Parents Partnering with Providers to Identify Sign Vocabulary that Packs a Punch

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Child Language Acquisition

• Built on early communication opportunities
• Acquired through interactive social experiences
• Parent(s) are first and most influential teachers
So many words!
Where do I start?
Adult ASL acquisition

- Parent/Caregiver vs. “ASL student”
- Communicative competence, not just vocabulary
Challenges

• Availability: native users, immersion opportunities
• Sign in the home/community
• Child inclusive opportunities
Words to...

- Label
- Request (object, action, routine, permission)
- Protest
- Ask for more
- Comment
- Get attention
- Greet
- Show affection
Do you need words to communicate…

- Protesting
- Expressing interest
- Requesting
- Getting attention
- Showing affection
Communication vs. Language

• Our goal today is *language*
• Back to the question: Where do I start?
• How do I work with my provider to prioritize what to learn?
Core vs. Fringe Vocabulary

• Core vocabulary
  – High-frequency
  – Multiple settings
  – Combine to make phrases and sentences
  – Number of words is small in comparison

• Fringe vocabulary
  – Lower-frequency
  – Specific to a person or activity
  – Provide content for sentences
  – Number of words is large
  – Early words from routines
Some examples

• Core Vocabulary
  – Pronouns (I, you, mine)
  – SEE
  – HAVE
  – WANT
  – WHERE
  – NOT
  – CAN

• Fringe Vocabulary
  – HORSE
  – TRAIN
  – PEACH
  – SOAP
  – GIRAFFE
  – CASTLE
  – MILK
Child Development

- Early vocabularies are mostly nouns in a child’s routine or environment
- The transition from single words to word combinations and sentences depends on core vocabulary
Mental State Words

- THINK, KNOW, FEEL, UNDERSTAND
- Support a child’s ability to take another person’s perspective (theory of mind)
- Important milestone
- Impacts later language and literacy
- Hearing parents of D/HH children use fewer mental state words
- Mental state words are core vocabulary
The temptation of learning mostly fringe vocabulary

- Fringe words are immediately apparent
- Fringe words are routine based (which is an important component of early intervention)
- Fringe words label
- But, they can limit
Core Vocabulary Approach for parents of D/HH children

• Actively learn both core and fringe sign vocabulary
• Fringe- routines, familiar, motivating
• Core- the most frequently used words as children grow and provide opportunity for expansion
• Guided practice
Benefits of core vocabulary

• Multiple opportunities to use a sign reinforces recall
• Modeling of phrases/sentences that are next in the child’s development
• “Statistical learning”- Learning without trying
  – Requires variety and consistency in the model
• Social-emotional learning- mental state words
• Book sharing
ASL features to support core: Pronouns

- I, me, we
- You, you (all)
- He, she, it, they, them
- Number incorporation

- My, our
- Your, your (all)
- His, her, its, their
Patterns and variety

- I see the hippo
- I see the tiger
- I see the lion
- I see the kangaroo
- I see the monkey

- The lion sees the kangaroo
- I think the monkey wants to see the hippo
- Do you see the giraffe?
- I can’t see the tiger
Consistency within variation

- The elephant wants the apple.
- I like my elephant
- The elephant sees the plate. He thinks the bear is finished. He says I want the plate. The bear says, “no, elephant.” That is my plate
- I can’t see the elephant
- Your bear is happy. I think he likes the elephant
What might you say/sign?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzRb8Vxa_Ck
- Which is core vocabulary?
What core signs?
Break free with reading!
Beyond basics: Using ASL to extend your core

• Sentence types - Rh?’s: WHY, #DO-DO
• Leveraging classifiers
• Expanding through connecting words
  – FINISH ("and then")
  – BUT
  – ASL connecting words (e.g. UNDERSTAND)
Some resources

• 100; 200; 300 signs
  – https://www.handspeak.com/word/most-used/

• Google: ASL storytelling videos
  – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-8yvNOVsFY
  – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoW_F4WU2sM
  – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wtzawp0bd5k

• Most commonly used words in (hearing) preschoolers
“Baby Sign” Resources

- Developed primarily for hearing children
- Focus on fringe vocabulary
- The core is provided through spoken language with sign support for fringe
- D/HH children need access to the full vocabulary
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