

American Sign Language Fluency: A Foundational Competency for Future School Interpreters

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OBJECTIVES

Explore the implications and outcomes of a new ASL benchmark assessment with feedback to support students' learning progression as they shift from ASL to interpret coursework.

BACKGROUND

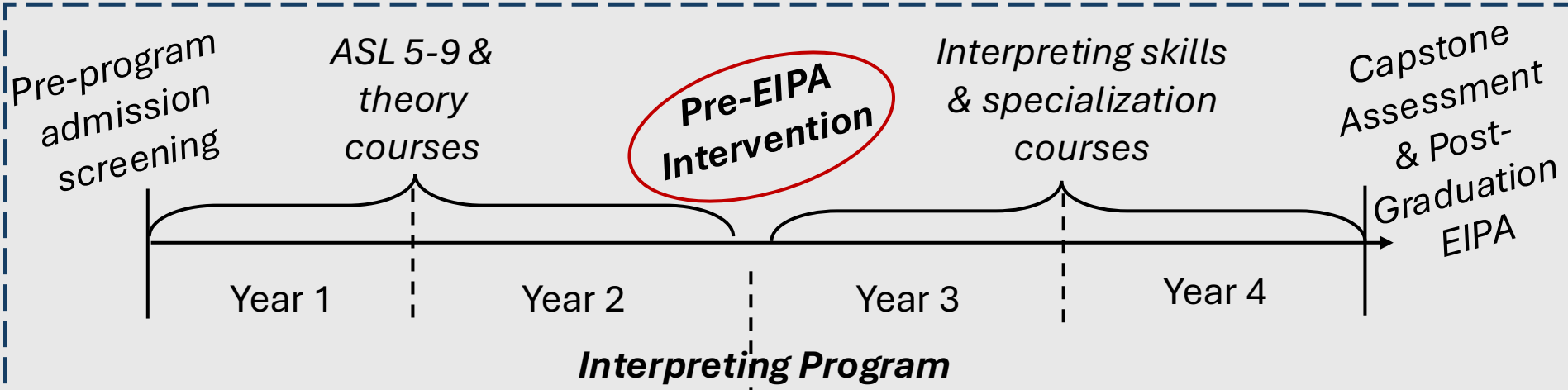
Most interpreting program graduates begin working as interpreters in schools; however, new interpreters may demonstrate the Dunning-Kruger Effect, inaccurately assessing their skills. Many school interpreters do not possess the necessary language competency to effectively interpret for children and youth. (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Fitzmaurice, 2020; Girardin, 2023; Johnson et al., 2023; Schick et al., 2006; Williamson 2020)

Graduates (2015-2020) met the standard for ASL fluency:

36% set by the program under investigation (i.e., SLPI Advanced Plus or higher) **10%** set by the field (i.e., Superior or higher) (CIT, 2022)

RESEARCH DESIGN

- 18 interpreting students
- Partnership with Preparing School Interpreters Project (OSEP: H325K210024)
- 4-year ASL-English interpreting BA program in the U.S
- Intervention: Pre-EIPA as an ASL benchmark between Year 2 and Year 3



Measure interpreting students' ASL fluency and self-awareness of their fluency at mid-point in the program, and will compare to post-graduation outcomes

DISCUSSION

Pre-Program Skills = Success

ASL 1-4 foundational skills pre-program entry = a higher degree of fluency on the ASL benchmark (Garrett & Girardin, 2018; Holmes, 2022)

Self-Awareness

- Dunning-Kruger Effect
- Emerging reflection literacy
- Written feedback paired with dialogue supports students' awareness.

(Chan & Lee, 2021; Fitzmaurice, 2020)

ASL Fluency Findings

- Complex, richer ASL skills (R1) weren't consistent
- Lower scores on ASL features without English equivalents (e.g., use of space/classifiers – $M=2.7$) (Cagle et al., 2018; Cates, 2021; Taylor 2002)

The Bigger Picture

Formative assessments highlight gaps but also support students' awareness of their growth.

(Bryk et al., 2015; Karpicke et al, 2009)

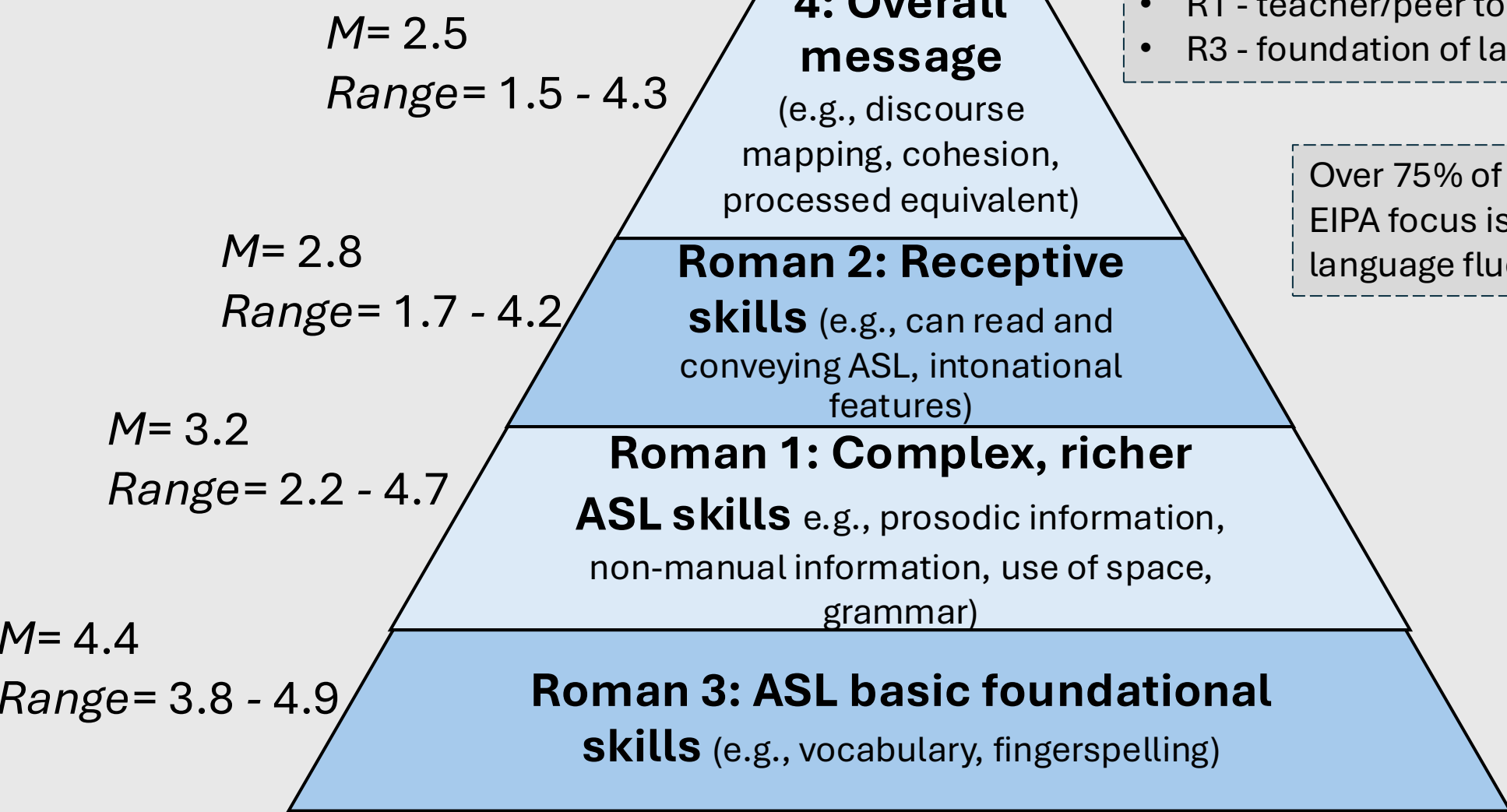
RESULTS

Students' ASL Fluency:

These students demonstrated an average of 3.2 (Range= 2.6-4.5) on the ASL benchmark assessment between Year 2 and Year 3 of their academic study, which is intermediate skills with:

- Interpreting that communicates basic classroom content,
- Basic vocabulary, not consistent accuracy and some sign mis-productions,
- Inconsistent ASL grammar,
- Some consistent prosody,
- Slow pacing

(BoysTown National Research Hospital, n.d.)



Students' Awareness of Their Fluency:

After completing their ASL benchmark, before seeing the EIPA results:

- 33% identified the need and had a preliminary plan to improve on skills
- 83% noted their primary area of concern was academic vocabulary

After reviewing EIPA results with interpreter educators:

- 69% acknowledged patterns
- 83% targeted areas they need to improve
- 33% justified results
- 17% expressed the desire to seek work before they were ready

IMPLICATIONS

School Interpreters	Mentors	Programs
Strive for excellence: Follow the National Association of Interpreters in Education's (NAIE) <i>Professional Guidelines for Interpreting in Educational Settings</i> Pursue ongoing growth of knowledge and skills	Change the paradigm: Include a Deaf mentor to focus on vocabulary, advanced language skills, and receptive skills. Incorporate a diagnostic assessment approach, which "seeks to understand the nature of a [interpreter's] work for the purpose of guiding professional development. It is a valuable tool in making decisions about skill development needs and priorities" (NCIEC, n.d., para. 7).	Boost impact: Raise awareness that school interpreting requires highly qualified professionals. Apply improvement science by tracking outcomes to inform changes (Lewis, 2015), thus conducting intervention studies to guide future improvements (Mertens, 2018).