



**ACQUIRING COMMAND OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
THROUGH THE USE OF  
**SIGNING EXACT ENGLISH (S.E.E.)**



# Welcome

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# Objectives

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- Objective #1: Participants will identify and explain the importance of exposure to English through the air.
- Objective #2: Participants will list the four pillars process learners move through when acquiring a language.
- Objective #3: Participants will identify the role that S.E.E. can play in mastering English in all of its forms (listening, spoken and written forms) and how this can lead to English literacy.

# What is Signing Exact English (S.E.E.)?

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Signing Exact English (S.E.E.) is a sign system created to represent English vocabulary and grammar. S.E.E. makes use of:

- 9 principles
- English grammar (syntax)
- English morphemes
- 75 - 80% borrowed or modified ASL signs
- S.E.E. created signs
- Visual components
- Non-manual markers

S.E.E. is not a replacement for ASL

# History of S.E.E.

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## 1960s

Researchers in the field of deaf education gathered data regarding reading and literacy levels of students with hearing differences. Their research indicated that students with hearing differences performed below their hearing peers in the area of English literacy (expressively & receptively).

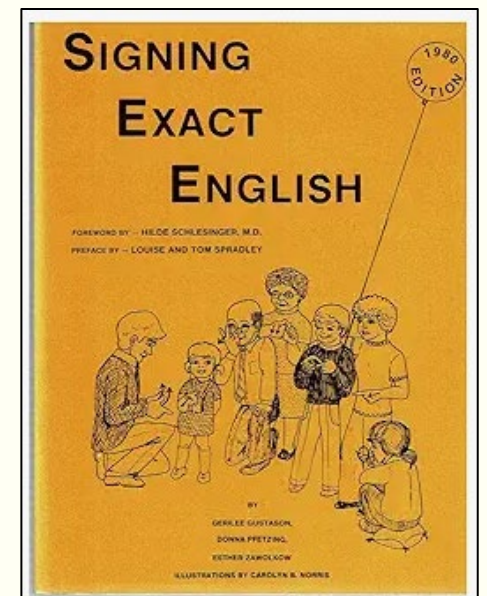
- Omission and incorrect use of words
- Simple and rigid sentence structures
- Fewer adverbs, auxiliary verbs and conjunctions
- Incomplete outputs

# “English through the Air”

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- January 1969, Southern California
- Meeting of the minds (those impacted by hearing differences from different perspectives)
- UNITED GOAL: Discuss appropriate and effective ways to represent English in a gestural mode. *“English through the air”*
- Of this meeting ...

**Signing Exact English ( S.E.E.) was born.**



# Let's Begin With Self Reflection

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# Language Acquisition: The Four Pillars of Gaining Command of a Language

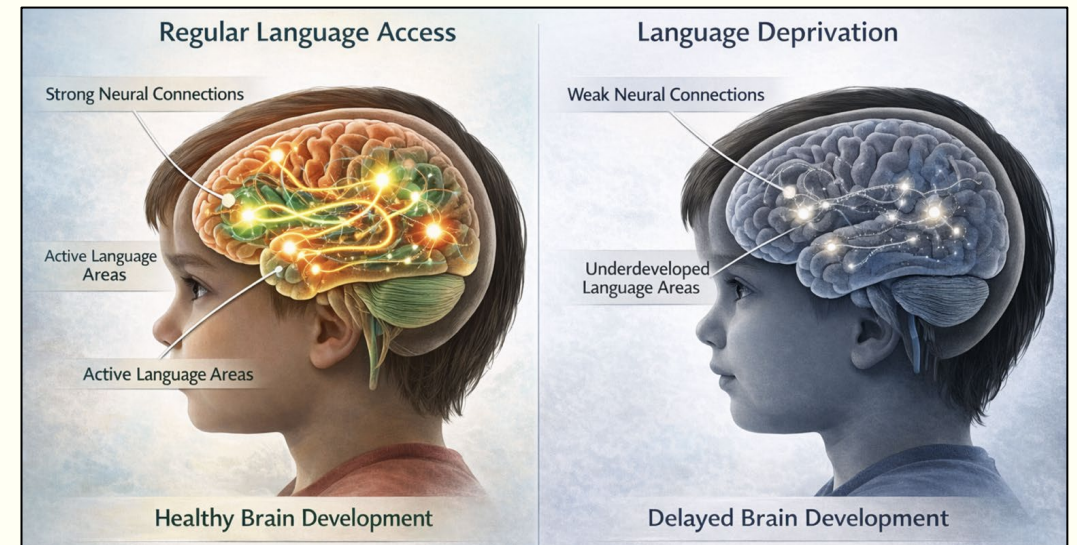
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# Why Early Intervention Matters

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- Brain architecture is most malleable from birth to age three: Building or pruning pathways
- Morphological awareness begins early (building this awareness will be especially important when the child is school aged)
- Families are primary language models
- Early structured exposure reduces later remediation

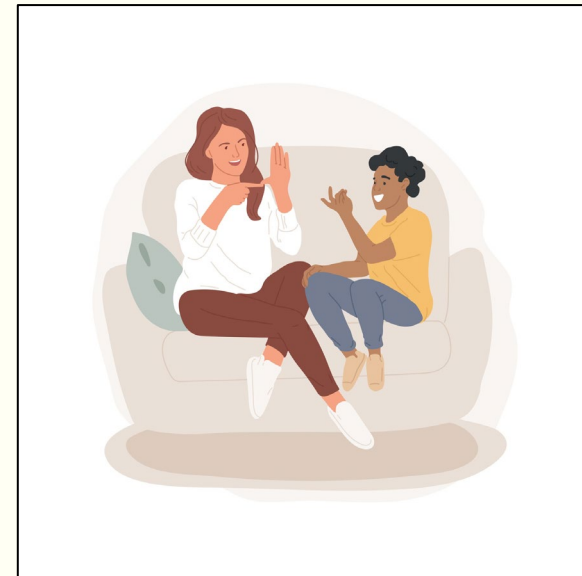


# How Do We Build Meaningful Language Experiences?

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## Intentionality

Intentional opportunities  
Intentional exposure  
Intentional practice  
Intentional scaffolding



# Why English Matters to DHH Literacy

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**Research shows that many DHH students struggle with:**

- Vocabulary
- Morphology (–s, –ed, –ing)
- Grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity, function words
- Figurative Language

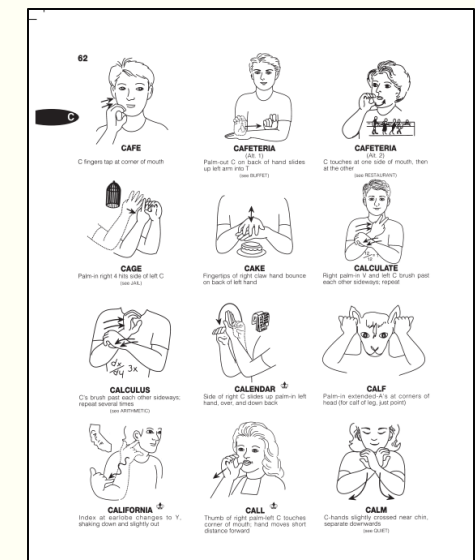
# Vocabulary: One -to-One Equivalent

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English should be signed in a manner that is as consistent as possible with how it is spoken or written. (Principle #1)

A sign can only be “mapped” to one English equivalent. (Principle #2)

- 4400 basic English words (BICs)
- 1600 advance level vocabulary (CALPS)
- ASL signs



# Morphology

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“Morphology is simply the study of the structure and formation of words, focusing on the smallest units of meaning (morphemes like prefixes, suffixes, roots) and how they combine to create and change words.”

Basic word

- “act”

Basic word + Suffix

“active”

-

Prefix + Basic word

“react”

-

Prefix + Basic word + Suffix

“reactive”

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# S.E.E. Makes English Morphology Visible

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Vocabulary growth can be morphologically related. It makes English structure visible.

Breaking the morphological code multiplies vocabulary possibilities.

Morphological awareness strongly predicts word reading, vocabulary, and comprehension.

**Begin Early.**

**Early Intervention Matters.**



**Tip: Strengthen morphology and you will strengthen the entire language system.**

# The Bridge

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Morphology, shown visually with S.E.E. can be the bridge if it is:

- Frequent
- Predictable
- Structurally consistent

Because S.E.E. makes those markers visible, then language learning can operate more efficiently.



# Intentional Morphological Instruction and Scaffolding

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S.E.E. makes use of the visual features of a signed language.

## Visual Features of a Signed Language

- Question Markers
- Negation/Affirmation
- Placement
- Eye Gaze



## Visual Features of a Signed Language

- Directionality
- Emphasis
- Emotion/Affect
- Modification
- Duplication
- Translation/Comparison



Think: What does it look like? What does it feel like? What does it do?

Connect signs to the senses.

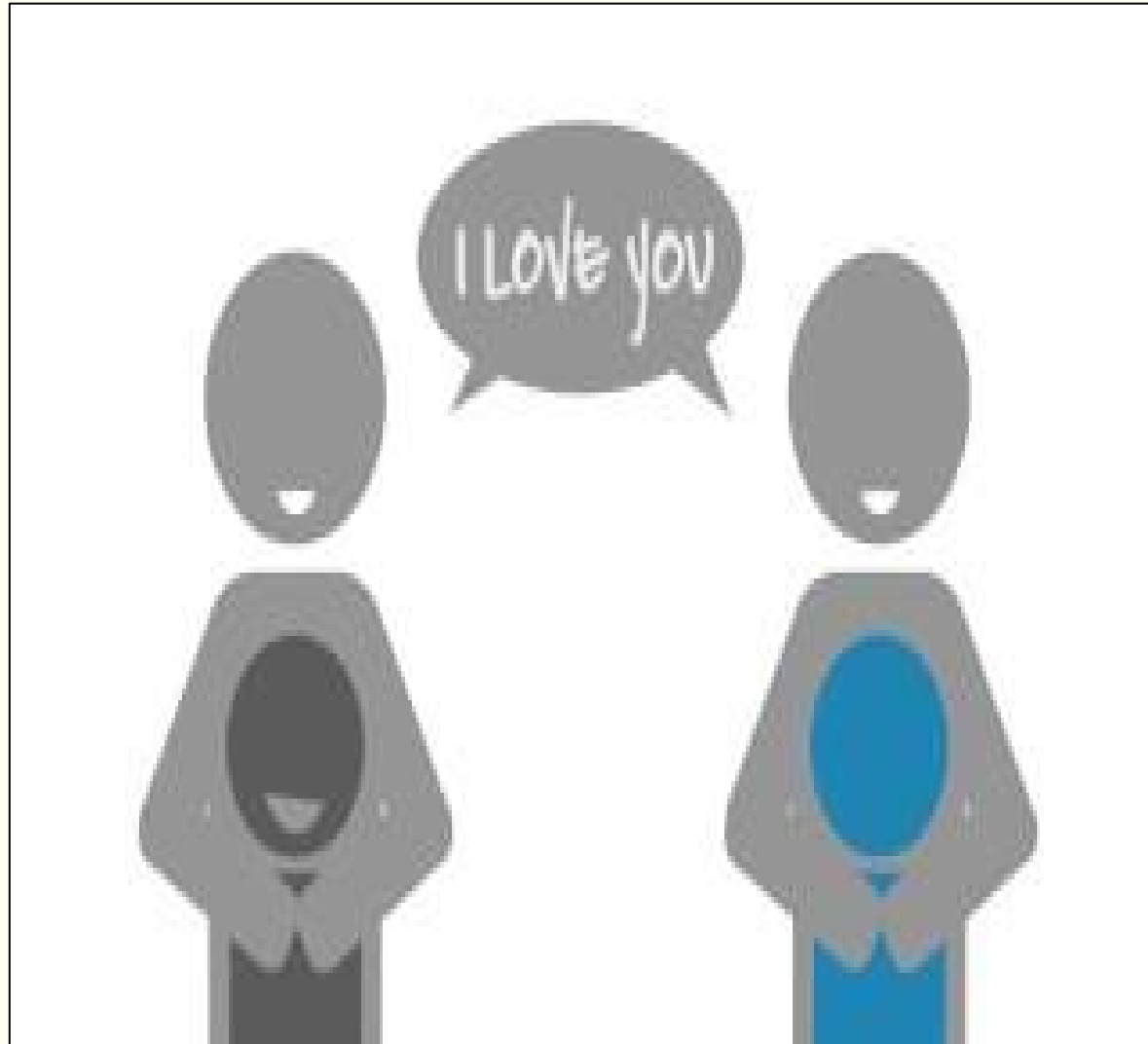
## Findings Related to S.E.E.

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- For English-speaking families,
  - their knowledge and understanding of the syntax and grammar rules of English makes learning S.E.E. easier.
  - they find the addition of S.E.E. signs are more easily acquired.
  - access to a “more complete English model” at the first and second pillars earlier in life.
  - children are able to internalize the language and have more success with English literacy.
- Students using S.E.E. can understand stories told in ASL as well as students from ASL programs.
- Children that use S.E.E. can read better than students using PSE.

“The brain has no preference for language input...”

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“Access”, **not deafness**, is the variable.

# Join us for

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# SEEing English

Signing Exact English (S.E.E.):  
SEEing English through the Air

THE SEE CENTER

MARCH 17, 2026



**March 17, 2026 - 1:45 PM - 2:45 PM**

**Location: St. John's**

# Questions

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# References

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Thank you!

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