Sign language: The similarities and differences between ASL, PSE, and SEE.

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ASL-210-03

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April 19, 2020

When first learning American sign language (ASL), it may be challenging to understand. Just like any other languages, ASL has its own grammar, syntax, etc, which is why it can be complicated to learn. When beginning to learn ASL pidgin signed english (PSE) and signed exact english (SEE) can be helpful, as it eases you into the exciting world of ASL. Both PSE and See can be helpful in this process, but they are NOT the same as ASL. While they are all ways to use sign language, there are many similarities and differences.

As mentioned earlier, ASL is its own language meaning it consists of its own rules, grammar, and structure/syntax. It is an official language, and the native language to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The structure of ASL consists of the basic idea of a sentence, instead of presenting it word by word like the english language. When structuring an ASL sentence, it is important to identify the time (tense), topic (main subject), comment/action (adjective/verb), and referent (refers to the topic) of the sentence. Once identified, they can be arranged in a few different orders: time + topic + comment + referent, topic + comment + referent, topic + referent + comment, or topic + referent + comment + referent.

While ASL follows the specific grammar of the language, PSE only follows some of the grammar rules. It is seen as a combination of both ASL and english, as it uses sign language but mostly follows the grammatical structure of the english language. When PSE is used, there is often a larger amount of words being mouthed than in ASL. The only grammatical rule from ASL that is used is that articles such as “the” and “to” are cut out. While PSE is commonly used, it is less conceptual and not an official language. It is most often used by hearing parents and even interpreters.

SEE is when the complete english grammar is used, including the articles being signed. It is often used by those who are new to sign language as well as in deaf schools when they want the students to begin speaking the english language. When using SEE, there is even more oral movement than both ASL and PSE. It is also very lengthy because it uses the largest amount of words when being compared to ASL and PSE and both the prefixes and suffixes of the words must be signed. While SEE is easy to learn, it must be understood that it is not a real language.

It is very important to understand the differences between ASL, PSE, and SEE if you intend on studying or using sign language. It is acceptable to use both PSE and SEE however, it is important to know that it is not the same as ASL. There are many similarities and differences between each, and it is important to know them. ASL is a very important language that should be recognized and practiced correctly.

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