

SIGN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT: TOWARDS EQUITY IN LANGUAGE TESTING FOR BILINGUAL DEAF STUDENTS

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CANADA

Background	ASL Receptive Skills Test	ASL Expressive Skills Test	ASL Phonological Awareness Test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to develop parallel testing instruments for multilingual children in order to measure their development in all their languages. Multilingual issues are also of concern for deaf children, as increasing heterogeneity within Deaf communities has been reported in many countries (Christenson & Delgado, 1993). There is an increasing demand for formal signed language assessment tools as these are frequently missing in multilingual and multimodal educational programs for deaf students. Here we describe three American Sign Language (ASL) tests. Each test has been developed to measure young children's development of various components of ASL (i.e., receptive grammar, phonological awareness, and narrative skills). Standardized versions of these three tests will help educators support the language and literacy development of multilingual deaf students. 	  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>ASL Receptive Skills Test</i> assesses a child's comprehension of ASL grammar in phrases and sentences. The test is an ASL adaption of the British Sign Language Receptive Skills Test (Herman, Holmes, & Woll, 1999) and is intended for use with children ages 4 to 13. The test includes a vocabulary check of 20 words, three practice items, and a total of 42 test items. Eight grammatical categories are assessed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negation Number/distribution Noun/verb distinction Spatial verbs (location and movement) Size/shape specifiers Handling classifiers Role shift Conditionals The ASL-RST has been standardized and is available at: northernsignsresearch.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>ASL Expressive Skills Test (ASL-EST)</i> assesses story re-telling skills. The process of eliciting narratives (story re-telling) is an effective approach for measuring children's expressive language development (Cravens, 2013). This research also builds on a test developed for British Sign Language to assess children's narrative skills (Herman, et. al., 2004).  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ASL-EST involves the child watching a short, language-free (no signing or talking) video and then re-telling the story in ASL. The child's story is assessed for narrative content and structure, as well as ASL grammatical structures (spatial verbs, agreement verbs, aspect, manner, role shift). Normative testing on 215 children between the ages of 4 – 13 years is completed and percentile ranking is used to compare raw scores to developmental age groups. Examiners must be trained to use the test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>ASL Phonological Awareness Test (ASL-PAT)</i> measures a child's awareness of the phonological building blocks of ASL (i.e., the sub-lexical parameters of handshape [H], location [L], and movement [M]) and the ability to identify phonological similarity relations in signs sharing three, two or one parameters. The ASL-PAT is designed for use with children ages 4 to 14. The ASL-PAT is a web-based assessment application. The testing procedure consists of five phases: a) log-in and brief background demographic questionnaire, b) vocabulary check, c) instruction video in ASL, d) four practice trials, and e) test block of 24 items. The testing takes about 15 minutes for each test-taker.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normative testing with over 175 children has been completed. Psychometric analyses are underway.