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Signed Language Academic Papers

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Commentary: Signed Academic Papers

Signed Language Academic Papers

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Abstract

Signed language academic papers are a new possibility that recent developments in technologies for recording, editing, presenting, and reviewing visual materials have made practical in an academic setting. This article presents guidelines the authors developed for papers specifically in American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting courses; however, signed language academic papers can be effectively used in signed language classes of all levels in any country.

The authors offer rationales for assigning signed language academic papers to bilingual students, and suggest style and practical guidelines analogous to guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). Recommended guidelines address practical and academic considerations. The recommendations arose from a collaborative process with students and have been refined over time through implementation in an interpreting program. Observed benefits of signed language academic papers are a transformative change in students' conception of the capacities of signed language as a language; opportunities for linguistic analysis and improved fluency; opportunities for planned, formal, and academic use of signed language; and transfer of skills to interpretations and translations. The end result has produced successful student outcomes from the perspectives of students and instructors.

Keywords: ASL, signed language, academic papers, tools for bilingual classroom

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Signed Language Academic Papers

1. Introduction

The authors of this article co-taught a first semester interpreting course in fall 2009 (Fundamentals of Interpreting). During the second week of class, students approached us with a request to produce and submit some of their papers in American Sign Language (ASL). This request initiated our collaborative process of developing guidelines and grading rubrics for ASL academic papers. In this article, we present the parameters of academic signed language papers that we developed in our work with students. These parameters are analogous to written academic conventions.

1.1. Academic Papers and Video Texts

Written academic papers follow standard conventions and style manuals. In 1929, the first style manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) was published as a “standard of procedure, to which exceptions would doubtless be necessary, but to which reference might be made in cases of doubt” (Bentley et al., 1929, p. 57). Our goal has been to provide analogous general principles and guidelines for students and academicians producing academic papers in a signed language. (We have retained the English word *paper* to refer to an unpublished work developed in the context of an academic setting, regardless of language.) At this stage, our goal is to help lay a foundation toward a standardized set of principles and guidelines for use of signed language academic papers.

The Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning at Gallaudet University hosted a series of presentations on Academic ASL in fall 2011. As part of this series, Raychelle Harris and Chris Nunn presented their findings on a study they conducted on academic ASL at Gallaudet University (Harris & Nunn, 2011). Their findings focused on language use and attitudes towards language. This provides a backdrop for information on language use in academic signed language papers.

In our review, the only other reference to what we have termed “ASL academic papers” or “signed language papers” is what the Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning at Gallaudet University calls “video texts.” The Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning website provides links to a number of resources for ASL use within academic settings, including tutorials of academic ASL modules and an undergraduate rubric for ASL public presentations. The tutorial modules are intended to aid students in developing skills in academic ASL and include a series of videos on Core Principles of ASL Composition that describe formatting suggestions for ASL academic use in video texts.²

Currently, published ASL journal articles can be found in the *Deaf Studies Digital Journal (DSDJ)*. *DSDJ* has submission requirements specific to that journal (see <http://dsdj.gallaudet.edu>) that will result in a posted presentation with visual components (main video, plus visual aids, picture in picture, and text citations). Authors provide the presentation, text, photos, and images, along with cue points, and *DSDJ* formats the presentation.

² We refer readers to these modules at http://www.gallaudet.edu/Office_of_Academic_Quality/Office_of_Bilingual_Teaching_and_Learning/Academic_ASL_Modules.html.

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From our review, *DSDJ* is the only publication that publishes in ASL. We are aware that the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) and the *IJIE* have expressed interest in publishing signed language papers, but at present *IJIE* requires papers to be in English, and the CIT proceedings remain in English.

We collaborated with instructors and students across departments (interpreting, ASL, deaf studies, and general studies), undergraduate and graduate schools, and faculty at different institutions (Gallaudet University, Douglas College, Lakeland College, and the University of Alberta). In our initial collaboration we located rubrics for ASL presentations that focused on the use of the language. We did not find any instructions or rubrics for ASL academic papers. We had discussions with people from various programs, but to our knowledge no one had developed a style manual.

1.2. Our Perspective

We teach in the U.S., and our working languages are ASL and English. The work we share here can be applied to any signed language. Nothing in our recommendations is necessarily limited to the context of ASL. We have tried to reflect this belief in our writing. However, for the remainder of this commentary we refer to our own experience of developing ASL academic papers, with the assumption that our discussion can be applied to the development of an academic paper in any signed language. Throughout this paper when we talk about students and interpreters, we are talking about those who are deaf as well as those who are non-deaf. (The benefits of producing ASL academic papers are not contingent on whether students are deaf or non-deaf, nor are the benefits contingent on the students' native language.) We specify one or the other when necessary.

Furthermore, although we developed this approach for use in an interpretation and translation program, the principles laid out here could be applied in any academic course that uses a signed language as a classroom language. The core concepts underlying these recommendations for signed-language papers can be incorporated, with appropriate modified expectations and requirements, at any level of education (similar to incorporating written papers from a very early age).

This paper is an expanded version of our original presentation at the 2010 CIT convention entitled "Students' ASL Academic Papers: The How-To, the Benefits, and the F-U-N." Below, we discuss the rationale and outcomes for these papers; present and discuss the conventions, guidelines, and rubrics we developed; and discuss the implications and recommendations for incorporating ASL papers in academic settings.

2. ASL Academic Papers

As we are teachers of interpretation and translation it is incumbent upon us to create opportunities for students to increase and demonstrate their ability to use their working languages (in our case, ASL and English). Just as there are different levels of formality and complexity for written academic work, we envision educators tailoring the specifics of an ASL academic paper to analogous levels of formality and complexity. It is possible for educators to use ASL academic papers in the same way as written academic papers. Although the techniques are different, our expectation is that ASL academic papers are as formal and rigorous as their written counterparts.

ASL academic papers are not the same as ASL journal articles. Just as written term papers are a precursor to formal journal and other academic authorship, ASL academic papers allow students to develop the skills to progress toward journal articles and other academic authorship. Classroom ASL academic papers serve as a stepping-stone to developing the requisite skills for formal and academic ASL use and the development and argumentation of a thesis in a signed language. Likewise, ASL academic papers are distinct from presentations, in large part because the format is different. Presentations may be planned and even scripted; however, the audience is live, and there is opportunity for interaction, however minimal it may be in a particular case. Academic papers are intended to become frozen texts.

Throughout their academic careers, students have had the opportunity to produce written academic papers. With this article we are promoting an avenue for students to produce signed-language academic papers. The courses we teach require a variety of papers, which prior to 2009 were solely written (and, therefore, necessarily

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English) papers. In this section, we discuss the benefits of signed-language papers and suggest formatting conventions, style guidelines, and assessment rubrics for ASL academic papers.

2.1. Benefits

Once students proposed the idea of ASL academic papers, we immediately saw the value of such papers as in alignment with development and refinement of the requisite skills for interpreters and interpreting students, as well as with the core values of bilingualism. Below we discuss four benefits that we have observed and students have reported. There was one significant and unanticipated benefit, which has fundamental implications. We discuss this benefit first.

2.1.1 Paradigm Shift

ASL academic papers provide an opportunity for students to examine and broaden their worldview of ASL. Requiring ASL academic papers facilitated and forced a new level of understanding and embodiment of the language. Although we had not anticipated that creating signed-language papers would lead to a paradigm shift for the students, they reported and we observed that this was the case. In producing ASL academic papers, students reported a transformative and unexpected change in their understanding of ASL, their abilities to use ASL, and their conception of the capacities of ASL as a language. They said that being required to use ASL in a formal, planned, and academic manner afforded them the opportunity to examine their attitudes, formerly unconscious, toward the language. And in turn, being required to use ASL in an academic paper forced them to discover new ways to use the language that they had not had to do previously. Their linguistic understanding, use, and appreciation of the language increased.

We observed this transformation of students' attitudes toward, understanding of, and respect for, ASL. Although students and second-language users generally understand on an intellectual level that ASL is a fully capable language, they may have a tendency to actually use and work with ASL as though it is has limited capacities. Students may believe, for example, that ASL is unsuitable for discussing abstract concepts, and therefore has limited academic application.

A paradigm shift for students happened as they realized that limitations they had ascribed to ASL (consciously or not) were actually merely limits in their own language usage, not deficiencies in the language. The changes for students happened in a nonlinear fashion, but they included the following: (a) identifying unconscious beliefs about ASL, (b) recognizing how these beliefs limited their understanding of ASL, (c) identifying their own limitations in using ASL, and (d) making changes in usage toward more appropriate usage for different contexts. Notwithstanding previous protestations to the contrary, students who viewed ASL as a less than fully capable language began to shift their thinking. This shift led students to consider that they may not be as fluent in the language as they had thought, to open their minds to other possibilities, and to find ways to increase their proficiency in the language. This in turn allowed them to incorporate ASL more fully into their academic worldview.

2.1.2 Academic Papers

Being required to produce papers in ASL forced students to produce ASL on an academic level in a way that classroom use of the language alone did not. ASL academic papers require students to use the language in a register appropriate for academic discourse, which is not necessarily a consequence of classroom use of ASL. Using ASL in an academic manner may be a new experience for students, and it is a process that does not happen overnight. Nonetheless, we have consistently seen students make significant improvements in their ASL use as a result of being required to produce academic-level ASL, which then show up in their other uses of the language (i.e., the improvements are not limited to the papers themselves). This increased facility with language use occurred when students were compelled to find ways to successfully complete the assignment that they produce academic papers in ASL.

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2.1.3 Planned Formal and Academic Discourse

The process of creating multiple drafts of a paper in any language aids in the development of a thesis, cohesive use of discourse, and the ability to structure a paper to make clear and concise arguments with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information. The formal academic discourse expected in ASL academic papers required students to employ skills to create a planned, structured and edited paper. Whether students produce papers in ASL or English, the process is recursive, providing opportunities to inculcate beneficial habits of thought and organization. The improvements students made while working on ASL papers also carried over to their written English papers.

2.1.4 Language Analysis

In addition, ASL academic papers, including drafts, provide students with data they can use to analyze their own language use. Once papers have been recorded, students have the opportunity to review discrete parts of their language use on their own, with each other, and with their instructors. From this work, they can identify areas of appropriate and inappropriate language usage and develop plans for refining their language use.

This is significant because students have the opportunity to examine their own language production as they are constructing their thoughts, as opposed to when they are interpreting someone else's language use. For many students, an ASL academic paper might be the first opportunity they have to look at a recorded version of their language use and analyze it for appropriate linguistic features. By requiring ASL papers throughout a program, students gain practice at assessing their language use. Students analyze their own language production systematically through several drafts and through different assignments, throughout their academic career.

In addition, students studying their language use in ASL papers are analyzing *academic* language use, as opposed to narrative or conversational use. They are also analyzing their language use without the interference of the interpreting process. These factors highlight areas where students' ASL usage may be problematic and allows them to incorporate appropriate linguistic features.

2.2. *Formatting for ASL Academic Papers*

Style conventions exist to provide guidelines for standardization, convenience, and ease of readability (APA, 2010). We offer the conventions we have developed and modified, and we hope that these will contribute to the standardization of a style for ASL academic papers. The specific conventions that we present below are not as important as the fact that the field needs to come to agreement for one or more sets of conventions for ASL academic paper style(s).

2.2.1 Paper Conventions

As in any educational setting, instructors and programs have different expectations for written work, depending on the goal of any given assignment. This is as true for signed-language academic papers as it is for written academic papers. The types of paper required of students will vary according to course and assignment. We consciously walk students through the process of creating ASL academic papers by beginning with less formal and less complex papers. We then move on to more formal and complex papers requiring greater length, more citations, greater formality, and so forth. Our classes called for the following types of papers, in order of increasing formality and complexity:

- Reflection papers
- Self-analysis papers
- Linguistic and discourse analysis papers
- Research papers

We initially developed guidelines for ASL academic papers by reviewing guidelines and conventions for written academic papers. We used APA-style formatting, and incorporated elements (e.g., identifying information, reference lists) where appropriate. When we introduced the concept of ASL academic papers to students, we first talked about how a written academic paper is constructed, because they were familiar with this type of paper. We discussed general formatting expectations and requirements, such as margins, title page, and reference lists. This

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led to a discussion of how to create analogous formatting markers for a signed-language paper. The conventions and guidelines we present below are the result of our collaborative process with students as they completed their assignments. Subsequent to developing these guidelines, the Academic ASL Modules were created and posted (2010),³ and we now refer students to those as well. Below is a comparison of the signed-language and written conventions.

Table 1: Comparison of conventions

ASL	English
Title slide with identifying information	Identifying information (at top of first page or on cover page)
Table of contents slide* with time codes Section slides and other transitions	Page numbers Headings (and sub-headings)
Supplemental document*: table of contents, outline & reference page	APA style
Clear, flat, solid background Full frame Professional dress Professional stance (standing)	1"-1.25" margins 12-point <i>Times New Roman</i> Double-spaced Headers
Citing	Citing
Reference list at end of movie	Reference list at end of paper
Appropriate use of examples of work	Appropriate use of examples of work
Spell check	Spell check
Edit papers	Edit papers

*The purpose of the table of contents and section slides is to function as a guide to locating content within the documents, analogously to how page numbers, headings and sub-headings function in written work. This allows a reader to quickly scan for content sections. The supplemental document functions in the same way, but includes an outline that allows the instructor to have an overview, quick glance, and reference points for more of the content of the paper. It is likely that as we become more accustomed to scanning videos to locate the information we need, and as technology improves to allow for searches in a video, we will find this supplemental document will no longer be necessary. We have begun to test requiring students to use ELAN (Eudico Linguistic Annotator, a transcription software tool available as a free download from the Max Planck Institute website at <http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan>) and submit an .eaf file with their video that includes the information in the outline and table of contents. This may replace the supplemental document altogether.

2.2.2 Formatting style guide for ASL academic papers

In this section we provide an example of the guidelines we provide to students when we introduce ASL papers in a course, after we have discussed the parallels between an English and ASL academic paper (see Table 1 above). The guidelines are in the table below:

³[http://www.gallaudet.edu/office_of_academic_quality/office_of_bilingual_teaching_and_learning/academic ASL modules.html](http://www.gallaudet.edu/office_of_academic_quality/office_of_bilingual_teaching_and_learning/academic_ASL_modules.html)

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Table 2: Guidelines

Filming/ Recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Record with a clear background, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you use a curtain as a backdrop, iron it. ○ The wall behind you should be flat (not a corner), and free of visual distractions like outlets, pictures, etc. ○ Pay attention to how the light in the room changes at different times of the day to have the light be consistent. ▪ Full frame where you can be seen clearly (be sure you do not cut off your head or your arms/hands when they move) ▪ Professional dress ▪ Professional stance (standing rather than sitting) ▪ Place notes near the camera lens so you are not looking away when you look at your notes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider whether you want your notes to be nonverbal, screen shots from drafts, words, or a combination. ▪ Film with breaks so that you can edit with ease.
Slides See Figures 1-6	<p>You may use visual materials, titles, slides, and/or movie/DVD tools for the opening and/or closing and transitional portions of your paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifying information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student's name, instructor's name, course name and number, assignment name, date) ▪ Table of contents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To provide a list of your topics or sections <i>with</i> time codes ○ Formatted for ease ▪ Headings/section slides ▪ Quotes ▪ Citations (along the bottom of the frame) ▪ Examples ▪ References ▪ Avoid redundancy; avoid duplicating information—see below for slides; if you use a slide to provide information do not repeat that information in ASL, or vice versa.
Cites See Figures 4 and 5	<p>Ensure that it is clear what claim you are attributing to the author. You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sign the citation before the claim (S-M-I-T-H, 1997), or ▪ Place the citation as a title on the bottom of the screen <p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When using a quote, keep the original language on a slide if it is written or as a video insert if signed (do not translate quotes)
Examples included in paper See Figure 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Video clips or pictures from actual source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sample of clip full frame ○ Sample of clip in the frame and transition slide ▪ Reenacted examples
Typed document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Table of contents with time codes ▪ Typed outline follows the structure of your ASL academic paper ▪ Typed reference page

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These guidelines cover appearance, formality, professionalism, and formatting. As with any academic paper, students are advised that they may not turn in a “first draft,” and they are expected to proofread and edit their papers. It should be clear from the submitted work that a paper has gone through necessary revisions and is being turned in as a final paper. We recognize the challenge this may present in the beginning, as students need to acquire a degree of technical proficiency to produce and edit ASL academic papers. Below are images from student papers that illustrate text slides, quoting, citing, and including an example.

Figure 1
Identifying information

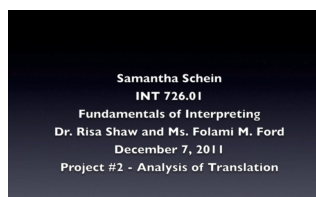


Figure 2
Table of contents with time codes

Table of Contents	
Introduction	00:09:21-00:45:20
Lexical Variation	00:46:17-4:55:19
Transitions	4:56:12-6:31:00
Accuracy Notes	6:31:18-7:53:04
Equivalency Notes	7:54:23-8:51:04
Conclusion	8:51:28-9:29:02

Figure 3
Headings/section slides

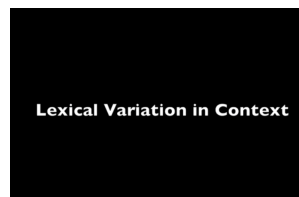


Figure 4
Quotes

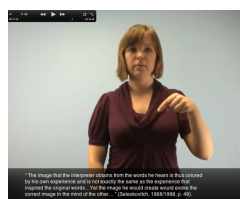


Figure 5
Cites (along the bottom of the frame)

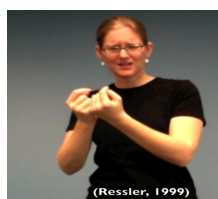
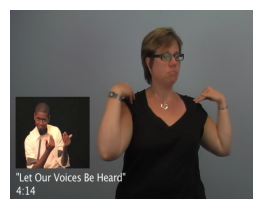


Figure 6
Sample of Picture-in-Picture



Figures 4 and 5 are examples of quoting and citing. If the student chooses to display a quote at the bottom of the screen or as a full frame slide, it has to remain on the screen for a sufficient time for the viewer to read the entire text. When the student cites an author (Figure 5), the citation should remain visible to identify the entire segment that is being attributed to that author. The image in Figure 6 shows an example of the student discussing the data she analyzed by using picture-in-picture with time code. Students can also choose to show the example full frame, transitioning to and from the example.

As ASL academic papers become normalized, the conventions and guidelines laid out here may not need to include the sort of general instructions that are assumed in the context of written work; for example, for written academic papers, “make sure your paper is not crumpled” and for ASL academic papers, “do not let your cat jump on your lap, and if this happens, be sure to edit it out.” However, it was through the process of students attempting their first ASL academic papers and submitting them that we realized the significance of explicitly noting the required elements until such conventions are fully developed and well established. Some of the early problems in students’ papers are listed below:

- Inconsistent or inappropriate fonts (shadowed, not professional or academic)
- Font sizes that were too small to read, or too large for the screen
- Background containing extraneous visual distractions (visible corners, outlets, or pictures/books, wrinkled curtain, shadows from natural light, noncontrasting or inconsistent color, people or animals walking through)
- Inappropriate dress (colors blend with skin, distracting tie, sleeves too short or too long—ideal length seems to be $\frac{3}{4}$ or long sleeves that end at wrist)

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- Transitions that were too “fancy,” for example, circle open or close, cube, and mosaic transitions (as named in iMovie).
- Signing before camera is fully on
- Editing issues, e.g., overlapping transition with signing, pasting video segment more than once in the paper

In addition to providing students with guidelines, we remind students to plan ahead and allow time to deal with technical difficulties that are likely to arise. Although this advice also applies to written academic papers, students may not yet be accustomed to the specialized technical requirements of ASL academic papers, including editing an ASL academic paper. This can be a steep learning curve for some students. On the other hand, students often have a greater facility with technology than their instructors, and they can provide excellent guidance on which programs are most suitable for creating and editing ASL academic papers that will comply with these conventions and guidelines.

For each assignment, we specify for students the minimum and maximum permissible length of the assigned paper. Initially, we tried to determine appropriate recommended length of ASL academic papers by “translating” length from equivalent written academic papers. We discussed the issue of how to assign length for ASL academic papers with other instructors and decided on requiring the equivalent of a 1-to-1 correspondence for written and ASL academic papers (if we required a 4- to 5-page paper, we would require a 4- to 5-minute paper). However, based on student feedback and our assessment of the depth and quality of the content of the paper, we later modified our requirements such that 1.5–2x was allowed/required for ASL academic papers as compared to the number of pages for a written academic paper.

2.3. *Rubrics and Assessment*

For any assignment, we provide students with guidelines, which include a rubric with information regarding assessment of the content and format of the assignment. Below is an excerpt describing the expectations of a high quality academic paper (see Appendix for sample rubric):

Clearly and concisely delivered, with coherent and logical progression of ideas and supporting information; clear introduction, transitions, and closing; cohesive discourse throughout. Precise and correct use of professional academic language, tone, and demeanor; applies theory; follows formatting instructions; follows APA rules (appropriate use of quotes, attributions, and citing with clarity on relevance to points, analysis, and/or arguments; reference list is complete).

The goals and student-learning outcomes of each particular assignment guide our assessment of students’ papers. Our assessments reflect our intended focus for the assignment, and we modify the rubric according to the goals of the assignment; for example, if an assigned paper is less formal, formal citing may not be required. If the purpose of the assignment is to focus on language use, we will add a section in the rubric that specifically addresses language use.

Although it may be daunting at first to envision how to grade and offer feedback to students on ASL academic papers, we benefitted from and strongly encourage the use of the transcription software program ELAN. This program provides a useful and elegant mechanism for providing students with instructor feedback on language use, formatting, and content. The beauty of ELAN is that it enables the user to tie her/his comments directly to the corresponding segment of the video. When we provide feedback to students, we create tiers (lines for annotated text) for content, argument, formatting, citing, and language use. This both structures our review process for our own benefit and allows students to make better use of that feedback. ELAN makes the work of the instructor easier and significantly increases the benefit to the students.

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3. Conclusion

The value of ASL academic papers for students, both personally and academically, became apparent almost immediately. We saw growth in the development of students' critical thinking skills and language skills as a result of the process of learning to produce academic ASL papers. We also saw fundamental changes in students' self-assessment skills and in their perception of ASL. The process of constructing ASL academic papers helped students recognize and address some of their unwitting audism and paternalism. This helped them uncover their unconscious assumptions about ASL. This was true for non-deaf and deaf students alike, though the specifics may have differed. The students developed a more realistic picture of what they were capable of doing in the language and the work they would need to do to be able to use the language more fully. This is transformative!

Students reported pride and satisfaction in creating ASL academic papers. They also reported that they recognized and could pinpoint their improved fluency in ASL. They realized the importance of the process of examining and making changes in their unconscious notions about ASL. Students reported that these benefits outweighed the struggles they had experienced when called upon to meet the challenge of creating ASL academic papers.

We have found that we have spent more time giving feedback on the first few papers students turned in. The more invested students become in examining their language use and perspectives about ASL, the quicker they make significant strides in language proficiency.

The more students were afforded opportunities to work on ASL academic papers, the more comfort, confidence, and fluency they gained in their use of ASL both in academic register and in more general use. These gains, coupled with feedback from instructors, allowed students to become more proficient at producing academic papers. They also were better able to understand and use the nuances and intricacies of the language. Students increased their range of formal language use and their ability to structure and make logical arguments, as well as produce coherent and cohesive discourse.

We have seen benefits to deaf and non-deaf students simply from the fact that they went through the process of creating ASL academic papers at the same time. Students have helped one another with structure, with filming, and with editing of their papers (both signed and written). This collaboration can lead to more proficient language use and more cogent argumentation, as well as increased desire and ability to work with one another in teams on translations and interpretations.

In each course we teach, we now require both ASL and English papers from students, strategically choosing which to assign according to the learning outcomes and goals. The range of expectations for papers will vary depending on the level of the course (differing, for example, between an introductory undergraduate course and a graduate course) and the pedagogical focus of the class (e.g., language learning, self-analysis, research, etc.). We have incorporated signed-language papers program-wide in the Interpreting Program at Gallaudet University, and we use them in our qualifying and comprehensive exams as well.

Our work is an initial step in the development of protocols and standards for signed-language academic papers for classroom work. It is our hope that this paper and the work we have presented will further discussion toward standardizing and including signed-language academic papers in classrooms wherever signed languages are in use.

4. Recommendations

All students who are in signed-language interpreting programs (regardless of academic level) should be able to successfully create a signed-language paper. If they are not linguistically able to do so, they may need to rethink whether they have the requisite language fluency to interpret, and consider developing greater fluency before proceeding with interpreting training.

Students at any level can create level-appropriate papers in a signed or written language. Students who are learning a signed language and who may not have adequate language proficiency for an academic paper can begin

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with shorter and less formal papers. As students become more proficient bilinguals, this proficiency should be demonstrated in more rigorous academic papers.

We recommend that deaf and non-deaf students work together as editors and consultants on academic papers in any language. As a result of this collaborative work, deaf and non-deaf student teams will serve as models of collaboration for the field, not only as teams on language-focused projects, but also as teams on interpreting and translating assignments.

With regard to grading ASL academic papers, it has been our experience that the more we used ELAN for grading, the more proficient we became at providing feedback, and the less daunting and time-consuming the process became. In fact, after we each graded several papers, we established procedures and routines for viewing ASL academic papers and providing feedback, just as instructors have always established personal procedures and routines for reading written academic papers and providing feedback. Although we currently require a supplemental paper document to be submitted along with a signed-language paper, we are exploring how to move the information required for that document to an ELAN-native .eaf file. We anticipate that by doing this, one will be able to search within ELAN just as one can skim a paper document to locate sections and topics.

In the development of standardized guidelines, it is important to take into consideration feedback from students, instructors, and professionals who have various applications for academic signed papers. We recommend cross-discipline collaboration, across professional organizations and across academic institutions and departments. Over the course of the last 2 years, we have revised the guidelines and conventions in consideration of issues in papers students have produced and based on our ongoing conversations with students in numerous classes about their experiences with creating ASL academic papers. These guidelines and conventions will continue to be developed as a result of the process of requiring, reviewing, discussing, and determining the efficacy of ASL academic papers. Part of this process of standardization will involve application of the guidelines we offer and those developed by others (see websites below). Standardization will also require discussion with professionals in the fields of interpreting, language teaching, education, and research. We look to the profession to continue to develop and refine expectations, requirements, and conventions for signed academic papers. We hope to see standardized guidelines for signed-language papers included in style handbooks in the future.

The use of ASL academic papers has produced innovative and creative opportunities for successful student outcomes. The process has been both exciting and beneficial, and we encourage others to incorporate signed-language academic papers in their work.

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Appendix

For all assignments, we provide students with assignment guidelines that include a rubric regarding assessment of the content and format of the assignment. Below is an excerpt of the assessment of the formatting portion of the paper only.

	Possible points	Maximum points	Midrange	Work not appropriate
Paper formatting, language use, academic paper	Number of points for this part of the assignment	Demonstrates x-level presentation ability; clearly & concisely delivered with coherent and logical progression of ideas & supporting information; clear introduction, transitions, and closing; cohesive discourse throughout. Precise and correct use of professional academic language, tone, and demeanor; applies theory; follows APA rules (appropriate use of quotes, attributions and citing with clarity on relevance to points, analysis, and/or arguments; reference list is complete).	Demonstrates some x-level presentation ability; some clear & concise delivery with some coherent and logical progression of ideas & supporting information and some cohesive discourse; inconsistent use of professional and academic language, tone, & demeanor, application of theory, and support; inconsistent or inaccurate use of APA style; some correct use of grammar; some correct organization, cohesion, & coherence.	Lacks x-level presentation of information; lacks coherence & logical progression of ideas & cohesiveness; imprecise and incorrect use of professional and academic language, tone, and demeanor; lacks application of theory and support; does not cite and/or follow APA style; inappropriate use of grammar; inconsistent and/or confusing organization, cohesion, and/or coherence.