

An English as a Second Language (ESL) Curriculum and Instructional Design  
for College-bound Deaf Students

Curriculum, Research and Development/Proposal for Future Research

ESL for Deaf Students

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## **Introduction and Statement of the Problem**

Deaf students are entering college English composition courses with inadequate writing skills. Most students come to college writing at a fourth- or fifth-grade level. However, many of these students have knowledge of signed American Sign Language (ASL), which has different rules and a different structure than English. Using their informal knowledge of signed ASL, students apply the rules and structures of this language when communicating in a written format. As a result, written communication is often unintelligible, and deaf students are viewed as unintelligent. For example, a sentence in ASL would be signed: HEY, ONE-WEEK-PAST, AWFUL HAPPEN. This would be signed using grammatical signals (hands, face, and body). In English, this sentence would be translated to: "Hey, last week, something awful happened." Deaf students possess the intellectual skills and the motivation to learn written English. Deaf students want to communicate more clearly with the hearing world. The curriculum and instructional design that the writer is developing for college-bound deaf students is intended to give students the written English skills to effectively communicate in various academic, social, and employment situations with hearing people who do not know ASL.

## **The Problem**

The purpose of this study is to construct and test a curriculum and instructional design that formally teaches the written equivalent to signed American Sign Language (ASL) rules and structures and English as a Second Language (ESL) to college-bound deaf students. The objective is to determine whether a course in ASL and ESL improves deaf students' writing skills.

## **Research Question**

Did the writing skills of deaf students improve after taking a course in ASL and ESL?

### ***Subquestions***

1. What curriculum and instructional designs have been and are used to teach deaf students English?
2. Do deaf students have a formal or informal understanding of ASL rules and structures?
3. Do deaf students consider English as their first language or their second language?

## **Research Hypothesis**

Deaf students who take a course that formally teaches the written equivalent of ASL rules and structures and then learns English as a Second Language will show improvement in their writing skills.

## **Delimitations**

The writer will restrict the study as follows:

*Curriculum and Instructional Design:* The writer selected the books and developed the pre-test, post-test, materials, activities, and guides for the course.

*Participants:* Participants in the study will be students from the ages of 18 to 21 who have an interest in entering college.

*Time Period:* The time during which the project will be planned and implemented is during the summer months.

### **Procedures**

To obtain information for answering the research questions set forth in this study, the following steps will be taken:

1. Letters of interest will be sent to high schools, colleges, and community services for the deaf agencies in northwest Ohio as well as to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, and Gallaudet University. Approval for involvement will be obtained from students who wish to participate in the study and their schools or agencies.
2. Students who express an interest in the 6-week summer course will receive registration information.
3. Each participant will take a pre-test to evaluate his/her writing skills. Three different, volunteer English or ESL professors will evaluate each essay as a method of determining writing levels. Rubrics will be provided to the evaluators.
4. Participants will complete the ASL and ESL course.
5. At the end of the course, each participant will take a post test to re-evaluate his/her writing skills. Three different, volunteer English or ESL professors will evaluate each essay. Rubrics will be provided to the evaluators. Classroom activities, for each unit, will also allow for a measurement of comprehension of participants.
6. Participants will also complete a survey concerning strengths and weakness of the curriculum and instructional design.