

Skill Development Activity: Improving PRONOUN / PROLOCATIVE Skills

One of the reasons that identifying who is doing what to whom is so difficult for interpreters is that we have not been adequately taught all of the pronoun markers used in ASL to indicate agent / receiver relationships. Also, the markers used are sometimes very discrete...such as a slight shift in eye-gaze. These exercises are designed to help you recognize pronoun forms more readily.

Activities:

- **Watch - Stop - Infer**

Analyze a text of ASL signers and stop the text every time you become confused or lost with regard to who is talking or who is where in the speaker's message.

Try to infer the information based on the general context of the message and then re-watch that section in slow motion if possible. Watch for the markers the speaker uses and then try and put the pieces together. Then watch the next section of the text to gain more information.

Continue trying to infer from the context who is saying or doing what. Once you understand, go on with the analysis of the recording until you reach another section that is confusing. Repeat the process again. Watch-stop-infer.

Go back to the beginning of the text and watch it all the way through. Continue until you comprehend and then watch and analyze more of the text.

- **Finding Referents**

ASL Texts:

Analyze ASL texts for specific pronoun forms. Work to isolate as many examples as you can of the pronoun or prolocative forms that are used by the speaker. Look for the shift or referent when it occurs and heighten your recognition of the various markers used by deaf people to convey pronoun / prolocative referents (such as body shifts, indexing, eye gaze, role-taking, placed signs including verbs that imply an agent/receiver relationship like GIVE-TO, etc.).

Once you have gone through the text and isolated all the instances of the pronouns / prolocatives, repeat the text and interpret ONLY those forms. Become used to recognizing and articulating the pronouns when you see them.

Then go through the text a second time, and integrate the rest of the message with the pronoun forms. This time you can try using a variety of strategies to interpret the pronouns - such as some third person, some narrative address.

This exercise can be repeated as often as you want until you feel comfortable with the text. Use the same activity with lots of different texts and be sure to try different strategies each time.

English Texts:

Go through the text and isolate all the places where you would need to indicate a pronoun or prolocative. Become familiar with where these referents are in the text.

Then go through the text again, and only interpret the pronoun referents into ASL. Indicate with a variety of different strategies (eye gaze, role taking, body shifts, etc.) the pronoun referents.

Then go through the text one more time and integrate the pronouns with the rest of the information in the text.

These steps enhance your recognition of pronoun forms, allow you to mark them in isolation, and then integrate them with the rest of the message.

Resources

Free Online Materials

ASL Storytime from the Department of Sign Language and Interpretation at Gallaudet University

- This series includes three volumes, each containing stories with a broad variety of ASL features.
- Available on YouTube.
 - Volume 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLxddLdxbOw>
 - Volume 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAGx5CXgmTU>
 - Volume 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqx4wCZoCMU>

NOTE: These stories are good for practice of many ASL features so use them with other instructional sheets in addition to this one!

TerpTalks from the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC)

- This series includes diverse ASL and English texts available for practice interpreting.
- There is no charge for accessing these materials, although you may be required to register to access.
- Available on NCIEC's website: <http://www.interpretereducation.org/tim/terptalks/browse/>

Purchasable Materials

The following resources may be available for use from your local interpreter education program or through your public library. If the library does not have them, request that they purchase them for community use.

American Sign Language: A Teacher's Resource Text on Grammar and Culture from Sign Media (www.signmedia.com)

- The most comprehensive explanation of ASL grammar currently available. The text is written for those with little or no background in linguistics. The companion DVD features a deaf person illustrating each of the more than 300 examples in the text.
- This resource can be used by an individual or with a group.

Interpreter Practice Materials from Sign Media (www.signmedia.com)

- Set of 33 DVDs includes 12 simultaneous texts, 12 consecutive texts, 7 one-to-one situations, 2 small groups, 6 ASL texts and 6 English texts.
- Excellent for individual, study group, or classroom skill development exercises.

The “Green Books” Texts and DVDs from Sign Media (www.signmedia.com)

- This set includes 6 one-hour DVDs and five textbooks. The videos explain and demonstrate difficult concepts in ASL and offer practice situations to improve your sign language abilities. Several lessons relate to pronouns and prolocatives. The resource may be ordered as a complete set or as individual books and DVDs.
- This resource can be used by an individual or with a group.