

Introduction

Research shows that one in every 12 children has experienced speech, voice, and language disorders in the past year, impacting their social, emotional, cognitive, and academic skills (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). American Sign Language (ASL) is a language that is typically used with children with hearing loss, but research has shown that exposure to ASL can improve children's communication skills for both typically developing children and those with disabilities (Millar, et al., 2006). Parents or caregivers are the primary contributors when it comes to teaching young children communication skills, but parent's confidence with exposing typically developing children to ASL is unknown.

Research Questions & Methods

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. How confident do parents with no previous exposure to ASL feel using sign language to communicate with their child before and after viewing videos describing the potential benefits of ASL and common signs?
2. How confident do parents feel using ASL to communicate with their child before and after viewing videos describing the potential benefits of ASL and common signs?
3. Are parents more likely to use ASL with their child after viewing videos describing the potential benefits of ASL and common signs?

These questions were targeted using an anonymous Qualtrics survey for parents and caregivers of children ages birth to three years old. 106 caregivers opened the survey and began answering questions, but 46 caregivers completed all of the questions. Of these, 14 of these participants reported no familiarity with ASL; however, only 10 of these participants completed all questions. This survey assessed parents' and caregivers' knowledge, comfortability, confidence, and likelihood of teaching their children American Sign Language before and after watching two informational videos included in the survey.

Results

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare parents' reported likelihood of using ASL with their child before and after educational videos about ASL. For parents with no familiarity with ASL prior to the survey, there was a significant difference in the scores for prior to viewing the videos ($M=3.38$, $SD=.47$) and after viewing the videos ($M=4.33$, $SD=.82$); $t(9)=-4.72$, $p<.001$, $d=1.43$. When considering all parents, including those with familiarity with sign language, there was still a significant difference in parents' reported likelihood of using ASL prior to viewing the videos ($M=4.33$, $SD=.76$) and after viewing the videos ($M=4.59$, $SD=.69$); $t(45)=-2.732$, $p=.009$, $d=.358$, but with a much smaller effect size.

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare parents' reported confidence with using ASL with their child before and after educational videos about ASL. For parents with no familiarity with ASL prior to the survey, there was a significant difference in the scores for prior to viewing the videos ($M=2.33$, $SD=.94$) and after viewing the videos ($M=3.88$, $SD=.74$); $t(9)=-9.914$, $p<.001$, $d=1.83$. When considering all parents, there was still a significant difference in parents' reported confidence with using ASL prior to viewing the videos ($M=3.60$, $SD=1.20$) and after viewing the videos ($M=4.24$, $SD=.77$); $t(45)=-5.21$, $p<.001$, $d=.63$, but with a smaller effect size.

Sample Video



Discussion

These results indicate that both parents with no previous exposure to ASL and parents with exposure to ASL benefited from being informed about the potential benefits of ASL and being shown a few demonstrations of common signs. Parents or caregivers also reported that they were more confident in teaching their child ASL after viewing the educational videos. Data showed that after watching these videos, parents or caregivers are more likely to use ASL with their children. Although these results support initial hypotheses to the research questions, there were a few limitations in the data that we examined. The survey had a high attrition rate, in which many caregivers began the survey, but did not finish. Additionally, approximately half of the participants had a graduate degree, which may skew these results. These limitations suggest that the findings may not be representative of the general population. Future research could benefit from including a more diverse sample to strengthen the validity of these results.

References



Parents who are unfamiliar with ASL

