizations, use of classifiers, animals, occupations, family relationships, market activities, the bank, the post office, the factory, the police, the hospital.

### b. Grammar rules that are covered

The Grammar of every natural language, both at the levels of phonology (articulation of the linguistic message), syntax and semantics, as well as at the level of organization and management of vocabulary, is governed by a closed system of rules, the gradual decoding of which allows the natural speaker to master his mother tongue. The rules that govern GSL vocabulary - as is the case with any natural language - reflect the mechanisms of vocabulary organization, as well as the mechanisms of production of lexical units, while controlling the operation of lexical units in speech. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

In elementary school, students are able to recognize and describe particular characteristics of GSL and explain the importance of gaze and non-motor cues as a grammatical cue. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

They recognize, convey and describe meanings and signs in their basic form but also in inflection or in combination with classifiers as well as the inflection of nouns, verbs and adjectives. They learn the production and categorization of nouns in GSL and the production of noun definitions. They also learn recognition and formation of verbs and the formation of verb definitions (energy, existential, simple and directional) in GSL, formation of noun-verb pairs and the different types of classifiers in GSL and their integration into movement and position verbs. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

A key element of the material is the development and demonstration of the skills required to define the grammar of GSL sentences (recognition of grammatical and syntactic

categories, e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, classifiers, adverbs etc.) and the understanding, recognition and use of the components of sentences (e.g., subject and object). They get familiar with learning, recognition and formation of individual elements of GSL sentences (such as thematization, change of roles, establishment of positions in the space, use of gaze to suggest a subject or object) and understanding, recognition and use of two basic types of questions (total and partial ignorance) in GSL but also the differentiation of affirmative from question marks. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

They learn to use the four basic parameters of a meaning, visual contact and the use of the gaze. They learn to incline nouns, verbs and adjectives and to form tenses in GSL. They are taught the differentiation of common from proper nouns, the use of a noun/ verb agreement and also the formation of sentences with basic editorial structures. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

Finally, they learn to apply the appropriate grammatical principles governing the use of personal pronouns and the formation of classifier category structures with acceptable combinations of hand elements with gestures and movements. At this level begins the analysis of the structure of derivative meanings in order to find their etymological roots (e.g., pairs / families of noun-verb-adjective). (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

### **c. The amount of words that pupils learn at this level**

The Greek Curriculum in Special Education for deaf students does not specify a precise number of words that students will have learned after graduating from primary school. However, it is clearly stated that by graduating from the Fourth grade of Elementary school, students will have assimilated and will be able to understand and use about a thousand (1000) meanings that correspond to the thousand most common words. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

Of course, in Special Education learning is a combination of many factors. The Curriculum is such a factor, as well as the incentives from family environment. The health issues and special educational needs that deaf students may face (e.g., dyslexia, autism, Asperger syndrome, Asher syndrome, etc.) also play a key role. Therefore, the number of words a student can learn is not always strictly defined.

However, it is worth noting that in each class the main goal of Curriculum is the enrichment of vocabulary and meanings both in terms of comprehension and in terms of its proper use in the appropriate communication context. Moreover, in each class there is emphasis on learning and using the different categories of GSL vocabulary (common and concise nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.), idioms in GSL, the numerical system, rare words, foreign words, distinction of genuine elements from loans signs. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

#### d. The content of the course at this level

From infancy, children learn to monitor their interlocutor and develop self-control, use distraction techniques and maintain eye contact during communication. They learn the basic hand elements of GSL, the use of semantic concepts (time, place, description, energy, etc.), the use of space to indicate grammatical relations in sentences, the use of non-manual cues to represent meanings. However, the basic elements of the material are the use of GSL for communication purposes (requirements, needs, desires, etc.) and the story telling of personal moment / description, etc. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

In the first grades of elementary school, students practice understanding and using new vocabulary. They start using classifiers and sequence markers (identity, linking main to secondary sentence, etc.) to link sequential stories. They are being taught the description of subject and accusative, while a communication act is underway (e.g., in video), and the differentiation of common from proper nouns. They also learn to differentiate between affirmative and interrogative sentences. They are now able to tell a story using the appropriate techniques (body rotation, maintaining a suitable reference space for each character, narrating with reference to beginning, characters, background, sequence, plot, end). They can create sentences -with agreement verbs- where the order of the words changes to express the same meaning in present, past and future tense. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

At the same time the student will understand the function of classifiers as pronouns and will combine the appropriate hand elements of semantic classifiers with images of different semantic classifiers such as: vehicles (cars - all types / models, motorcycles, caravans, tractors, buses, trucks, all, boats, etc.) The student will also combine the appropriate semantic classifier hand elements with images of different semantic classifiers, such as: people (e.g.: people of all kinds, people sitting, people walking), animals (e.g.: animals that "sit", animals that run, animals that "stand") and buildings / constructions (e.g.: tall buildings, low buildings, large houses, tents, castles, etc.) (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

Also, the student will combine the appropriate hand semantic classifier with images of different semantic classifiers - airplanes, space buses, etc. Categories of classifiers related to the human body will be introduced. The student will combine the appropriate hand elements of these classifiers with images from different parts of the body, e.g., head, eyes etc. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

Regarding the verbs, simple verbs will be taught such as: EAT, KNOW, THINK, LEARN, PLAY, TASTE, FEEL, WANT, HEAR, CRY, NEED, verbs of agreement, verbs that shows interaction (for example: WE SEND MESSAGES TO EACH OTHER, WE HATE EACH OTHER), movement verbs, position verbs. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

At the end of the program students will use the material for hand elements, position and movement. They should recognize the 54 forms of GSL and the 5 positions of formation of a meaning. They will also have to recognize the verb tense and be able to form the plural. (Greek Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute, 2004).

### **3. International Signs in Greece**

International Signs (IS) are quite popular in Greece but mostly among young people. They learn about it through social media, Youtube videos and internet. There are several videos on IS in websites concerning Deaf Society. Some deaf people pointed out that nowadays during quarantine (due to covid-19) they managed to watch videos on the internet in IS and therefore they got more familiar with IS. Some deaf people even use the IS in video calls with other deaf friends and colleagues, when travelling to other countries for educational or professional reasons or entertainment. They also use IS in International or European Deaf Festivals, when they participate in seminars with the presence of an IS interpreter or even when volunteering to International Sports Events.

#### **3.1. Characteristics**

Deaf people in Greece present IS as a code system which is based mostly on American Sign Language. International Signs are made by descriptive meanings and many of the signs are borrowed from various national sign languages. They are specific signs that are made by necessity for communication at conferences and councils. Each speaker uses words from his/her local sign language vocabulary, so there are more than one signs for one meaning. It is commonly believed that it would be easy enough for deaf people to understand IS, since it is a natural need for them, but it would not be that easy for non-deaf people.

#### **3.2. Policies and Legal Status**

Unfortunately, in Greece there is not any formal policy or legal status for International Signs.

#### **3.3. Learning**

Since there is not any formal policy or legal status for International Signs in Greece, there is not either an organized learning framework for IS. Although there have been done some seminars where some basic signs of IS were taught, those seminars were not repeated periodically. Therefore, anyone who keeps an interest on learning IS has to look on his own for such opportunities. Most of the people who are interested in learning IS in Greece watch videos, websites, talk with video-calls with foreign friends and seek for international communication on their own.



## 4. Communication Challenges Between Deaf and Non-deaf in Education

A literature study on the education of deaf students explored both the needs and conditions and prospects of joining the Greek educational reality. Through the needs, problems and suggestions of the participants, the survey concluded that integration may be an option that will benefit after a certain time not only deaf students but also hard-of-hearing as well as the whole society. (Koukkos, 1995).

The proposals that deaf made, are of particular significance as they are for the people involved. Most of them recommend the use of personal computers equipped with appropriate educational software, in order not to consume time to keeping notes during the lesson but to participate actively in the learning process, being creative and productive in their time. Additionally, they ask for modern equipped classrooms, modern textbooks, rich visual material in digital format (images, DVD, presentations based on the image) and even musical education (Gena, 1998).

Considering the possibility of inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in the "public school" as described in the literature, it could have beneficial effects in the Greek reality. It is obvious that such an effort should take under consideration the pupils' needs. It is also a matter of priority to provide equal opportunities and respect the diversity fostering the spirit of cooperation among the group. (Papasprou, 2000).

Basic requirements are a total restructuring of education and ideology focusing on equality and acceptance of diversity, modification and enhancement of the teaching methodology and personalized teaching objectives, smaller groups, fully equipped classrooms and in particular the absolute qualified teachers -with good knowledge of sign language- who are experts in Special Education and have the desire to support such a demanding project. (Zoniou Sideri, 1998).

More specifically, Lambropoulou, Vlahou and Hatzikakou suggested that in the inclusive class the light plays an important role for deaf students and students with hearing problems. The teacher's face should be lightened enough so the student can read his/her lips. It is also important that teacher should talk close to the student with hearing problems and prepare his/her lesson so that at any time he/she can adjust it on pupils' needs. They pointed out that the noises coming from outside should be reduced and the acoustic of classroom should be good enough. Last but not least they suggested that there should be communication and cooperation between school and parents. (Lambropoulou, Hatzikakou, & Vlahou, Η ένταξη και η συμμετοχή των κωφών/βαρήκων μαθητών σε σχολεία με ακούοντες μαθητές - Οδηγίες για τους εκπαιδευτικούς πρωτοβάθμιας και δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης, 2003)

Finally, although inclusion is a difficult task that needs time, work and dedication, perseverance and patience by all stakeholders, can certainly be applicable and have very positive effects on education.

#### 4.1. Survey on Communication between the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Greece

A survey was carried out by Hellenic Mediterranean University, and it was accessible by undergraduate students and Greek citizens. The survey was conducted online using Google forms and remained public for several weeks, allowing time for as many participants as possible to answer. The participants were asked questions about their personal experiences interacting with Deaf people, their communication with deaf people, their knowledge on Greek Sign Language, their perception on deaf people's communication among them and with non-deaf people, their intention on learning GSL and International Signs and finally their suggestions for deaf students on studies and generally on academic life. The responses of 267 participants were included in these results. There are some minor discrepancies in the totals or certain questions due to the fact that participants were free to continue with the survey even if they did not answer some questions.

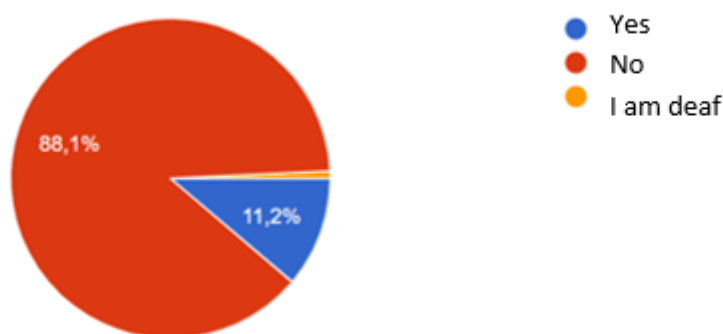
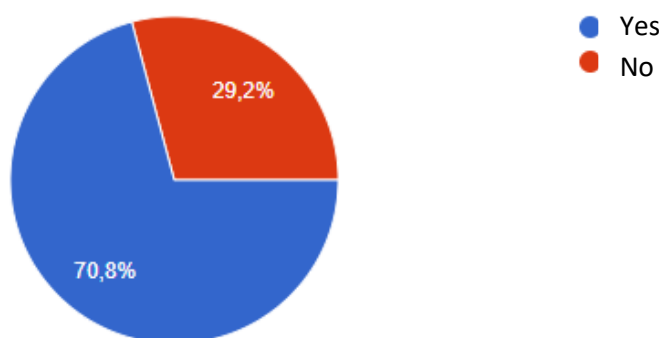


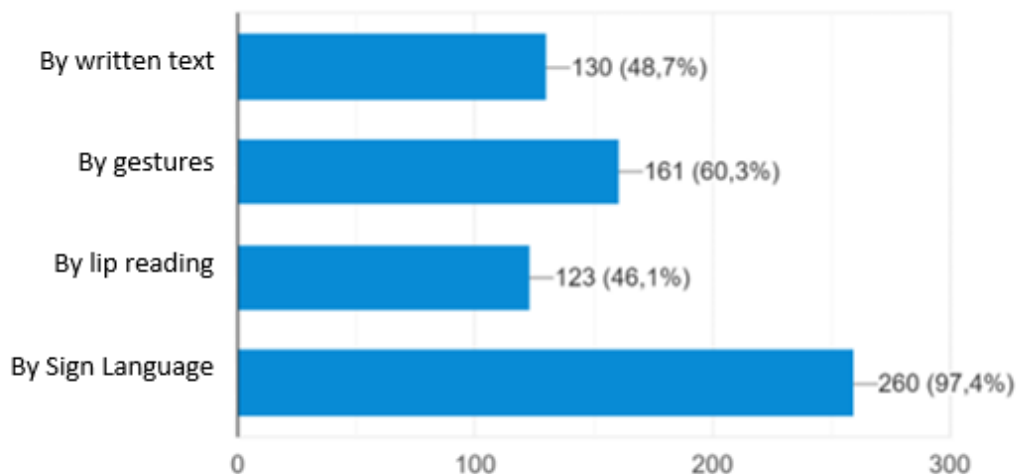
Figure 3: Do you communicate with deaf people?

The majority of hearing participants 88,1% answered that had not any communication with deaf people (Figure 3) and many of them (70,8% of 264 participants) seemed to believe that deaf people do not have many difficulties in understanding written Greek language (Figure 4).



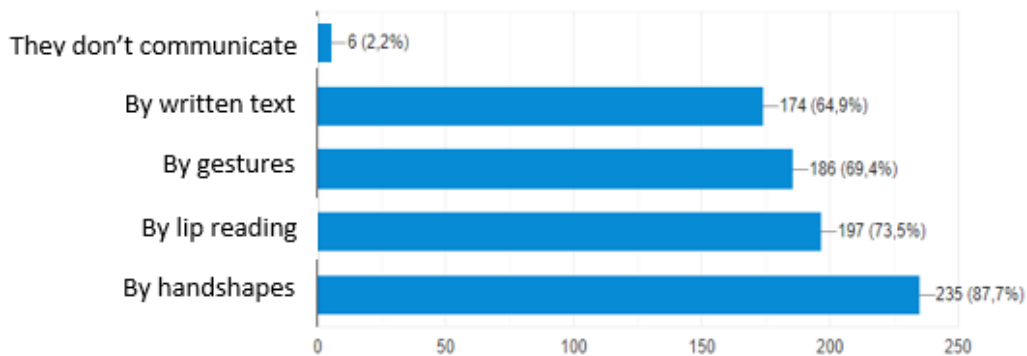
**Figure 4: Do deaf people can easily read and understand written Greek language?**

They have also been asked about communication among deaf people and between deaf and non-deaf people. Regarding communication among deaf people the participants had the opportunity to choose more than one answers. Particularly they answered that deaf people communicate mostly in Sign Language (97,4%), with gestures (60,3%), through writing (48,7%) and through lip reading (46,1%) (Figure 5).



**Figure 5: How do deaf people communicate with each other?**

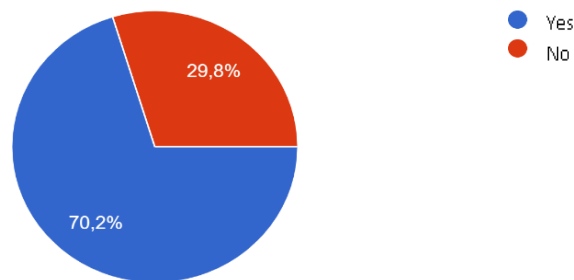
About communication between deaf and non-deaf people 87,7% answered that communication is feasible with hand signs, 73,5% answered with lip reading, 69,4% with gestures, 64,9% with writing and 2,2% answered that they do not communicate as it is pointed below (figure 6).



**Figure 6: How deaf people communicate with the non- deaf?**

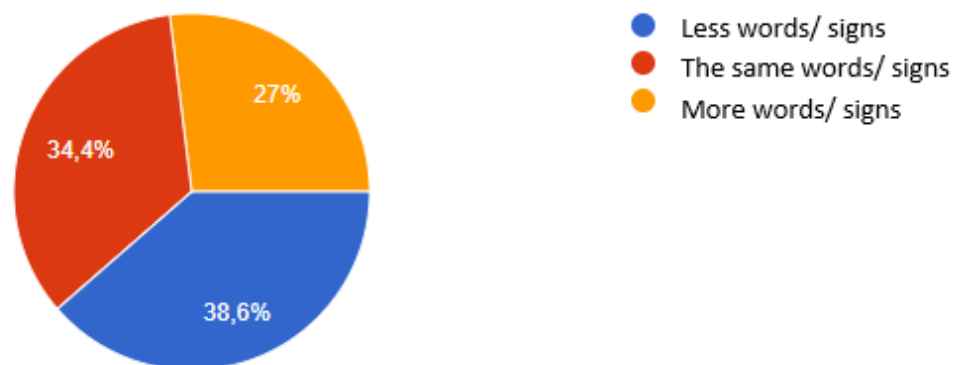
When they were asked how they used to communicate with deaf friends or colleagues they answered either that they do not know (do not have any deaf friends) or with gestures, signs, writing, GSL, lip reading. Most of them (126 people participated on this question) pointed out that they are willing to communicate by focusing on deaf signs and at the same time trying to be understood speaking clearly and showing emotions.

Participants were also asked whether Sign languages vary on different countries and 70,2% seemed to believe they do (figure 7).



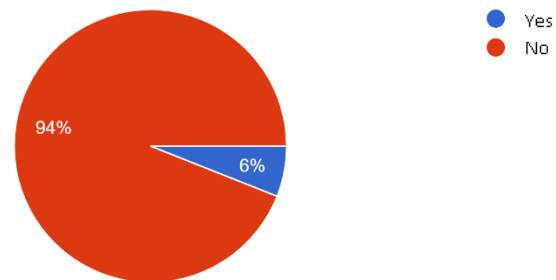
**Figure 7 : Do you think that sign languages differ from country to country?**

They were also asked whether -in comparison to Greek Language- Greek Sign Language has more, less or the same number of words. From 241 answers 38,6% say that GSL has less words than Greek Language, 34,4% believe that they both have the same number of words and 27% answered that GSL has more words than Greek Language (Figure 8).



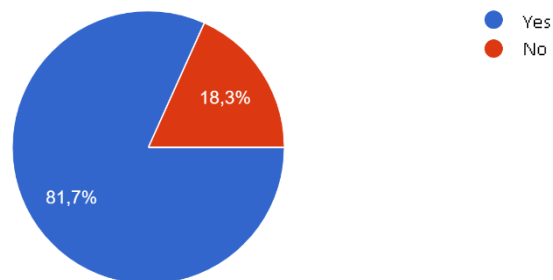
**Figure 8: In comparison to Greek Language, does Greek Sign Language has more, less or the same number of words?**

From 267 participants only 6% claimed to know GSL (Figure 9) but from 264 participants 82,2% claimed that they would like to learn GSL.



**Figure 9: Do you use Greek Sign Language?**

Regarding International Signs 78,7% of the participants said that they are aware of them, versus 21,3% who are not. From 264 participants 82,6% claimed that they would like to lean IS and 81,7% said that they are interested in attending classes on IS if they were available (Figure 10).



**Figure 10: Would you be interested in attending classes on IS whether there were available?**

Finally, participants were asked to suggest any ideas they thought that would help deaf students in education, in classroom and generally in their academic life. This question was answered by 121 participants with many of them to suggest that the teachers of all educational levels should know GSL and two of them added IS in order to be able to teach both in Greek Language and at the same time in GSL. Almost 1/3 of them suggested that there should be free lessons on GSL for everyone in order to have a better communication with their deaf classmates and fellow men and awareness on deaf people problems. Many of them also suggested that there should be an interpreter in the classroom, in university lessons and during seminars as well as in any academic institution and a specialized advisor on academic matters in order to have equal opportunities in education and information. A several number of participants suggested that there should be subtitles during lessons and seminars or even video recording of a lesson in order to put later subtitles and let deaf students to have access on it. Also many of them said that we should invent digital tools that will strengthen

accessibility for deaf and other disabled students. They strongly recommended that teachers should offer either written material on what they are about to talk or digital visual material with many pictures. Surprisingly, three of participants recommended on co-teaching of deaf and non-deaf students, what is called inclusion in international bibliography in order to avoid isolation and marginalization of disabled people. They suggested offering better books and teaching through new pedagogic, experiential and interactive methods, too. They also said that there should be an interpreter periodically present, to give deaf students the capability to communicate with their teachers for questions. Two of them suggested that deaf people should take part in theatre groups (even starring in them), library groups etc. so they will come closer with non-deaf people, share ideas, interests and feel acceptance and equality. Two participants seemed to encourage deaf people to have faith, persistence and tenacity on their dreams and on spreading GSL. Finally, two of them insisted that all problems begin from non-deaf people's behavior because there are not ethical values and respect any different. Therefore, they suggested that school should focus on equality, acceptance and brotherhood.

## 4.2. Guided Interviews on International Signs in Greece

A second survey was carried out from Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU). This time it was accessible to deaf Greek people, interpreters of GSL, researchers on GSL, Organization (public or private) dealing with the Greek Sign Language, Organization (public or private) dealing with the education of the deaf and citizens who speak GSL. The survey at first was planned to be conducted through face-to-face interviews, but due to health restrictions (restrictions due to Covid 19) was conducted online using Google forms and remained accessible for a few weeks, giving as many people as possible the opportunity to participate. It was also sent to all Greek Deaf associations, unions and clubs, to teachers specialized on deaf pupils' education and to the Association of Greek Sign Language Interpreters. The participants could also contact the researcher from HMU in order to ask for clarifications or any additional help.

24 participants answered to the questionnaire. Figure 11 shows the category each one of the participants belongs to.

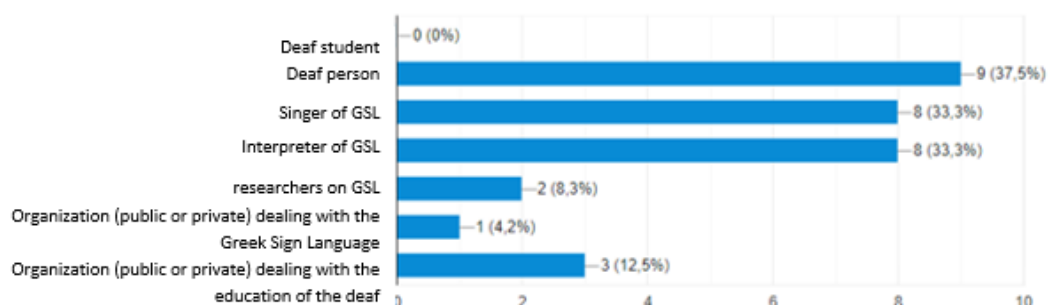


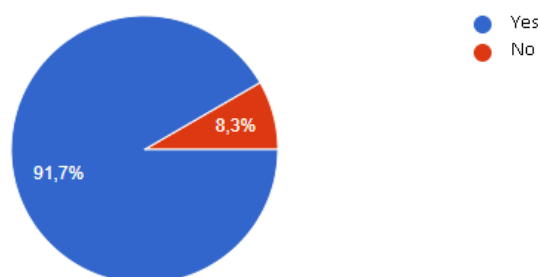
Figure 1: Participants categories

Questions were asked about the participants' personal experiences on International Signs, their knowledge on IS, their perception on deaf people's knowledge on IS, their communication with foreign deaf people, their intention on learning International Signs and especially using CEFR for Languages, their perception on the difficulty for someone to understand IS and the advantages of IS. They were also asked whether they have seen the use of IS and if they use IS, whether technological solutions (e.g., cochlear implants) are well accepted by the deaf people and if deaf people use IT courseware and digital content frequently. Interesting answers were given on the question whether they would prefer the existence only of IS rather than local Sign Languages. There are some minor discrepancies in the totals for certain questions due to the fact that participants were free to continue with the survey even if they did not answer some questions.

The participants' responses are presented below.

#### 4.2.1 How commonly are International Signs used?

As indicated by the interviews the majority of participants 91,7% claimed to know the existence of IS but they were not sanguine about popularity of IS in Greece (Figure 12).



**Figure 12: How commonly are International Signs used?**

In particular, 9 of 24 participants answered that IS is not very popular in Greek deaf community and 6 of 24 answered that it is more popular among young deaf people and not among non-deaf. Some of them pointed that many non-deaf people believe that Sign language is international and there are not local sign languages. Only 7 of 24 claimed that IS is popular in Greece. The interviewees were also asked if they know how many people with hearing problems are aware of International Sign Language. Only nine participants tried to estimate the percentage of deaf people knowing IS, but their answers varied from 2% to 70%. Some of them pointed out that International Signs are more popular among young deaf people i.e. people aged from 18 to 50 years old. Most of them did not know a number but could tell that deaf people learn IS through experience and communication with foreign deaf people, European councils and conferences, European camping, student exchange programs (for example Erasmus), private travelling, international deaf festivals and mostly through internet and videos shown on social networks.

#### 4.2.2 Does the interviewee use of International Signs?

From 24 participants only 10 claimed that they do not use International Signs. Most of them knew IS or at least they use some of them in order to communicate during travelling in foreign countries, hosting friends from abroad or being hosted on friends. They also use IS during European events and international festivals, interpretations and social networks. One of them claimed to have been a volunteer on European Basketball Games, that were hosted in Thessaloniki, and had the opportunity to communicate with participants from all over Europe.

#### 4.2.3 How do you learn International Signs?

Most of the participants would learn or have learned IS mostly through experience and communication with foreign deaf people, through deaf friends who know IS. Five of them would search for a deaf teacher or a sign language learning school. Two of them said that they could learn from specialized internet sites and H3 World TV that often shows cultural and athletic programs using IS. Two other participants would seek for information at the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf (OMKE) or the National Deaf Institution and one would look for a European program concerning learning IS.

#### 4.2.4 How do you communicate with foreigner deaf if you don't know IS?

Despite participants who know IS, all the others would try to communicate using GSL, or words they know in British Sign Language but mostly using pantomime, descriptive movements, facial expressions, the posture and movement of the body. They would also use classifiers, which are not several words and are being understood and used in any local sign language.

#### 4.2.5 How easy is it to understand International Signs for someone skilled in national sign language?

International Signs seems to be easily understandable by someone skilled in his/her local sign language but not knowing IS, as 52% of participants (12 of 23 answers) claimed. At the same question 26% did not give an answer and only 13% were negative. One participant said that it would be easy enough for deaf people to understand IS, since it is a natural need for them but it would not be that easy for non-deaf people. It is worth to mention a specific answer as a conclusion "as any second language, IS needs practice, tenacity and effort in order to learn".

#### 4.2.6 Have you ever seen International Signs in use?

As indicated by the interviews from 23 participants (82,6%) have seen IS in use mostly in internet, social networks (Facebook, Instagram), international videos in Youtube, European deaf councils and conferences, student exchange programs (e.g., Erasmus), international deaf festivals and meetings, and through online videos of international federations.

#### 4.2.7 How difficult do you find International Signs compared to your national sign language?

Since the majority of participants do not officially know IS, they could compare IS to GSL. Those who know IS find it easy enough in comparison to national sign language (43,4 % answered that it is not difficult at all). They said that anyone who knows American Sign Language finds it easy to learn IS. They added that it is easy because "it is not even a language.



They are specific signs that are made by necessity for communication at conferences and councils". According to a specific answer "it is just as easy as learning any second language".

#### 4.2.8 Do you think that it would be an advantage if only International Signs would exist?

The overwhelming majority of participants (20 interviewees out of 23) strongly recommended that only IS should not exist. Only two participants claimed that only IS should exist, and one could not give a certain answer claiming that deaf people's opinion should be considered. Most of them accepted that IS should be learned by all people, especially by deaf people as a second language. Moreover, many of them insisted that "it is natural for any language to evolve through time and differ from place to place in order to meet the different needs of every civilization". Another interesting and well documented answer which it is worth to mention says "Sign Language is a natural language and language is a consequence of history and culture. It is not only a code. It is no coincidence that the first reference to sign language in Greece is found in the text "Kratylos" by Socrates. International Signs can only function as an aid for communication purposes, just as English does in spoken languages".

As a conclusion local sign languages are part of deaf people's culture and tradition. It is an element that strengthens their ties, so the National Languages must be preserved. Additionally, it is important to promote IS to everyone.

#### 4.2.9 What are the advantages/disadvantages of the International Sign Language?

Regarding the questions referred to the advantages and disadvantages of the International Signs, most of the participants agreed that the enormous advantage is the facilitation of communication. International Signs gives the opportunity for interactive communication between deaf people and people with hearing problems all over the world, so they can get to know each other's way of life and civilization in different countries. It also helps people to keep in touch, travel, study or even work abroad. IS is useful for international communication.

On the other hand, they claimed that IS is not a complete language but only a code for basic communication and also it cannot be precisely translated since there is not much vocabulary. "A large percentage of IS is borrowed from ASL" said an interviewee as a negative aspect of IS. Many participants pointed out that there is a huge danger in IS because if young people communicate only in IS, the local sign languages will be altered, in the same way that many spoken languages are no longer existed. "Linguistic diversity is at stake" were the exact words of an interviewee. Finally, another participant said that "Languages are not characterized by advantages and disadvantages. Their users maybe can be characterized by them".

#### 4.2.10 Does International Signs have any legal standing in your country?

The majority (69%) of interviewees answered that they know about the legislation for the recognition of the GSL as an official language for deaf people and people with hearing

problems in Greece. Especially two of the participants named the legal frame in Greece concerning GSL, which is considered as equal with Greek language according to the law 4488/2017 and as a formal language for education with the law 2817/2000. 31% of the participants did not know the legal status of IS in Greece.

#### 4.2.11 Do you know of any variations of the International Signs?

The majority of participants (48%) answered that IS has different dialects since it borrows elements from many local Sign Languages and differs according to the person using it. Furthermore, IS often borrows signs from English or American Sign Languages. One interviewee claimed that IS is approximately the same to ASL. Therefore, since ASL has many dialects, IS has many dialects as well.

There were many answers (22%) claiming that IS are the same everywhere. Actually, one interviewee pointed out that “in most of the countries IS are the same but each signer incorporates his/ her local sign language during his/ her speech. Most of signers use 70% of ASL and 30% of Europe Sign Language”. Also, one person claimed that there are different signs, however they are not considered dialects.

The rest 30% of participants did not have a clue about it. One of them said that he didn’t know about IS but was sure that GSL has many dialects.

#### 4.2.12 Do deaf people use IT courseware and digital content frequently?

Most of the answers (59%) were positive to the question according to the use of IT by deaf people and people with hearing problems. In addition, 18% of interviewees claimed that deaf people and people with hearing problems very often use IT courseware and digital content. It is a common belief, among the interviewees, that the younger generation of deaf people use technology more than the older generation. More specifically, two participants claimed that it depends on the age, the level of hearing loss, the specific needs, the different interests, and the educational level. Another one pointed out that “nowadays deaf people can get acquainted and be familiar with special software. The educational means can be classified into four categories:

- a) Printed and visual material (special manuals, videotapes, visual material).
- b) Special electronic material (material made to achieve specific learning objectives).
- c) Special material that requires connection to a computer.
- d) Multimedia software.”

There were some many participants (23%) who could not give an answer.

#### 4.2.13 Are technological solutions (e.g., cochlear implants) well accepted?

As indicated by the interviews, participants are divided, and opinions differ on the acceptance of technological solutions such cochlear implants by deaf people. In fact, only 26% of interviewees believe that they are well accepted, and another 26% that they are not

accepted. Only one participant was definitely positive on it and said that “every technological solution for the deaf is like a miracle to facilitate his daily life”.

The majority of interviewees (44%) pointed out that the use of technological solutions like cochlear implants are well accepted only under specific conditions and in specific circumstances. Many students use cochlear implants. The community as a whole seems to be sceptical of their effectiveness. The level of acceptance also “depends on the self-perception of the deaf person and the attitude towards deafness by his family and himself” as one claimed. It is worth to mention some different answers about it. One interviewee claimed that “They are acceptable only when are done at the right age and under right conditions for hearing development. For financial reasons they are often promoted and submitted to people who will not benefit from the implant. But they certainly believe that those who have a cochlear implant are removed from the deaf community and lose part of their identity”. Another one claimed that “cochlear implants are not for all Deaf people, nor are all Deaf people compatible with their existence”. Some of them seem to believe that if the operation for cochlear implant is performed on babies it may has benefits, but it is certain that when it is performed in older children is definitely a failure. Only 4% could not give a certain answer.

As a conclusion we present one well informed interviewee’s opinion claiming that “although cochlear implantation has been used since 1997 in Greece and successfully restores hearing and deafness problems, it is not yet a widely known method. It is estimated that more than 500,000 people in the world, with a severe, borderline deafness hearing loss, would benefit from a cochlear implant system. Speech, which is the most basic form of human communication, has as a prerequisite for proper development of oral speech the integrity of the hearing system. The period of the first three years of life is particularly critical for the psychomotor development of children, since during this period language learning takes place. The most appropriate age for implantation is around the 1st year, because from this age the central nervous part of the auditory system develops. Children who had a cochlear implant at the age of 12-18 months reportedly had better results and did not show a delay in their language. At older ages, suitable candidates are the “translingual patients” i.e. the people who have lost their hearing after they have acquired speech and now their communication is based on lip-reading. Therefore, for children older than 1-year-old and for people who are congenitally deaf, it does not offer any results and it does not make sense to enter this process because it will not have any positive effect”.

#### 4.2.14 How difficult is it to learn International Signs to a point where you are able to communicate?

The majority of interviewees (76%) could not give a specific answer. Nevertheless, one participant believes that all levels of IS should be taught. Another one claimed that the basic level for IS is A2 and should reach to B2, and another one said that someone should know many words in IS. There were also two answers claiming that IS is not a language, so there is not a basis and there are not any levels of knowledge since “it has not prevailed as a real international language of communication”.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Recently, great progress has been made in Greece concerning the use of Greek Sign Language and the education of deaf people. Since Special Education for deaf people had been well organized in past, many deaf people in Greece had the opportunity to learn GSL and create the deaf culture. Therefore, it was a matter of time for deaf people to create federations, clubs and associations in order to claim their rights for equal education, recognition of GSL and equal opportunities in life. Even if there are still many deaf people who do not know GSL due to natural barriers and physical distance from schools, GSL is well known by the deaf community and there are many public and private schools where anyone deaf or not deaf can be taught GSL.

On the one hand, the associations for the deaf provide the necessary additional help and assistance to the families of the deaf in order to receive the necessary education and acquire the skills and competences for their employability. Furthermore, they provide support to them for socialising and be integrated in the society.

On the other hand, at this point Greek education faces the challenge of inclusion deaf and non-deaf people at the same school in order to provide equal opportunities in knowledge, studies and work for all people. Furthermore, the educational system and the Ministry of Education and Culture in Greece has been developing the methodology and means for the education of inclusion, although there is a lot more to be done in this direction.

At this moment there are 2645 people in Greece who are qualified signers of GSL according to the official record of Greek Federation of the deaf. Moreover, according to the aforementioned surveys many people are willing to know GSL and IS as well in order to communicate. This acceptance supports deaf community, respects their rights and helps deaf people to keep and evolve the deaf culture.

In recent years, the evolution of technology brings up the need for international communication. So the code, named International Signs, has been created due to more frequent travelling of the deaf for education, for entertainment, but also for socialising and communicating with deaf friends coming from all over the world.

Most of the participants of the aforementioned surveys pointed out that IS has to be taught to everyone and not in order to replace each local sign language, but in order to intensify communication of deaf and non-deaf all over the world.

Young deaf individuals have easy access to the means and tools of technology. By this way they support themselves and create better perspectives for their future and their wellbeing.

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