

Simultaneous Communication: More Questions Than Answers

How did we get *here?

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January 21, 2016

Abstract

- This presentation poses many questions about the concept of Simultaneous Communication (SC) and its use.
- Some questions can be answered. Others cannot be answered only discussed.

Abstract

- Some questions are posed for the express purpose of opening a discussion.
- The final section poses some questions for further research.

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- Most programs for the deaf and hard of hearing use simultaneous communication in the classroom.
- Most teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing do not have proficient skills in ASL and/or sign English systems.

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- The same teachers demonstrate linguistic inconsistency in their signing behavior.
- Most Total Communication programs lack a concise language and communication policies. These are mostly mainstream.

History

- 1817 **Manual Communication philosophy**. American School for the Deaf signing in ASL educated to read and write in English
- 1860s **Oral Philosophy** began, early 1900s fully in place

History

- 1960s-1970s **Total Communication Philosophy**
"the right of the deaf child to learn to use all forms of communication in order to facilitate the development of language" (Denton, 1972)
- Late 1980s after the circulation of "Unlocking the Curriculum" (Johnson *et al*, 1989), new philosophy became known as the **Bilingual/Bicultural approach**.

Sign Is Back

- Change in educational philosophy from oralism to an environment that provided a variety of access possibilities, a new term was coined Total Communication (TC).
- TC philosophy held great promise.
- Teachers were allowed to use anything and everything to assist education and learning. **Sign was back!** But sadly few if any knew or used ASL

Question

- **TC Philosophy** (Denton, 1972)
"to facilitate the development of language" **meant English**

Does SimCom fit?

- **Bilingual/Bicultural approach** (Johnson *et al*, 1989) equal respect for 2 languages and 2 cultures

Does SimCom fit?

SimCom

- The new concept **Simultaneous Communication** had to have a sign.
- The sign that is most widely used is from the manual systems includes initialization S on one hand and C on the other hand moving alternately.
- Ironically this sign breaks an ASL grammar rule: signs in symmetry condition is produced with an alternating movement it must have that same handshape.

SimCom

- In an effort to express a more conceptually appropriate sign for this term TIME^SAME COMMUNICATION began to be used.
- Interestingly if you ask a Deaf person who is a native ASL user (L1 ASL) about SimCom the sign that is used is completely different.

<HANDS-MOVING>mouth-moving
- Can't be used in SC. Neutral sign SC works.

TC and SC

- TC is a Philosophy of education
- TC was actualized as **Simultaneous Communication (SC)**
- SC is a mode of communication not a philosophy of education.
- These 2 terms are often used interchangeable and incorrectly.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Why do we use SimCom in this environment?

A: Our student population people with a mixture of preferred communication codes and mode. SC is only one way to address this issue.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Who uses SimCom?

A: Anyone who knows English and some form of signing.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Do Deaf people use SimCom?

A: Yes, but not the same way hearing people do.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Do Deaf people whose L1 is ASL use SimCom?

A: Yes, and they are the most skilled users. They use SC in brief spurts of information to clarify or name something.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Do Deaf people who grew up in mainstream settings use SimCom?

A: Yes, and they are the more consistent users. They process information in SimCom getting balanced amounts of information from the sign and the speech.
(personal communications)

QUESTIONS:

Q: Is all SimCom the same?

A: No. SC can be English driven or Sign driven depending on the L1 of the person using SC. The word order tends to come from L1 and the vocabulary tends to come from L2.

QUESTIONS:

If English driven can use a Sign System or Contact Variety signing with mouthed, whispered, or spoken English.

If sign driven will include many ASL grammar features including use of space, modified signs that include additional information, non-manual signals/face grammar.

QUESTIONS:

The greater the knowledge of both languages the clearer the message when SimCom is used.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Is SimCom a good model for English Language learning?

SC utterances are not grammatical English and may in fact be deficient enough to cause confusion amongst the users (Bernstein, 1991, 171)

"The sign in SC does not fully represent all the grammatical and morphological elements of spoken English." (Bernstein, 1991, 189)

QUESTIONS:

Q: Is SimCom a good model for American Sign Language learning?

A: No. The combining of parts of both languages is obvious in overuse of SVO patterns, missing non-manual signals, lack of conceptually accurate sign choices, and poor ASL receptive skills.

QUESTIONS:

The greater the knowledge of both ASL and English the clearer the message when SimCom is used.

Communication Dyads

		NONE	SOME	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT	NATIVE		
A S L							A B	NATIVE	
								EXCELLENT	
								GOOD	
								FAIR	
								SOME	
								NONE	
		English							

QUESTIONS:

Q: When SimCom is used with Contact Sign, what is it like?

Linguistic Characteristics of Contact Signing (based on Lucas and Valli, 1992)

- ASL and ASL-like lexical items (signs)
- Mouthing of English words during signing
- Single isolated spoken English words
- Whispering of English words during signing
- ASL, English, and idiosyncratic lexical meanings and functions
- Reduced ASL and English morphology

QUESTIONS:

Linguistic Characteristics of Contact Signing (based on Lucas and Valli, 1992) (cont.)

- Some inflected ASL verbs
- Some signs for English inflections
- ASL non-manual markers
- Reduced English syntax
- Embedding
- Constructions with prepositions
- ASL use of space (for establishing a referent)
- ASL use of eye gaze
- ASL pronouns and determiners
- Classifier predicates
- Discourse Markers

QUESTIONS:

Q: When you use SimCom, what is it like?

QUESTIONS:

Q: When watch SimCom, do you get most of the information from the sign?

QUESTIONS:

Q: When watch SimCom, do you get most of the information from the mouthing and speech?

QUESTIONS:

Q: When watch SimCom, do you get equal information from the sign, non-manual features, mouthing and speech?

QUESTIONS:

Q: When you SimCom, is it sign driven?

QUESTIONS:

Q: When you SimCom, is it English driven?

QUESTIONS:

Q: How do you feel about SimCom?

QUESTIONS:

Q: How many students in your classes are oral and do not know how to sign?

Q: How do you communicate with them?

QUESTIONS:

Q: How many students in your classes use ASL?

Q: Do you communicate with them in ASL?

Q: Can you communicate with them in ASL?

QUESTIONS:

Q: How many students in your classes use SimCom?

Q: Do they understand your SimCom?

QUESTIONS:

Q: If you use SimCom in your classes, why do you use SimCom?

QUESTIONS:

Q: If you use SimCom in your classes, do your ASL students understand you?

QUESTIONS:

Q: What skills do you need to improve?
