

Why American Sign Language is Important to the University

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University of Washington



Outline

- History
- ASL and Linguistics
- ASL Instruction
- ASL at the University of Washington
- Oppression of ASL
- Technology and ASL
- Growing ASL for Science
- Challenges



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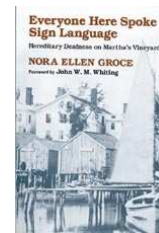
American Sign Language (ASL)

- ASL is the preferred language for approximately 500,000 Deaf people in the U.S. and most of Canada.
- ASL is not a code for English
- There are hundreds of sign languages around the world.
- Signs are composed of location, orientation, hand shape, movement, facial expressions, body position.
- How many signs are there?



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History Martha's Vineyard Deaf Community



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History Gallaudet and Clerc



Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet



Laurent Clerc



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History of ASL

- 1800s - Martha's Vineyard
- 1815 - Gallaudet and Clerc
- 1817 - American School in Hartford Conn.
- 1820 – 1900 - Proliferation of residential schools for the deaf
- 1865 – Gallaudet University
- Deaf clubs
- Professions



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ASL and Linguistics

- William Stokoe
 - Sign Language Structure (1960)
 - A Dictionary of American Sign Language on Linguistic Principles, with Casterline, and Croneberg (1976)



B₂B₂ z[~] ʌʌʌ⁴ 3⁺ □ J C⁺ J C⁺ ʌ⁺ } Y⁺ J G₂ < v⁺
 B₂ ʌ B₂ ʌ G⁺ B₂ B₂ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺
 G⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ □ J C⁺ J C⁺ ʌ⁺ X₁ X₁ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺
 B₂ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺ X₁ X₁ ʌ⁺ ʌ⁺

ASL and Linguistics

- Klima and Bellugi
 - The Signs of Language (1979)



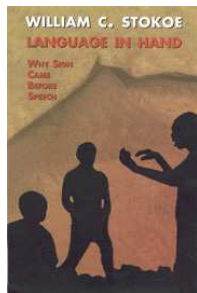
ASL Research

- Sign Language Studies
 - 1972-1997
 - 2000 – present
 - Gallaudet Press
- Sign Language & Linguistics
 - 1998 – present
 - John Benjamins



Origins of Language

- Could sign language have been the first human language?



Conclusions

- Signed languages are natural languages just like spoken languages
- There are universals
 - grammatical structure
- There are differences
 - Use of space
 - Classifiers in action

Sign Language Research at UW

- Catherine Kettrick, Ph.D.
 - Cerebral lateralization for ASL and English in deaf and hearing native and non-native signers (1985)
- Karen Petronio, Ph.D.
 - Clause structure in American Sign Language (1993)
- Lorna Rozelle, Ph.D.
 - The structure of sign language lexicons : inventory and distribution of handshape and location (2003)

Anthropology Research at UW

- Theresa Smith, Ph.D.
 - Deaf people in context (1996)
- Heather Clark, M.S.
 - Identity shift : a cross-generational perspective of Deaf African Americans in the Northwest (2007)

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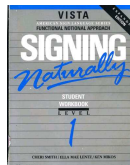
ASL Instruction

- 1964 – Ball State University Workshop
 - Founding of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)
 - Impetus to start interpreter training programs at community colleges



Milestones

- 1980 Baker-Shenk, Cokely
 - Incorporated linguistics principles into the teaching ASL
- 1988 Ella Mae Lentz, Ken Mikos, and Cheri Smith
 - Extensive use of video



Growth of ASL Instruction

Enrollment

	1990	1994	1998	2002
Spanish	533,944	606,286	656,590	746,267
French	272,472	205,351	199,064	201,979
German	133,348	96,263	89,020	91,100
Italian	49,699	43,760	49,287	63,899
ASL	1,602	4,304	11,420	60,781

432% ASL enrollment growth between 1998 and 2002

Foreign Language Enrollments in US Institution of Higher Education, Fall 2002
Modern Language Association Survey, *ADFL Bulletin 2004*

Growth of ASL Instruction

Number of Programs

	1998	2002
Spanish	2,166	2,279
French	1,668	1,701
German	1,192	1,163
Italian	531	606
ASL	116	552

476% ASL program growth between 1998 and 2002

Foreign Language Enrollments in US Institution of Higher Education, Fall 2002
Modern Language Association Survey, *ADFL Bulletin 2004*

Notable ASL Programs

- University of Minnesota
 - 31 sections
 - University of Texas
 - 10 sections
 - UC San Diego
 - 13 sections
 - University of Iowa
 - 12 sections
 - University of Arizona
 - 7 sections
- All 2 year programs

Sign Language Instructors

- More than 50% are deaf (my estimate)
- Few have Ph.D.s
- Professional Society



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ASL at UW

- 1970-80s – Deaf Education Program
 - Signed English Classes (Larry Petersen)
- ~ 1984 – Applicant asks for ASL for admission, but is turned down.
- ~ 1993 – Petition to President Gerberding by students and community led by SPHS student Susan Wampler
- 2001 – Resolution by Student Senate

ASL at UW

- Spring 2005 – Professor Sharon Hargus and I presented a proposal for an ASL program within Linguistics to the Dean of Arts and Sciences
- Fall 2005 – solicited 36 support letters
 - Academic leaders at UW
 - Faculty at UW
 - Staff at UW
 - Student Leaders
 - Deaf Community
- Fall 2006 – received temporary funding for three years to hire one instructor
- Spring 2007 – interviewed candidates
- Fall 2007 – two sections of ASL 101

ASL Lecturer

- Lance Forshay
 - Deaf from a deaf family
 - Gallaudet Alumnus
 - Taught ASL at Pierce College, Puyallup HS
 - President of Washington State ASLTA



Goals for ASL at UW

- Permanent Funding
- Expand to a two year program
- Increase size of program to meet student demand

Rationale

- Requirements
- Demand
- Scholarship
- Diversity
- Competitiveness
- Community Outreach

Requirements

- American Sign Language (ASL) counts for admission, foreign language, and Visual, Literary, and Performing Arts (VLPA) requirements in exactly the same ways as any other language.

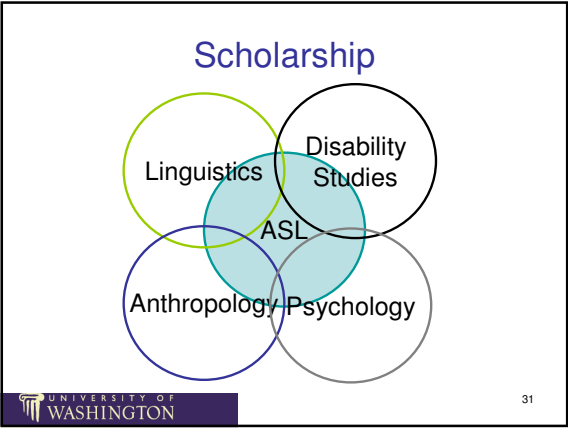
<http://www.washington.edu/students/ugrad/advising/aif/forlang.html>

Demand

- 375 students signed up on the waiting list for ASL 101
 - “I am planning on being an ASL interpreter. I need this class.”
 - “I am beginning my junior year at the UW and am pursuing a career in nursing. I feel that in my career path it is important to be able to communicate with all people which is why I want to learn sign language.”
 - “I am an Early Childhood and Families major. I also work at the Experimental Education Unit, where sign language is in frequent use to communicate with non-verbal children with disabilities.”

Demand

- More
 - “I have waited a long time for this opportunity. I am a Speech and Hearing major.”
 - “I am a disability studies minor and this class would be very applicable to what I am studying and have interest in. I have been waiting for this class to be started at UW, and I am excited to take it!”
 - “The only thing I didn't like about UW when applying was that they didn't offer ASL. Thank you for adding it!”
 - “Pretty please!”



- ## Scholarship
- Professional Need
 - Speech and Hearing Sciences
 - Special Education
 - Social Work
 - Nursing
 - Medicine
 - Dentistry
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- ## Diversity
- Part of the UW Mission statement.
 - “As an integral part of a large and diverse community, the University seeks broad representation of and encourages sustained participation in that community by its students, its faculty, and its staff.”
 - Understanding the deaf perspective will help students become better citizens and decision makers.
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- ## Competitiveness
- Most UW peers already have ASL.
 - Some of our best students desire ASL.
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- ## Community Outreach
- The deaf community has until now been virtually left out of UW.
 - Times are changing
 - Carol Padden is Walker-Ames Lecturer
 - Bernard Bragg performs at UW Kane Hall
 - Lance Forshay teaches ASL and deaf studies
 - Howie Seago teaches drama
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Oppression of ASL

- Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf, Milan, Italy, 1880.
 - A declaration was made that oral education was better than manual (sign) education. A resolution was passed banning sign language in deaf education.

Oppression of ASL

- Eugenics Movement
 - “Those who believe as I do, that the production of a defective race of human beings would be a great calamity to the world, will examine carefully the causes that lead to the intermarriage of the deaf with the object of applying a remedy .”
Alexander Graham Bell, 1884.



Oppression of ASL

- Public Law 94-142 (1975), Now called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - “...to assure that all handicapped children have available to them ... a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs...”

Oppression of ASL

- Hearing technology including smart hearing aids and cochlear implants.



Signing for Hearing Infants



Linda Acredolo and Susan Goodwyn (1985). Symbolic gesturing in language development: A case study. *Human Development*, 28, 40-49.

The Irony of It

- Hearing parents are encouraged to sign with their hearing infants.
- Hearing parents are often discouraged to sign with their deaf children.

Singing for Everyone

- There is a fierce natural drive to communicate in a language spoken or signed.
- Most people in the world are multilingual*.
- ASL and English, why not both?

*De Bot, K and Kroll, J.K (2002). 'Psycholinguistics'. In N. Schmitt (Ed.) *Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press: London.

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Influence of Technology on ASL

- Video Phone



Video Relay Services

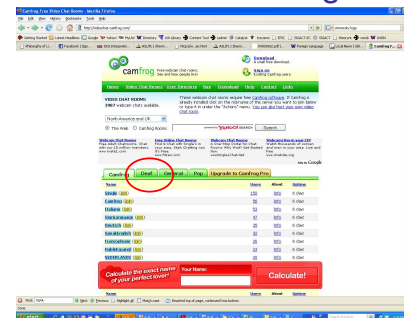


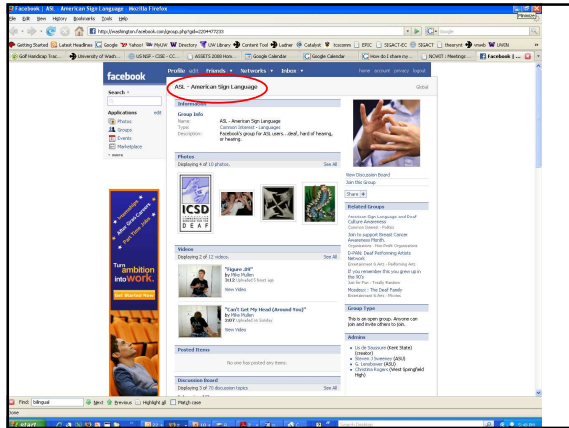
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Vlogs



Social Networking





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ASL-STEM Social Networking for a Purpose

- Enable ASL to grow into Science.
- Empower more deaf students to go into advanced science fields.
- Leverages the interest in the video enabled web.

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Enabling ASL to Grow in STEM

Jeff Bigham, Anna Cavender
Daniel Otero, Jessica DeWitt

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ASL-STEM Video Forum

Terms are organized by the community in a hierarchy for easy navigation.

The most highly ranked signs are displayed at the top, enabling the site to act as a reference for those looking for the sign for a term.

Signs are rated by the community. These ratings are used to rank the signs.

Users can discuss each term in both English and ASL.

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Challenges

- For linguists
 - How is ASL changing because of video enabled phones and web?
- For social scientists
 - How do video enabled phones and web bring the deaf community together?
- For the University
 - Will ASL become permanently funded?

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Thank You

Povost's Town Hall Meeting

- 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 14,
- 102 Johnson Hall
- All members of the UW community are invited and encouraged to attend.

