

Society for American Sign Language Journal

Volume 3 | Number 1

Article 1

April 2019

SASL Journal, Volume 3, Number 1

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(2019) "SASL Journal, Volume 3, Number 1," *Society for American Sign Language Journal*: Vol. 3 : No. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/saslj/vol3/iss1/1>

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SASL Journal

Volume 3, Number 1
Spring/Summer
2019



A Society for American Sign Language Publication
ISSN: 2474-8277 (online)

Society for American Sign Language Journal
Volume 3, Number 1

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Mission Statement

The Society for American Sign Language (SASL) is a professional association with the credentials dedicated to basic and applied research about American Sign Language. SASL's goal is to expand linguistic accessibility. Linguistic principles are emphasized for understanding the signed language along with its aesthetics and role in literacy development and learning. SASL's scope and forum include theory, policy, and practice considerations, as well as addressing how an alternative language modality fulfills the needs and well being of all citizens in society.

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ISSN 2474-8277 (online)

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A Pilot Study of Prosodic Features in American Sign Language Used by Deaf Adults to Convey Empathy

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Abstract

Empathy, the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing, is recognized as one of many human emotional states. People express their emotions both linguistically (e.g., through vocabulary and syntax) as well as through metalinguistic cues (e.g., intonation, volume, and facial expressions) which are collectively known as prosody. While numerous studies have examined prosodic cues in spoken languages, to date, few studies have examined the prosodic markers in American Sign Language (ASL) by Deaf people to express emotional states. This small-scale, exploratory research study examined prosodic markers intended to convey empathy. Deaf ASL signers were video recorded as they produced a series of three identical sentences expressing three different emotional states (neutral, angry, and empathy). The videos were coded for ASL prosodic markers in the empathetic sentences. A second group of Deaf signers viewed the videos and provided their perceptions about which utterances expressed empathy. Although some variation was found, the study may indicate some type of conventionalized prosodic markers (e.g., furrowed eyebrows and slower pace of signing) to express empathy in ASL. These findings, although preliminary, may be useful to interpreters and counselors who often work in emotional settings and need to accurately convey the empathy and connection being expressed by service providers.

Keywords: American Sign Language, empathy, prosody, prosodic features

Introduction

Deaf people are known for being signers and have maintained a close-knit community based on a common language of American Sign Language (ASL) over the years (Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). They, like any group of people, have ways of expressing themselves and acknowledging the emotions of others. When struggling to understand one another, people in general are often advised to put themselves “in another person’s shoes.” This human ability to consider and relate to another person’s experience is the foundation of empathy. Davis (2018) defined empathy as the affective and psychological perspective of understanding another’s experiences. Individuals demonstrating a deep capacity for empathy are often regarded in society as being selfless and caring. The Deaf community is not an exception to the rule. The empathy-based characteristics are considered especially important dispositions in human service professions such as social work, healthcare, and counseling, leading to positive outcomes for clients and patients. In healthcare settings, for example, a study of expressions of empathy were shown to result in trust and positive healthcare outcomes for patients (Elliot, Bohart, Watson, & Murphy, 2018; Gerdes & Segal, 2011; Lelorain, Brédart, Dolbeault, & Sultan, 2012).

Understanding that society by and large may not know a signed language, the provision of ASL interpreters for Deaf people has become commonplace in a variety of settings, including

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healthcare. However, some medical professionals are still unaware of their responsibility to provide this access (Ralston, Zazove, & Gorenflo, 1996). Interpreters may be tasked with conveying 'hard' information between a doctor and a deaf patient. According to a survey of 87 Deaf individuals reported that they feel as if they are not treated as a person, and feel less comfortable when interacting with physicians (Zazove, Niemann, Gorenflo, Carmack, Mehr, Coyne, & Antonucci, 1993). The study focused on individuals in the primary care physician's office setting. One of the findings from the study was that although interpreters may be utilized; Deaf individuals were three times more likely to see physicians at least 6 times a year compared to hearing patients of the practice. This may speak to the importance of sharing a common language with the physician or professional. The same holds true in different situations where Deaf people may have counselors that speak a common language, ASL, for example. Deaf students attending Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf are provided with a variety of services in ASL. In any case, the professional and a Deaf person may engage in intensive and heavily emotional signed conversations. These conversations can require a level of empathy from the provider and if a shared language is not present, then an interpreter is typically employed. This indicates that interpreters would need to convey the prosodic information between two languages. There is a wealth of literature that focuses on the prosodic features in spoken languages.

For hearing individuals, emotional states in spoken languages are often expressed through various changes in pitch and tone (Wittforth, Schröder, Schardt, Dengler, Heinze, & Kotz, 2009). For example, anger is often marked by an increase in volume and emphatic expression of words (Hammerschmidt & Jürgens, 2007). However, conventionalized prosodic markers for spoken languages have not been identified for other emotional states, such as empathy. And yet, the perception of empathy can convey important messages to the perceiver. Empathy is expressed both linguistically (in words and syntax) and via prosodic features (e.g., intonation, volume, and speed) (Regenbogen, Schneider, Finkelmeyer, Kohn, Derntl, Kellermann, Gur, Schneider, & Habel, 2012). Several studies have examined how prosodic features express emotion in spoken languages (Ekman, 1993; Ekman & Friesen, 1986; Keltner, Ekman, Gonzaga, & Beer, 2000; Wallbott, 1998); however, to date, little investigation has been done on the prosodic features of emotion in signed languages concerning Deaf people (for exceptions, see McCullough & Emmorey, 2009; Reilly, McIntire, & Seago, 1992).

In this small-scale exploratory study, the researcher examined specific prosodic features produced by three Deaf adults in ASL when expressing three different emotional states. The Deaf adults were instructed to express three distinct emotional states using identical sentences while being video recorded. A second group of Deaf participants was asked to identify the emotional state of the Deaf signers on the video recording. The aim of this study was to identify specific ASL prosodic features that are associated with the emotion of empathy. The results are expected to be useful, especially for instructing professionals who work with Deaf people in both the production and comprehension of empathy in ASL. Additionally, the project undertaken should help close the gap in research and understanding about features of emotions concerning the signed modality of human language.

Literature Review

To begin, it is important to ask this question: What are emotions? Fischer, Shaver, and Carnochan (1990) defined emotions as “organized, meaningful, generally adaptive action systems”

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(p. 84). Adaptive action systems delve into the cognitive elements and processing of emotion (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989), so individuals may recognize and process emotions being expressed. Emotions are considered the response that connects a reaction to one's experiences, including responses of anger, sadness, happiness, and empathy (Ekman, 1972, 1992; Lazarus, 1991; Levenson, 1994; Mauss, Levenson, McCarter, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2005; Scherer, 1984; Tomkins, 1962). According to Ickes (1997), empathy is "a complex psychological response in which observation, memory, knowledge, and reasoning are combined to yield insights into the thoughts and feelings of others" (p. 2). Further, Coke, Batson, and McDavis (1978) (as cited in Hodges & Wegner, 1997, p. 313-314) separate empathy into two components: (a) an affective response to another person that may include sharing in the emotional state, followed by (b) the capacity to understand the other person's perceptions. In this perspective of empathy, an individual must first be able to have the capacity to understand another person's perspective and then engage in the emotion or feelings of the other person. Two identified emotions that relate to recognizing the feelings of others are empathy and sympathy.

Empathy versus Sympathy

Empathy and sympathy are sometimes thought as being the same emotion; however, researchers have found that they represent two distinct emotional states. Aring (1958) wrote that sympathy requires a person to join the other person in their emotional state. However, Davis (2018) described empathy as an understanding of the emotional state without a personal sense of involvement. In a study of the difference between empathy and sympathy, Pudlinski (2005) examined 53 phone transcripts from a peer support helpline. The transcripts were analyzed for various ways in which empathy was shown to callers by the peer hotline individuals. Pudlinski described empathy as the action of individuals being able to stop at simply attempting to understand the individuals' feelings. Sympathy, on the other hand, was defined as becoming involved in the situation presented by the individual and personally experiencing that emotion of another. This paper supports the differences between empathy and sympathy and focuses specifically on empathy.

Empathy in Professions

The expression of empathy can be vital for successful professional outcomes, particularly in human service fields. For example, several medical researchers have investigated how healthcare providers connect with their patients via empathy (Adler, 2002; Ong, De Haes, Hoos, & Lammes, 1995; Squier, 1990). A recent area of study, narrative medicine, has examined the value of active listening to a patient's story during the provision of healthcare (Charon, 2001). In Charon's view, active listening not only involves understanding the specifics of what an individual is experiencing, but also attending to the emotional status of the patient. Empathetic listening applies directly to healthcare providers, but active listening is also critical to mental health providers, such as counselors or psychiatrists, or professionals in other human service fields, such as social work.

Tempering the need for empathy in the human service professions, providers have long grappled with the question of how deeply engaged they should be with their patients. Schell and Kayser-Jones (2007), for example, examined the relationships of 27 certified nursing assistants

(CNAs) with terminally ill patients for whom they were caring. A thematic analysis from participants' comments suggested that seven of the 27 CNAs found it difficult to detach their personal feelings from their patients' situations. Similarly, social workers also face challenges related to empathy. Gerdes and Segal (2011) developed a theory of empathy based on social workers' engagement with psychological aspects of their clients. The researchers provided guidelines of how social workers should handle empathy based on the code of ethics for the profession. In their view, social workers need to find a way to separate work from their personal life. Overall the literature suggests that the capacity to express empathy without becoming consumed by a person's needs is a critical skill for individuals who work in human service professions.

Prosodic Expression of Emotions

As early as the nineteenth century, Darwin (1872) wrote that emotions are conceptually developed and decided by facial expressions and body language that accompany the words that are being received. In short, human expression of emotion is conveyed both linguistically (*what* is said) and prosodically (*how* it is said). The prosodic aspects of a language provide the receiver with insight into the meaning of the utterance and feelings of the speaker. In addition to the linguistic content of a message, emotional information is also being received and perceived by another, which could shift the understanding in the discourse. Emotions are not only conveyed, but they also require a listener who is responsible for receiving the intent of the emotion being expressed.

Receivers' understanding can be broken down into different perceptual actions. Adolphs (2002) investigated the perception of facial expressions and concluded that expressions are connected to psychological processes. Using various conditioning tasks, Adolphs reviewed literature related to the cognitive processes, such as neural pathways, that occur in the brain while a listener is perceiving emotion. His findings suggest that mental processes are involved with the ability not only to recognize, but also to process emotions being expressed.

The detection of prosodic markers begins at a young age. According to Spinelli, Fasolo, and Mesman (2017), babies develop perceptual skills for language via exposure to infant-directed speech, a speaking style that exaggerates prosodic features of language. The study involved examining previous studies regarding infant-directed speech. The researchers identified five published research studies that met the criteria for the study which involved (a) measurement of prosodic and phonologic aspects of speech, (b) observations of infants' responses, (c) analysis of parents' speech, (d) prosodic analysis of caregivers' speech with ordinal numbers, and (e) testing of infant-directed speech connected to outcomes. Their final evaluation of the literature suggests that infants who are exposed to language from an early age will show typical development of speech and utterance boundaries.

Spinelli et al.'s study examined infants' comprehension of these language features in spoken languages, but similar behaviors can also be attributed to infants who learn a signed language (Dominey, 2000). Evidence of studies of infants who have access to a signed language from birth indicate that they are sensitive to what has been termed 'motherese' which includes exaggerated prosody to support infants' recognition of utterance boundaries (Reilly & Bellugi, 1996). In their study, Reilly and Bellugi examined videos of 15 Deaf mothers signing with their infants for exaggerated features on the mothers' faces while signing WH-questions. In ASL,

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grammatical production of WH-questions to use conventionalized facial movements; that is, the question form requires the parents to either have furrowed brows or a puzzled face. The results suggest that infants of Deaf parents acquire ASL must learn to distinguish between grammatical prosodic features (e.g., WH-questions) and affective facial expressions (e.g., indicators of happiness, frustration). The ability to correctly produce and perceive ASL facial markers is a critical component of becoming fluent in ASL discourse.

Today, technology allows researchers to examine how facial expressions are manifested in different parts of the brain. One study utilized functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans while a speaker presented the variation of an utterance (a description of air travel) with a neutral face, a smiling face, and a frightened face (Pourtois, de Gelder, Bol, & Crommelink, 2005). The participants were exposed to 12 different samples produced by six females and six males. The participants were first shown only the facial expression, followed by an audio of the spoken message, and, finally, a combination of the two. The results showed that different parts of the brain were activated in the participants based solely on the facial expressions shown in the stimuli, suggesting that the receiver of the message perceives meaning based on facial expressions.

Prosodic Markers in Human Languages

Prosodic markers used to express empathy have been investigated in spoken languages as well as in signed languages. Cutler, Dahan, and van Donselaar (1997) investigated how prosody in spoken languages consists of different suprasegmental aspects such as stress and intonation. The researchers categorized research on prosody by identifying three areas: (a) prosody in spoken language, (b) prosody with syntactic structure, and (c) the role of prosody in processing discourse. Their work showed connections between stress of syllables and the comprehension of phrases or words if the stress is shifted. The findings indicated that different features utilized in spoken language have an impact on the comprehension of the listener. Thus, pitch, tempo, loudness, and pauses can be produced in isolation or in conjunction with other features to allow for the listener to “reconstruct the speaker’s message” (p. 142).

In Whalen’s (1991) study, 36 participants listened to random and non-words that contained different phonological profiles. The listeners were instructed to repeat the words with a similar prosody pattern as it was presented. When the item did not follow the phonotactic constraints (syllable structure) the participant’s ability to repeat the term presented. The results illustrated that phonologic constraints are connected to the expressed concept. This connection becomes important when the role of prosodic markers in cueing listeners to intended meaning, which is critical to service providers in human service professions who are seeking to understand their clients’ emotional state.

The effect of prosody lies not only at the phonological level but can also impact the sentential level of discourse. Schegloff (1998) described how prosody shapes discourse in subtle ways, including turn-taking management. Schegloff measured the changes in tone and pitch in a single conversation to examine how alterations can shift the meaning of the words. Results indicated that even highly nuanced prosodic markers in speech differentiated or totally changed the perceived meaning in interactions. Thus, nuances not identified at the surface level of language had the power to shift the meaning of the utterance.

In a study utilizing conversation analysis, Weiste and Peräkylä (2014) investigated prosody and pacing in 70 recorded psychotherapy sessions between clients and therapists. Using audio

recorded data, the researchers analyzed the prosodic markers used when patients were discussing their feelings. Utilizing software that measured the intonation of the counselors and patients, the results suggested a pattern of prosody by the therapists in which they validated patients' ideas through shorter utterances in a lower tone. Conversely, if the therapists challenged or disagreed with their client, they varied the length and volume of their utterances. Thus, the production of prosody shaped the interaction between the therapists and the patients' therapeutic discourse.

Prosodic Markers in the Signed Language Modality

Prosodic features in ASL that have been identified include eye aperture, mouth gestures, head shakes and nods, body movement (Nicodemus, 2009), tense vs. lax signing (Wilbur, 2000), speed of signing (Wilbur, 2009), and holds (Liddell, 1993). Further, Allen, Wilbur, and Schick (1991) argued that signed languages are expressed in a rhythmic pattern. Prosody within signed languages has been investigated by exploring how native speakers identified and utilized pacing, pausing, patterns or timing to portray differences in American Sign Language (Nicodemus, 2009) as well as in Israeli Sign Language (Dachkovsky & Sandler, 2009). Nicodemus (2009) examined the perceptions of Deaf signers in identifying the location of utterance boundaries while viewing an ASL interpretation. Results suggested specific prosodic cues are used to indicate utterance boundaries during signed language interpretation.

Wilbur (2009) studied the role of signing speed as a prosodic cue in ASL. Six Deaf individuals were instructed to re-tell stories in ASL that they had memorized. The speed of signing was measured to investigate how the speed is utilized to impact the resulting message. Wilbur determined that pacing is typically accompanied by other prosodic features to provide meaningful information to the message.

Some studies suggest that ASL prosodic features and articulators impact the meaning of an utterance beyond the signs used. As stated earlier, signed languages are produced using the eyes, body, eyebrows, and mouth, among others, to express grammatical information. Hoza (2007) explored how these prosodic features were produced during face-threatening acts expressed in ASL. Using a politeness theory frame, Hoza examined how both lexical items (signs) and non-manual markers express meaning in ASL. Signers were instructed to use scripts to make a request to a Deaf viewer. Hoza studied the construction of requests that involved features including the face and body. The results from the study showed that individuals would show more exaggerated facial non-manual markers when making more difficult requests.

ASL affective production and perceptions were tested by Reilly et al. (1992). The researchers asked six Deaf individuals to produce 60 sentences each while wearing a mask during half of their production of the utterances. Participants were provided with five different emotions: neutral, happy, surprised, sad, and angry. The utterances were analyzed based for length of utterance. The researchers found that the longest utterances conveyed sadness, while the shortest utterances conveyed anger. The researchers then selected one of the participant's utterances to show a group of 25 Deaf adults to review and rate videos (masked and unmasked) the emotion being conveyed. The participants most often correctly identify the sentences that conveyed happiness, while the most errors were found in the sentences conveying surprise. The researchers also found that the responses were not only focused on the individual's ability to see the face, but were also based on the other articulators such as head position, shoulders, body orientation, and the hands.

Although each signed language is a distinctly different linguistic system, they may exhibit similar prosodic markers (Applebaum, Coppola, & Goldin-Meadow, 2014; Nespor & Sandler, 1999; Tang, Brentari, González, & Feliz, 2010; Wilbur & Patschke, 1998). Like all languages, ASL is not made up of individual words or signs (also known as the surface structure). This surface structure that is presented as the signs or utterances has been shown to be impacted by other articulators. Much like the study above from Reilly et al. (1992), the production and perception of affect is expressed by different features. The studies examined articulators that are involved with various prosodic features. The current study investigates how the expression of empathy is conveyed in ASL.

Methods

Demographics of Two Groups

This study utilized two groups of Deaf individuals. Group One consisted of two females and one male between the ages of 39-49. Each Group One member reported that ASL was their first language. Each participant was determined to be highly fluent in ASL, demonstrated by their experience teaching ASL at the postsecondary level. Group Two participants consisted of two females and one male between the ages of 32-59. Group Two participants also identified ASL as being their first language. The members in both groups were recruited through personal and professional networks.

Stimuli

The stimuli were co-created by one participant from Group One. The sentences were co-created with an individual who identifies ASL as their first language to ensure the sentence followed appropriate conversational structure. Together the researcher and the Group One individuals developed three different utterances in ASL. The sentences are provided in ASL gloss form (with an English translation) below:

1 (POSS. 2)¹ BROTHER SICK AGAIN?

Is your brother sick again?

2 (POSS. 2) CAR BREAK-DOWN?

Did your car break down?

3 (PRO. 1)² SISTER (index left)³ DOCTOR INFORM BAD N-E-W-S.

¹ In transcription, POSS.2 indicates second person possessive.

² In transcription, PRO.1 shows a first-person pronoun indicator.

³ In transcription, index left indicates pointing to the area where the pronoun was established in space as a reiteration of PRO.1.

The doctor gave my sister some bad news.

Each member of Group One was given the glossed forms of the three sentences and instructed to produce each sentence utilizing three different emotions: (a) neutral stance, (b) empathy, and (c) anger. After video recording their ASL sentence production, an initial assessment of the video recorded samples was completed by the researcher. Surprisingly, the analysis reveals no distinct differences in the prosodic markers between the three sentences. Each participant was individually interviewed and was asked to identify the prosodic features they regarded as conveying empathy in ASL and stated that they felt the third sentence allowed for empathy to be conveyed. After examination of the sample and the discussion with the participants, the first two sentences were removed from the study. The third sentence was signed by each participant in Group One with three different emotions. The nine sentences were clipped and arranged into a video for viewing by Group Two.

Prior to meeting with the Group Two participants, the samples from Group One were uploaded into a linguistic annotation program (ELAN) in order to code for the different prosodic features of sentence number 3. The following prosodic features were examined: (a) posture, (b) signing space, (c) signing speed, (d) mouth movements, and (d) eyebrow movement. The coding was intended to identify the prosodic features produced by Deaf individuals to convey empathy. In this way, a baseline was created to examine how empathy was conveyed in the example sentences.

For the perception component of the study, each participant in Group Two was interviewed individually via a video conferencing platform. The participants were provided with the link to the video that contained the ASL sentences. The directions were provided in ASL during the video interviews. Group Two participants were provided with an electronic rating sheet with three possible choices: (a) empathy, (b) no empathy, or (c) not sure. The instructions were to view the video recorded sample sentences and complete an evaluation of whether empathy was being expressed in the stimuli videos on the rating form. After the participants completed the rating form, each individual was asked to describe the features that they felt elicited the feeling of empathy. The initial interview question was “what do you see that makes you feel a connection and feeling of similarity to the sentence?” The participants were video recorded giving their responses during the interview. The rating forms completed by each of the participants were analyzed to extract the percentages chosen for each of the three emotions. Following this, interview comments from Group Two were analyzed for themes about the prosodic markers used in the sentences.

Results

This section will present both the analysis of the Group One’s sentences including the features presented with the empathetic sentence, as well as the findings from the interviews with members of Groups One and Two.

Group One: Production of Prosodic Features

Table 1 contains an analysis of the ASL prosodic features produced by three Deaf signers in their empathetic production of the sentence:

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Video of Sample Sentence
(<https://youtu.be/i4XyQNo9UMI>)

ASL Gloss: (PRO. 1) SISTER (index left) DOCTOR INFORM BAD N-E-W-S.

English: *The doctor gave my sister some bad news.*

Table 1

Prosodic features in the utterances produced by Group One expressed with empathy.

	Furrowed Brows	Shift in Eye Gaze	Narrowed/ Closed Eyes	Pursed Lips	Open Mouth	Forward Body Lean	Upper-Body Tensing	Slow Pacing
Signer 1	X		X	X			X	X
Signer 2	X	X	X	X			X	X
Signer 3	X		X		X	X		X

Eyes and Brows

All three participants produced furrowed brows with each of the sentences that were intended to convey empathy; however, there were some slight differences with eye gaze. The first participant closed her eyes while signing and fingerspelling “BAD N-E-W-S”. The second participant shifted his gaze away from the camera while spelling “N-E-W-S” (Figure 1). The third participant’s eye gaze was directly focused at the camera throughout the sentence (Figure 2).

Aside from eye gaze being shifted there was also evidence from the three participants that showed evidence of eyes narrowing or being closed after producing “BAD N-E-W-S.” Two participants closed their eyes completely and the other participant narrowed his eyes.



Figure 1: Signer’s eye gaze shifts away from camera and brows are furrowed.



Figure 2: Signer’s eye gaze is directly focused on the camera and brows are furrowed.

Speed

All of the participants in Group One showed a pronounced difference in speed when signing the sentences that were intended to convey empathy. The sentence overall was produced at a slower pace than other sentences, and were produced with decreased speed at the end of the utterance, while signing “BAD N-E-W-S”.

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Mouth

While signing “BAD N-E-W-S,” two of the participants pursed their lips (Figures 3 & 4). Pursed lips were not present in sentence produced the third participant’s sample; instead the participants mouth was open (Figure 5).



Figures 3 and 4: Signers’ lips were pursed during and at the end of the sentence.

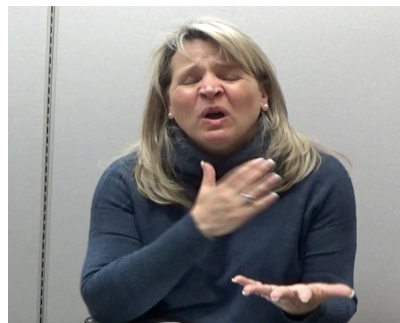


Figure 5: Signer’s mouth was open at the end of the sentence.

Body

The first participant showed a tensing in the shoulders and neck area at the end of the utterance (Figure 6). The second participant tensed and moved his shoulders up while signing “BAD N-E-W-S.” The third participant leaned at the hip and dropped her head down slightly when signing the final section of the sentence (Figures 7 & 8).

Group One: Interview Data

Each participant in Group One reported that a body lean was obligatory to express



Figure 6: Signer's shoulders slightly moved up and tensing in neck area while fingerspelling.



Figures 7 and 8: Signer moves from sitting up to leaning forward at the hip and dropping head slightly at the end of the utterance.

closeness to their conversant in the empathetic sentence production. Participants 1 and 2 mentioned the need to have their eyebrows down with their eyes narrowed. Participants 1 and 3 described needing to purse their lips when signing the utterance. Also, Participants 2 and 3 stated it was important to add a sign or gesture at the end to convey empathy.

While there were some similarities, the Group One participants also expressed varying viewpoints about the prosodic markers to indicate empathy. Participant 1 mentioned that the sentence required moving the eye contact away from the individual at the beginning of the sentence but ensuring that the sentence ends with direct eye contact with the receiver. Participant 3 stated that the lips could be in a neutral position or the mouth could be open slightly.

Group Two: Perception of Empathetic Sentences

In seven out of nine responses (78%), Group Two participants correctly identified the sentences intended to be empathetic. The participants stated that they did not sense the sentence that conveyed anger as empathetic in eight out of nine responses (89%). However, one participant asked to change her response after reviewing the sentences; which then became 7/9 responses (78%). The most varied responses provided related to the sentences that were produced as neutral. Participants responded that the neutral sentence conveyed empathy five out of nine times (56%) whereas one participant responded not sure (11%).

Group Two: Perception Interview Data

During the interview, Group Two was asked to define the features that were or were not present in the videos that they felt conveyed empathy. One similarity between the three participants was expressing that furrowed eyebrows were important in conveying empathy. Two of the three participants mentioned that to convey empathy, the signing space needed to be conveyed in a condensed signing space, such as “box in front of the chest.” The participants also explained that this “box” should be approximately shoulder width and from the stomach area to the neck in height. Two of the three participants discussed the need for signers to close their eyes or move their eye gaze down during the utterance. Although the third participant did not mention eye gaze, when asked about the features he felt conveyed empathy, the example signed by the participant was with slightly closed eyes and a downward eye gaze. Further, two of the three participants discussed the nature of the signs becoming tenser in the body grammar; not only did they mention leaning forward, but both described a tightening of the neck and upper body.

Another feature identified from the interviews was the pacing of the signs. Two out of the three participants explicitly discussed the pacing, stating that they noticed signs in the empathetic sentence were presented in a slower manner. All three participants in Group 2 used the sign SOFT to indicate how the signs would need to be produced to convey empathy. Two participants stated that their personal experiences may have affected how they responded to the utterances. The participants mentioned that if they had similar experiences or had been exposed to the emotion before that this could have a potential impact on how they perceived the sentences.

Discussion

The results of the study suggest that, although variation was found, a set of prosodic markers that may be to express empathy in ASL. Different ASL features were identified (see Table 1) including: (a) furrowed brows, (b) eye gaze, narrowed or closing of the eyes, (c) pursed lips/open mouth, (d) forward body lean, (e) body tensing, and (f) slow pace of signing. The responses from the interviews from Group One support that the participants believed these features were involved in expressing empathy. This finding was supported by the comments of Group Two, with two of the three participants mentioning the necessity for the signer to move eye gaze down to the floor, as well as the third individual who looked toward the floor when signing an example of what they felt would convey empathy. Another feature that was identified and discussed was the need for the eyebrows to move down. This feature was present in all three of the samples that

were meant to convey empathy, suggesting again that it is a conventionalized feature among ASL users.

The second feature identified as being necessary to convey empathy was a slower pace of signing. As stated above, the three participants in Group Two described the nature of empathy and the sentence being signed in a “SOFT” manner. The identification of speed related to signing means that individuals may not perceive an utterance presented at a typical speed or quickly to be considered empathetic or soft. This finding is consistent with Reilly et al.’s (1992) study in which utterances showing anger were signed at a faster rate compared to sentences with neutral or sad content. Reilly et al. discussed the utterances that were presented as ‘sad’ were produced at a slower pace. This study’s findings also coincide with the study by Wilbur (2000) for tense or lax signing.

Thus, the findings suggest that some prosodic markers which are conventionalized in ASL may convey empathy, although their production may vary across signers. Much like Hoza (2007), perception impacts the interactant not only by the words that are used but how the message is delivered. Thus, while certain prosodic markers are identified by the participants as conveying empathy, some variation in their production is acceptable. The markers produced by Group One were, for the most part, supported in the perceptions of Group Two.

The interviews from Group One did uncover certain features that were present in the discussion but not in the sample sentences. One area discussed was the sense of needing to bend at the waist to be closer to the person during an empathic sentence. This body posture aligns with the ideas of how body movement is used among users of spoken languages (Ickes, 1997).

The responses from Group Two suggested some difficulty in the perception of the neutral sentence versus the sentence that was deemed by Group One as expressing empathy. The majority of responses from Group Two indicated a perception that the neutral sentence was empathetic. This could be in part due to the linguistic content of the sentence. This finding mirrors Reilly et al. (1992) finding in which a majority of the participants were unable to successfully distinguish between neutral and sad utterances.

A possible limitation of this exploratory study was the use of invented sentences in ASL; however, the source text was created in an effort to control the production and create a standard stimuli video. This pilot study only involved a small sample of Deaf participants and the number of stimuli sentences was limited. These two factors reduce any claims that can be made in this exploratory study; however, this initial attempt to examine prosodic markers for empathy may lead to designing a large-scale study. Finally, the recordings were analyzed using the researcher’s ability to distinguish the prosodic features in the samples. In the future, Deaf consultants should be employed to assist with the analysis.

Conclusion

The emotion of empathy is tied to an individual’s ability to connect with and understand another person’s perspective. This study was an attempt to begin to examine and describe features related to how empathy was both produced and perceived through prosodic features in American Sign Language. The results of this study confirm earlier studies that ASL prosodic features, in that the use of eyebrows, narrowed or closed eyes, lips, body leans, pacing, and body tenseness, play a role in conveying emotion. Although some discrepancies were found between Deaf signers’ production and Deaf adults’ perceptions of empathetic sentence, some consistencies and

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agreement also emerged in the data. The findings provide preliminary insights into how prosodic markers may convey empathy in ASL. The results may benefit individuals who work in emotional settings (such as interpreters, medical professionals, counselors, and social work professionals) to become more sensitized to the role of prosody in ASL discourse.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Brenda Nicodemus and Dr. Danielle Hunt for their support and discussions throughout the project. Also, the author would like to thank the individuals involved in both groups for sharing their time and expertise. The study was completed while the author was a doctoral student in the Department of Interpretation and Translation at Gallaudet University and was approved by the Gallaudet University Institutional Review Board.

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Teaching Literature to Deaf Students and the Challenge of Bilingualism

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Abstract

Understanding the importance of deaf students' opportunity to study literature in American Sign Language (ASL) is much needed, especially with the works originally developed in the signed language, not via translations of English literature. Additional considerations for the improvement in the education of deaf students include the need for methods for these students to develop reading skills in an effective manner that enables them to read and study English literature through their high school graduation. In this article, a brief pedagogical description of how deaf students best learn English literacy will lead to the discussion of signed language education as a model. A critical review of the traditional deaf/special education practices will confirm the reported lack of theoretical coherence for how deaf students are educated (e.g., Andrews, Leigh, & Weiner, 2004). Both ASL literature and English literature suffer the consequences of deaf/special education's emphasis on access to only information and activities. According to the Universal Design for Learning framework, deaf students need to enjoy access to learning. The signed language education model links to the concept of linguistic accessibility and provides a well-integrated set-up for teaching both bodies of ASL literature and English literature to deaf students. These students would have the pedagogical means and skills to read English literature along with being masterful signers when given the opportunity to study ASL literature. The article will end with a review of promising ASL literature teaching research studies with deaf students that point to the face validity of the learning experience involved.

Introduction

The study of literature provides insights into the human condition and a wide range of human experiences. Considerably different from normal everyday language, specialized or aesthetic language is frequently included in literary studies as well. All students benefit from studying literature in the classroom. Deaf students are no exception to this rule. In the United States and parts of Canada, the two languages under consideration for the education of deaf students are American Sign Language (ASL) and English.¹ Ideally, these two languages work in tandem in a school for the deaf with students and teachers signing ASL and reading print materials in English. ASL would function as deaf students' primary and oral² language with English assigned to the role

¹ The identification of ASL and written English for Canada applies to most of its provinces, but not all. Quebec serves as a good example of where a different signed language, Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) is used (Parisot & Rinfret, 2012). When discussing Quebec, LSQ and written French need to be considered for the education of deaf students.

² The term oral has historically been used to reference the spoken language modality only, with speaking and listening considered as oral language at play. However, this definition is now broadened to account for how deaf students sign and communicate 'through the air'. Deaf students should be viewed as having the capacity of listening with their eyes as much as hearing students do with their ears. A number of scholars in the field of ASL/Deaf Studies have used the term oral liberally. A comprehensive book on ASL literature by Bauman, Nelson, and Rose (2006) identifies ASL

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of a written language (see Johnson, Liddell, & Erting, 1989/2018, for the original proposal on how to handle the two languages in question for the education of deaf students). With English, deaf students will need to have an effective pedagogical means for learning and mastering reading skills during the elementary school years. These students can then proceed to study English literature up to the time they graduate from high school.

Equally important is deaf students' opportunity to study a separate body of works that make up ASL literature (see Bauman et al., 2006; Rosen, 2019, for a review of ASL literature). The ASL literary works will need to be originally developed in the signed language, not translated from English literature. This will help maintain the legitimacy and quality of ASL literature for the benefit of deaf students and their teachers (Byrne, 2017). Understanding that many ASL literary works have been made available for study through videos, deaf students will engage in viewing³ as opposed to reading, as is the case with English literature.

Unfortunately, the education of deaf students is not where it should be, and there is a strong need for improvement. Sandford (2006), a teacher of the deaf, expresses a concern over the minimal attention to ASL literature and explains how it "tends to be overlooked for educational purposes..." (p. 278; see also Byrne, 2017; Rosen, 2019). With the successful publication and circulation of the *American Sign Language Literature Series* (Supalla & Bahan, 1994a, 1994b) as an example, ASL literature seems to be more popular with hearing students who study signed language as a foreign/second language in high schools and higher education settings. According to Rosen (2017), disparities associated with the support for signed language between the deaf and hearing student populations are troubling and in need of correction.

The situation with English literature has its share of challenges. Teachers of the deaf may understand the importance of teaching English literature to their students, but it is not easy to achieve. Deaf students are well-known for experiencing reading difficulties (see Paul, 1998 and 2008, for a review of English literacy issues with deaf students). The question of how to best teach English literacy to deaf students requires teachers to think carefully about reading essentials. The conventional reading instruction practices with English assume that students would have heard the spoken language and then proceed to learn to read in school. Deaf students are different as they are signers and will think and process in signed language (Supalla & Byrne, 2018; Supalla, J. H. Cripps, & Byrne, 2017). What this suggests is that reading must start with ASL, and deaf students can experience moving from ASL to learning and mastering English literacy at the same time. This is contingent on the provision of a special reading methodology that helps connect ASL to written English in a cross-linguistic fashion (Supalla, 2017).

With this article, a brief pedagogical description of how deaf students best learn English literacy will lead to the discussion of signed language education as a model. This is where ASL literature will find its rightful place alongside English literature in the education of deaf students. Please understand that teachers for the deaf, by and large, have their own view on what classroom teaching should look like. Their training in deaf/special education exerts a powerful influence on how deaf students are expected to be educated. The critical review undertaken on the traditional

literature as oral with stories being told and retold over generations, for example. ASL does not have a written language, but has rich oral traditions that are comparable to many languages and cultures around the world.

³ For clarification, the term viewing includes the active thought process and construction of meaning for the comprehension of ASL literary works. Deaf students do not passively watch a story told in ASL, for example. These students decipher and deconstruct the signed story that is part of the act of "message-getting, problem solving" (Clay, 1991, p. 6) of the ASL language structure (see Wall, 2014, for further discussion of this topic).

deaf/special education practices will confirm the reported lack of theoretical coherence for how deaf students learn English literacy (e.g., Andrews et al., 2004). The article will end with coverage of promising research studies on the teaching of ASL literature to deaf students in the classroom setting. The review of two published articles and one Master's thesis will demonstrate the face validity of ASL literature teaching in a school for the deaf setting.

Making a Case for ASL Literature Teaching with Deaf Students

Perhaps the strongest argument for ASL literature's integration into the curriculum of a school for the deaf lies in the concept of linguistic accessibility. The publications of Supalla and J. H. Cripps (2008) and J. H. Cripps and Supalla (2012) have contributed to the present understanding of bilingualism in the education of deaf students. The status of ASL as a signed language holds ramifications for the development of a strong language base. It helps avoid the linguistic deprivation risk that deaf students have during their critical formative years at home and in school (e.g., Hall, Hall, & Caselli, 2019; Johnson et al., 1989/2018). Deaf students are known to learn and use ASL with ease, and communicate face to face on a daily basis for a wide range of social contexts just as a spoken language operates for hearing students (e.g., Supalla & McKee, 2002; see also Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Valli, Lucas, Mulrooney, & Villanueva, 2011). Signing is understood to be the norm for deaf students as much as speaking is for hearing students. This kind of understanding will help boost ASL literature's value for the education of deaf students. Deaf students' opportunity to study and appreciate various ASL literary works involves their own language after all. It is true that ASL does not have any written literature, but this should not stop deaf students from having exposure to signed literary works either live or through videos (Byrne, 2017; see also Rosen, 2019 for the importance of teaching ASL literature to deaf students in schools).

Interestingly, there is an increasing awareness among scholars and researchers of the accessibility issues of English literature for deaf students. Arenson and Kretschmer (2010) explain that English poems that incorporate rhyming are problematic for the education of deaf students. Deaf students will need to experience hearing the spoken language to appreciate such poems, which is clearly not feasible. The researchers suggest that deaf students should be introduced to ASL poems where they experience rhyme in the signed language modality. The researchers go on to explain that in ASL, the use of rhyme is "based on sign formation and the use of signing space and poetic language to convey certain messages" (p. 111; see also Ormsby, 1995, for more information on poems as performed by the well-known deaf ASL poet, Clayton Valli). ASL literature becomes valuable as it provides deaf students with literary experiences that would be lost on them with English.

Serving as a good example, *Atalanta in Calydon* by Algernon Charles Swinburne, including alliteration with "the repetition of a same consonant sound in successive words in a line..." (Valli, 1990/2018, p. 75) will require full attention from teachers of the deaf. It is only the teachers who are properly trained and understand the principle of linguistic accessibility that will know what to do with this situation. Deaf students can study the ASL poem, "Snowflake," which was identified by Valli (1990/2018) as an example of the technique of alliteration for the signed language modality. With deaf students learning about the concept of alliteration in ASL, a teacher can then explain the similar phenomenon occurring with *Atalanta in Calydon*. Deaf students may

not appreciate the English poem as they do "Snowflake" but will take the English poem's structure into account on an intellectual level.

Arenson and Kretschmer emphasize that deaf students can still enjoy reading many English poems that cover feelings and ideas, assuming that these students have effective means for learning to read. More discussion on reading instruction practices will take place later in this article. What is important at this point is how teachers of the deaf need to recognize the strong representation of the deaf experience in various ASL literary works. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) report on how deaf performers have most actively participated in making contributions to ASL literature (and for the literatures of other signed languages of the world). Their view of the world is naturally connected to the works involved (see also Sutton-Spence & de Quadros, 2014, for the aims and intentions that deaf poets have with their works and with their audiences). Thus, the opportunity that deaf students have in studying ASL literature will facilitate their identity development and healthy self-image (Small, J. S. Cripps, & Côté, 2012; see also Sutton-Spence & Ramsey, 2010, for teachers' insights on the importance of signed stories for identity development among deaf children in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Mexico).⁴

Finally, teachers need to consider the opportunity for their deaf students to become accomplished or masterful signers (see Edwards & Sienkewicz, 1990, for the importance of oral performance skills in general). Rose (2006) discusses some of the positive effects of formal ASL literary study on deaf adults in terms of performance quality. The retelling of ASL literary works was identified by Rose as an effective method for teaching and learning. After one of the adult participants in Rose's ASL literature workshop had "learned more about ASL poetry and narrative and literally 'tried on' different artists' styles through performing their [oral] texts, she became not only a knowledgeable student of ASL literature but a budding poet-performer herself" (p. 142). For this article, it is reasonable to state that students attending a school for the deaf are entitled to the beneficial learning experiences with ASL literature as reported for deaf adults through research.

It is now necessary to shift attention to one teacher of the deaf who had the rare opportunity of teaching ASL literature in a school for the deaf setting. The teacher's name is Marlon Kuntze, who wrote and published the first known paper on teaching ASL literature to deaf students in 1993. The fact that Kuntze is a deaf person, along with being a teacher of the deaf, is noteworthy. The title of the paper, "Developing Students' Literary Skills in ASL," was thought-provoking at the time. Kuntze created a platform for the teaching of deaf students with the following quote: "The epitome of the growing freedom and recognition currently being accorded American Sign Language...is the emergence of ASL literature" (p. 267). Although linguistic accessibility as a concept was not available at the time, Kuntze expressed his feeling about how freeing ASL is. ASL is a signed language, and literature as a 'voice' for deaf people is also identified through the signed language itself (see also Rosen, 2019, on this topic).

Interestingly, Kuntze, at the time of his writing, noted that the body of ASL literary works was small, but he predicted that it would expand exponentially. Kuntze's prediction has been fulfilled through the ASL Literature Database work of Byrne (in press) that reports the number of recorded ASL literary works now over 500. The timing for the adoption of ASL literature teaching

⁴ In comparison, the coverage of deaf people in English literature is rare and can be plagued with misconceptions and a lack of authenticity (Krentz, 2007; Padden & Humphries, 1988; see also Avon, 2006; McCullough, 2018; Schuchman, 1988, for similar problems with mainstream films produced for society at large). This points to a strong need for deaf students to study ASL literature.

in the American and Canadian schools for the deaf could not be better. If a school for the deaf considers the implementation of ASL literature teaching, teachers will need to take into account the dramatic changes in the ASL performing arts towards the close of the twentieth century (Peters, 2000). For example, the narrative affectionately known as *The Hitchhiker* has been passed around and transmitted across generations as expected for any folklore. This narrative is seen as collectively- or community-owned (see Byrne, 2018, for a brief background on the narrative example). However, a new generation of ASL performers has chosen to create and produce a variety of literary works utilizing video technology. This allows the performers to make changes to their works by viewing and re-signing or editing them with a final product to be published via the video format (Rose, 1994; see also Krentz, 2006, for additional coverage of this topic). It is such single-authored ASL literary works that have contributed greatly to ASL literature in terms of number and scope of genre (Byrne, 2017).

Consequently, both single-authored pieces and folkloristic pieces will need to be part of ASL literature teaching. The ASL folkloristic pieces stand as a genre, which includes the sub-genres of legends, tall tales, riddles, and humor. The genre of single-authored pieces is divided into three main genres: poetry, drama, and prose (see Byrne, 2017, for the ASL literature taxonomy). The wide array of ASL literary works are captured in VHS, DVD, and online publications. Posted on its official website, the Society for American Sign Language organization provides a link to access the ASL Literature Database in regard to titles, genres, and where to locate the works within the United States and Canada (see the organization's website at www.societyforasl.org).

Signed Language Education as a Model

The treatment of signed language education as a model is designed to help teachers 'think outside the box' in the education of deaf students. The importance of signed language education lies in its tailoring of an approach drastically different from spoken language education (see J. H. Cripps & Supalla, 2012; Padden, 2003; Padden & Rayman, 2002; Rosen, 2017, for an increasing number of scholars who see the importance in the signed language education model). Spoken language education has too long been treated as the norm for how students should be taught in American and Canadian schools. This includes teachers of the deaf finding themselves powerless to change the situation with spoken language rhymes, as discussed earlier. The widespread ignorance of ASL literature is also part of the unquestioned dominance of spoken language in the American and Canadian educational systems.

It is now appropriate to discuss a special reading methodology, which is called ASL Gloss. ASL Gloss aligns with the Universal Design for Learning framework that addresses a wide range of challenges in the education of students with disabilities (e.g., Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002). Access to learning is what all teachers working with students with disabilities need to understand and embrace. This includes how the text, as used in schools through various reading materials, including books, may be restrictive and in need of manipulation that will lead to more successful learning outcomes (Ralabate, 2011). Consequently, the new awareness for the teachers of the deaf centers on the possibility that the text will need to be manipulated to help alleviate the effects of deafness as a disability, for example.

When thinking about the regular English text “in the eyes of” deaf students, its representation of spoken language should not be accepted at face value. This is especially true

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because deaf students do not hear the English language and do not rely on spoken language knowledge for learning to read (see McQuarrie & Parrila, 2009, for the research findings confirming deaf students' lack of functioning inner speech for the spoken language; see also Bélanger, Baum, & Mayberry, 2012; Bélanger, Mayberry, & Rayner, 2013; J. H. Cripps, McBride, & Forster, 2005). Understanding that deaf students will only know and think in ASL when trying to learn to read, the use of regular English text for teaching these students reading constitutes a poor practice (Supalla, 2017). Linguistic confusion will prevail here. The fact that deaf students find reading with regular English text to be bewildering (Hoffmeister & Caldwell-Harris, 2014) points to a pedagogical problem that the field of deaf/special education has not recognized over the years.

The breakdown in the reading experience, as described for deaf students, calls for ASL Gloss. As its name indicates, ASL Gloss will make the text that deaf students encounter and learn to read in school clear. This includes manipulating the regular English text into ASL-like text (Supalla, 2017). The English text in the form of children's literature and leveled books will be rearranged according to ASL's morpho-syntactic structure. An example from a glossed book, *Balloon* (Rigby PM Benchmark Kit, 2000) will clarify:



Figure 1: Glossed Text Sample of the Book, *Balloon*

The glossed text, DAD SAY <rs: Dad RED BALLOON FOR IX=2.> is the proper ASL translation of the original English sentence: "The red balloon is for you," said Dad. The use of special conventions such as underlines and the use of <rs: Dad...> as used with the glossed sentence is most helpful in rendering the English text into an ASL-like structure. These conventions represent topicalization of a sentence in ASL (i.e., raised eyebrows while signing) and role/body-shifting to assume a character while signing. Teachers who are trained in signed language education will make sure that the students learn about these writing conventions utilized in the glossed books.

Deaf students who undergo the reading programming of ASL Gloss will recognize that the capitalization of all words in the glossed sentence DAD SAY <rs: Dad RED BALLOON FOR IX=2.> represents ASL. Thus, what the deaf student knows in ASL is faithfully represented in the

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glossed text. The glossed sentence begins with the identification of who is speaking, in this case, 'Dad saying'; whereas this same phrase would be placed at the end of the English sentence. Deaf students will experience reading comprehension more successfully when the phrasal structure is in ASL. Moreover, oral reading is understood to be an important strategy for all students learning to read (e.g., Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Rasinski, 2003). With the glossed text and glossed books, deaf students can now be encouraged to read aloud in the classroom (i.e., reading and signing at the same time; see Supalla et al., 2017, for the descriptive data on how deaf students perform oral reading with the glossed text successfully).

It is important to point out that glossed text and glossed books are only a portion of ASL Gloss. There are other components to consider for the realization of a theoretically coherent reading instruction approach for deaf students. While deaf students may be reading ASL at the sentence level via the glossed text, the words themselves remain English. ASL Gloss thus provides deaf students with a way of identifying the English words in the glossed books when needed. Let us suppose that BALLOON in the glossed sentence: DAD SAY <rs: Dad RED BALLOON FOR IX=2.> is not recognizable for a deaf student. This student (with the help of an iPad) can click on the word to be supplanted by a sign equivalent written in ASL: ✱₁ ✱₁ ≈ ∘ ∫ . Here the student can read the sign and understand the English word and return to reading the rest of the glossed book, *Balloon*.

The system that contributes to the writing of ✱₁ ✱₁ ≈ ∘ ∫ for BALLOON is called the ASL-phabet. The system's 32 graphemes represent the phonological structure of signs by incorporating the handshape, location, and movement parameters. As the term indicates, the ASL-phabet is a tool and corresponds closely to the alphabetic system for spoken languages around the world, including English (see Supalla, McKee, & J. H. Cripps, 2014, for more discussion of the ASL-phabet and its comparison with other alphabets). With the ASL-phabet, teachers can focus on teaching deaf students' phonetic skills in ASL. A wide range of skills associated with the alphabetic principle will be taught in the signed language modality (Supalla & Blackburn, 2003). Deaf students will develop sign language-based decoding skills at the word level and be able to read signs for the purpose of identifying English words (see Supalla, 2017, for a review of research evidence confirming deaf students' abilities in decoding signs written in the ASL-phabet).

With the signed language education model, a teacher will need to introduce ASL rhymes to deaf students to help them learn to read signs written in the ASL-phabet (see Byrne, 2017, for how signed language-based nursery rhymes have been identified as a sub-sub-genre for the ASL Literature Database and are available for use in the classroom with deaf students). Take the written sign example, ✱₁ ✱₁ ≈ ∘ ∫ for BALLOON. The first two letters refer to a specific handshape that includes spread out fingers and thumb that are slightly bent. This handshape is represented as ✱₁ according to the ASL-phabet. Deaf kindergartners can watch one rendition from *The ASL Parent-Child Mother Goose Program* DVD (Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf, 2004). In this video, the performer describes a bear by signing "big ears," then "big cheeks," then "bear," and finally, "chubby stomach" using the handshape ✱₁. The handshape rhyme is at play here. This would amuse deaf kindergartners and help develop handshape or phonological awareness at the same time. When these students encounter and try to read ✱₁ ✱₁ ≈ ∘ ∫, the teacher can talk about how the written handshape symbol of ✱₁ happens to coincide with the handshape rhyme they learned. The students would already be familiar with this handshape and quickly learn about the

written symbol in the ASL-phabet (see Byrne, 2017, for the original proposal of connecting ASL rhymes with the ASL-phabet).

For the question of how deaf students transition from ASL to written English, please consider the fact that the orthography and spelling are basically the same between the glossed text and the English text (e.g., BALLOON vs. balloon). Recall the earlier discussion that deaf students would have a means of deciphering BALLOON through reading the ASL equivalent written in the ASL-phabet. When these students read a regular book written in English and encounter the word “balloon,” they would recognize it. As deaf students keep reading glossed books over time, their English vocabulary knowledge would increase as well. The regular books become more readable via ASL Gloss.

However, there is more to the transition from ASL to written English. Deaf students must develop knowledge about English's morpho-syntactic structure in addition to vocabulary. ASL Gloss has a component called Comparative Analysis to help deaf students learn about English grammar. It is necessary to go back to the glossed sentence example and see how English is taught to deaf students. The teacher who is trained with ASL Gloss can take the original English sentence from the regular book, *Balloon* and have it shown along with the glossed sentence to deaf students as follows:

DAD SAY <rs: Dad RED BALLOON FOR IX=2.>

"The red balloon is for you," said Dad.

With this set-up, deaf students will recognize the glossed sentence as they have just finished reading the glossed book, *Balloon*. While the regular English sentence may be new, deaf students will understand that the lesson's goal is about learning English as a new language. The teacher will help these students see where and how English differs from ASL and learn about some structures that are specific to English. Deaf students will actually go through the Comparative Analysis lessons with all sentences in the book. Comparative Analysis lessons will take place with all other glossed books that deaf students finish reading as well. Moreover, teachers of the deaf will take advantage of the children's literature being organized from grammatically simple to grammatically complex over time. Deaf students will be learning English grammar in a scaffolding manner (Supalla, 2017). By the time deaf students reach fourth grade, they would have a good working English language knowledge along with reading skills acquired through the glossed books and the ASL-phabet that enable them to become fluent readers of English (Supalla & Blackburn, 2003). It is now appropriate to ask this question: What about the big picture associated with signed language education from Kindergarten through 12th grade? Understanding that ASL Gloss will be taught during the elementary school years (Supalla & Blackburn, 2003), deaf students will need to learn effectively during all of the school years with ASL and English. In response, a diagram is provided in Figure 2, below that includes yearly progression in each grade for ASL (as the first language or L1) and English (as the second language or L2) with deaf students. With the L1 arrow from Kindergarten to 12th grade, ASL literary works are subject to curriculum expectations based on the grade levels (see Gibson, 2006; Gibson & Blanchard, 2010, for more details). With the L2 arrow from Kindergarten to 12th grade, the diagram includes ASL Gloss as the special reading methodology up to the 4th grade. With students becoming fluent readers, they can start reading

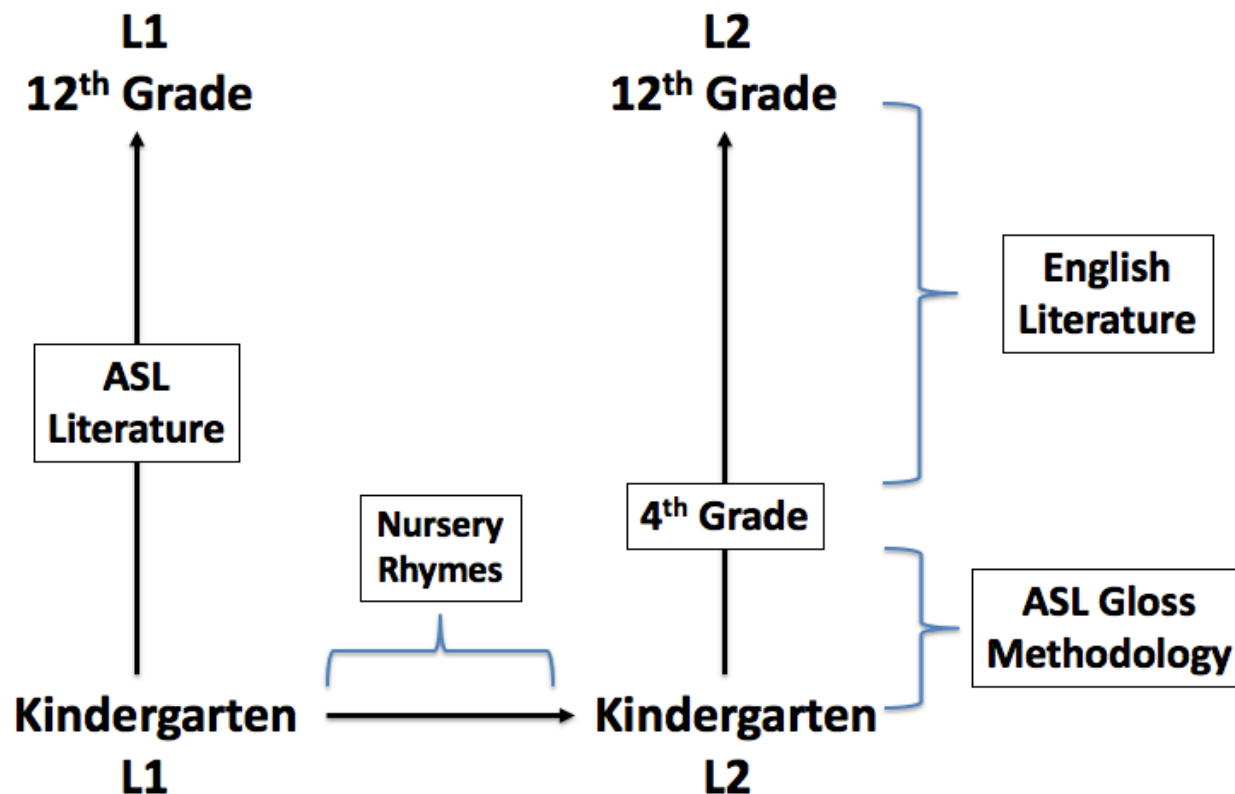


Figure 2: Pedagogical Framework for ASL and English in the Classroom with Deaf Students

English literature independently around 4th grade and continue reading all the way up to the 12th grade.

The remaining feature in the diagram above that requires elaboration is the arrow that moves from left to right (from Kindergarten L1 to Kindergarten L2). The diagram's incorporation of the signed language-based nursery rhymes addresses the previously discussed concern that English rhymes are not accessible for the education of deaf students. Teachers who are trained in signed language education will make sure that deaf kindergartners are exposed to the nursery rhymes in ASL. It is important to keep in mind that teachers who follow the signed language education model will integrate both bodies of ASL and English literary works for teaching purposes with sensitivity to the accessibility issues. Deaf students will find themselves viewing ASL literary works and reading English literature as they should.

A Comparison with the Traditional Deaf/Special Education Practices

In this subsection, the traditional deaf/special education practices will be identified as lacking theoretical coherence in comparison to what has been discussed for the signed language education model. At the root of the problems plaguing deaf/special education is its emphasis on providing deaf students access to information and activities. This focus is different from access to learning, as discussed for the Universal Design for Learning framework (Supalla & Byrne, 2018). With ASL Gloss, signed language reading plays a critical role for the education of deaf students.

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Having ASL written (as is evident with the glossed text and the ASL-phabet) is what facilitates signed language reading. Deserving a response is the deaf/special education expert, Connie Mayer's view on signed language reading (2017) as follows:

Even assuming that written forms of signed language were viable as a route to literacy, the cohort of deaf learners who would take advantage of this route would be limited to those who used ASL as a first language (L1). This group has never constituted the majority of the deaf school population and in the current context of universal newborn hearing screening and advances in hearing technologies including cochlear implants, bone-anchored hearing aids, and middle ear implants, its size is continually decreasing (Archbold & Mayer, 2012). Greater numbers of deaf children are now being educated in mainstream settings...and use a spoken language (albeit sometimes with sign or other visual support) as their primary means of communication. (p. 553)

Mayer's statement above emphasizes the viability of spoken language education with no apparent sensitivity for linguistic accessibility. Mayer's blind faith with the access to information and activities orientation of deaf/special education underlies the arguments that she made. This includes a belief that deaf students can acquire and internalize and know spoken English as a prerequisite to their reading development. Deaf students' placement in a 'rich' speaking environment, as found in regular public schools will help with their accessing spoken language as information. Schools for the deaf being signing schools thus appear to be problematic and undesirable in Mayer's eyes. Deaf students who experience integration with hearing students are thought to enjoy access to reading instruction activities developed for the latter group.

Mayer does not account for what the deaf/special education literature has to say in regard to deaf students' performance with English language acquisition. The findings associated with spoken English for deaf students are not good and, in fact, rather distressing (see Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2001, for a review of deaf students' capacity for learning to speak English). Mayer's assertion that technology has the power to eradicate deafness does not stand either. Hearing loss continues to prevail with no known cure and has had an adverse impact on deaf students' learning of English literacy even with the use of technology (e.g., Hall et al., 2019; Humphries, Kushalnagar, Mathur, Napoli, Padden, Rathmann, & Smith, 2012; Spencer, Marschark, & Spencer, 2011).

Mayer's mention of supports in her own words, "spoken language (albeit sometimes with sign or other visual support) as their primary means of communication" suggests her painful acknowledgment that deaf students' are lacking access to the English language and English literacy. Supports must be described as evidence for a contradiction to Mayer's position on the vitality of spoken language education. Supports account for how teachers develop desperate measures to address the need for deaf students to have 'improved' access to the English language and English literacy. This need leads to two competing, but futile support approaches with one emphasizing English and the other ASL when it comes to the education of deaf students (see Supalla & Byrne, 2018, for further discussion on this topic).

With this article's emphasis on literature teaching, it is interesting to see how teachers who utilize ASL support for the education of deaf students do their job. What is called ASL translated literature teaching has never been subject to any known critique until now. Many teachers of the

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deaf embrace the notion of having children's literature written in English translated into ASL. This includes having an adult signer first read a children's book and then sign the story to a video camera. The video recording is then subject to editing and finally released to the public for use. It resembles how ASL literature is made available through videos, as discussed earlier, but ASL translated literature only accounts for English literature (Byrne, 2017). ASL translated literature teaching does not have anything to do with original ASL literary works.

In any case, the practice of teaching ASL translated children's literature is strong among schools for the deaf in the United States and Canada. Gallaudet University and six schools for the deaf have led the effort in the creation of ASL translated children's literature. These materials have been circulated to other schools for the deaf for a period of time now. Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD) was the first to create what is called a *Visual Storyreading Program*. The materials produced at KSD are similar to a project undertaken more recently at the Texas School for the Deaf (<https://www.texasdeafed.org/Page/1048>), the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (<https://www.youtube.com/user/csdbchannel/videos>), Rocky Mountain Deaf School (<https://www.youtube.com/user/RMDSCO/videos>), Georgia School for the Deaf (<https://www.youtube.com/user/AMPresources/videos>), California School for the Deaf – Fremont (https://www.csdeagles.com/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=909416&type=d&pREC_ID=video), and Gallaudet University (<https://vl2storybookapps.com/digital-library>). Over 100 popular children's books written in English were translated into ASL at KSD, and the videos are designed to accompany the original English books. When considering the combined efforts of multiple schools for the deaf and Gallaudet University in the creation of a library for ASL translated children's literature, the number of translated English works has increased to more than one hundred at this point in time.

Of relevance is the claim by KSD that its program is comparable to what has been provided for young hearing children. That is, hearing children frequently have book and audio cassette sets to work with. KSD explained that that reading books "aloud to children fosters enthusiasm for independent reading and contributes to skill development and broader awareness" (Wixtrom, 1998). Unfortunately, the approach of teaching ASL translated children's literature to deaf students is flawed. Young deaf students with KSD's program watch an adult signing the story in ASL on a screen, and read the book in English. This experience is linguistically confusing and cannot be validated as 'reading aloud' as KSD claims. Educators at KSD need to recognize the fact that hearing students read a book and listen to the spoken rendition via an audio cassette all in one language, English (see Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, on the importance of teaching reading per language for all students). This is not the same process occurring in KSD's program.

The other line of ASL translated literature development work at Gallaudet University's Visual Language and Visual Learning Center funded through the National Science Foundation (SBE-1041725) is also flawed, in the same way as discussed for KSD. This center has been involved in producing the newest version of ASL supported reading materials, *VL2 Storybook Apps*, from 2012 to the present. Gallaudet's project relies on the use of app technologies that allow deaf students to become part of an interactive experience. This includes the flexibility of watching an entire ASL rendition of a story, or rather shorter chunks, as determined by the individual pages of the book. In an article published in Gallaudet's *Odyssey* magazine (2015), Herzig and Malzkuhn explain that technology can make a difference for how deaf students learn to read (see also Malzkuhn & Herzig, 2013, on a similar topic in a scholarly journal). The advancements in

comparison to the other projects initiated by schools for the deaf are superficial, however. The mismatch of the English text and a person signing in ASL continues to be problematic.

It is interesting to note that Gallaudet University's *VL2 Storybook Apps* has its own way for deaf students to identify words in English when compared to what was discussed for ASL Gloss. When reading a children's book, the students would click an unknown word (via iPad) to have an adult appear and sign the word. Deaf students would learn the meaning of the English word via signed translation. For the ASL Gloss method, deaf students must read the ASL equivalents written in the ASL-phabet in order to identify the meaning of English words. It can be said that with ASL Gloss, deaf students experience reading whereas this is not the case for *VL2 Storybook Apps*. It is important to understand that the ASL translated literature teaching approach is not limited to young deaf students. Older deaf students are subject to ASL translated literature teaching as well. For example, *The Lady and the Spider* (McNulty, 1986) has rather complex text that is designed for use with students as old as age 9. At KSD, this story has been translated into ASL and put on video. Both younger and older deaf students in the elementary school are thus subject to ASL translated literature teaching.

With the current ASL translated literature teaching tools and products, many teachers falsely believe they are doing the right thing. This includes the common belief that deaf students are provided with access to children's literature written in English. These students may have information about different children's stories via ASL, for example, but teachers have not taught them reading yet. Deaf students are wrongfully encouraged to develop a dependence on viewing signed ASL renditions for comprehending a wide variety of children's literature written in English. The disconnection between ASL and written English is maintained here. The other problem with the deaf/special education practices lies with how deaf students are provided access to the reading activity by having a book that goes along with the ASL video. However, the regular English text remains restricted or inaccessible.

What Research Has to Say About ASL Literature Teaching

Literature teaching for deaf students is a serious business. Our analysis of the lack of theoretical coherence for the deaf/special education practices and related research show that pedagogy for deaf students must be sensitive to the separation of two languages, ASL and English. English literature should not be studied via translation, and deaf students need to use ASL Gloss to appropriately study children's literature (in English) and become fluent readers of English in due time. This would allow English literature to be read and ASL literature to be studied as oral literature in its own right. With the availability of ASL Gloss to ensure deaf students' learning of English literacy, teachers can be relieved of pressure and be open to the teaching of ASL literature. There would be no more confusion associated with providing deaf students access to information and activities that push many teachers into translating children's literature into ASL. With teachers of the deaf shifting their focus to access to learning, they will appreciate the key role of the signed language education model that has theoretical coherence. However, the impact of ASL literature teaching on deaf students still needs to be addressed through research. The number of known research studies on ASL literature teaching in the classroom with deaf students may be small. However, the findings are most helpful in confirming the face validity of ASL literature teaching.

Before proceeding with the research literature review, it is important to note that the current lack of attention for ASL literature for the education of deaf students is not the only

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challenge. The fact that ASL Gloss has not yet been embraced in any of the schools for the deaf in the United States suggests that the signed language model has a long way to go. However, there is a glimmer of hope. Teachers in several Canadian schools for the deaf have tried out ASL Gloss as part of "[t]he ASL Curriculum Project which involves design, development, field-testing, and implementation of the curriculum from nursery to grade 12..." (Gibson & Blanchard, 2010, p. 22). Although ASL Gloss is an American innovation that originated in a charter school in Arizona (Supalla & Blackburn, 2003; Supalla, Wix, & McKee, 2001), it is the Canadian educators who embrace the signed language education model. True to signed language education, ASL literature teaching receives the bulk of attention in the Canadian schools for the deaf (e.g., Gibson, 2000, 2006). Consequently, all of the three research studies on ASL literature teaching reported for this article took place in Canada.

The 1996 publication on the teaching of ASL literature to deaf students belongs to the teacher of the deaf, Andrew Byrne. The title of Byrne's publication, "ASL Storytelling to Deaf Children: More! More! More!" suggests that having ASL literature in the curriculum was appealing to deaf students. Byrne's classroom was filled with young deaf children at the first-grade level. Byrne investigated the impact of live storytellers in the classroom with deaf students when using story repetition as a teaching strategy. With ASL literature, Byrne acknowledges that one option for teachers would be using videotaped literary works and showing them to deaf students in a classroom. Such a practice is vital, but not the exclusive way of studying ASL literature. Byrne explains that "[t]here is no give and take; no personal, two-way communication between the performer and the children" (p. 59) when the performer shown on the video signs a piece in just one way and 'fixed' with no flexibility. Thus, the ASL literature teaching options need to include a teacher telling live stories in the classroom.

Byrne's study focused on his own teaching during the daily 30-minute period. As expected of any ethnographic study, he collected data through videotaping his teaching (and the students) and wrote field notes throughout the 1994-1995 school year. After analyzing the data, Byrne could see himself making an impact on the students as follows:

...when a story involved a lot of physical movement, the students' bodies would move along with mine, while their attention would stay locked onto the story. When I finished the story, the students would ask for more and beg me to repeat. This indicated to me that they were taken by the story. When I saw that reaction, it would in turn influence my storytelling. I would become even more enthusiastic about telling the stories. My stories are affected by the students' reactions. When students ask for repetition of a story they liked (as they often did), I tended to change the story based on my sense of what they liked. (p. 53)

The testimony, as written above, includes the important understanding that deaf students could become enthusiastic, all while learning about story structure in general. Taking account of the needed flexibility in telling stories is what Byrne wanted to demonstrate through his research. The opportunity to observe how a story was told repeatedly and how it may vary through the oral means is critical for any student in terms of literacy development (see also Schickedanz, 1978, for the positive impact on hearing students, especially in the area of cognition with live storytelling and oral retellings in English).

Kristin Snoddon is a scholar and researcher who published a study on ASL literature teaching in 2010. As evidenced by Snoddon's paper's title, "Technology as a Learning Tool for ASL literacy," the focus is on video technology, which is highly relevant for ASL literature. Snoddon examined the impact of video technology on three different classes: 2nd grade, 3rd grade, and 5th grade. Two visiting deaf storytellers to the classes shared their experiences associated with name signs, the old dialect of ASL that was once used in the deaf community, and other topics. The storytellers talked about the history of their education and explained, for example, that signing was not allowed in the classroom, which intrigued students as times have clearly changed. The set-up for the classes and teachers with the storytellers was richly interactive.

The storytellers' presence in the classroom was videotaped for more discussions between the teacher and students. This allowed critical information from the visiting storytellers to be preserved over time. Snoddon reported that the students "demonstrated that they are capable of discerning and analyzing past and present inequities in their social environment" (p. 210). The students also shared their own experiences based on the topics covered during the storytellers' visit to the school. The students' performances were subject to videotaping as well. The students participated in drafting and editing their own personal stories in ASL. The oral text that came out for each student could be shared with an audience (through a conference presentation format).

After making observations of the classrooms via recordings on a video camera and field notes, Snoddon completed her research project, pointing to the oral texts as evidence that the students were confident and articulate storytellers. This researcher emphasized the value of the students' opportunity to interact with adult role models. This includes how deaf students at the Canadian school for the deaf had their works showcased in a polished and celebrated form, which helped with their identity development. Snoddon concluded that the production of oral texts must be part of literacy programming for other schools for the deaf to follow.

With the third and last research study on ASL literature teaching, Linda Wall, the researcher is, once again, a teacher of the deaf who completed her Master's thesis in 2014, entitled: *From the Hands into the Eyes: An Analysis of Children's American Sign Language Story Comprehension*. This researcher takes into consideration the fact that many ASL literary works have been video recorded and that deaf students have had the opportunity to study ASL literature through videos in the Canadian schools for the deaf. Most importantly, Wall chose to investigate the impact on cognition among deaf students being taught ASL literature. Wall was determined to understand the mental processes of deaf students when they view and process a story told in ASL on a video. As part of the literature review on story comprehension for her Master's thesis, Wall wrote the following:

Teachers need to know what and how the students are thinking as they [attend to] ASL stories and how they are making use of the ASL cueing systems to extend their comprehension of ASL stories. When teachers know what areas in ASL comprehension to look for and to guide students' learning, they will be in a better position to further instruct in the use of ASL comprehension skills and increase students' metalinguistic knowledge and analytic skills of ASL stories. (p. 18)

The mention of ASL cueing systems refers to the graphic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of the flow of ASL in the literary work. This is part of utilizing appropriate comprehension strategies with ASL stories. In Wall's view, all deaf students need to effectively

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view, comprehend, and analyze ASL stories (i.e., develop their deciphering or deconstructing skills). Wall explained that story comprehension is not automatic, but that it must be taught and the skills developed over time. Teachers thus play an important role in assessing students' comprehension skills.

A total of eight deaf students aged 5-8 participated in Wall's study. They viewed a videotaped ASL story depicting animal characters. Wall then asked these students 12 questions that were developed for the study (covering all four language cueing systems: graphic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic). Wall also used another set of questions to query the participants' inferences. The students' signed responses during the interview were subject to coding (i.e., 2 for a correct response, 1 for vague response, and 0 for an incorrect response) and then analysis.

Interestingly, what is known for spoken language-based story comprehension is also found to be true for signed language. While all 8 deaf students in Wall's study were natively proficient in ASL, their ability to construct the meaning of the ASL story varied quantitatively and needed improvement. The students who demonstrated a lower level of story comprehension had used less of the language cueing systems when viewing the ASL story. The others who comprehended the story more effectively used more of the cueing systems in ASL. Students with the higher story comprehension level also did better at generating inferences, which constituted another important finding in Wall's study. Based on these findings, Wall implored programs and teachers to pursue comprehension assessment as part of ensuring the high quality of teaching ASL literature in the classroom.

The combined Canadian research findings suggest that the teaching of ASL literature in a school for the deaf setting must be highly valued. The impact on deaf students includes positive results for both oral language comprehension and expression capacities as well as for deaf students' pure enjoyment. Both live performances and video recorded ASL works are deemed as important components for how ASL literature study should be conducted in the classroom. In addition to the face validity of ASL literature teaching, teachers will need to consider the importance of ongoing student assessment to help ensure deaf students' successful learning of ASL literary works.

Discussion and Conclusion

What seems to be clear at the close of this article is that ASL literature learning is a real phenomenon, yet far from being realized for the education of deaf students. This problem includes a systematic failure to address bilingualism concerning ASL and written English and a consideration of how deaf students access learning. The fact that mere access to information and activities serves as a basis for deaf/special education contributes to the vicious cycle of poor teaching practices and does not help the situation. Given the fact that attention in this article focuses on ASL support, it is important to state that English support as the other language orientation for the education of deaf students does not fare any better (see Supalla & Byrne, 2018, for further discussion on the limitations of English support). The underlying problem of supports consisting of 'throwing' information and activities at deaf students (and other students with disabilities) remains. Teachers need to understand that their teaching must be tuned to deaf students' learning, which includes what has been discussed for the signed language education model. Signed language reading, as provided through ASL Gloss, plays a key role in connecting ASL to print as well as English literacy. Deaf students will be drawn to learning when their cognition is fully tapped with the use of appropriate language tools and procedures.

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Moreover, ASL literature teaching allows deaf students to experience full access to education, especially with nursery rhymes and certain kinds of poems. English literature can be properly introduced to deaf students with sensitivity to accessibility issues. ASL translated literature teaching will need to be dismantled altogether for its failure in addressing the reading instruction issues. The current situation of deaf students not being prepared for becoming fluent readers of English can no longer be tolerated. Equally important is how the large body of ASL literature is worthy of study, which calls for its integration into the curriculum for the American and Canadian schools for the deaf. The same holds true for deaf students' access to English literature, a need that begs for the realization of deaf students' reading capacity.

According to Supalla (2017), the field of deaf/special education may be 200 years old, but reform is timely. The concept of signed language reading is not new, as it was first explored in France during the early nineteenth century (around the time when the first permanent school for the deaf was established in the United States). Deaf students were encouraged to read in French Sign Language through what is called *Mimographie* (Mimography in English). However, the efforts in teaching deaf students how to read in the signed language faced an uphill battle. The timing was not right for signed language reading, as many educators at the time became attracted to a strict form of spoken language education that prohibits any signing in the classroom with deaf students. Even today, there is a strong inclination for teachers to undertake one extreme position or another, as the frustrations in how to best teach deaf students English literacy continue to prevail. Sadly, the current situation with ASL support and English support orientations demonstrates a remarkably similar trend of division in the field of deaf/special education, akin to the older terms of manualism (favoring ASL) and oralism (favoring English).

What this article attempts to point out is that the language question should not be controversial and self-defeating when it comes to understanding and meeting the needs of deaf students. In recent years, educators have begun to understand the value of embracing differences and diversity along with the public's push for best practices and accountability for American and Canadian schools. Included here is the consideration for how deaf students have the right to be signers and use ASL as their accessible language (in comparison to English as a spoken language, for example). Some policy work will need to be done to help generate incentives for the reform with the education of deaf students. This includes addressing the undue pressure for the placement of deaf students in regular public schools where spoken language education reigns. Alternative forms of integration will need to be considered, including how hearing students could enroll in schools for the deaf with the understanding that they learn and use ASL as the language of instruction (e.g., J. H. Cripps & Supalla, 2012). More specifically, what is called reverse integration under the banner of signed language education will require attention from research and scholarship in the near future. For now, the signed language education model, especially with its demonstration of theoretical coherence, aims to help teachers of the deaf think about a new direction for the improvement of education for deaf students. With this, American and Canadian educators can begin the much-needed dialogue on signed language reading, linguistic accessibility, and the Universal Design for Learning framework.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge Dr. Laura Blackburn for her input and earlier edits, Robin Supalla for editing this article, and two peer reviewers for their valuable input.

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A Hidden Treasure Shines Light on Black ASL

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McCaskill, C., Lucas, C., Bayley, R., & Hill, J. (2011). *The hidden treasure of black ASL: Its history and structure*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. Hardcover. 240 pages. \$75.00

The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL is the first and most comprehensive study of Black ASL ever undertaken since Bill Stokoe's colleague, Carl Croneberg, stated more than 50 years ago that "a study of ASL dialects of the Negro deaf will constitute an important part of the full-scale sign language dialect study" (Stokoe, Casterline, & Croneberg, 1965, p. 315). I enthusiastically welcome *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL* because it paves the way for a deeper understanding and appreciation of what many in both the Black and White [d]eaf communities have talked about anecdotally as a "Black way of signing" (Hairston & Smith, 1983).

The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL offers a conceptual framework and road map to help inspire and foster further research and scholarship on Black ASL. The book and companion DVD are organized around the following four guiding questions: (1) what was the sociohistorical reality that would make a spate variety of ASL possible?; (2) what are the features of the variety of ASL that people call Black ASL?; (3) can the same kinds of features that have been identified for African American English be identified for Black ASL to show that it is a distinct variety of ASL?; and (4) if unique features exist, what are they, and what are the linguistic and social factors that condition their use? Answering these questions aimed, at least in part, to shed light on Hairston and Smith's observation that "there is ... a Black way of signing used by Black [d]eaf people in their own cultural milieu—among families and friends, in social gatherings, and in deaf clubs" (Hairston & Smith, 1983, p. 55).

The companion DVD provides numerous video samples of signing by former Black deaf alumni who attended segregated schools for White and Black deaf students. One can readily note phonological differences in sign usage between Black and White deaf signers. A video sample that stands out for me involved a group of Louisiana Black deaf signers. They demonstrated their signs for days of the week. One member in the group asked the other members "do you remember how we knew it was the end of the week and time to go home?" Whereas ASL uses one-handed initialized signs for Monday through Friday, the Louisiana Black deaf signers (who had attended Southern State School for the Deaf in Baton Rouge) used two hand signs. The non-dominant hand formed an "S" handshape and the dominant hand touched the outer palm of the non-dominant hand using a "1" handshape for Monday, a "2" handshape for Tuesday, and ending with a "5" handshape for Friday.

The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL also includes a rich collection of stories about life in segregated schools for Black deaf students and about their initial encounters with White teachers and students when the Black and White schools integrated. Readers will especially enjoy the variety of interviews interspersed throughout the DVD, including that

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with Mary Herring Wright, author of the book *Sounds Like Home: Growing Up Black and Deaf in the South* (1999) and an alumna of the North Carolina School for the Blind and Deaf in Raleigh. Wright attended school during the Great Depression and WW II era.

The chapter on the history of Black deaf schools and the sociohistorical reality that contributed to the transmission of Black ASL from one generation to another, particularly in the South, is one of the most fully developed and well-documented reports published to date. The authors provide valuable insight into how it was possible for a Black variety of ASL—separate from that used in the White deaf community—to evolve and be passed from one community of Black deaf users to another over multiple generations. Furthermore, I was especially heartened to learn about the linguistic differences between Black and White ASL. The authors did not find evidence that the ASL used by White signers was better or more advanced than Black ASL. What they did note, at least in part perhaps as a result of the maintenance of segregated schools throughout much of the 20th century, was that Black ASL had not undergone processes of change such as those that occurred with the variety of ASL used in the White deaf community. Perhaps Black ASL could be considered akin to a more orthodox or traditional variety of ASL. I also suspect that their findings have the potential to help dispel a common misperception of Black ASL as a less sophisticated variety of ASL compared to that used in the mainstream white Deaf community. Their findings challenge members of both Black and White deaf communities to reassess and reconsider how they perceive and talk about Black ASL. Moreover, how one perceives and talks about Black ASL also has potentially significant implications for the teaching of sociolinguistic variation in ASL courses and for the training of professional personnel such as interpreters and teachers of deaf students.

The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL is a product of an outstanding, as well as unique, collaborative effort among a diverse group of people. It involved a partnership between two academic departments at Gallaudet University—the Department of ASL and Deaf Studies and the Department of Linguistics—and the Department of Linguistics at the University of California at Davis. The research team, which comprised Drs. Carolyn McCaskill, Ceil Lucas, and Robert Bayley, along with Gallaudet University Graduate students Joseph Hill (doctoral student in the Department of Linguistics) and Roxanne King (2008 graduate of the MA degree program in ASL and Deaf Studies), and community representative, Pamela Baldwin, brought a powerful synergy of scholarly expertise as well as diverse multicultural and multilingual perspectives, to the project. Additionally, both Carolyn McCaskill and Pamela Baldwin brought first-hand personal experiences to the project as alumnae of segregated schools for the deaf in the south and later as members of the first group of Black students to attend integrated classes on White deaf school campuses (Alabama and Arkansas, respectively).

The success of this collaborative effort also involved reaching out to and developing partnerships with target groups of deaf people who, for the most part, have been historically underrepresented in research involving the American deaf community. The six states represented in the study included North Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas. The large and diverse number of Black deaf individuals who participated in the research project through interviews and free conversation was remarkable. They reflected a microcosm of the Black deaf community on the basis of educational attainment, socioeconomic status, type of school attended (segregated,

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integrated, or a combination of both), use of Black ASL and a host of other factors. Not only did the team members reach out to the Black deaf community to develop partnerships for the purposes of collecting data for the project, but they also devoted significant time to sharing their results with numerous audiences. These included informal social gatherings such as cookouts for and reunions of former students as well as formal gatherings such as national and regional conferences of the Black Deaf Advocates and the national conferences of Deaf People of Color.

In conclusion, though Carl Croneberg made his observation more than 50 years about the need for research on “a Black way of signing used by Black deaf people in their own cultural milieu,” I believe if he had an opportunity today to review *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL*, he would be pleased. In fact, I think he would more likely grin from ear to ear and sign, “Job well done!” I, too, heartily applaud the tireless efforts of the research team that authored this treasure of a book.

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Miller's Little Light

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Miller, R. H. (2004). *Deaf Hearing Boy*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. Paperback. 155 pages. \$22.95.

I read with great interest R. H. Miller's memoir *Deaf Hearing Boy*. As a fellow-CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), there is an enchanting fascination with this peculiar world we were born into. I could care less about a hearing child growing-up in a Hearing World. Its appeal is lost in a myriad of stories and tales all too familiar. A CODA, however, is a different breed. As Robert Hoffmeister wrote in the foreword, we find ourselves "living between two worlds" (p. x). I often find myself distantly related to other CODA's... no bloodline to speak of. They are like a long lost relative I somehow sensed was alive but never met. When we should meet along the way, the path is often too familiar and yet quite different. The one phenomenal facet to these encounters is the language... American Sign Language (ASL). When I see it, I am drawn to it like a moth to a candle. I simply cannot resist. Miller's memoir was simply that... another light along the way.

Miller's life begins in a small, rural town called Defiance, Ohio. The oldest of four hearing brothers raised during the '40s and '50s. The reader gets not only a kitchen table view into his childhood and life with Deaf parents, but also a smattering of history, the difficulty of home life following the Great Depression, and the United States march into WWII. Ironically, Defiance is a properly named beginning for the young Miller. At times, he is the recalcitrant: angry, disturbed, agitated, confused, embarrassed, guilt-ridden, and noncompliant. At other times he is the content, orderly, controlled, ambitious, proud, good son, and at times a "savior." On page 121, all of his experiences he often lays at the doorstep of the Institution (School for the Deaf) which he contends so ill-prepared his parents for life which then affected their family life.

Miller's narration of life events growing-up in a Deaf World was fairly common to most CODA's within the Deaf Community. The dominance of oralism within the field of Deaf Education which plagued many in the Deaf Community; the ignorance of the Hearing World which so many learned to accept and move on (not enough time to educate all the hearing); the significance of the School for the Deaf, both positive and negative; and the self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations from the Hearing World including those closest to them... their hearing family members. The fact that many hearing parents (during Miller's parents' time) did not communicate via ASL with their child(ren) is perhaps the greatest tragedy facing the Deaf Community. Following 200 years of educating Deaf children in the US, we have yet to fully bridge the communication gap between hearing parents and Deaf children. The converse, however, is not true! Many Deaf parents are able to communicate with their hearing children, and it is accomplished both naturally and effortlessly via ASL. One day may we put this great travesty to rest.

Miller's transparency regarding his relationship with his parents and grandparents was surprisingly candid. In the introduction section of his book, he described his father as aloof, distant, bright, and a jack of all trades. His mother was the social butterfly, ambitious, a poor cook, and ill-tempered (volatile) at times. In his early years, he readily admits conspiring with his grandparents, thus usurping his parent's role within the family. At times I found myself siding with the

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grandparents, even though they were controlling and untrusting of Miller's parents. When one family lives with the parents' parents, the rule book tends to favor the homeowners. No question living under the roof of his hearing grandparents (who never had a course in ASL or Deaf history) added confusion, tension, misunderstandings, and conflicts within the family dynamics. He also recounted his Deaf parents fighting throughout childhood which ultimately leads to their divorce, and subsequent remarriage to one another. I must confess (as a CODA) that I was often guilty of comparing my family life to Miller's. Although my parents had their faults, their marriage of 65 years remains a constant reminder of how true love should be lived.

Miller's glimpse behind the curtain into the Deaf World is a quick, worthy read. His personal accounts concerning the decline of Defiance (hometown), his family tree, life on the farm (no electricity, running water, and outhouse), a new schoolhouse... all seemed insignificant to me. He allows the reader, however, to see what it's like *growing up between two worlds*. On the last page of his book, Miller laments the fact that if his grandparents knew as much about the Deaf World as his parents understood the Hearing World, things would have been quite different for everyone. Perhaps true! We should, however, measure an individual's totality of life by one's accomplishments, not the events (positive or negative) which shaped him/her. Miller's narrative seemed to encompass a bit of that. He even aligns his childhood with Robert Frost's description of "childhood as the "Age of Terror"" (p. 150).

In conclusion, in spite of all the two worlds did to complicate and thwart Miller's childhood, he has remained married to the same woman his mother told him to break-up with, has three daughters, grandchildren, and now enjoying retirement. As a mature adult reminiscing his background and growth, he shares that he is an accomplished Professor Emeritus of English from the University of Louisville. Not a bad ending for a young, poor, shy, introverted, one-eyed, fearful lad growing up in the Deaf World. Another small light into a dark, ignorant, sometimes blind Hearing World.