

Skill Development Activity: IMPROVING SPATIAL STRUCTURING Verb Agreement and Distribution - ASL Texts

Learners can practice tracking verbs in ASL messages by creating spatial maps. The strategy of spatial mapping involves the following steps:

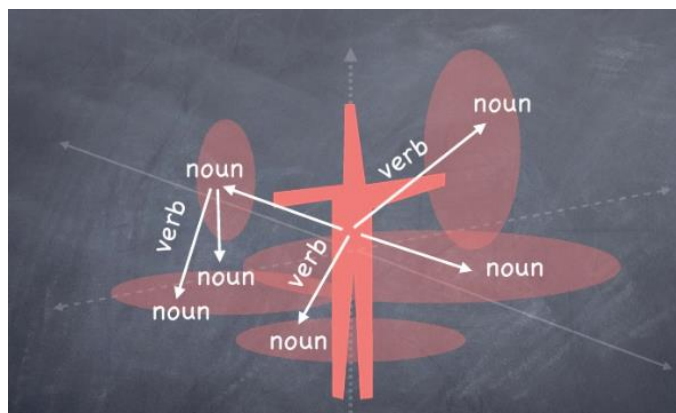
- Select an ASL text and watch it for comprehension.
- On a sheet of paper, draw a stick-figure of the signer from the waist up [torso], inclusive of torso, shoulders, arms, neck and head.
- Watch the ASL text again, and map onto the stick-figure, the zones / areas around the body where people, locations, events and things are placed and talked about.

You can represent the zone / area with an oval shape circle. These typically will be located directly in front of the signer, or slightly away from the signer's center, to the left side or right side of the signer, etc.

- In one or two words, place a label in the zone that identifies what that space represents - for example, work location, home, school, reunion, meeting, etc.
- Next, map the verbs that move from the signer to each zone, or from each zone back to the signer, or from one zone to another.

You can do this using lines with arrows. The line will be drawn from the location where the directional verb begins and the arrow head will point to the location where the directional verb moves to. For example, if the signer talks about going to some event established in one of the zones, then the line would start on the signer's torso and move to the zone and the arrow head would be placed within the zone. Or, if someone moves from the zone on the signer's left to a zone on the signer's right, start the line in the left-side zone, extend it to the right-side zone and place an arrow head at the end.

Here is an image of what the end result might look like. This graphic only shows the verbs going in one direction - from the signer to the zone. However, in many texts, the verbs will also move from the zone to the signer.



<https://youtu.be/o6gRQS5ZOyM>

A hand-drawn diagram illustrating a career path. At the top is a sketch of a man's head and shoulders. Below him, several ovals and a dashed line represent different roles and communities. Arrows indicate the flow of the path, with some labels like "work there" and "PREFER".

- ARIZONA/ASU ADMINISTRATION** (oval)
- ARIZONA/ASU ASL PROGRAM** (oval)
- DEAF COMMUNITY** (dashed line oval)
- NARRATOR** (oval)
- U. of Colorado** (oval)
- ARCC** (oval)
- ERCC** (oval)
- SICO** (oval)
- 30th Street** (oval)

Arrows and labels:

- From **ARIZONA/ASU ADMINISTRATION** to **ARIZONA/ASU ASL PROGRAM** (labeled "Coordinate w/").
- From **ARIZONA/ASU ASL PROGRAM** to **DEAF COMMUNITY** (labeled "ASL PROGRAM").
- From **DEAF COMMUNITY** to **NARRATOR** (labeled "NARRATOR").
- From **NARRATOR** to **U. of Colorado** (labeled "U. of Colorado").
- From **U. of Colorado** to **ARCC** (labeled "work there").
- From **ARCC** to **ERCC** (labeled "ERCC").
- From **ERCC** to **SICO** (labeled "SICO").
- From **SICO** to **30th Street** (labeled "30th Street").
- From **U. of Colorado** to **ARCC** (labeled "PREFER").

Examples of Verb Agreement

- ### Examples of Spatial Verbs

- He taught-there at University of Colorado
- He had to wait for the class to make before being offered a contract
- He interviewed at ASU

- He worked in the ASL Dept. at ASU
- He taught and developed curriculum there
- He associated with peers in the Department
- He associated within the Deaf Community in the area
- He preferred the weather in Colorado
- He stayed in Arizona during the 9-month academic year
- He went-to/came-to Colorado for 3-months in the summer
- During the summer, he worked-there FRCC, University of Northern Colorado, and FRCC-EICP
- He enjoys Colorado

View the text as often as you would like until you feel confident that you are able to see each of the specific zones / areas and what is referenced in each, the verbs that show action from him as the narrator to that zone / area and from that zone / area to him, as well as the spatial verbs.

Then, generate an interpretation of the text. Practice it a few times until you are satisfied you have a solid representation of the information. Then, conduct a self-assessment of your performance. Were you successful in accurately interpreting the verbs and maintaining the appropriate agreement? Where could you make improvements? Seek feedback from a mentor and/or peer as well. Use this feedback, along with your own assessment, to re-do the interpretation.

Repeating this process with a variety of texts will heighten your awareness of verb forms and verb agreement in ASL. This can strengthen your ASL to English interpretations.

Exercise B. You will now apply the steps outlined in Exercise A to a new ASL text.

Step 1: Watch the ASL text titled New Used Car Story (3:07 minutes in length).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbNJeLKBNtw>

Step 2: List the main ideas of the text.

Step 3: Map the spatial structuring that occurs in the text.

What zones / areas are used around the signer's body? What information is established in the zones / areas? What directional and spatial verbs are used? How do they relate from the signer to the zone / area or from the zone / area to the signer?

Review the completed map to identify the inter-relatedness of ideas and how the overall message fits together.

Step 4: Record yourself interpreting the text, applying cross-linguistic features to convey the verb forms in spoken English.

Review your performance against the spatial map and assess your effectiveness in conveying all the intended connections. Are there areas where you could improve your performance as it relates to verb forms as part of spatial structuring? If so, where and why?

Step 5: Seek feedback from a peer and/or mentor. Incorporate this feedback, along with your own observations from the self-assessment, and re-do your interpretation.

Step 6: Apply steps 1-5 to a range of ASL texts involving different speakers and a variety of topics.

Here are additional texts you can use.

My Thoughts of Deaf Bilingual Coalition – 3:06 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYG-RkEG6u8>

Day of Pink – 3:17 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRdYoLEXd8&t=28s>

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.

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.