

The Connection Between ASL Acquisition and Early Literacy Development

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About Me

Jeni Jackerson, M.S.ed.

- California Native - Deaf family
- Mother of 2 ½ years old CODA
- Elementary teacher - 7 years
- ASL Specialist - 3rd year
- RMDS Toddler Program team
- Certified ASL Assessor/Trainer
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Workshop Agenda

01

Question

What is the connection between ASL acquisition and early literacy development?

02

ASL Milestones

Birth - 5 years old ASL milestones

04

Early Literacy Development

Strategies and techniques on developing a child's early literacy skills.

03

The Connection

How to connect the ASL acquisition and early literacy development?

**What is the connection between ASL
acquisition and early literacy
development?**

ASL development involves the development of the skills used to communicate with others through languages, while literacy development involves the ability to read and write.

Acquisition vs. Learning

What is the Difference?

Language Acquisition:

“Picking it up”

Developing ability in a language by using it natural, communicative situations.

Language Learning:

“Knowing the rules”

Having grammatical knowledge of the language

Examples of Activities

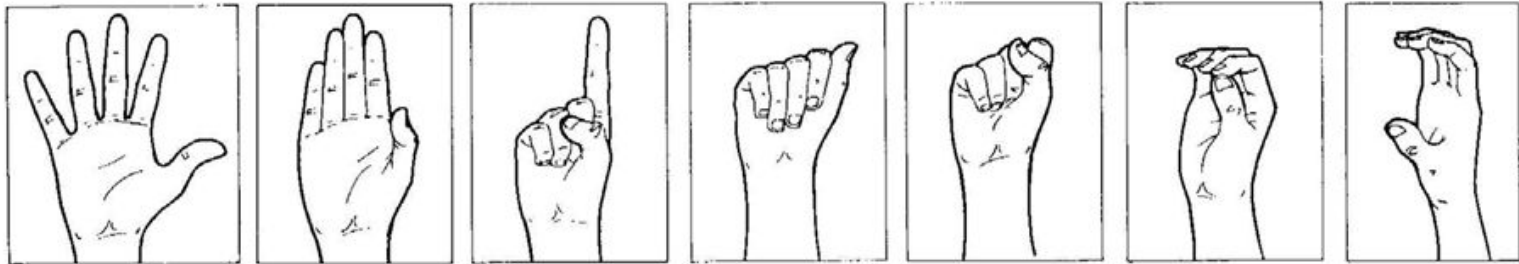
Language Acquisition:

- Conversing during meal times
- Storysigning/wordless books
- Interacting with peers and language models
- Informal chat/discourse
- Fingerspelling with context
- Incidental play

Language Learning:

- Flashcards
 - Handshapes
 - Classifiers
 - Vocabulary
 - fingerspelling
- Games
 - Instructions
- Instructional signs








Unmarked ASL Handshapes



Unmarked Handshapes

The Visual Communication Sign Language (VCSL) Checklist Vocabulary list by handshape

Listed below are American Sign Language (ASL) signs that Deaf/Hard of Hearing children (ages 0-5) are able to use based on the seven handshapes shown below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
						
all done	advanced	alone	a	age	boy	ball
afraid	all done	banana		bath	dinosaur	big house
	baby	black	apple	bike	duck	boss
bear	bad	candy	aunt	can	eat	bottle
bye	bed	caterpillar	bath	car	fix	bowl
cheese	blue	come	bottle	carrot	flower	cake
clothes	boat	crazy	coat	cold	food	cereal
color	book	crown	cold	cough	goose	chocolate

ASL Milestones

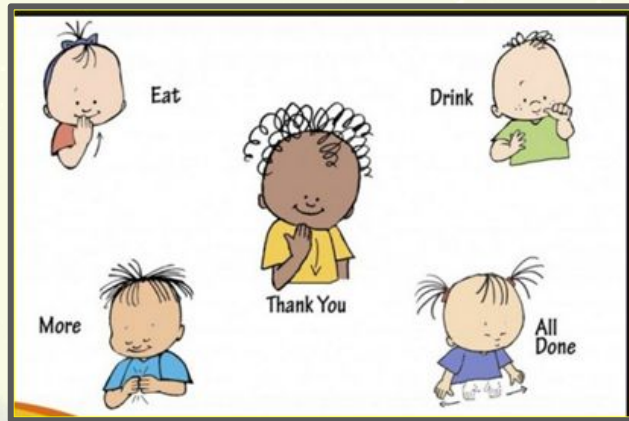
Birth – 12 Months

- Looks attentive at a person's face
- Eyes track objects and people
- Is fascinated with their own hands
- Copies movements and facial expressions
- Babbles with their hands
 - Emerging use of “5” & “S” handshapes
- Begins to notice signing
- First sign may emerge from 10 to 12 months
 - MOM, DAD, MORE, MILK, BED, BATH
- Points to people, objects and places



12 Months – 18 Months

- Uses at least 10 signs
- Begins to use points as pronouns
- Acquires new signs but does not mark with inflections
- Responds to requests



18 Months – 24 Months

- Signs reflect basic handshapes with simple movements (straight forward, up, or down)
- Points to things or pictures when named
- Follows simple instructions
- Understands and carries out complex commands and requests
- Shows interest in “how” and “why”
- Vocabulary rapidly expands
- Begins to distinguish and use non-manual markers (facial grammar)

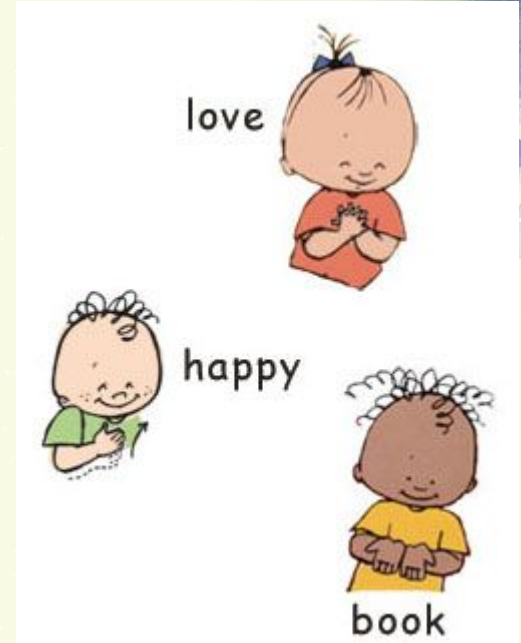


2 Years – 3 Years

- Uses directional verbs (GIVE-ME)
- Begins to use possessive (your, mine) and plural (US-TWO, YOU-THREE) pronouns
- Uses action with object (DRINK WATER)
- Demonstrates negation with headshake or sign “NO”
- Begins to use classifiers to represent objects
- Begins to use non-manual markers (raised/squinted eyebrows) for YES/NO and WH-questions
- Sign order used to show semantic relations
- Refers to things around them during conversations and storytelling; may copy the actions and facial expressions of others in a story

3 Years – 4 Years

- Begins to mark distinctions between noun-verb pairs (FLY/AIRPLANE)
- Uses classifiers to show objects and movements of these objects
- Begins to make modifications to verb signs to show the manner and amount of time involved in an activity (temporal aspect) by changing the movement of the sign and/or adding facial expressions
- All “real world” pronouns (pointing at objects and people in the immediate environment) used correctly
- Tells stories through use of objects or role-playing; may not always show clearly who is speaking or doing something



4 Years – 5 Years

- More complex handshapes and movement (wiggling fingers, twisting wrists) used accurately
- Begins to use noun modifications to show different meaning (e.g. repeating the noun to show plural)
- Simple sentences still used but complex sentences including topicalization and rhetorical questions emerging
- Begins to set up points in space to establish location for people and objects not present in the environment
- Role-playing used more frequently with characters clearly identified but skills to show changes in roles such as body shifts, eye gaze and facial expression not used consistently



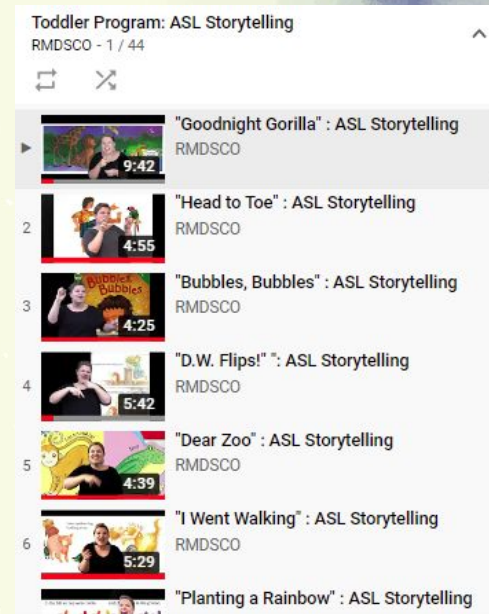
Early Literacy Development

Reading is not only about
learning; it is a shared and
social experience.

A shared language allows the parent to engage in a dialogue with the child using print in books and in the child's environment, and through this interaction the child learns that things in the environment have names and labels.

Bilingual Early Literacy Activities:

- Books
 - Categorize by topics
 - Find similar animals/places/things
 - Bring books to places
- ASL videos with books
- Child led interest hands on activities



Bilingual Early Literacy Activities: ASL Rhymes/Rhythms

ASL Rhymes/Rhythms

- Visual pattern
- Handshapes
- Repetition
- Executive function: working memory
- Phonological Awareness (language structure)

Daily Routines

- Bedtime
- Mealtime
- Bath time
- Clean up time







Bilingual Early Literacy Activities:

- Videochat with ASL peers
- Watch ASL videos together
- Playdates
- Field trips
- Use toys/puzzles to label:
 - Colors
 - Size
 - Number order
 - Family members
 - Animals
 - places

15 Principles for Reading to Deaf Children

Laurent Clerc
National Deaf
Education Center

Following the Child's Lead

Pax starts talking about bears eating people. Kathy asks him a question and gives him time to explain his thoughts.



Pax: No. When a person walks by

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

The Connection

Using ASL does not necessarily mean that a student can master English/reading; however, it can promote metalinguistic skills - understanding of how the language ASL or English works.

Benefits of Early Language Acquisition

- Acquiring a complete first language during early childhood is critical for later reading comprehension.
- Learning two languages [that is, American Sign Language (ASL) and English] is advantageous for deaf and hard of hearing children.
- Parents' frequent use of sign language is predictive of later language development in deaf and hard of hearing children.
- A language foundation is an important factor in spoken language development.



Family Involvement

- Family involvement is a critical factor in deaf children's language acquisition
- Early language acquisition, whether spoken or signed, contributes to improved social, cognitive and literacy skills
- Signed language development is similar to spoken language development; similarities outnumber differences
- There is a critical period for language learning; children who learn ASL later (age 5 years and beyond) are less fluent and make errors in language that carry on into adulthood
- There is NO EVIDENCE to suggest that learning ASL will negatively influence the development of speech
- Resources for families are essential to achieve optimal language learning for deaf children

Family Involvement

- Start early, even if that means you're learning ASL with your child
- Seek deaf ASL mentors and peers
- Use authentic ASL resources
- Researches, webinars, group discussions
- Early intervention program

Most of all, love your child and provide ALL access to languages.

“One language sets you in a
corridor for life. Two languages
open every door along the way.”

-Frank Smith



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 **YouTube RMDS**

Resources

- Gallaudet University - Visual Language Visual Learning Science of Learning Center
- The National ASL and English Bilingual Consortium for Early Childhood Education
- California School for the Deaf, Fremont
- Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center