Motivation for L2 ASL learning by hearing parents with deaf children
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Background
• Motivation has a powerful influence on L2 learning (Gardner and Tremblay 1994)
• L2 signers with integrative motivations for learning ASL, expressing positive views of the Deaf community and a desire to integrate into it, scored higher in signing proficiency than learners expressing instrumental motivations, such as practical or career-related reasons (Lang et al. 1996).
• This study examines motivations of a neglected subtype of hearing adult L2 signers: hearing parents who learn ASL in response to an urgent instrumental need to communicate with and provide accessible language to their newly-diagnosed deaf child.

Methods
• Semi-structured interviews and written survey collected from 27 hearing parents using ASL with their deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) children (ages 0;7-9;11, median 48 months). The current analysis focuses mainly on parents’ survey responses.
• Survey questions focused on parents’ reasons for choosing to adopt ASL, its role in their family life, and their experiences as ASL L2 learners.

Results
Parents demonstrated long-term commitment for both themselves and their DHH children to become an “ASL-English bilingual person, actively using both languages” [Figs. 1 & 2]

Discussion
Hearing parents of DHH children exhibit strong instrumental motivation to learn ASL. Examination of their perceptions of ASL also reveals a strong motivation for integration into the Deaf community, but with a twist: they seek integration not for themselves, but for the sake of their deaf children, whom they anticipate will need ASL and the Deaf community. Such long-term commitment to L2 learning for the benefit of another is a novel case in L2 motivation studies, and remarkable given the prevailing public perception of signing as both a cause and result of failure to develop listening and speaking skills (Mauldin 2019).

Parents’ most common motivations for learning ASL are for bonding and communication (instrumental) and to provide their DHH child with rich language input (instrumental). [Fig. 3]

However, parents cite perceptions of ASL that are consistent with integrative motivations, e.g. ASL is “fascinating” and “more expressive than English,” and especially “becoming a good signer requires being involved in the Deaf community”. [Fig 4].

Selected references

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