BSL Acquisition and Assessment of Deaf Children - Part 2: Overview of BSL Assessments

Wolfgang Mann

A brief history

- For a long time, language assessment of deaf children was rarely addressed by researchers. Common practice was to use and adapt tests designed for hearing children, or make more subjective assessments (Herman, 1998)
- Although language tests designed for hearing children continue to be used in some situations, e.g. with oral deaf children who have received early cochlear implants, their use is not always appropriate

Problems with using or adapting test for hearing children

1. Standard test administration procedures may not meet the needs of a deaf child (e.g. rate of presentation, numbers of allowed repetitions, etc)
2. Language used in tests or individual test items may be unfamiliar to a deaf child or difficult to speechread
3. English-based tests cannot simply be translated into BSL or SSE (or any other language) and considered equivalent in terms of what they are measuring
4. Test norms have only limited validity when applied to deaf children whose language exposure and experience is often so different from those upon whom the test was developed

What is involved in developing language tests?

- Developing language tests involves identifying appropriate areas to assess and determining patterns of typical development
- This requires a large population from which to select a representative sample
- However, deaf children, are a population that is both small and highly heterogeneous
- In addition to factors such as onset of language and communication at home, there are growing numbers of children from minority backgrounds and children with additional disabilities

Consequences

- Tests reporting deaf norms are generally based on fewer numbers than would be found in similar tests for hearing children
- Although these smaller sample sizes represent a far larger proportion of the population of deaf children than is found in tests based on hearing children, their applicability to all deaf children requires careful consideration
- Important that professionals who use language tests with deaf children take care when interpreting test results
- Interpretation of test results should consider knowledge about individual child and their language experiences and extent to which these compare to children upon whom test norms are based

Available tests for BSL

1. The BSL Receptive Skills Test

(Herman, Holmes & Woll, 1999)

- Video-based test looking at comprehension of BSL sentences of increasing grammatical complexity
- Children respond by selecting the most appropriate picture from a choice of three or four
- Test is used widely in UK settings, including research
- The test is now available online
- For more info, contact

R.C.Herman@city.ac.uk

2. The BSL Production Test
(Herman, Grove, Holmes, Morgan, Sutherland & Woll, 2004)

- Uses a story recall task to analyse narrative skills and grammatical development in BSL
- Children watch a short, language free film and retell the story to a fluent signer. Norms are provided on deaf children aged 4-12 years acquiring BSL under optimal circumstances
- For this test, attendance on a training course is necessary to become registered as a test user
- For more info, contact R.C.Herman@city.ac.uk

3. BSL MacArthur CDI

(Woolfe, Herman, Roy & Woll, 2009)

- CDI= Communicative Development Inventories
- Well established parent report tool that measures receptive/ productive vocabulary in children aged 8-30 months
- Parents complete checklist to document their child's language development
- The CDI have been translated into many spoken languages and a BSL version was developed with norms based on deaf native signers (8-36 months)
- For more info, contact b.woll@ucl.ac.uk or R.C.Herman@city.ac.uk

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Early BSL Development

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BSL CDI

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DIALECT

The BSL CDI project is now finished, see latest news for an update.

This website is fully accessible for British Sign Language users

Click on the BSL icon to display a BSL version.

BSL

Welcome to the

Early British Sign Language Development website

With the recognition of the importance of early intervention work with deaf children, there is a strong need for data about the early natural developmental stages of BSL. We are studying early BSL learning: first signs, first sentences, handshape development, expression of emotion etc.

This website is designed to enable the general public and other researchers to know more about our work. It is also a resource for the parents of the children involved in our work

As we do more projects, there will be further pages added on this website and it will be developed further.

Please do feel free to contact us with questions via the contact page

Best wishes

Professor Bencie Woll, Dr Rosalind Herman and Dr Gary Morgan

BSL

The MacArthur-Bates CDI Project is part of the Positive support in the lives of deaf children and their families project.

This project is a collaboration between the University of Manchester and University College London, in partnership with Deafness Research UK (the Hearing Research Trust) and the National Deaf Children's Society. The project is funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund
see www.positivesupport.info for details.

***If you are a parent with a deaf child aged under 3yr*. please visit the project website at www.positivesupport.info to find out how your child could be part of this important project.**

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/HCS/research/EBSLD/

4. Nonsense Sign Repetition Task

(Mann, Marshall, Mason & Morgan, 2009)

- Measures how deaf children between 3-11 years learn different aspects of phonology in BSL, e.g., handshape, path, and movement
- Children watch single signs and have to repeat them
- The test has been standardized and a trial version is available on request (Wolfgang.Mann@roehampton.ac.uk)

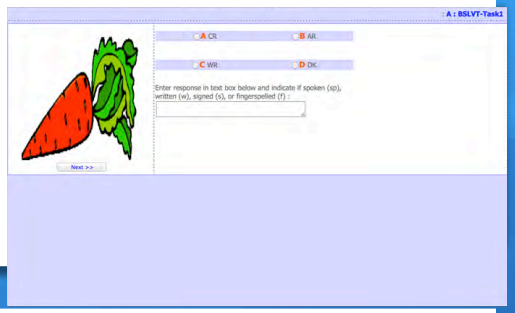
Example

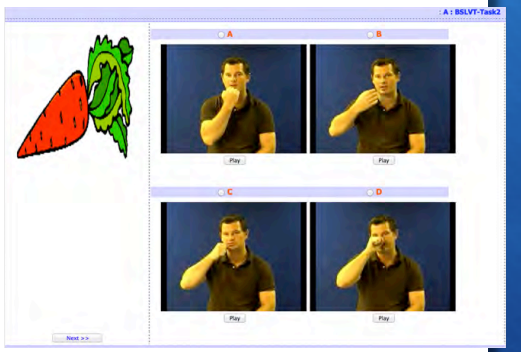
5. Web-based BSL –Vocabulary Test
(Mann, 2008)

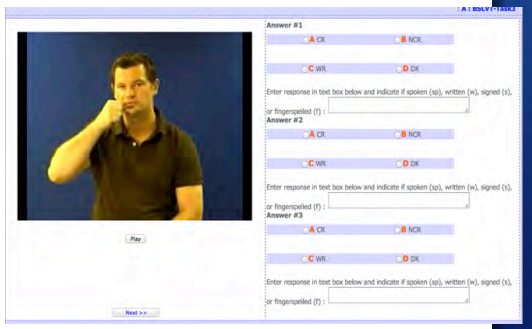
- Assesses vocabulary development in deaf children aged 4-15 years using a combination of comprehension and production tasks
- Measures both vocabulary size and vocabulary depth
- Based on a model for second language learning

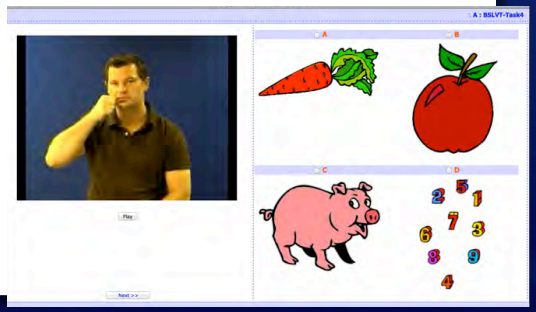
Format

- Four tasks to assess degree of strength of vocabulary knowledge
- Two receptive, two productive skills task
- Each task consists of 120 items (same across tasks)





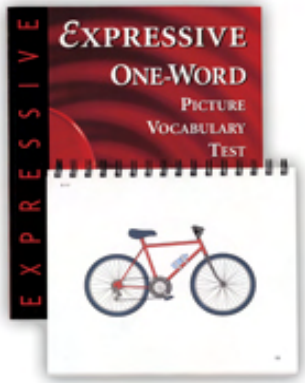


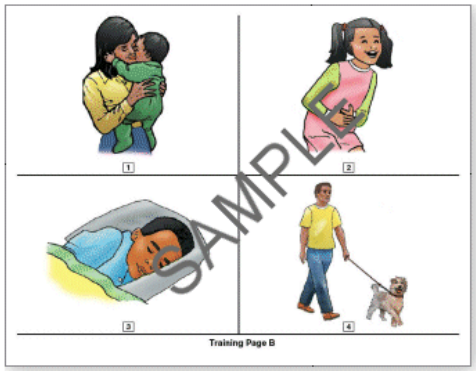


+ allow many different words to be tested

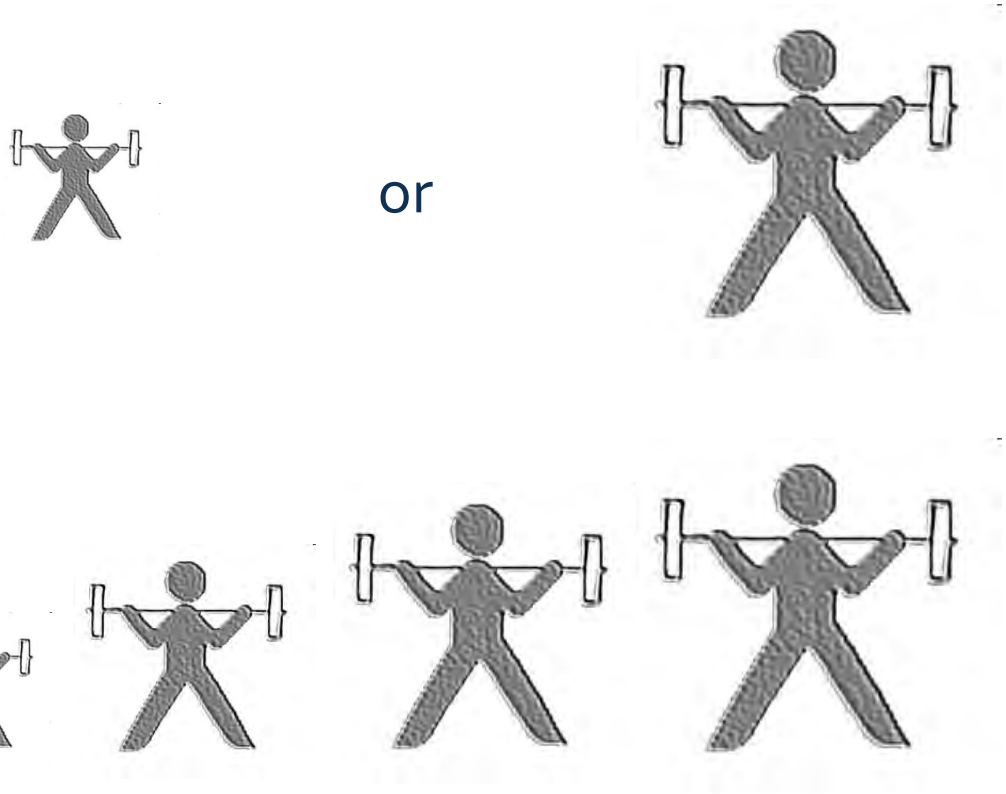
+ provide a measure of children's total vocabulary size

- provide limited information on how robust children's vocabulary is



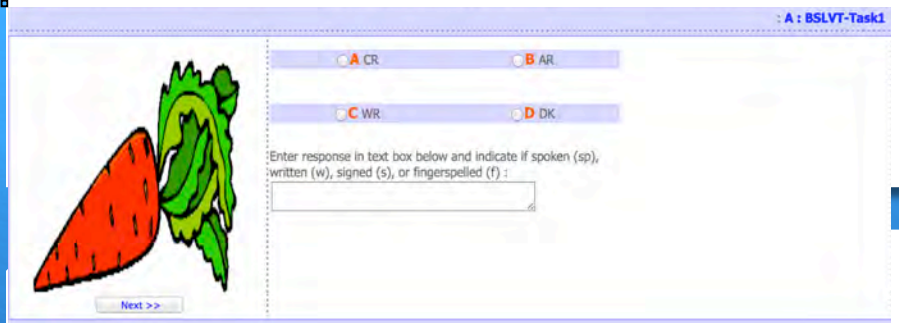


Vocabulary knowledge

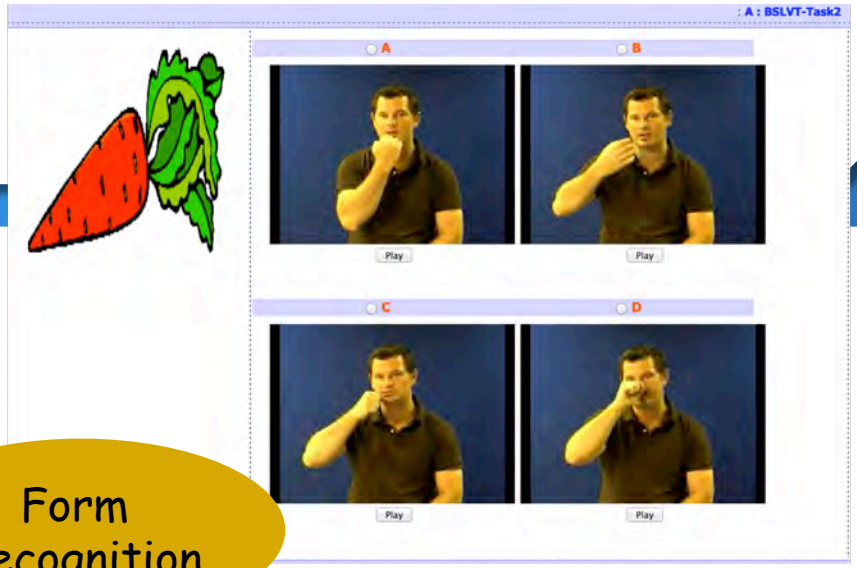


Laufer, Elder, Hill, & Congdon, 2004; Laufer & Goldstein, 2004

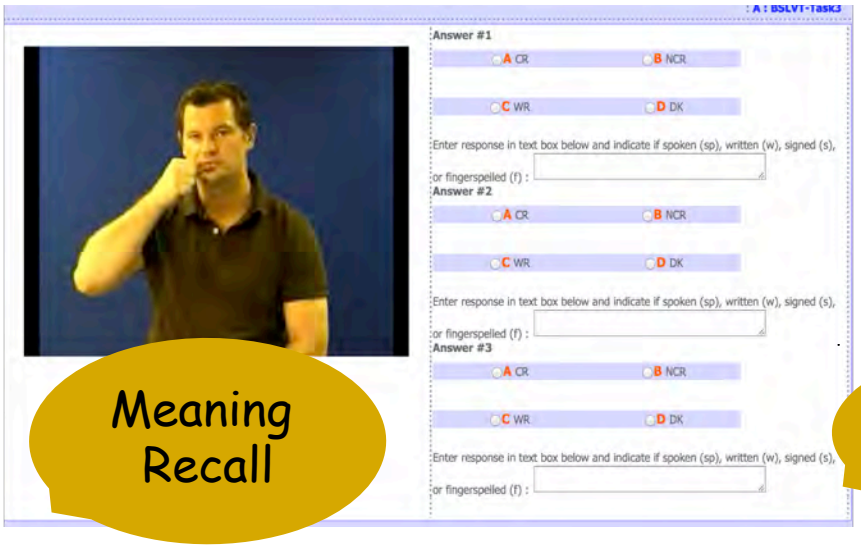
Read, 2001



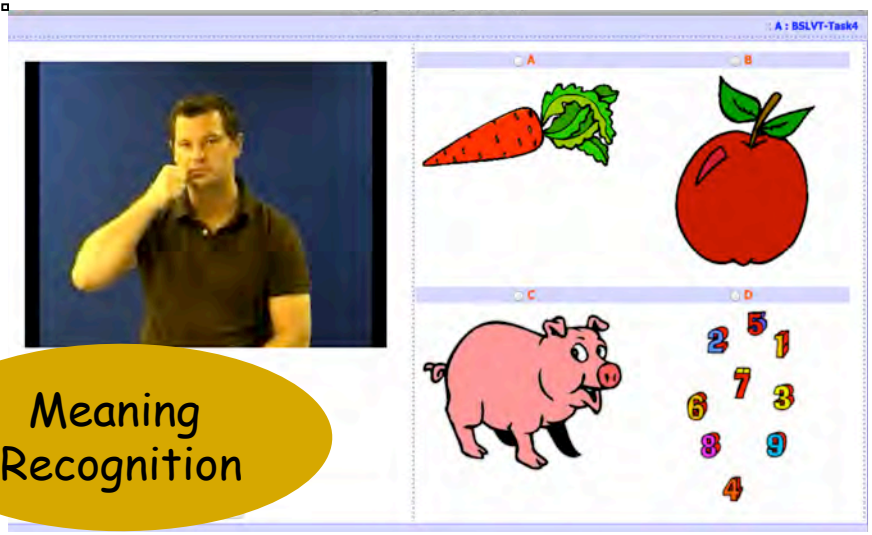
Form Recall



Form Recognition



Meaning Recall



Meaning Recognition

SIGN INVENTORY

B

BANK (109)

BED (13)

BSL-VOCABULARY TEST (BSL-VT): TARGET SIGNS

R

RAKE (59)

REFUSE START (33)

REFUSE END (33)

BSL-VOCABULARY TEST (BSL-VT): TARGET SIGNS

L

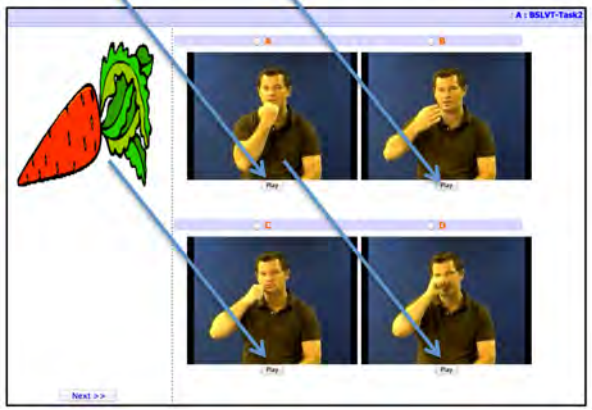
LETTER START (28)

LETTER END (28)

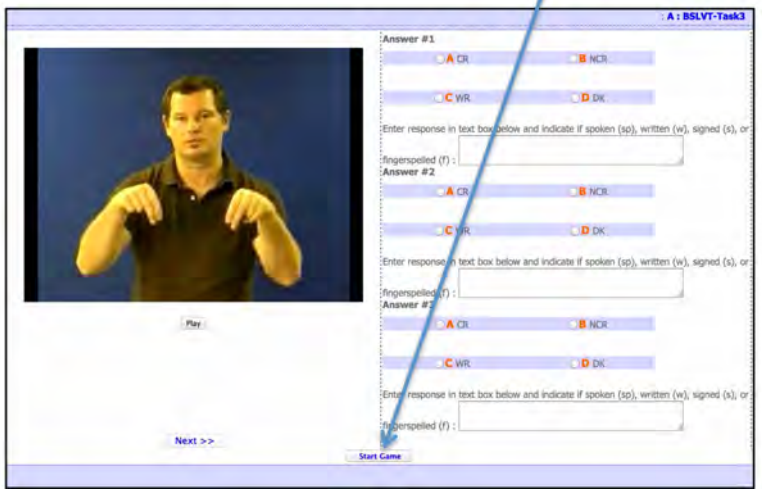
TUTORIALS

2. Enter the English gloss (see below for example) for the response in the text box and indicate whether the child's response was in signed, fingerspelled, spoken, or written. In addition, select a score: CR = correct response; AR = alternate response (e.g., vegetable, pumpkin, etc.); WR = wrong response (e.g., rocket); DK = Don't know. Indicate whether response was signed, fingerspelled, spoken, or written (if student wants to type response him/herself).

Click 'Play' to watch video and select the matching response. Make sure the student watches all videos before selecting a response.



. Once you completed practice item 2, click on 'Start Game' to start test.



Once you/the child has selected a response, click on 'next' to proceed.

The score is displayed above the video as part of the label behind '/'. In the example above, the score is '20'.

Contact

- Wolfgang.Mann@roehampton.ac.uk

- Thank you!