How to support ASL as an L1 for children and L2 for parents: An interactive discussion

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Poll Everywhere to gather audience participation. You can vote in two ways:

- from any web browser at Pollev/chenpichler
- OR by first texting CHENPICHLER to 37607, then your response
Which of the following best describes you?

I am a parent of a deaf child
I teach deaf children.
I provide services to deaf children.
Other.
How would you rate your ASL proficiency?

Beginner

Intermediate

Advanced

Native or Near-native
True or False: Children learn their L1 because their parents teach it to them in early childhood.

TRUE!

FALSE!
Who am I and where am I coming from?

- Hearing L2 (second language) signer
- Sign language linguistics background = very different perspective from early intervention
- Recently shifted focus to "the other 95%;" new grant project with Drs. Lillo-Martin and Gale, *Family ASL: Bimodal bilingual development by deaf children with hearing parents.*
First Language: Acquisition
- Subconscious process
- Based on exposure
- No previous language
- Child controls pace
- Process is predictable
- Endpoint is uniform

Second Language: Learning
- Intentional process
- Based on teaching
- Transfer from first language
- Teacher controls pace
- Process is less predictable
- Endpoint is not uniform
Parents' long-term goals for **THEIR OWN** ASL learning
(Chen Pichler, to appear, b)
What do language learners (both L1 and L2) have to learn?
Some examples of English linguistic patterns (rules)

Phonology: Allophones of plural /s/

- Noun + /s/
  - Bat + [s]
  - Dog + [z]
  - Horse + [ǝz]

Syntax: Word order alternation with phrasal verbs

- a) Bob hung the phone up.
- b) Bob hung up the phone.
- c) Bob hung it up.
- d) Bob hung up it.
Some examples of ASL linguistic patterns (rules)

Morphology: Degree of intensity
REALLY-BLUE vs. BLUE vs. BLUISH
Some examples of ASL linguistic patterns (rules)

Syntax: Word order of negatives like NEVER

BOB NEVER EAT FISH  vs.  BOB EAT FISH NEVER

"Bob has never eaten fish before."  "Bob never eats/won't eat fish."

Wood (1999)
Important distinction

In second language learning, adults need to be taught most of these linguistic patterns.

In first language acquisition, children develop intuitions about these linguistic patterns through exposure.
Successful outcome is combination of input quality and quantity.

Let's focus on building two essential things:

- Learning resources tailored to parents' needs to optimize their development of ASL
- Access to signing community and a variety of ASL exposure for the whole family

Parent ASL skill:  

Access to signers:  

Input strength:
What is the most important area of ASL for parents to learn right away?

- Accurate "pronunciation" of signs (phonology)
- A large sign vocabulary (lexicon)
- Good sentence structure
- Good nonmanual signals
- Good story-telling skills
What aspect of ASL is the hardest for hearing adults to learn?
Which aspects of ASL are the most important to learn?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Not that important</th>
<th>Useful but not required</th>
<th>Critical</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate pronunciation</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large vocabulary</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produce and read fingerspelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facial expression/nonmanuals</td>
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<td>ASL story-telling skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word order and grammar</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick and use classifiers</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using eye gaze correctly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-directed ASL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Which aspects of ASL are the hardest/easiest to learn?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very easy</th>
<th>Not difficult</th>
<th>Quite difficult</th>
<th>Near impossible</th>
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<td>Storytelling skills</td>
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</table>

(Chen Pichler to appear, b)
"Nothing is scarier than not speaking the same language as your baby."

"...I want him to be around people that sign and I want him to be in classrooms that incorporate both....I feel it every day, like, “Man, I wish I could do this for you, but I can’t.”

"We can only parent half of her; the Deaf community parents the other half."
Some resources from Gallaudet

- Visual Language and Visual Learning (VL2) parent toolkit: https://vl2parentspackage.org/
- ASL Connect free ASL content https://www.gallaudet.edu/asl-connect and remote 1:1 lessons with a Deaf Connector (pilot phase now)
- Free online webcasts and other resource-based information through the Clerc Center: https://www3.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center/our-resources/for-families.html
I don't need an ASL teacher! I need exposure to lots of quality language input!

But how can I expose you to quality ASL input if I'm a new signer??

- Seek out reputable ASL sources and start learning early.
- Build other ASL input providers (your "village") into your family schedule. Variability is good.
- Find opportunities for regular interaction with signing peers.
- Use everything you've got to communicate and play with your baby; don't let a missing word stop you!
Many thanks to the parents who were interviewed as part of the *L2 Sign Acquisition* project.

*L2 Sign Acquisition* was generously funded by a Gallaudet Priority Grant to Deborah Chen Pichler.

Thanks also to Deanna Gagne for her contributions to this presentation.
ASL Connect offers a free program to teach basic ASL. Remote lessons with a Deaf Connector also offer 1:1 training to families of deaf children.

https://www.gallaudet.edu/asl-connect/asl-for-free

What is ASL?

Watch the captioned video.

Watch the Demonstration

Observe the use of active listening to provide feedback to the speaker.
New family-friendly textbook on sign language acquisition available now!

- Online content in ASL and English
- Covers research on:
  - child sign language acquisition 0 to 5
  - acquisition in diverse contexts
  - bimodal bilingualism
  - adult sign language L2 acquisition
- Available now from Gallaudet University Press at [https://signlanguageacquisition.com/](https://signlanguageacquisition.com/)
- All author royalties are donated to the Nyle DiMarco Foundation

Deborah Chen Pichler 2019
Learning Language by Eye or by Ear

A 1-credit Professional Studies course offered by Gallaudet University (PST 375)
February 3 - March 3, 2020

For more information: https://www.gallaudet.edu/center-for-continuing-and-online-education/learning-language
Selected references


