

HP

ASL, a language in capital letters.

A Project about ASL, Deaf culture and the
teaching methods of Sign Language.

Student: Mar Fijo Fernández

23/10/2019

Tutor: Lauro Delgado

(Foreign Languages Department)

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank the two people who have met with me continually so I could make my experiment work and until we got it right. So here goes a huge thank you to Jana and Aroa for their effort.

One of the first people who guided me through this process at the beginning, Raquel, she has provided me with a lot of information and material, so thanks to Raquel.

Towards the end of this project Ester Molins provided me the last bit of information that I was looking for, not only that but with a lot to think about after her meeting.

And last but not least, a big thank you to the person who has walked me through this process from the very beginning to the very end. To whom has giving me advice at all time and who has helped in everything he could; my tutor Lauro Delgado.

Thank you to all these people, without whose help I could not have done it.

I am glad to say that I made it and that I enjoyed it.

“Sign, I was now convinced, was a fundamental language of the brain.”

— **Oliver Sacks, Seeing Voices**

Main Introduction

What can I say about this project? I have only to say that it has been a total journey, that has given me a whole new point of view on the deaf culture and that has taught me a lot. I decided to take this theme to show the world how I saw the deaf culture and to provide something that I thought it could be useful. And not only have I tried to transmit it but also have I gained a lot of knowledge, knowledge which is embodied in the following pages.

This work is about American Sign Language, Deaf Culture and the teaching methods of Sign Language.

I hope you enjoy the ride you are about to take and that it is as useful as it was for me to understand a whole new world.

INDEX

- Front page	1
- Acknowledgements	2
- Introduction	4
- Index	5
- Glossary	7
- List of objectives	8
A. Objective 1	10
What is ASL?	10
ASL history	11
ASL as a language	16
· Grammar and Syntax	16
· Phonology	18
· Stokoe system	18
· L&J MH Model	19
· Phonological processes	20
· Morphology	20
· Sign Writing	22
· Sign Language etiquette	22
Deaf community	23
· Deaf culture	25
B. Objective 2	27
- Teaching methods	27
· Teaching a foreign language	27
· Grammar translation	27
· Audiolingual method	28
· Cognitive approach	28
· Denmark's curriculum	28
· USA's curricula	29
· Barcelona's curriculum	30
C. Objective 3	32
My Curriculum	32
Quality research and observation method	33
Case study	34
· Lesson plan	34

Goals	34
D. Objective 4	35
· Subject 1	35
· Subject 2	38
E. Objective 5	41
·Observations	41
·Data analysis	42
Research Project conclusions	43
Images	44
Bibliography and other resources	45
Annexes	48

GLOSSARY

- **SL** Sign Language
- **ASL** American Sing Language
- **OFSL** Old French Sign Language
- **OSF** Old signed French
- **OSE** Old Signed English
- **NAD** National Assosiation of the Deaf
- **NMS** Nonmanual sign

Objectives of the research project

Objective 1

To know about Sign Language

To accomplish this goal, I have asked myself some questions, such as what is ASL, what does it consist of ...

And I have done research in different articles, books, and on the Internet to answer the questions.

I have learnt that it has syntax, grammar, phonology, morphology its own way of writing and its own etiquette.

I have also searched about the deaf community to completely understand their culture and be able to understand them better. For that I have followed the same path as for learning about Sign Language itself.

I believe I have accomplished this objective with great results.

Objective 2

To learn about the teaching of Sign Language

Questions to answer:

- How do they teach Sign Language in different countries?

To answer this question I have read different books and talked with different people which master this matter.

I have seen that there is no method established, every school that has the bilingual modality, which is the one that teaches Sign Language, has its own way of transmitting this knowledge.

Objective 3

Setting up my own Sign Language Method

To accomplish this objective I have had to document myself with the different teaching approaches, not only for Sign Language but for teaching a second language in general.

I have used this information plus the information of the different curricula for teaching Sign Language and I have created my own.

Objective 4

Experimenting my own method

To see if this method would work I put it in practice with two subjects. I had met up with each of them individually for four sessions and on the fifth they met and put in practice what they had learnt in Sign.

With this I wanted to see if this curriculum that I had created would be useful.

Objective 5

Extracting conclusions from and of my method

Before each session with each subject I wrote down my expectations for the lesson and after it I wrote how it went. With this I have been able to see the process and to come to a conclusion about each subject and about the curriculum in general.

After extracting the conclusion I have been able to see what I would like to improve, try in a new occasion.

A. Objective 1

Here starts objective number 1, which is '***To learn about American Sign Language***'.

For this I have separated the main things I wanted to know about it such as: what it is, its history and then ASL as a language which include its grammar and syntax, its phonology, its morphology, its own writing system and its etiquette.

Not only wanted I to learn about the language but also about the deaf community, so for this I have done some research as well, which you will find following the ASL information.

I have done research in each of these things and due to that I have been able to achieve this goal.

Right bellow you are going to find all the information I have found.

What is ASL?

ASL stands for American Sign Language.

American Sign Language is a visual language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements including facial expressions and postures of the body. It has the same properties as any other spoken language. It is not a universal language, as its name says it is American. Every country has its own Sign Language. Particularly, ASL is used in the United States and in some parts of Canada. This language is recognized as a foreign language in various schools, high schools or colleges around America.

American Sign Language is the mother tongue of many deaf North American and it is said to be the fourth most commonly used Language in the United States.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not a representative form of English nor is it an imitation of spoken English. It is a fully developed and independent language.

ASL history

Before any educators of the deaf there was Martha's Vineyard where there was a very high deaf population so residents created and learned Martha's Vineyard SL.

Now, to talk about ASL history we must start by talking about French Sign Language.



Kinder beim Lernen der Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (via top10.raag.fm)

The situation of the deaf was extremely horrible until 1750:

- They didn't have the possibility to get the dominance of the talking, which made them mute.
- They didn't have a free communication.
- They were left behind in society except in the big cities.
- They didn't have access to reading and writing and to have an education about every knowledge of the world.

It was in this decade that their fate changed and the first works in the education of the deaf child started.



Charles – Michel de l'Épée was the first person who thought that Sign Language could be used for educating deaf children. It started when he saw two sisters communicating with each other by signing. Their mother told him that the only education they were receiving was private tutoring lessons by pictures.

So, in 1755 he found the first free educational institution for deaf people in France which later in 1771 became The National Institute for deaf- mute of Paris.

Although he thought about using Sign to educate deaf children he didn't recognize OFSL as a fully developed natural language. He devised the signs to represent all the verbs endings, articles, prepositions and auxiliary verbs that are present in spoken French. He thought OFSL lacked grammar but it didn't, it simply was different from

French; they were two completely different languages. After that, Épée and some more educators started modifying OFSL to make it look like a signed version of French. In 1760 they ended up creating a whole new signed language: OSF.

So at that time Sign Language was divided in Paris: there was OFS, the artificial system created by Épée which was used in the classroom. And OFSL, which was used by deaf adults and children in their informal interactions.

Not too long after Épée, Pierre Desloges wrote *'Observations of a Deaf – Mute'*. His writing demonstrated that French deaf people did indeed have a natural signed Language. (We have mentioned when talking about Épée).

He decided to write the book because at that time Abbé Deschamps was proclaiming that Sign Language couldn't be considered a Language so it had no use in education of deaf children.

Desloges said: *'Like a Frenchman who sees his language belittled by a German who only knows a few French words, I thought I was obliged to defend my language against the false charges of this author.'*

With these stories we can see that France is important in SL's history not only because it proves that natural sign language existed but also it is important in ASL's history because the development that took place in France had a direct bearing on the development of ASL.

It was when Roch Abroise Sicard, Épée's successor, had taken over the school in Paris, by the nineteenth century, that former teachers and students from the Paris school established several schools all over France. To get people to know about their teaching methods they made regular tours across Europe.



And here is where Gallaudet enters the picture. In 1816, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a Protestant minister and recent graduated from Yale, became interested in the education of the deaf. He had heard about the tours of the teachers and students from the Paris school so he decided to take a trip to Europe.

His first stop was England, where their main approach was the oral method that way they emphasized the development of speech. In England he met a group of teachers and students, in which there were Sicard and Laurent Clerc, this last one being a deaf man who had recently graduated from Paris school. When they told him about the school in Paris he decided to travel there with them.

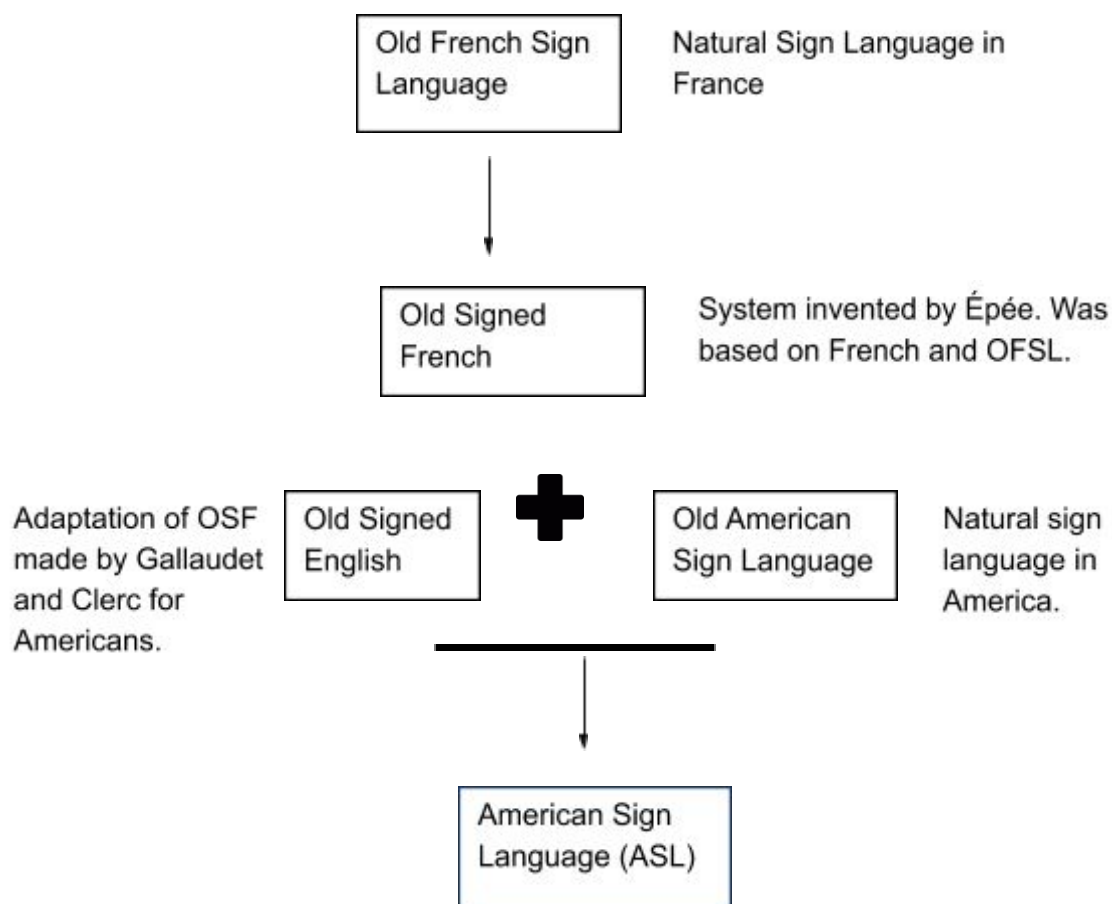
So his second stop was Paris. There he studied deaf education methods and learnt sign language with Clerc.

His third and last stop was America, his home. Once there Clerc and Gallaudet established the first permanent American school for the deaf: American Asylum. Placed in Hartford, Connecticut.

While on their way to America, Clerc and Gallaudet adapted the signed language used at the Paris school to the need of American deaf children. They adapted it to the grammar of English. From here comes the early form of Signed English, which has the bases form OFS, which at the same time its fundamentals are based on OFSL.

So Gallaudet and Clerc started using their new signed language in the classroom, this system of signing was called methodical signs, which we call Old Signed English. Shortly after they started with the school they noticed that students used OFS but only in class, outside they used their natural signed language, which we'll OASL. So, just like Épée, Gallaudet hadn't understood that deaf people had their own language which was fully developed. But once he did, he encouraged teacher to respect and learn the natural as he studied it himself. He thought it was marked by ellipsis and inversion of order, but it just didn't follow the English order because they were completely different languages.

So, to make it more comprehensible: ASL comes from OSE, which was based on OFSL, and OASL.



Until here is where ASL comes from, but that is not everything, its history does not end here.

Alexander Graham Bell believed that deaf should learn speech and lip-reading over sign language. His mother was deaf and his father created 'Visible Speech' which was a system of symbols meant to help in speaking languages which they could not hear. It was in 1872 when Alexander was invited to the Clarke School to present 'Visible Speech'. Not long after that, he returned to Massachusetts to open his own school for the deaf. Later, he left behind the Visible Speech method but he continued believing that deaf people needed to learn to speak to be socially and professionally integrated.

It was in 1880 when at the Second International Congress on the Education of the Deaf after discussing oral versus signed education, when the congress decided to endorse oralism and banned the use of sign language in schools. At the congress, Alexander Graham Bell spoke for three days against sign language while advocates of ASL were only given three hours to argue against oralism.

In 1890 the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) was founded. This organization defends the civil rights of deaf people in the United States. It was created to defend the ability of the American deaf community to use ASL and organize around important issues.

In 1965 William Stokoe, a linguist whose job was to show the general public that ASL was a fully-formed language rather than a visual form of English, finished the first ASL dictionary with two deaf colleagues at Gallaudet, Carl Croneberg and Dorothy Casterline.

Now many colleges and schools take ASL as a second language in their courses.

ASL, a language

We have to think about ASL as a whole language, it has its own grammar, syntax, phonology, morphology and sign-writing. Some of them may sound complicated to explain when it comes to sign language but they do exist.

First of all, to understand ASL we have to comprehend that it is not a signed form of English; it is a completely different language. In fact, English uses complex rules that are not applicable to ASL. And much of the meaning in sign language comes across in facial expressions.

Sign language incorporates: gestures, facial expressions, head movements, body language and the space around the speaker.

Grammar and syntax

ASL has a topic comment structure, in which the topic in ASL equals the subject in English. This topic is often a pronoun like *I, you, he, she, etc.*

TOPIC + COMMENT

In the topic section we find that we can place the topic at the beginning, at the end or at the beginning and at the end of a sentence:

I am an employee □ *I employee, employee I, I employee I.*

The three options would be correct in ASL.

The comment says something about the topic, and as we just saw the order can vary, it can be at the very beginning, at the very end, or both.

In the comment section there is a third element that can be added to a sentence to indicate the tense of the sentence, which is time. And that would go like:

Time + topic + comment

If you'd like to tell a story about yesterday, you would sign **yesterday** at the beginning and then keep going. Tenses can vary depending on when the conversation takes place.

ENG

'I'm going to eat lunch at a restaurant this afternoon.'

'Today I ate lunch at a restaurant.'

ASL

'Now afternoon I eat lunch'
(if it was in the morning you'd be talking about future plans)

'Now afternoon I eat lunch'
(if it was at nigh you'd be talking about something you did earlier that day)

If they want to talk about a series of events they will use the space in front of and behind them to indicate a timeline.

In ASL there is no variation of the verb *to be*, there is only when they are speaking about English or other comparable language.

So to say for example *I am hungry*, they would say *I hungry* while nodding their head, but if it were to be *I am NOT hungry*, it would be the same but shaking, meaning that you are not. In general while signing a sentence nodding means to confirm and shaking to negate.

ASL speakers use indexing pretty often, indexing is just pointing your finger at someone, indexing is used to indicate a particular person as the subject of your sentence; it can either be there (present referent) or not (absent referent).

To talk about the absent referent, first sign the person's name and then indicate a space in the area you are in to represent that person. Now when you point at that space they know you are talking about that person.

The punctuation in ASL works through pauses and facial expressions. You can punctuate a question by signing a question mark or by a facial expression, raising you eyebrows.

Wh- questions (what, who, when, where, etc) are always signed with the Wh-word at the end of the sentence.

Phonology

Phonology is the study of the smallest contrastive units in language, in spoken languages these are sounds and in signed languages these are parameters. Neither of them have meaning by themselves.

So phonology in sign language is the study of how signs are organized and structured.

There are five basic parts in ASL signs:

1. Handshape
2. Movement
3. Location
4. Palm orientation
5. Nonmanual signs (NMS) or facial expressions

All signs share at least one parameter, if one parameter is changed the whole meaning changes.

There are many signs that have the same parameters for handshape, movement and location.

Example:

Responsibility:

- Walk (same handshape)
- Review (same movement)
- Boss (same location)

The Stokoe System

William C. Stokoe, a graduate from Gallaudet, proposed a set of parameters: location, handshape and movement. He devised a whole set of written signs to indicate ASL signs.

TAB: location
DEZ: handshape
SIG: movement

These are based on the identification that all signs have simultaneous contrast. This means that signs differ from each other with one parameter.

The Liddell and Johnson Movement Hold Model

Scott K. Liddell and Robert E. Johnson created a system that represented the structure of signs, they claim that the signs consist of hold segments and movement segments that are produced sequentially: *sequential contrast*. They show movement within the sign as well as the movement within NMS.

Their system is called: *Movement Hold Model*.

And in their system all parameters are represented.

Here are the units of analysis in the L&J MH Model:

Timing unit: movement, hold or combo.
Contour unit: straight vs. curve
Contact: the symbol "+" represents contact
Rotation: palm orientation
Placement
Local movement
Handshape
Strong hand and weak hand represented
NMS

Phonological process

The phonological process is often defined as the way in which the parts of a sign interact with each other. The variations in sign structure are due to these phonological processes. There are five of them:

- **Movement epenthesis:** it consists in adding a movement in between signs. It occurs when signs are in sequence, compounds and with lexicalized fingerspelling*.

- **Hold deletion:** occurs when the holds between movements are shortened when signs occur in sequence. It is extremely common in compound signs.

- **Metathesis:** it is the process of changing the location of the sign.

- **Assimilation:** it occurs when a segment takes on the characteristics of another segment. It usually is the one before or after.

- **Weak hand deletion:** when the weak/passive hand is deleted from two handed signs.

Morphology

Morphology is the study of the smallest units of language and how they are used to build new signs; some do have meaning by themselves.

A free morpheme is an independent unit that can occur by itself. And a bound morpheme cannot occur by itself; it must occur with other morphemes. In English would be *-ed* or *-ing*.

In ASL linguistics there are two types of morphology; derivation morphology and inflectional morphology. The first one, derivation morphology, is the process of making new units for the language by adding affixes. (**write + r = writer/ verb + suffix = noun**). And inflectional morphology is the process of adding grammatical information to units that already exist. (look□ looks, looking).

There are different morphological processes:

Affixation: it is when we add bound morphemes to create new meaning. For example in English would be from dance (verb) we add er (a suffix) and get a noun DANCER, so in ASL you would add an agent suffix to form the noun.

Reduplication: reduplication is when a noun and a verb differ only in movement.

Ex: sit/ chair

There are also compound signs just as in English; a sign plus another sign form a new sign.

Ex: think + opposite = to disagree

Fingerspelling: this is a direct result of language contact with English, because you fingerspell the word according to the English spelling.

- Lexicalization occurs when fingerspelling bend together such that it looks like an individual sign.

It includes: deletion of signs, change of location, orientation, and handshape, added movement and a second hand, and reduplication of movement.

Some signs are fingerspelled for different purpose.

Numeral incorporation: when number handshapes are incorporated to create signs with more meaning.

Ex: month + three = three months

The signs that usually involve numeral incorporation are: day, week, month, dollar amount, place, height, exact time...

They are limited to how high numbers can go, usually 1-9.

Loan signs: It is the phenomenon of borrowing signs from other languages, it also happens in English.

The increasing contact is leading to more and more loan signs being used.

Ex: crap from BLS (British Sign Language)

SignWriting

SignWriting or Sutton SingWriting was created by Valerie Sutton in 1974. It is based on Sutton Dance Writing, a notation system for representing dance moves created by Sutton in 1972.

SignWriting uses symbols to represent the handshapes, movements, and facial expressions of signed languages, kind of like Stokoe System. It is a “movement-writing- alphabet” that can be used to write any sign language. In fact, it is the written form of 27 sign languages.

It writes the way the body looks when people sign.

There are newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, and literature written in SignWriting.

It is used to teach signs and signed language grammar to novice signers and can be used to teach skilled signers other subjects such as math, history or English.

Sign Language etiquette

When talking in ASL:

- Wait for the speaker to finish signing and to look at you, that indicates that it is your turn.
- Looking away means they aren't finished and will continue in a moment.
- If the receiver looks away and starts talking it means they are interrupting the speaker. If you are not in good terms it can be offensive; it is used in discussions and arguments.
- If the speaker turns and signs to an imaginary person it signifies a conversation they had or observed with someone else. It equals the *he said/ she said in* English.

It is not rude to walk between two deaf people signing if you need to get by unless you hesitate or draw attention to yourself.

ASL speakers can either use signs invented for other sign languages or don't. Those who don't it usually is because they believe it deludes the language.

Deaf community

There are two points of view about deaf people: the clinic one and socio-cultural one.

The clinic takes as a reference the lacking of audition and the socio-cultural considers deaf people as a minority social group, with a language, a history and a culture of their own.

Deaf people form a group, the deaf community, in which they have their own culture and their own language. People who form the deaf community have to be understood as a group with a differential culture.

Carbonell (1995) says: *'If a majority group absorbs a minority in a way that this last one gets confused with the previous one, losing its specific identity, its language, its eating and dressing habits, and its basic and distinctive value, its religion even... taking its acculturation process to the maximum possible, we shouldn't talk about integration but assimilation.'* Only if we understand the deaf community as a cultural group we will be able to learn to respect their distinctive characteristics.

To not accept the existence of a deaf culture and try to assimilate it takes us to making the deaf feel discriminated in any of the situation they live daily.

Let's dig into some of their characteristics:

Names: the sign for their names goes in function of a particular characteristic of the person; it can be the color of their eyes, or their hair, or if they have a freckle really visible or even or they have a big nose that could be their sign.

They use a light system for almost everything; if someone rings the door, as their alarm to wake up... For this last one they also have an alarm clock that vibrates and shakes them.

To get their attention they tap each other, but they hate being tapped on the head.

When talking:

They talk farther from each other than we do, then they need to see the signs the other person is making.

It is rude to walk through two people having a conversation and if you do you must apologize. It is also rude to stop looking at a person while talking to them.

When there are more than two people they stand or sit in circle so they can see everybody's hands.

Try to avoid standing in front of a light entrance; it makes it harder to see the signs.

ASL was considered as an arbitrary and rudimentary communication system until the 60's when it got the definition of a language in a large meaning: it had all the characteristic functions, communication, expression, representation, identification to a community. Just as any other language.

For the movies, we think that with subtitles everything is solved but it is not. Many old deaf people haven't learnt to read plus it is kind of hard to keep track of the movie, it would work better if the movies had a window with an interpreter.

For deaf people communicating in the distance, like a phone call, is a problem, they can't see each other's hands. Thanks to technology, though, it is getting easier because nowadays we have things such as FaceTime, where you can see each other not just hearing them.

They use to the maximum their lateral vision, to get some of the information that didn't get aurally.

They have an enormous capacity to feel vibrations. They dance to the beat of the music through feeling the vibrations from the floor. Stepping hard on the floor or smacking the table so they feel the vibration, are also common ways to get their attention.

There are theatre groups integrated by deaf people. Sign Language is as rich as any other language and you can express with it the same feelings and ideas as with other languages.

Deaf culture was based on the language as way of communication, knowledge, interaction with the world...

The deaf community is opened to all kinds of people; it has variety, even though its binder point is Sign Language.

The deaf community don't view themselves as disabled or as a problem: the problems are given by society.

Deaf Culture

The Cambridge dictionary describes culture as: *'the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.*

Music, art, theatre, literature, etc.'

Based on this definitions we can say that the deaf community has its own unique culture: plays, books, artwork, magazines, movies, they even engage in social and political activities exclusive to them.

Deaf cultural arts:

Art: throughout America you can find exhibits of deaf artists (painters, photographers, sculptors, etc.).

Some artists incorporate a hearing loss theme in their art and some others don't.

There are many vendors focused on products for and by deaf and hard hearing artists and some artists run their own websites.

Theatre: deaf theatre groups have developed and produced plays in sign language. There also are professional deaf theatre companies.

Literature: a lot of deaf and hard hearing people have published and written books about sign language and deafness. Some of these books have become required reading in deaf studies classes.

They also write poetry. ASL poetry is a form of poetry that uses sign language.

Cinema: deaf people have produced movies and hold film festivals. These usually focus on celebrating deaf culture and it is also a great opportunity for the deaf community to gather.

Deaf people have developed their own form of humor which focuses on the deaf experience; in fact, they often make fun of hearing people.

Sign language

Sign language is what is most identified with deaf culture. Every country has its own sign language. Some, even have sign language dialects, similar to what we would call an “Andalusian accent”.

Social life

A usual way of socialization is meeting at a restaurant, which it has come to get the name of ‘ASL dinner’, ‘signing supper’, or ‘silent supper’. There is also ‘deaf coffee’, which is meeting at a coffee shop to chat.

The deaf community also has its own dating sites.

Perspectives on deaf culture

There is a topic that is often discussed in the deaf community: is deafness pathological or cultural? If it is cultural, is it a disability?

B. Objective 2

The following information completes objective number two which was ***'To learn about the teaching of ASL'***. I have gone further and not only have I searched for the teaching methods of ASL but for the teaching of any foreign language.

To achieve this goal I have done some research on the different methods of teaching a foreign language, as it has just been said, and on the methods of teaching Sign Language, specifically the program of three countries; Denmark, United States and Spain, specifically Barcelona. It is necessary to say that the curricula that appear are not the exclusive methods but the ones I have chosen, randomly.

All this information has been useful for the subsequent objective: setting up my own Sign Language Curriculum.

Teaching methods

Teaching a foreign language

We have been considering ASL a language as it is through this whole work. So, to start talking about ways of teaching ASL we are going to start by mentioning ways of teaching a language.

As any other language, ASL can be considered a mother-tongue language, for those who have been in touch with it since a very young age or as a foreign language, for those who have not been around it.

Since I personally have not being around it that long, first, I am going to treat it as a foreign language, as it is for me.

As any foreign language teacher must know there are different approaches of teaching such language, here are some of the most used:

Grammar translation: this is one of the earliest approaches used by instructors of spoken languages. It is known for its emphasis on the memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules. Little attempt was made to communicate in the target language.

In the 1950s and 1960s was often used by sign language teachers, this was before providing evidence that ASL was a language.

Teachers of that method would speak in English while showing a list of signs to their students.

Audiolingual method: this method emphasizes using the language being learned with little reference made to the source language. It is like a full inversion on that language. The language learning is viewed as a set of conditioned habits to be processed as mechanical mimicry.

It encourages habit-forming, automatic responses through the use of memorized dialogues and patterned sentences.

Cognitive approach: this one attempts to organize materials around a grammatical syllabus while allowing for meaningful practice and use of language. It is based on the order: phonemes - words - phrases and sentences - simple phrases and sentences - complicated phrases and sentences.

It also emphasizes understanding and encourages the conscious selection of grammatical forms.

These are some of the methods for teaching foreign or non-primarily languages.

When it comes to teaching ASL or Sign Language in general there are fewer ways or at least there's fewer constancy on those. Here are going to be explained different curriculums from different countries.

[Denmark](#)

Their project has devoted attention to the communicative aspects of language; rules of the language, its practical use in communicative situations, its social and semantic content.

They use TV programs, fairy-tales, videos, books in sign plus, after they read it, they comment and discuss on it, songs and theatre.

-The sign lessons are in certain periods devoted to expanding the pupil's vocabulary.

- Lessons involving the use of games, maps or cookery book.
- Teaching the use of special “deaf signs” with the booklet “*30 specielle tegn fra døves tegnsprog*” (30 special signs from the sign language of the deaf). Which was published by Døves Cebeter for Totalkommunikation. They use it in the following way: the teacher goes through the examples from the booklet on the overhead, and the pupil’s thought of additional examples.
- They use games for practice, one of the most common being the game of 20 questions.
- And it is really important to discuss subjects they are interested in, that way they will participate in the debate.

USA

Some years ago the typical ASL instructor was given two cognitively based textbooks; first with *A Basic Course in American Sign Language*, this one emphasized a conscious awareness of the grammatical structure and provided substitution drills, transformation drills and question-response drills, and second were a series of textbooks and videotapes entitled ASL, it advocated an interactive approach to the learning of ASL allowing to memorize dialogues and then interact while performing them. Although technique was pretty successful compared to the one that succeeded it, Ingram noted that it could be overdone to the point that one’s command of the language becomes mechanical rather than spontaneous.

During the 1980s, ASL instructors became intrigued with the research being generated by ASL linguistics. There was great motivation to include the new findings into the signed language lesson plans being used, so teachers across the country began to set out their own linguistic-based lesson plans, with no curriculum being used as standard.

ASL instructors at Vista Community College in California found that students seemed to be learning how to use the ASL grammatical structures correctly with their curriculum and other programs across the country. Although they were progressing with the grammatical structures they were not able to converse naturally in ASL. This led to the United States Department of Education’s Fund to award the Vista Community College group a grant to develop a standardized ASL curriculum. The approach chosen was the

functional/notional approach, although its roots are in the 1960s, began to be used in the 1980s . Its major emphasis is on the communicative purpose of speech acts.

Vista's *signing naturally* curriculum uses strategies in the form of requesting information, expressing emotions or needs, accepting or rejecting invitations, and other interpersonal communicative competencies. It also introduces grammatical structures. Although *Signing Naturally's* primarily stated approach is functional/notional, its authors recognize the value of other principles and theories and they encourage ASL instructors to extend the prepared text.

Recently another educational curriculum has come out; *Bravo ASL! Curriculum*, which was produced and published by Sign Enhancers, Inc., offers a comprehensive curriculum for grades 6-12, and at college level.

Although these are great curriculums there is no ASL program based exclusively on the communicative approach. And the future holds an issue in ASL curriculum; articulation. As more high schools in the country accept ASL for second language credit, the use of Vista's approach may be adopted at that level. This could be a problem when such students enroll in a postsecondary institution and plan to continue their ASL studies because there won't be another curriculum but Vista's, it will be the same they have already studied. Perhaps the *Bravo ASL! Curriculum* will offer an alternative to the use of one standard curriculum in both high school and postsecondary levels.

There is currently no agency or unit synchronizing the growth and development of ASL classes in the United States.

[Barcelona](#)

The school whose project I followed and is going to be described below is named Escola Tres Pins. Although is one of the best and the ones that has a curriculum focused on bilingual teaching, it is not the only one in Barcelona.

Before being a regular school that also teaches Sign Languages it was a school specially for deaf kids and it was an oral school, this means that they taught children how to speak but no how to sign.

It was in the 80's when they realized that it was a linguistic problem, not a cognitive problem, so they decided to install a linguistic solution; that being teaching and using Sign Language in the classes and around the school.

The bases of the school is having a joint education, deaf and hearing kids, and a bilingual modality.

Their bilingual modality consists in:

- A joint, but not simultaneous, use of Sign Language and oral language as the way of communication and learning.
- It is pretended the maximum competence in both languages.
- Sign Language is considered as the mother language and the oral language as the second language.
- Sign Language is used to teach the other classes.
- The second language is studied written and spoken. The characteristics of the speaking work will depend on the auditory behavior and the oral reproduction of each individual.
- Hearing kids also learn Sign Language. In fact, there is a class that is Sign Language, which every kid has to take.

Projects for the promotion of linguistic environments in SL

- The baptism in SL
- Fairy tales
- Workshops
- Fairytale tellers
- Trust project: the older kids sponsor a little one so they can have them as role models, or they can trust them if they have any concerns.
- Songs in SL
- Saint George
- Pinyons Press magazine
- Newspaper
- Theatre workshop
- Annual meeting of schools with bilingual curriculum

C. Objective 3 ---

Here is when all the information I have been recollecting throughout the research is put into practice on the next objective: ***'Setting up my own ASL teaching method and apply it with 2 teenagers'*** in a type of Case study approach.

I have taken all the inspiration and ideas from the research and from my own creation.

Below, you will find my curriculum explained plus the lesson plan.

My curriculum

After doing some research on the different ways of teaching ASL, I have decided to try a mix of grammar translation approach and audio-lingual approach. So there would be the use of words in the mother tongue but also a lot of use of conversation in between the students

For that I have designed some flashcards that will make it easier to understand. Because I would also like the introduction of signwriting, in these flashcards would be the word in the mother tongue and written in sign.

I would also like to use games and conversation for more fluid and entertaining signing.

Although my main objective is the fluid use of ASL I wouldn't like to forget the basic rules of the language, such as grammar and syntax, and some of its culture, for I think it is important to comprehend completely the language.

It will come to be similar to the project in Denmark, where they use amusement to learn, such as games and movies, and at the same time it will have influence from Vista's curriculum, where they learn based on their needs of communication.

Quality research and observation method in a Case study approach.

The practical part of this work is a scientific observation; it is a systematic description of events, behaviors and artifacts.

This observation is a structured, obtrusive, direct, participant, noticed and reactive. Because it follows an observation checklist which would be the lesson plan and the notes on each pupil, it is structured, it is obtrusive because it has influence on the participants, they learn sign language; it is direct because the measurement is taken in relation to the behavior measured; it is participant because I is in contact with the participants most of the time; it is noticed because the participants are aware all the time of what is going on and of what it consisted; and it is reactive because I expect the participants to react according to what it was shown.

Case study

Lessons plan

Lesson 1 Grammar and syntax: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Topic comment structure- Only present Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Presentation-Alphabet	Lesson 4 Review last session Vocabulary Everyday activities
Lesson 2 Review of last session Grammar and syntax: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Past and future Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-hobbies Sign etiquette*	Lesson 5 Meeting
Lesson 3 Review last session Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Family Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Fun facts	

Goals

My goals were to be able to communicate the minimum in American Sign Language, and learn some expressions and words to have a conversation.

Although I would have liked for them to be totally fluent in ASL due to the time disposal that was not possible, however I would like for them to be able to introduce themselves and be able to have a conversation with what they had learnt.

Not only I wanted to transmit to them words and expressions but also a little of syntax and grammar so they know how to structure a new sentence with their vocabulary without the necessity of having them taught the sentence.

After all the sessions I expected to set them up so they could put in practice all the work they had been doing.

D. Objective 4

After all the information collected and the creating process here are the results: here is tested my curriculum. In the following section you will find the formal information of the subjects who participated and their progress. In these observations will be exposed the details of the last session and the differences and similarities between the subjects.

Subject 1

Full name: Aroa López López

Birth date: 25/07/2002

Age: 17

Currently studying: 2n Batxillerat. Tecnològic

Mother's occupation: Street marker seller

Father's occupation: factory worker

GPA: 9/ 9'3

Future plans: Architecture

Languages: Spanish, Catalan, English

Others:

First Certificate, volunteer (children, summer camp)

She likes listening to music, drawing, biking, skating and theatre.

Has a brother.

9/9/2019

Before sessions

The expectations for the first lesson are pretty high.

For today's lesson, the goal is to learn to present one and to go through some grammar and syntax rules to make speaking easier.

I expect her to learn it rapid since she has a good school history and is willing to learn and comprehend.

After session

Although I had high expectations the lesson overcame them. The things that were planned for today were done in ten minutes so we even went over some stuff planned for the next lesson, that being sign etiquette.

What I could see during the class was that she was interested in the subject and she really tried to understand everything right. I think that this could have made it easier and faster.

16/9/2019

For today I had more words and expressions prepared, they were a lot to take but she did in an excellent way. We learnt different words that can be useful when starting to speak a new language, such as again or what...

We also learnt "hobbies" so we could have a mini-conversation about stuff we like.

Today she was as receptive as the other day, she had the same enthusiasm which also really helped.

23/9/2019

Today's lesson was longer than the first one but shorter than the last, the goal for today was to learn about family, to be able to say if they have siblings, who do they live with, etc.

First of all we practiced what she had learnt in the other two lessons; it was pretty quick since she had been rehearsing at home. Later we proceeded with what was planned, and we talked about family.

To end the sessions we went over all the words and expressions of the three classes.

She made it through the class as expected and as always, with a brilliant predisposition to learn.

4/10/2019

This time it has been more than a week in between the two sessions so she had forgotten some signs but still remembered most of them.

The lesson today was about everyday activities such as going to school and extracurricular activities. After we learnt the signs we explained to each other what we had done yesterday.

The lesson started and ended with a rehearsal of all the signs as usual.

11/10/2019

Today Aroa and Jana are going to meet up to put in practice the signs that they have been learning.

The goal for today is for them to practice while meeting each other and to understand what the other person is signing.

Since I think of them as excellent learners the expectations are pretty high.

The result will be exposed in "Observations"

Subject 2

Full name: Jana Seras Alonso

Birth date: 08/06/2004

Age: 15 y/o

Currently studying: 4th of ESO

Mother's occupation: High school teacher

Father's occupation: engineer designer

GPA: 8

Future plans: Work with something related to theatre or languages.

Languages: Catalan, Spanish, English, French, German and Latin

Others:

Studies theatre and dance. Has two sisters and a brother.

17/09/2019

Today was the first lesson with subject 2, just as Subject 1 she seemed excited and enthusiastic, which really helped when explaining the stuff. She has the same facility as Aroa when it comes to learning. She seems to really pay attention to the details which makes her hand-shapes even more able to interpret. She does not mimic my gestures when explaining a new sign but she totally gets them, which makes me think she is more of a photo memory person.

We learnt the same as with Subject 1, some more words maybe, and the class lasted even less than with Subject 1.

I am excited to see how it goes with her.

24/9/2019

Today was Subject's 2 second session, as always we went through the signs that we have learnt, unlike Subject 1 she didn't remember most of the signs but she re-learnt them fast.

For today the signs were helpful words for when learning a new language, just as Subject 1 learnt her second day.

Today didn't have anything special or different.

1/10/2019

Due to a tight schedule, today we learnt what Subject 1 learnt in two lessons, so it was the longest session at the moment.

We went through all the signs learnt, she didn't remember some of them, but as the last time she re-learnt them quickly.

We learnt family members and daily activities, and at the end of the class we told each other who did we live with and what we had done yesterday.

11/10/2019

Today Jana and Aroa are going to meet to have a little conversation using the signs they have learnt.

The purpose of today is just to have a trivial conversation and that they practice and understand the signs they have been learning.

The expectations are pretty high; I think they both can do very well.

The result will be exposed in "Observations"

E. Objective 5

After putting into practice my curriculum and setting up the two subjects for a conversation in ASL I have extracted some common observations, from the joint session, and some conclusions from the whole curriculum.

In the following pages you will find all of these written down.

Observations

The observations on the last session where they met and talked about the stuff they had learnt are the following:

Subject 1 has understood the concepts faster and deeper than subject 2. Their velocity is higher, while subject one is almost fluent on the matters learnt, subject 2 needs more time to understand and process what they are being told. This can possibly be because Subject one has been practicing and rehearsing at home after our sessions.

Although there is this difference, they were quite similar when learning the new words and expressions. Subject 1 also has more ability to use their expressions and a wider fan of options.

All of these observations and results would have been different if they had been a different age or deaf. The fact that they are hearing subjects facilitates the learning of new signs since they can be given the oral translation in their mother tongue, while a deaf person whose first language is ASL has no translation to compare it with, in case they don't speak nor dominate any other language. Young people are more susceptible to learning new languages; the results would have changed if they had been adults or even children, in one case for the difficulties of retaining information and in the other for lack of interest or attention, for example.

Data analysis

The whole process of forming the curriculum has been rewarded by a, in my opinion, successful result. The process has provided me not only with information about the teaching methods of ASL but also about teaching a second language in general.

After the five sessions I can conclude that the flashcards did its work. For remembering what had been done the session before, at the beginning of every class, the flashcard helped, they would see the translation and would sign the word.

It has to be considered that both subjects who were chosen were subjects with a GPA of at least eight. Both of them also really interested in learning American Sign Language. And although Subject 1 rehearsed at home after each session while Subject 2 waited until the following one, they both were quick learners.

I think it is necessary to have in mind the fact that both subjects were hearing people who had already learnt another language, which made me able to translate the sign to their mother tongue so they would have something to compare it to. While if they were deaf subjects that had not other language to rely on would have made it harder, the grammar-translation method would probably have not been possible.

If there would have been more time, I would have tried to have more joint classes with the two subjects and also, I would have done some work on their interests like, for example, make a play in ASL since they both are interested in theatre.

Not only would I have tried to have more joint classes but also to experiment with subjects with more differences; bigger age gap, different genders, different cultures...

To sum up, although I did not have all the time I would have liked nor the differences between the subjects, I can come to the conclusion that the flashcards did work and made the process of remembering easier. Learning sentences and words which can be useful if ever they are needed in an ASL conversation, might have also been a factor that helped.

Research project conclusions

At the beginning of the project there were five objectives to achieve, each one of them completed with success.

The first objective was to learn about American Sign Language and deaf culture, the first part of this project is focused on this goal. There are tons of responses to that first objective, and although I have learned a lot about this culture I know that there are plenty of things that I still have to learn.

The second was to learn about teaching Sign Language, for that I appealed to books about bilingual education, with those I have learnt a lot about different programs in different countries and cities, I am looking forward to learning about more of these programs.

For the third one there was the need to learn about education in general, it was not enough with the bilingual education from the objective number three. Now it was time to create my own curriculum and provide something original to this whole project. To be honest, not everything I wanted to carry out was done; it was mostly a lack of time. In the future I would like to be able to extend and perfection this curriculum.

Along the objective four, objective five, trying out my own method, was the most gratifying part process. I got to put into practice something that I had been working really hard on. Not only I got to do that, but also to share all of the knowledge I had been receiving. I have nothing more to say that this part was, as well as the others, successful, the two subjects were able to have a small conversation at the end of the sessions, it was not a complex conversation but it was a good one for the number of sessions they had.

And the last objective, extracting conclusions from my method, is all written down on the sections *observations* and *data collection*. In my opinion these conclusions are satisfying. These have helped me to see everything that went right and everything that can be improved and that I would like to do in the future.

To sum up, this project has given me a whole new perspective on something that has always been there but that I had never paid enough attention to and that has made me discover a whole new passion. Although it was hard and it took a lot of time I thank it for having helped me to get to know a whole new world.

Images

Image 1: Deaf children in Martha's Vineyard

The Deaf Vineyarders Who Talked With Their Hands - New ...

www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com 600 × 460

Image 2: Abbé de l'Eppée teaching his students

Archives de France

www.archivesdefrance.culture.gouv.fr 239 × 288

Image 3: Roch Abroise Sicard, portrait

Deaf Education Events timeline | Timetoast timelines

www.timetoast.com 376 × 480

Image 4: Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet

Search Results Thomas Gallaudet | The Best Hair Style

krezzz.com 388 × 480

Bibliography and other resources

Internet resources

Deaf History timeline: Linguistics Department of Harvard University.

<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/asl/deaf-history-timeline>

(July 2nd 2019)

Deaf culture by Jamie Berker on *Verywell Health*.

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/deaf-culture-basics-1046268>

(July 5th 2019)

How Sign Language Works by Jonathan Strickland on *How Stuff Works*.

<https://people.howstuffworks.com/sign-language6.htm>

(September 10th 2019)

ASL syntax on *Lifeprint*.

<http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/syntax.htm>

(July 9th 2019)

Syntax, grammar, morphology, phonology: ASL Linguistics.

<https://asllinguistics.weebly.com/>

(July 9th 2019)

ASL linguistics by Angela Pence on *Quizlet*.

<https://quizlet.com/40078639/linguistics-asl-flash-cards/>

(July 12th 2019)

Sutton SignWriting on *Omniglot*.

<https://omniglot.com/writing/signwriting.htm>

(July 5th 2019)

American Sign Language on *Medicinet*.

https://www.medicinenet.com/sign_language/article.htm

(September 10th 2019)

What is American Sign Language? from National Association of the Deaf.

<https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/what-is-american-sign-language/>

(September 26th 2019)

American Sign Language on *NIDCD* (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders).

<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/american-sign-language>

(August 15th 2019)

American Sign Language: what you need to know and why it's unique on *I Will Teach You a Language*.

<https://www.iwillteachyoualanguage.com/blog/american-sign-language>

(September 26th 2019)

Bibliography

Learning to see: Teaching American Sign Language as a Second Language (*Sherman Wilcox & Phyllis Perrin Wilcox*)

Veo una voz; viaje al mundo de los sordos (*Oliver sacks*)

La cultura de les persones sordes (*Felia R. Piano*)

La Comunidad Sorda (*Begonya Torres Gallardo*)

Educating Deaf students: from research to practice (*Marc Marschark, Harry G. Lan & John A. Albertini*)

Educating Deaf Children Bilingually (*shawn Neal Mahshie*)

Bilingual Teaching of Deaf Children in Denmark: description of a Project 1982-1992 (*editor: Wendy Lewis*)

Lessons in SignWriting (*Valerie Sutton*)

Meetings

Ester Molins, headmaster from Escola Tres Pins. Provided information about Barcelona's curriculum.

Annexes