

“Transition to the Cultural Language” is the last of four booklets on Communication and Congenital Deafblindness. The booklets are written to inspire families and professionals communicating with deafblind children and adults. The cultural languages that exist world-wide are either perceived by vision or hearing. People with acquired deafblindness have developed tactile forms for perceiving sign language and speech, but this happens after language acquisition. For people with congenital deafblindness, who experience the world and the culture/language mainly using the bodily senses, it is therefore a big challenge to be part of linguistic activities and constructs of the culture.

The first chapter addresses central and relevant issues of language. What is it? And what is it used for? The stance is that the language we observe in congenitally deafblind children is just a variation amongst the many forms of languages that human beings produce. Deafblindness challenges the definition and methods related to language description and language acquisition.

In the second chapter case stories from six countries are described, which are also illustrated on the DVD. They describe nine different journeys through the development of communication for five children and four adults with congenital deafblindness. In the nine case stories parents and professional partners share a lot of knowledge, creativity and willingness to reach a shared meaning with their deafblind child or adult. The nine deafblind people who share their stories with us also illustrate their potentials, their desire and their struggle to understand the world and their seeing-hearing partners.

In the last chapter language construction is addressed as a co-authored adventure where this exploration requires the co-ordinated contributions of partners making the most of their shared skills and constraints. The main focus of this chapter will be on the typical features of language development observed in people with congenital deafblindness and on the competencies that all partners of deafblind children and adults need.