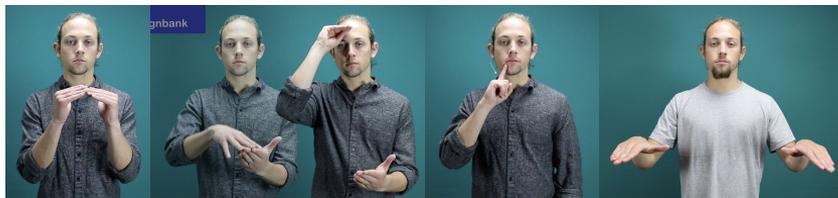




Family ASL: Bimodal Bilingualism for an Early Start to Equitable Education for Deaf Children



EHDI, 2021

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Disclosures

Elaine Gale

Financial: Employed by Hunter College; research grant NIH R01DC01690

Non-financial: Chair, Deaf Leadership International Alliance (DLIA); Board Member, St. Joseph's School for the Deaf; Executive Committee Member, Family-Centered Early Intervention; Associate Review Editor, Deafness & Education International

Deborah Chen Pichler

Financial: Employed by Gallaudet University; research grant NIH R01DC016901 [Note: no royalties received for book published by Gallaudet University Press]

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Diane Lillo-Martin

Financial: Employed by University of Connecticut; research grants from NSF 1734120, NIH R01DC016901 [Note: no royalties received for book published by Gallaudet University Press]

Non-financial: Board Chair, Sign Language Linguistics Society; Associate Editor, JDSDE; Board of Corporators, American School for the Deaf; Partner, DLIA





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L01: Language Acquisition

Diane Lillo-Martin



Language acquisition *with accessible input*

- Unconscious, automatic process
- Children are sensitive to patterns in the input
- Requires meaningful interactions
 - With parents, siblings, peers
- Does *not* require explicit teaching
- Very similar path for spoken languages and sign languages



(Chen Pichler et al. 2018; Hoff 2014)



When input is difficult to access

Infants miss out on crucial early experiences

- Discovering the patterns contained in natural language expressions
- Linking words to their meanings
- Communicating effectively with their caregivers

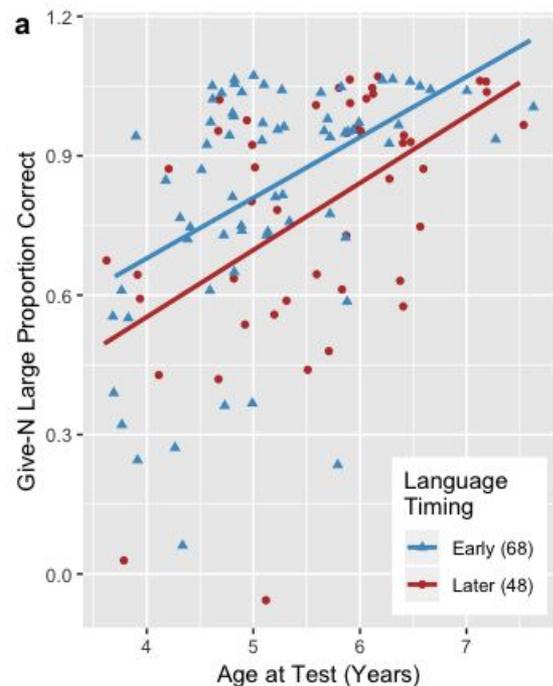


(Levine et al. 2016)



Once accessible input is received

- Great progress may be made!
- But effects of delayed access to language continue to be seen
 - In language
 - In cognitive development
 - In school readiness and success



(Carrigan, Shusterman & Coppola submitted; see also Hrastinski & Wilbur 2016; Mayberry & Kluender 2018)





L02: Advantages of Bimodal Bilingualism

— Deborah Chen Pichler —



Accessible input in two
modalities, signed and spoken

Bimodal Bilingualism

Eventual goal: two natural
LANGUAGES



Advantages of bimodal bilingualism

**Early sign language
supports spoken
language development**

Spoken English development* by DHH children with CI and early exposure to fluent signing equalled or surpassed that of oral-only deaf children with CI.

*Covered general language skills, vocabulary, syntax, phonological awareness, articulation.

(Davidson et al. 2014)



Sign language input enables the earliest stages of development to begin even before DHH children have access to spoken language. The rate of ASL vocabulary growth for DHH children whose hearing parents exposed them to ASL before 6 months is similar to that of native-signer Deaf children.

(Caselli et al. 2021)

Advantages of bimodal bilingualism

On-time early development despite delay in spoken language input

Advantages of bimodal bilingualism

**Language
opportunities:
More is more**

A bimodal bilingual environment is both a least-restrictive AND language-rich environment, maximizing communication options and empowering the child to choose the language that works best for them in each situation.

(Clark et al. 2020)



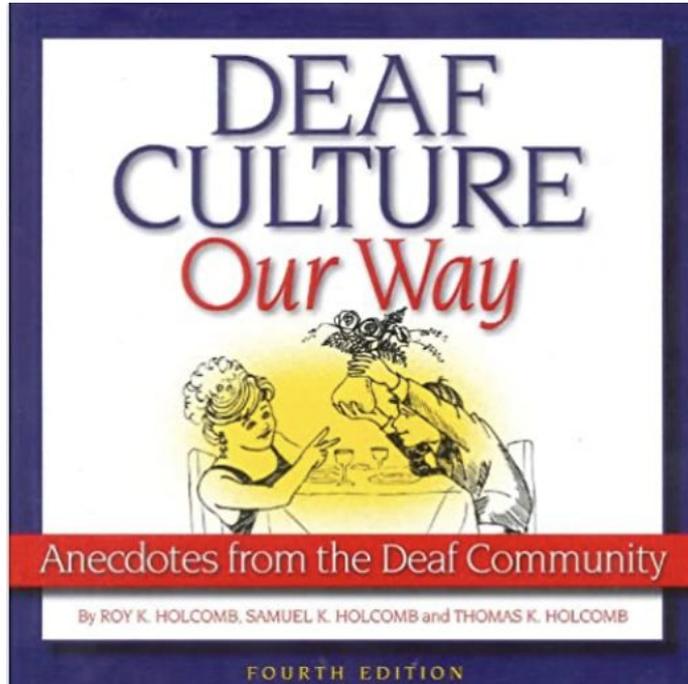


L03: Visual Communication

Elaine Gale



Why Visual Communication Strategies



(Holcomb et al., 2011)

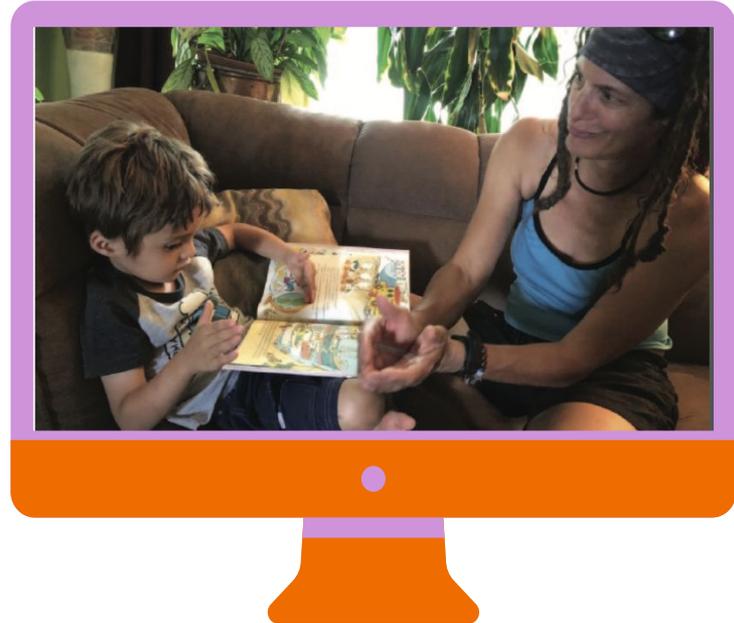


Visual Communication Strategies

Eye Contact



Sign on Book

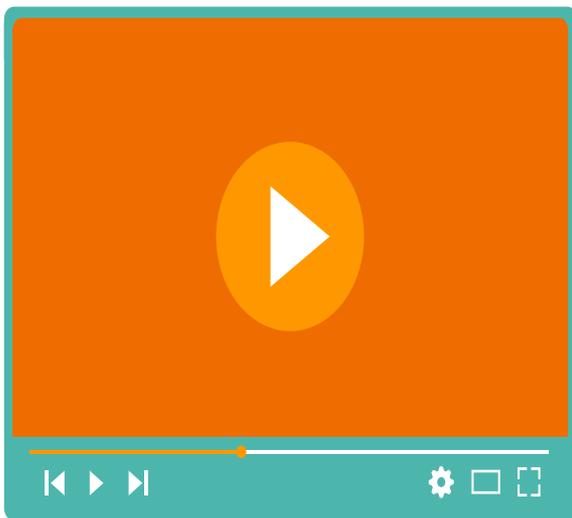


(Gale, 2020; Schleper, 1997)

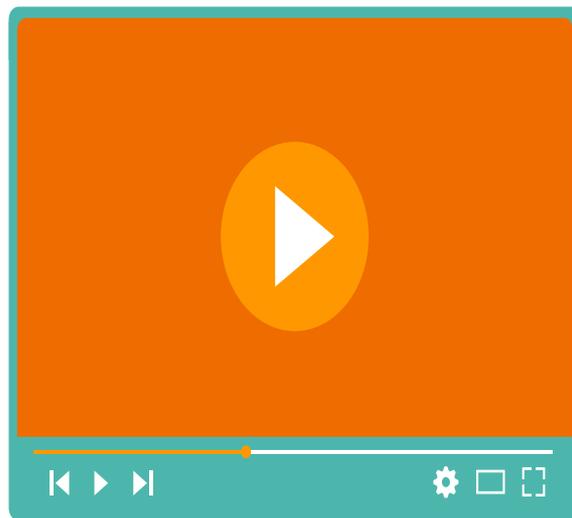


How Do Deaf Families Engage in Joint Attention

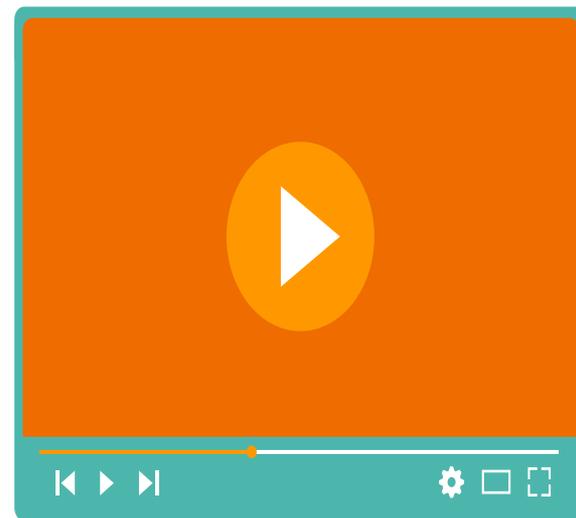
Sequential Pattern



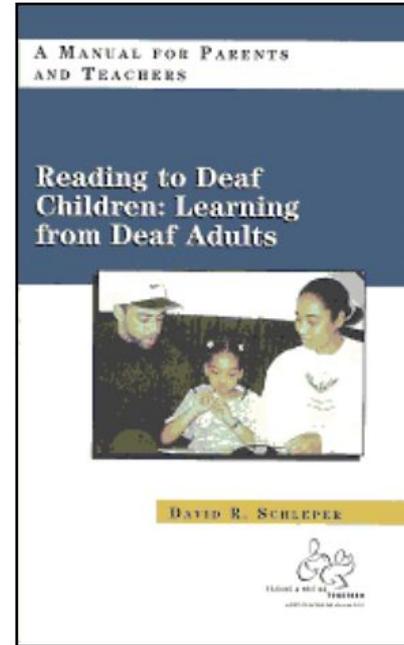
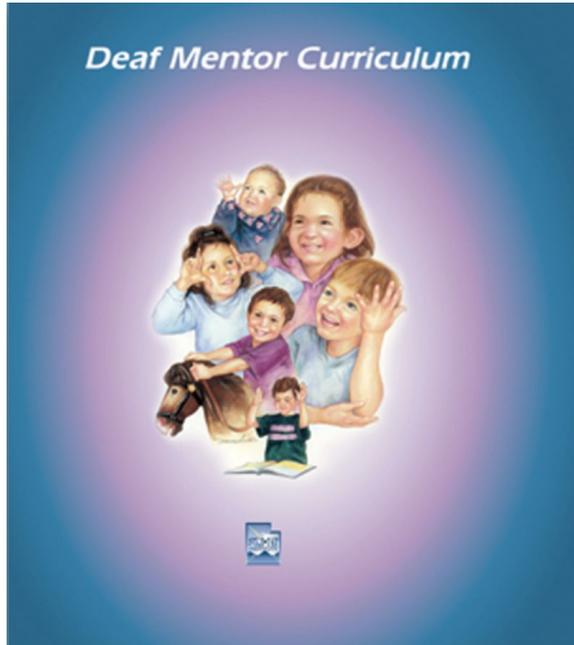
Time to Explore



Follow Child's Lead



Visual Communication Resources



<http://deaf-mentor.skihi.org>

<https://hopepubl.com/product/deaf-mentor-curriculum/>

<https://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/national-resources/learning/learning-opportunities/online-learning/fifteen-principles-for-reading-to-deaf-children.html>



FAMILY





Thank you! Questions?



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Poster Session



Stuck at beginner level: Hearing parents' challenges in learning ASL word order

Deborah Chen Pichler (Gallaudet Univ.), Elaine Gale (Hunter College), Diane Lillo-Martin (Univ. of Connecticut)

Only a small minority of Deaf and Hard of hearing (DHH) children are born into a home with language that is accessible to them.



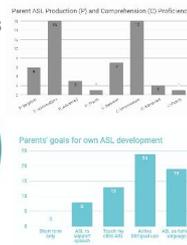
Some hearing parents opt to learn a sign language to provide accessible early language input and an inclusive home environment to their DHH child (Caselli et al. 2021). These parents' experiences as sign language learners offer insight on how to improve current resources for families who choose to sign.

Interview Questions

1. What are your goals for learning ASL for yourself? for your deaf child?
2. What motivated you to choose ASL, despite pressure against signing with deaf children?
3. What methods are most effective for learning ASL in a family context?
4. What aspects of ASL have been the hardest to learn? the most intuitive to learn?
5. What resources do you still need to support your family's development of ASL?

Focus for today

Interview Participants



21/23 of interviewed parents cited ASL word order as "Quite difficult" or "near impossible" to learn.

	Very easy	Not difficult	Quite difficult	Near impossible
Accurate form	1	14	7	1
Vocabulary	2	11	10	0
Fingerspelling	1	7	12	3
Nonmanuals	2	12	9	0
Storytelling skills	1	4	14	4
Word order	0	2	20	1
Classifiers	0	5	18	0
Eye gaze	0	16	7	0
Child-directed sign	1	12	10	0

"We started with vocabulary, which made sense at the time ... but because we started out with vocabulary and no grammar, it's been harder for us to shift the mindset into ASL grammar, [which] has been a huge challenge."
[mother of 3 yo child]

"...all the vocabulary has been very helpful but now I'm hitting this wall...I really need to work on the grammar...to get really serious in practicing the word order and I'm not really finding a place to do that..." [mother of 6 yo child]

"I can't get any feedback on my word order [from Deaf adults]. Nobody ever corrects me, they're just thrilled I'm doing ASL..." [father of 3 yo child]

"Speaking English and signing ASL are completely different when you're using [ASL] properly, so that has been the struggle. I do a lot of...[signing] ASL in spoken word order. So that's how I kind of incorporate ASL into our lives."
[mother of two children, 6 and 7 yo]

Conclusion: Three recurring themes

- Parents feel their lack of ASL word order knowledge keenly and are uneasy about using English word order with ASL signs.
- Attempts to solicit word order instruction or correction are often unsuccessful, as Deaf adults may view word order corrections as discouraging and/or may modify their own ASL to be more English-like to accommodate beginning signer parents.
- Initial focus on vocabulary is helpful, but parents quickly need more advanced syntactic knowledge, which should be incorporated into family-centered ASL curricula.

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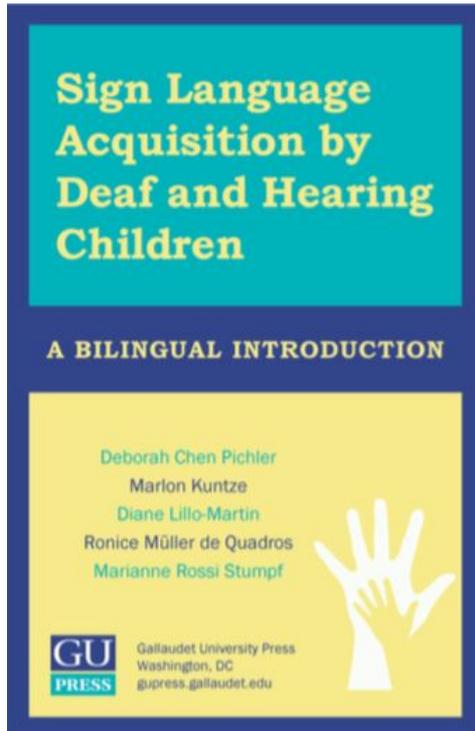
Acknowledgments

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Resources

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Thank you to the families for permission to share videos for educational purposes.



Thank you! Questions?



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