

**Ch. 5 of McCaskill et al. 2011: *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL*
presented by Kie, 25 Feb. 2020**

1. History of White ASL, Black ASL—see ch. 2 of book

- As we've discussed, residential schools for deaf children have been crucial in the development of ASL
 - Brought together children using a variety of homesign, as well as children from signing Deaf households, or sometimes from communities with "shared sign"
- From more or less the Civil War till aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in much of the U.S. there were segregated White and Black schools
 - No discussion here of where children who were neither white nor black could go...
 - Teachers in Black deaf schools were generally diverse in terms of both race and status as Deaf/hearing
- Not surprising that different varieties of ASL would develop in the two separate school systems

Table 2.1. Black and White Deaf Schools: Founding and Desegregation

State	White school established	Black school/department established	Desegregation	Years between establishment of Black and White schools	Years between establishment of Black schools and desegregation
DC, KDES	1857	1857 (dept.)	1958	0	101
N. Carolina	1845	1868–1869	1967	24	98
Maryland	1868	1872	1956	4	84
Tennessee	1845	1881 (dept.)	1965	36	84
Georgia	1846	1882	1965	36	83
Mississippi	1854	1882 (dept.)	1965	28	83
S. Carolina	1849	1883 (dept.)	1966	34	83
Kentucky	1823	1884 (dept.)	1954–60	61	70
Florida	1885	1885	1965	0	80
Texas	1857	1887	1965	30	78
Arkansas	1850/1867	1887	1967	37	80
Alabama	1858	1892	1968	34	76
Missouri	1861	1888 (dept.)	1954	37	66
Kansas	1861	1888, dept	1954	27	66
Virginia	1839	1909	1965 (2 schools)	70	56
Oklahoma	1898	1909, dept	1962	11	53
Louisiana	1852	1938	1978	86	40
W. Virginia	1870	1926	1956	56	30

Note: Adapted from *American Annals of the Deaf* (1951 January); Fay (1893).

2. Phonological variation: Let's watch the video!

- McCaskill & al. collected data in 6 of these states with a history of segregated Deaf schools
 - Filmed groups (e.g., alumni at a class reunion) of two types of signers, in free conversation, interviews, and cartoon retelling
 - >55, attended segregated school
 - <35, attended integrated school
 - Analyzed social attitudes, linguistic variation at many levels
- Below are **images of the key signs** for phonological variation, to help us follow along
- Overall, McCaskill & al. find that Black ASL (especially for older speakers) tends to be conservative
 - They suggest an explanation: oralism was more prevalent in White deaf schools
 - This means ASL was not used so much in the classroom there, more in informal interactions between students
 - Children in Black deaf schools had more exposure to formal, adult sign

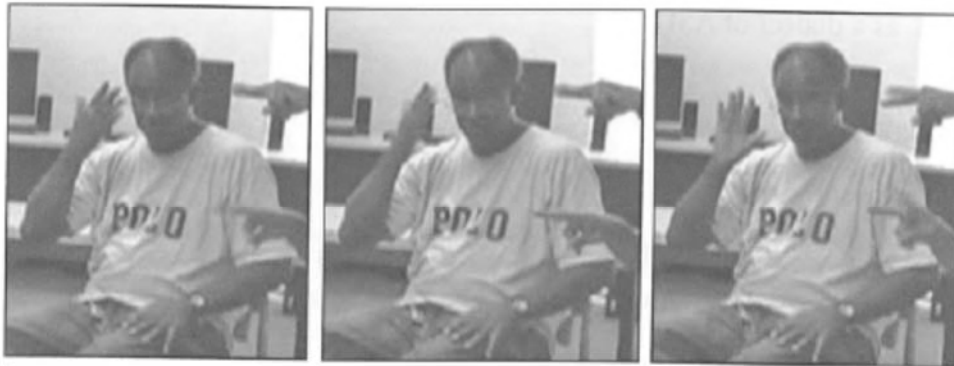
3. Two-handed signs with one-handed variants

- Only studied for signs where both hands have same handshape, same movement (whether synchronous or alternating)
 - these are the signs that should be eligible for Weak Drop, as we've seen

DON'T KNOW



a



b

Figures 5.1a and 5.1b. Two-handed and one-handed variants of DON'T-KNOW.

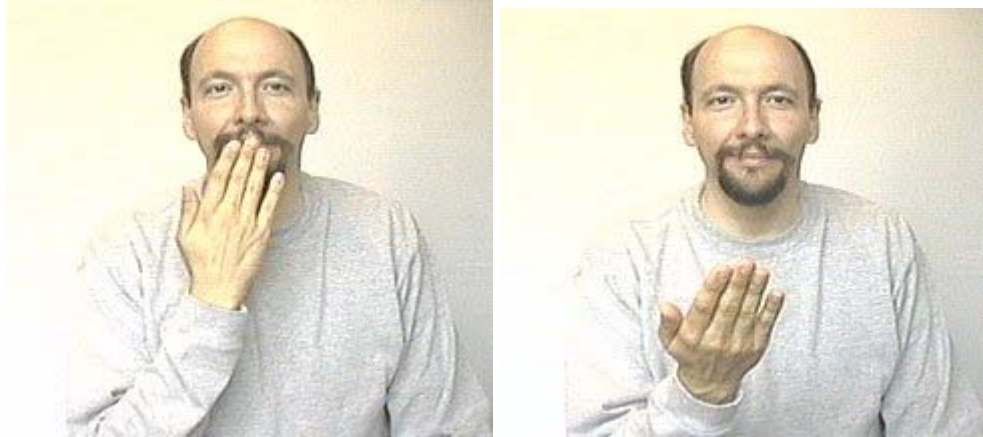
(p. 76)

REMEMBER (Lifeprint)



¹ <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/r/remember.htm>

THANKS (Lifeprint—one-handed version)



2

GIVE (Lifeprint)



3

SURPRISE (Lifeprint)



4

² <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/t/thankyou.htm>

³ <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/g/give.htm>

⁴ <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/s/surprise.htm>

- One-handed variant found to be more common when...
 - preceding or following sign is one-handed
 - sign involves contact with head or body
 - signer is younger
 - signer is Northern
 - signer is white (comparing with data from earlier study)

Table 5.3. One-Handed vs. Two-Handed Signs by State and Race

California		Louisiana		Kansas/ Missouri		Massachusetts	
Eth- nicity	% 1H	Eth- nicity	% 1H	Ethnic- ity	% 1H	Ethnic- ity	% 1H
AA	42	AA	39	AA	38	AA	56
W	47	W	42	W	50	W	61
Total	44		40		45		59

Note: $n = 2,258$ (Lucas et al. 2007)

(p. 86)

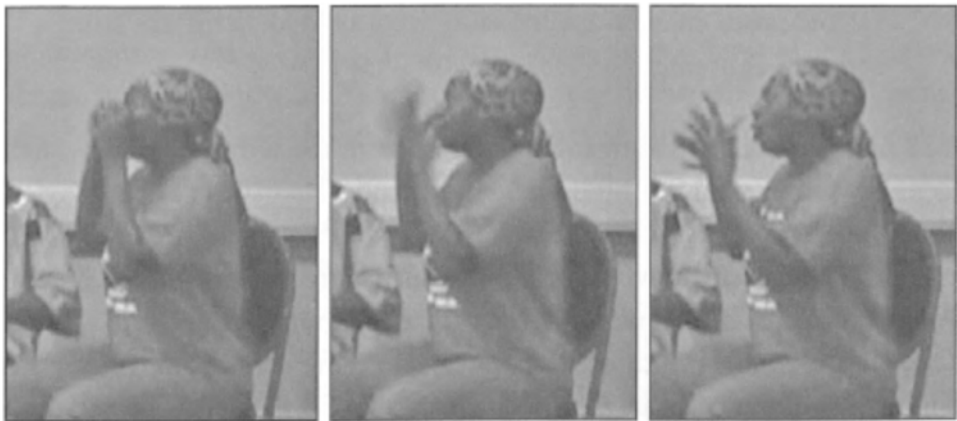
- By the way, there's a super-interesting moment in the Ch. 2 part I video, starting at 12:00—let's watch it
 - older interviewee recounting how education in segregated Black schools was all vocational
 - interviewee at first is using left hand very little, but then notice what happens

4. Lowering: e.g. from temple or forehead to lower

UNDERSTAND (Lifeprint)



TEACHER



a



b

Figures 5.3a and 5.3b. **TEACHER** in citation and lowered form.

WHY (Lifeprint)



LEARN (Lifeprint)



BLACK (Lifeprint)



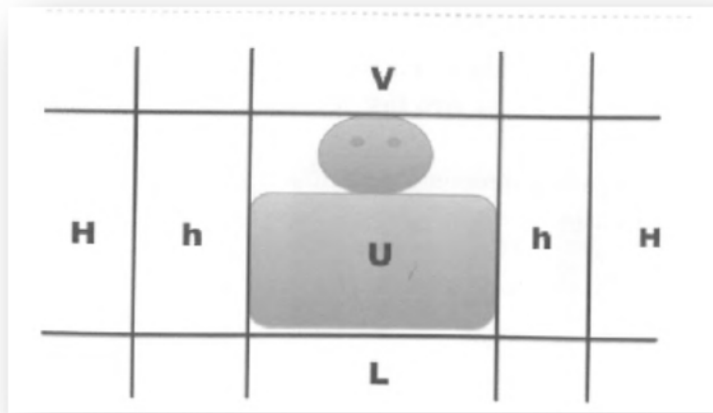
⁵ <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/u/understand.htm>

⁶ <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/b/black.htm>

DEFINITELY – sorry, couldn't find a static image, but let's try to catch it from the narrator

- Lowering found to be more common...
 - in compounds
 - in nouns than verbs
 - location is body (with or without contact), or head with contact
 - signer is Texan
 - signer is younger
 - signer is white

5. Signing space [for this part of video, we can skip forward to 15:30]



(p. 99)

- Anything in V, L, h, or H coded as “outer”
- More “outer” space use in...
 - “depicting/locative” verbs (“a verb that may use space to indicate the relative location of the event or entity”)
 - to a less extent, “indicating” verbs (“a verb that uses space to indicate grammatical relationships”)
 - less for “plain verbs”, adjectives, nouns, and function words
 - emphasis
 - everyone except older white signers
 - previous findings that white signers use smaller signing space may be becoming obsolete

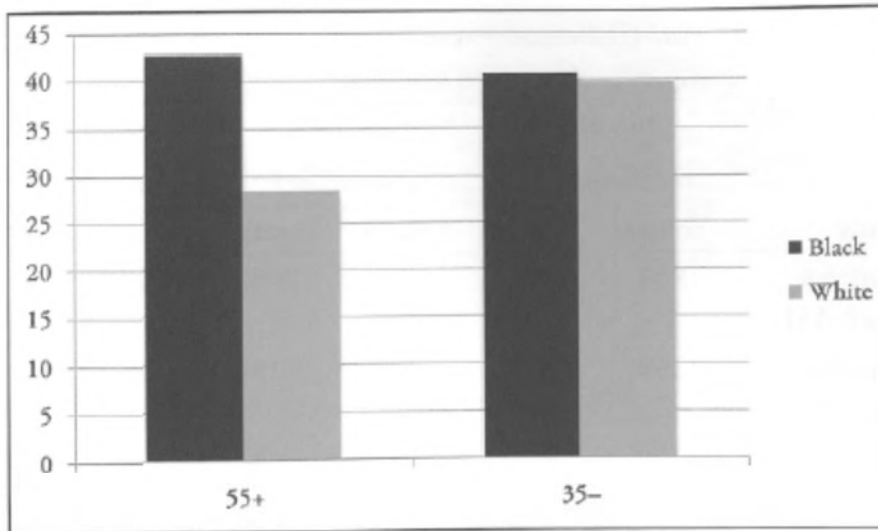


Figure 5.8. Size of the signing space: Age by race (percentage of signs beyond the usual signing space).

(p. 105)

References

McCaskill, Carolyn, Ceil Lucas, Robert Bayley & Joseph Hill. 2011. *The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL: Its History and Structure*. Gallaudet University Press.