

Role of language, culture and identity in Auslan



Language

Language is how we communicate.

- We use language to share information within and across communities.
- Auslan is the language of the Deaf community in Australia, with its own grammar and vocabulary.
- Auslan users may be bilingual or multilingual.
- Auslan is a visual and gestural language, expressed through the hands, face and body.

Consider:

- How does language reflect culture?
- How does language relate to a sense of identity?



Culture

Culture is the shared way of life of a group of people.

- Language shapes our culture.
- Auslan is central to the identity of Australia's Deaf community.
- Deaf culture has its own protocols, history, behaviours, values, customs and ways of being.
- Auslan users may be bicultural or multicultural.
- Deaf culture can be passed down through families, schools and communities.

Consider:

- How does culture shape the way we use language?
- How does culture influence our identity?



Identity

Identity is the sense of who you are – as an individual and as part of societal groups.

- Language contributes to our identity.
- Auslan is not just a language – it is a marker of Deaf identity and pride.
- Using Auslan allows access to shared ways of being, for example, storytelling, humour beliefs and experiences.
- Auslan users have diversity in background, language skills, communication styles, culture and feelings about being d/Deaf, hard of hearing or a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults).
- Auslan users may or may not identify culturally as Deaf.

Consider:

- How do language and culture contribute to our identity?
- How do they contribute to a shared identity?



Reflecting on the interconnections between language, culture and identity

Reflections can be expressed in Auslan or English.

- How is Auslan similar to and different from spoken languages like English?
- What does it feel like to use Auslan?
- How does identity connect to language and culture – for you, the Deaf community and the wider hearing community?
- How has learning Auslan impacted your identity?
- What have you learned and/or noticed about the Deaf community and how Auslan users connect with each other?
- Why is awareness and visibility of Auslan and Deaf culture important?
- What role can you have in advocating for Auslan and the Deaf community?
- How might Auslan users' experiences today differ from those of previous generations?