



Dr. Ellen Schneiderman

Professor

California State University,

Northridge

Deaf Education Teacher Preparation

ellen.schneiderman@csun.edu

**Language Development Milestones in ASL &
the Ways that Deaf Parents Facilitate Them:
What Does This Really Look Like?**

Deaf child (age 2) with Deaf parents



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Deaf child (age 2) with Deaf parents

Mom (Estella) with Estellina (age 2)
mom & daughter are both Deaf

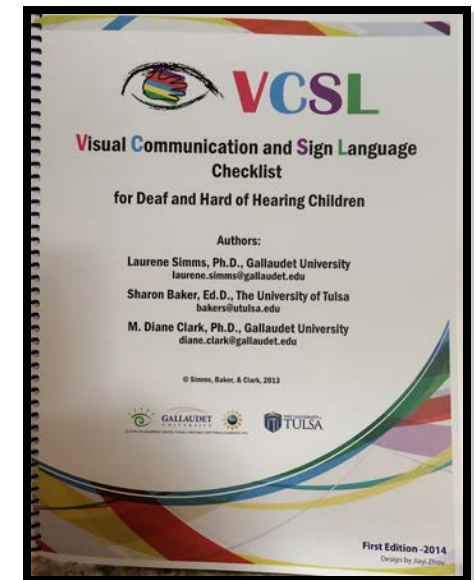
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subset of ASL acquisition milestones

Visual Language and Visual Learning Science of Learning Center. (2013, June). *Family Involvement in ASL Acquisition*. (Research Brief No. 9). Washington, DC: Charlotte Enns and Liana Price.

For a more comprehensive checklist of ASL development:

Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist (VCSL),
Simms, L., Baker, S., & Clark, M.D. (2013),
Science of Learning Center on Visual Language
and Visual Learning. VL2.gallaudet.edu



0 - 1 year old children:

- understand that signs are symbols to communicate meaning
- use sign babbling
- first signs emerge (primarily nouns)

sign babbling



NOVA program; PBS TV

sign babbling



NOVA program; PBS TV

1 – 2 year old children:

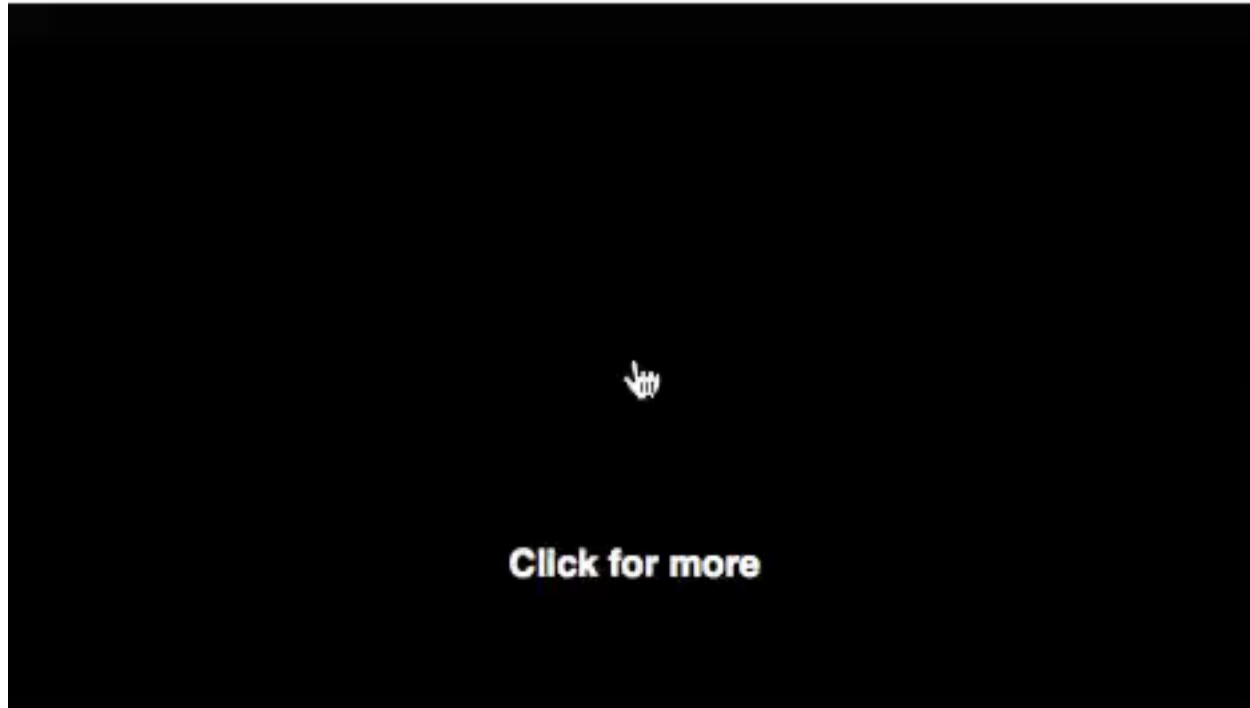
- understand that eye gaze is needed to give and receive messages
- follow simple directions
- use over 50 signs
- sign about things that are present
- use two-sign combinations and combine pointing with signs
- ask and understand basic questions, “who” and “what”

Deaf child (age 1) with Deaf parents



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Deaf child (age 1) with Deaf parents



Used with permission from Beth Hamilton



deer



fish



bird



bear

Deaf child (age 18 months) with Deaf parents



Used with permission from Heather Dans-McCrory

Deaf child (age 18 months) with Deaf parents



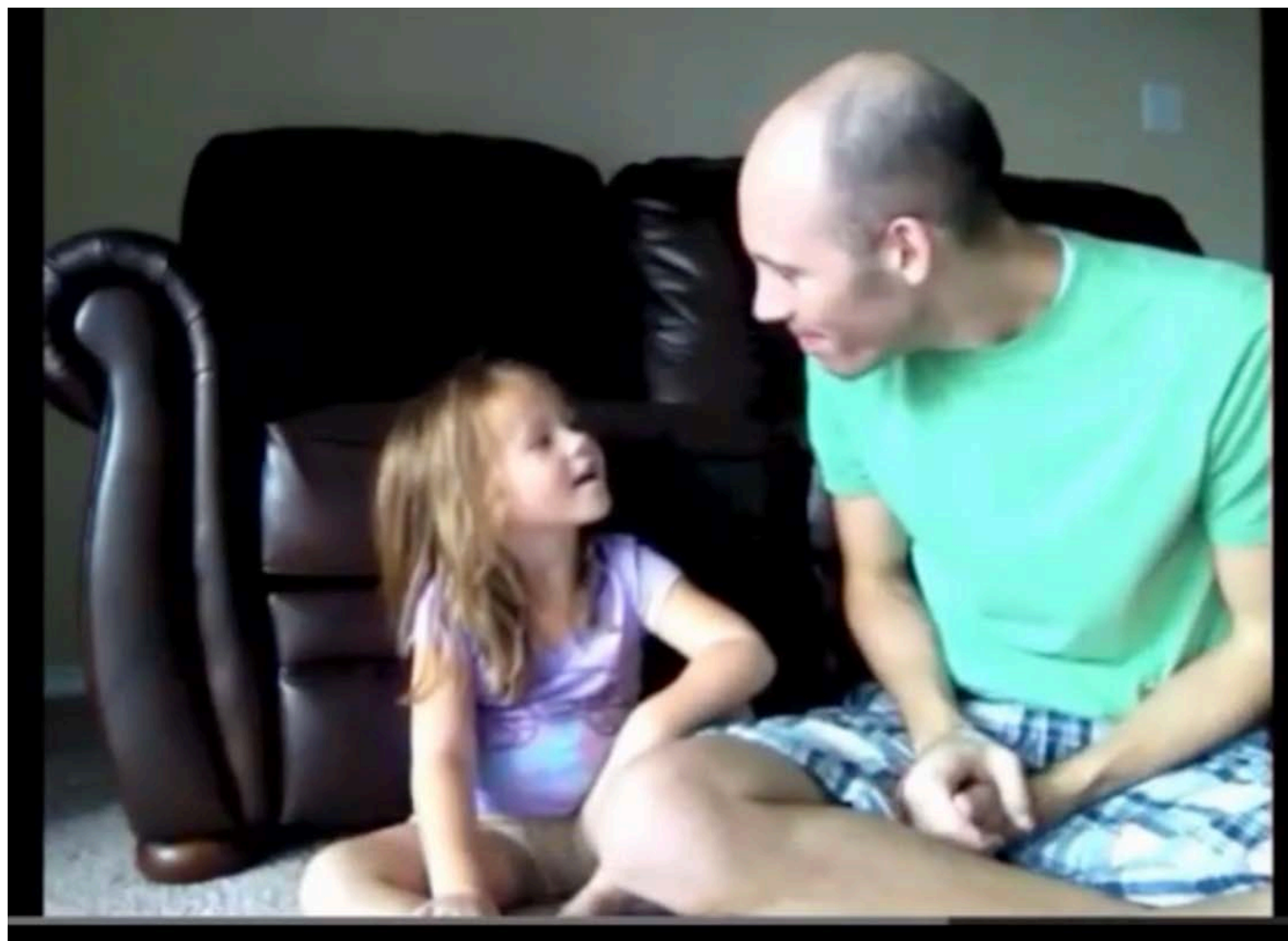
Want more? More?

Used with permission from Heather Dans-McCrory

2 – 3 year old children:

- use over 250 signs
- begin to use fingerspelling
- use negation (“no,” “none,” “not-want”)
- express emotions (signs for happy, sad, mad)
- use ASL to share daily experiences and events

Deaf child (age 3) with Deaf parents



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Deaf child (age 3) with Deaf parents



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3 – 5 year old children:

- **maintain visual attention for ASL conversation (appropriate interruption, turn taking, gaze shifting)**
- **ask & understand questions, including “where,” “how,” & “why”**
- **use simple sentences, including subject-verb- object; complex sentences also emerge**
- **use ASL to find out how things work, explain games, tell stories**



**What does a facilitative
language acquisition
environment look like?**



From the GENERAL parent-child interaction literature:

- I. Overall child-centered form of responding**
- II. Features of comprehensible adult language**
- III. Strategies to support child progress**

From the DEAF parent- DEAF child interaction literature:

- I. Augmented tactile cues and eye gaze**
- II. Gaining and directing attention**
- III. Reducing the need for divided attention**
- IV. Linking language and meaning**

I. Overall child-centered form of responding

1. Focus on **real communication** while engaged in an activity. Be purposeful.

2. Attend and be responsive to the CHILD'S focus (follow **the child's lead**)



3. RECOGNIZE and be responsive to the ALL forms of child communication.
(gestures, facial expressions, vocalizations)

Be responsive! Act as if they are communicative!



II. Features of comprehensible adult language

1. Use **concrete language** that talks about things that the child can see and touch. (“here and now”)
2. Adults should **support their own language** with gestures/expressions/objects



3. Provide **frequent models** of key words and phrases.

4. Use **a special “voice”** with exaggerated intonation & facial expression.



5. Use **well-formed, shorter and simpler** sentences

~~“What do you think about this small dog that is hiding in the closet from the kitty cat?”~~

Oh, the small dog is hiding.

Where is he?

He’s in the closet.

Is he hiding from the kitty cat?



III. Strategies to support child progress

1. Give feedback to the child that shows how well s/he communicated. **Don't focus on the form only!**

~~Oh, not just a grumpy face. Can you say SAD?~~



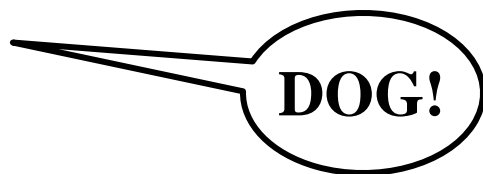
Oh, you are feeling sad. My sad baby... I love you!

2. Takes turns in conversation...**WAIT**

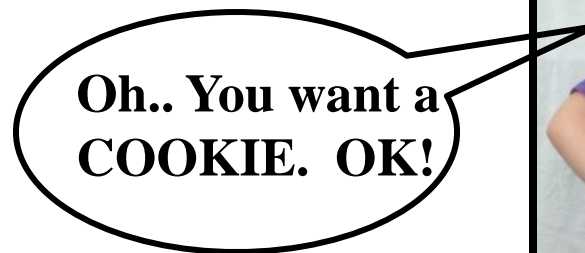
You may be surprised what you'll get!



3. Use scaffolding to provide just the right response.
Respond in **the child's ZPD** (*zone of proximal development*)
a step just beyond the child's independent ability.



4. **“Re-cast”** the child's language back in a corrected or elaborated form.



5. Model, use strategies of **self-talk** (talking about what YOU are doing) and **parallel talk** (talking about what the CHILD is doing).



My CAR is going fast. My CAR hit my leg. Go CAR go!

From the GENERAL parent-child interaction literature:

- I. Overall child-centered form of responding**
- II. Features of comprehensible adult language**
- III. Strategies to support child progress**

From the DEAF parent- DEAF child interaction literature:

- I. Augmented tactile cues and eye gaze**
- II. Gaining and directing attention**
- III. Language is visually accessible**
- IV. Reducing the need for divided attention**
- V. Linking language and meaning**

Augmented tactile cues and eye gaze

Natural strategies of deaf parents for interacting with deaf children that optimize visual attention and maintain communication.

More animated both visually and often tactilely.

Multi-modal become more easily perceived.

- **repetitive movements**
- **physical activity**
- **eye gaze alternating back & forth between mother & surroundings**
- **sustained gaze to social partner longer**

This is interpreted by the Deaf parents as a precursor to signing and is responded to with praise and encouragement (attunement)

Deaf child (age 1 month) with Deaf parents



Deaf child (age 1 month) with Deaf parents



Hello. This is "name sign E" E-R-I-K-A.

Gaining and directing attention

- a. breaking the child's line of gaze and gaining attention using movements of the hands and body
- b. using touch to gain the child's attention
- c. using pointing to direct attention while still permitting language input
 - gain attention 1st and tell child what they will see, then directing their attention
 - OR
 - direct attention to object and then displace signs so both can be seen at the same time

Language is visually accessible

- a. Sign in ways that are easy for your child to see.**
- b. Make sure your child can see your face and the sign.**
- c. Make your signs a little slower and larger.**

Reducing the need for divided attention

- a. **Use short utterances.** (Child must retain information in memory as they shift visual attention from one source of information to the other.)
- b. **Point and look. Then sign.**
- c. **Position self and objects in the child's visual field.**
- d. **Move hands or face or both into the child's visual field.**

Linking language and meaning

Language input and information from the environment may be sequential rather than simultaneous; so they may be less obvious.

a. bracketing - a sign is placed at both the beginning and end of an utterance (name object + point + name object)

b. modifying signs

- displacing signs on or close to objects
- repeating signs
- enlarging and prolonging signs

Dr. Ellen Schneiderman
 California State University Northridge
 Deaf Education Teacher Preparation Program
 2016 EDHI Conference

notes for viewing videos:

Overall child-centered form of responding	
focuses on real communication	
responsive to CHILD's focus	
responds to all forms of child communication	
**gaining & directing attention	
**augmented tactile cues and eye gaze	
Features of comprehensible adult language	
talks about concrete topics	
supports language with gestures/objects	
frequent model/repetition of key words	
exaggerated intonation/expression/signs	
short & simple sentences	
** language is visually accessible	
** reducing the need for divided attention	
Strategies to support child progress	
gives feedback on communication/not correction	
Takes turns in conversation: WAITS	
fine-tunes responses to scaffold child in ZPD	
re-casts child errors in corrected way	
models and repeats key words/language	
uses self-talk and/or parallel-talk strategies	
** linking language & meaning (filling in context)	

Deaf child (age 9 months) with Deaf parents



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Deaf child (age 9 months) with Deaf parents



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Hearing child (age 20 months) with Deaf parents



Used with permission from Dr. Charles Katz

Hearing child (age 20 months) with Deaf parents



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