

Why is lip reading or exchanging notes often ineffective?

For many persons in the Deaf population, English is not their primary language; American Sign Language is. The Deaf person's English ability may be at the Elementary School level. Also, the majority of English speech sounds emanates from the tongue, throat, breath, so they are invisible on the lips. Approximately 70% of speech reading involves guesswork because only about 30% of English speech sounds appear on the lips. During a discussion about medical information, where the patient is usually nervous and anxious, this type of guesswork leads to misunderstandings and may place the patient in serious danger. Written notes may be acceptable for short and simple conversations, such as asking a question in a store, but not when the information is long, important, or complex.