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AUTHOR ABSTRACT

Over the past 30 years, several Manual Codes on English have been developed in the United States. Unlike American Sign Language, which is a language independent of English, manual codes of English were designed to specifically reflect English and are signed in English word order. The first such system to appear during this time frame was Seeing Essential English (SEE I), developed by David Anthony, a deaf educator of the deaf. Today most educational programs for the deaf use Signing Exact English (SEE II) or Signed English and there is confusion about the nature and role of SEE I. This paper is designed to clear up some of the misconceptions that have grown up around SEE I, to provide some historical background about its development, and to review some research findings concerning its effectiveness.

Concomitant with a move away from oral only education in the 1960s, several educators investigated the possibility of developing what have become known as manual codes on English (Stedt & Moores, 1990). Unlike American Sign Language, these codes follow English word order, and contain specific signs for bound morphemes to signify English verb tenses, adverbs, and function words. They were also designed so that they could be presented in coordination with spoken language. According to McAnnally, Rose, and Quigley (1994, p. 261), "The rationale of the systems is to provide deaf or hard of hearing children with an intelligible visual-manual representation of English that can be used in a fluent manner... [and that] will enable [them] to acquire a high proficiency level of the English language."

Although researchers such as Supalla (1990) have raised concerns over both the advisability and utility of manual codes on English, there is abundant research to support the position that English can be signed with a high degree of accuracy (Hyde & Power, 1991), that hearing parents of young deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) children can improve their own signing of various systems and retain these improvements over time (Luetke-Stahlman & Moeller, 1990), and that deaf and hard of hearing children acquire English and read well when they are exposed to specific systems (e.g., Moeller, 1989; Schick & Moeller, 1989; Luetke-Stahlman, 1988). However, the benefit of one specific system, Seeing Essential English (SEE I) has never been fully explicated. Perhaps due to the combination of its rarity of use and its variance from other sign systems (Bornstein, 1990), SEE 1 was not included among the major manual systems. Therefore, information on the invention, history, and research involving SEE I are provided below.

SEE I INVENTION: A RATIONALE

Richard Paget's Systematic Sign Language, introduced in Great Britain in 1951, was the first gesture system developed in the twentieth century to approximate English. The core lexicon of the system was the Ogden Basic English Test, which consisted of the 850 most frequently used words in the English Language. Paget argued that his signs represented a single English word or part of a word, the system approximated English syntax, and had the same morphology as English. The system was used for approximately a decade in England, but never achieved wide acceptance (Bornstein, 1979). Reportedly unaware of the work of Paget, David Anthony, who at the time was working with deaf retarded children, came across a magazine article describing Ogden's basic word list and decided that it could provide a basis for the development of an English-based sign system (Anthony, 1966). Anthony and associates believed that if each of the basic English words had a sign equivalent, it would be possible for deaf and hard of hearing children to acquire the syntax

and grammar of English. Yet, they realized that less than half of the 850 words had signs in American Sign Language (ASL). For example, there were no signs for words such as "inch," "foot," "mile," "ounce," "ton," "pint," "quart," or "gallon."

It was also noted by Anthony et al. that several ASL signs were used to gloss more than one English word with only minor stress and movement variations. That is, "beauty," "beautiful," and "beautifully," all used the same sign, as did "lovely," "pretty," and "attractive" and "am," "is," "are," "was," "were being," and "been." Another concern was that some signs coded more than one English word. For example, the verb to run could be signed in almost as many different ways as there were English idioms for it.

Washburn (1983) noted: One (deaf) boy signed that this should not be so: "a glass is a glass is a glass." A few days after that, the same boy came up to Anthony, and gave a new sign for "glass": G at eye "for eye"; G at hand sweeping down, "for window through see," G hand on other palm, "for water drink." Thus occurred the first stage in the development of SEE, and its first rule: one word, one sign, no matter the "sense" of the words, since a word has no intrinsic "sense" until it is put in context with other words to make a statement (p. 27).

Washburn (1983) further noted that it was the deaf and hard of hearing children in Anthony's class who asked for signs to differentiate the "be" verb:

An expansion of this first rule came when Anthony told his students that there was one sign for [the be verb] and that this sign also represented "exists," "true," "sure," "fact," and "real," and all their inflections. The youngsters asked for changes, and a separate sign for each new form was devised (using initialization). In this matter, SEE took root (p. 27).

SEE I was the first of the twentieth century American sign systems to be invented (Gustason, 1983). The group contrived signs for the remaining Basic English words, with assistance from professionals at the Michigan School for the Deaf, the University of Michigan, and deaf and hard of hearing people around the country. Signs were created for verb endings such as "ing," and "ed" (Milburn, 1992). Prefix and suffix sign designations were developed. As new words were needed by educators and students, they were added to the basic lists.

SEE I signs were developed based on what Anthony, et al. (1971) called pivot words. "Strong", for example, is a pivot word. Additional affix signs are added to it to form such words as "stronger" and "strongest." "Cept" is another example of a pivot word. This base sign is used in words such as "deception" (three signs), "contraception" (three signs), "except" (two signs), and "accept" (two signs). Whenever possible, ASL signs were retained as basic pivot SEE I signs (Washburn, 1983). Also, with each of the pivot words, the one sign for one English word rule was maintained. SEE I authors originated the two-out-of-three rule (Gustason, Pftzing, & Zawolkow, 1973): if two out of three characteristics between the spelling of a word, the meaning of a word, and the sound of the word are the same, the words are signed in the same manner. For example, the word mean would be signed the same in the sentences, "You are a mean person." and "The words mean the same thing."

Anthony and associates describe their system as follows:

The major drawback of the American Sign Language has been that it has followed its own syntax and developed its own idioms. Recently a group of people--led by Mr. David Anthony--developed a new approach to the language of signs. Using American Sign Language as a base, Mr. Anthony added verb tenses and appropriate endings, noun, adjective, and adverb suffixes and prefixes; and signs for words such as articles for which there have been no signs before. Mr. Anthony gives praise and credit to the members of his group--all of whom are born deaf people ranging in age from 15 to 67 who met at least once a week to discuss, devise and decide on signs. The exciting development in a system of signs now permits us to have one sign for each word, and--of the utmost importance--allows us to use the language of signs in the correct patterns of English syntax. Mr. Anthony calls the new sign system SEEING ESSENTIAL ENGLISH (Anthony et al. 1971, v).

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

As Anthony et al. worked with the SEE I system, they concluded that the analytical methods used at that time to teach English to D/HH children were no longer necessary because the new sign system paralleled English grammar (Milburn, 1992). That is, since each sign could be given a written equivalent, D/HH children could remember the sentence word order and could write in standard English syntax. Each part of the word had a sign and the sign pivots and affixes could be combined and recombined by the children to produce any English word. According to Miburn (1992) in homes where parents were using SEE I, D/HH children were acquiring English via natural exposure to the system and were able to participate in the communication of that home.

Anthony first described the SEE I system of communication in his master's thesis (1966). Anthony moved to California in 1969 and, with other deaf adults, teachers, parents, and interpreters met to write SEE I guidelines (Gustason, 1983). A committee was selected to continue this work. These committee members also taught the committee members also taught the first SEE I classes.

Fundamental philosophical and practical differences occurred within the committee, which split in two. At that time Anthony's system was formally distinguished as SEE I and in 1971, he published a two volume SEE I set. The remaining members of the committee developed the system now known as Signing Exact English, or SEE II (Gustason, Pftzinger and Zalwolkow (1973). SEE I and SEE II have major characteristics in common: Both systems utilize English syntax and grammar; incorporate manual features such as gestures, directionality, use of space, fingerspelling, and words; utilize invented English markers based on English sound and spelling; use one sign for one word, regardless of the meaning conveyed; and are signed literally. SEE I and SEE II differ in that SEE I utilizes signs for all morphemes (prefixes, roots, and suffixes) and some are further divided (e.g., the word "motor" is signed with two signs). In SEE II each English word is signed differently, and those words for which there are no signs are fingerspelled.

Anthony moved to teach in Greeley, Colorado, and introduced SEE I to the program for the deaf and hard of hearing housed in the Laboratory School of the University of Northern Colorado. At that time, teachers trained at UNC were taught in SEE I and they were subsequently hired throughout the Midwest. Hence, SEE I was used in parts of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas. In 1990, the lab

school changed its official school instructional system from SEE I to SEE II. At present, SEE I use is primarily limited to Texas where it also is called a Morphemic Sign System (MSS). The use of the term morpheme or morphemic by advocates is confusing because pivot words are often not English morphemes. For example, four signs are used to code the word "motorcycle" although the word has two morphemes. In fact, perhaps a third of the pivot signs used in SEE I are ASL signs (e.g., "tree", "want", "have", etc.).

SEE I was brought to Texas by a concerned parent, Camille Brodie in 1971. Parents first attempted to use the system at the Callier Center in Dallas, and then in a newly developed program in Richardson, which augmented oral education with SEE I. Amarillo later adopted SEE I and remains a stronghold of the system today.

Since 1982, Texas educators, spearheaded by Dr. Wanda Milburn at the Amarillo Regional Day School Program, have collaborated to collect and store all the SEE I sign designations in one repository so that more are available to parents and current and future teachers of the D/HH (Milburn, 1992). Currently, there are about 55,000 English words in the repository. Parents and teachers can learn the code used to store signs (e.g., the combinations of pivot and affix signs) and also have access to a dictionary for reference. All of the repository materials are available to other schools in hard copy or disk format. Parents and educators who want to learn to read the sign/code may obtain a codebreaker manual and a video training tape from the Amarillo Regional Day School Program.

SEE I evening classes are conducted several nights a week in Amarillo, during the academic year. Enrollment varies from 30 to 80 adults. In addition, 30 to 40 hearing students enroll in after school sign classes each semester. Day classes for parents as well as peer tutor sessions are provided. SEE I classes also are taught for credit at Texas Woman's University.

Parents and teachers learning SEE I experience the motor execution needs common to all adults who are learning to sign (Milburn, 1992). Although they vary in the rate at which they learn to read the SEE I code, the average person begins to read and sign it in approximately six one-hour sessions. Thereafter, the rate of proficiency is determined by motivation and practice. Some hearing students have reported learning to sign SEE I/MSS by socializing with D/HH peers and/or watching the transliterators in their mainstream classes (Milburn, 1992).

D/HH students who use SEE I do not evidence severe difficulty in communicating with D/HH adults, according to school administrators and teachers (Milburn, 1992). When Ralph White, a deaf man and interim director of the Texas Commission for the Deaf, visited the program in December, 1992, he had no difficulty understanding the children, and was surprised at how many of the signs used in SEE I were common to ASL and/or SEE II (White, 1992).

RESEARCH INVOLVING SEE I

The Richardson Independent School District (1992) compared scores on the Stanford Achievement Test from 1977-1981 for students in Richardson using SEE I to those in other Texas programs serving the deaf. In Reading Comprehension, the Richardson, Texas students 8 years of age or younger scored at a 3.0 grade level compared to a Texas state-wide average of 1.9; students 11-13 years of age from Richardson scored a 4.9 grade level compared to a Texas state-wide average grade level of 2.9; and students 14-16 years of age from Richardson scored a grade level of 5.5 compared to a Texas state-wide average of 3.6 (Richardson Independent School District, 1982).

Stanford Achievement Test data from deaf and hard of hearing students in Greeley, Colorado also documented reading comprehension scores that were above the mean of the national norms for deaf and hard of hearing students. Washburn (1983) stated that these subjects evidenced a diversity of hearing loss and socioeconomic backgrounds and scored in the top 20% of all deaf and hard of hearing high school students taking the subtest (Washburn, 1983). Scores from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) were similarly high (Washburn, 1983). Washburn (1983) noted that deaf and hard of hearing students in the Davenport, Iowa SEE I program also scored above chronological age on the PPVT.

Luetke-Stahlman reported on research that compared the English reading and language abilities of several groups of deaf and hard of hearing children who had been exposed to different input models for at least three years. The study (Luetke-Stahlman, 1988) controlled for age, and aided and unaided hearing acuity. Subjects exposed to Signed English and Pidgin Signed English (PSE) had a higher socioeconomic status than subjects exposed to the other input models. Sixteen D/HH students from Richardson, Texas, who used SEE I, participated in the study. These SEE I subjects had a higher mean aided hearing acuity and a higher mean unaided hearing acuity than students exposed to Signed English, PSE, and ASL. Only the group of oral subjects had more residual hearing. SEE I subjects out-scored subjects using Signed English and PSE, but not those exposed to oral English or SEE II.

Luetke-Stahlman (1991) also investigated adult signers ability to follow the rules of the sign system that they purported to use. Eight subjects identified themselves as SEE I signers from Davenport, Iowa. Results indicated that four of the eight SEE I subjects did not follow the rules of SEE I although they were strong advocates of it. Averaged results indicated that the SEE I signers were able to follow the rules of SEE I about 39% of the time. They were able to capture the meaning of the original stimuli, regardless of the form of the signs that they were using, about 71% of the time. When deviations from SEE I occurred, subjects omitted a sign or affix marker and used a correct sign from a language or system other than SEE I.

The first author compared scores of children in the Amarillo and Richardson programs using SEE I to those of 1,506 deaf and hard of hearing children in 40 other programs in Texas on the Reading Comprehension, Number Concept, and Math Computation subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test. Information obtained from the Texas Education Agency documented diversity in socioeconomic status across programs. Students in other programs were instructed through a variety of communication languages and systems. After controlling for hearing loss, the Reading Comprehension scores of the subjects from Amarillo and Richardson programs differed in a marginally significant manner ($p < .05$) from other state educational programs. Average Number Concept scores of students in the two SEE I programs were significantly higher ($p = 0.42$) than for children in the other programs.

CONCLUSION

SEE I is a sign system that was developed by a deaf adult with input from D/HH students and D/HH and hearing professionals. Once an influential method of communication throughout the Midwest, it is now primarily used in Texas, where extensive efforts have been made to collect and store SEE I sign designators on computer.

There is a paucity of research available involving teachers and/or students who use SEE I. The system has proven beneficial for some children, and professionals and parents may wish to discuss these findings as they strive to make informed decisions and to educate future teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. Well-designed research of the system would assist in clarifying the role of this system of sign communication.

Added material

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