

Heritage Language Learners Video Transcript

Module 3

Christine: Hello this video discusses how we as parents can support our KODA children and their language development in both ASL and English.

Lisa: I'm very excited to be here and have this opportunity to provide two different perspectives and to be able to discuss and collaborate children that grow up as KODAS we really cherish and value them. I'm Lisa Perry Burkart I'm a deaf mom and I have two boys. My oldest is deaf he's 14 and the other is 12 and is a KODA.

Christine: I have four grown children that are KODA's. Their ages are 25, 23, 20 and 18. So I'll talk about my experience growing up with them plus we both work at the compass program with Sorenson that supports CODAs that are 18 or older who have a goal of becoming an interpreter.

We have a condensed interpreter training program that helps develop their language and understanding of interpreting technology as a whole through a 10-month program. The Sorenson team has worked with over 300 CODAs supporting them to become interpreters because we see their language and their understanding of deaf culture. I think this correlates with being able to help KODA's and support their development of language.

Lisa: That's what I really love to see! Seeing their language developing and their language growing. It's very important for them to see facial expressions being able to learn signs. All the exposure that CODAs get. CODAs can receptivity see all that and take it and adapt it in their own way. It's the same way for hearing kids and hearing families. The inflection of the voices the different cultures. The way they speak or the different events they do. They're able to hear all of that and know that and take that in. It's just like that with CODAS and deaf families.

Christine: Often, CODAs grow up and don't really get to talk about the outside world. Most conversations are related to families, like go clean your room, help me cook, your grandma 's coming, that is family communication. It means their signs are comfortable related to families. If you want to grow their language in different situations like maybe a school discussion about science and how plants become green or something like that. This gives them exposure. Maybe take them out to see you at your place of business, where you work so they can see different environments. That helps them see some different signs, ways, and vocabulary. Different vocabulary different forms of communication. This gives them more exposure not just at home communicating just a different type of communication. Maybe some Formal and informal exposure like a science lecture or platform interpreting so that helps them develop and grow.

Lisa: That's a perfect Segway into Basic signing versus in-depth signing being able to be totally immersed and sharing different experiences. For example, you know I read a lot of books

growing up and I would sign those books for example the five little monkeys or just other common books. For example, Biscuit was their favorite book it's about a dog. It has multiple books to go with the series.

So, I would read one story and I would sign it to him. Then when I finished, I would say let's read this paragraph and I would say you remember what happened to the food it fell over here, and my son would laugh and receptively he was gathering it all. Then I would say it's your turn and we were talking back-and-forth and he'd be able to tell me the story of what he read, and he'd be able to incorporate it and include the signs he learned. That just one example of not just teaching basic signs but going in depth.

Christine: So, learning actions and consequences go together. You know if you think mom is mad, but you have to connect the story. Really you know there are many parents that will focus on nouns like ball, cookie, milk, or dog. Just those easy nouns but we really have to have those abstract dreams about love and sharing and peace and those abstract concepts of actions and what the consequences and results and how those are perceived. Even if my actions caused them to look at me differently. They also need to know all these different signs to provide the kids abilities to discuss those and know how to sign it.

Lisa: Like for dinner, it's Best to establish early on that at dinner everyone signs. When they're outside playing with their brothers and sisters and friends signing is not necessary. At the dinner table it's expected that everyone has to sign. Make sure all the adults agree that signing will happen at dinner. Sometimes like when my hearing parents come over for dinner my kids will talk and sometimes forget we are to sign. We all realize we have the same goal. So maybe start off it with a conversation about what was the best thing that happened to your day or if you've heard something awful has happened maybe talk about What's happening at work or maybe something you've heard on the news. Bringing up different topics is always great. This way maybe you're giving them practical experiences maybe talk about saving money or establishing a savings account at the bank. Just practice conversations. Maybe talk about setting up a savings account. You know maybe say you want to set up a credit account and the kid comes card back and the kids says no I'm too young! Just things like that to create conversations. Maybe use Dinner time to maybe challenge their language abilities.

Yes absolutely. I thought about something related to that. In my family we have 2 hearing and 2 deaf. One child is a CODA and my husband's hearing, and he signs very well. I'm trying to think of how to incorporate that like he said talk about credit cards of money and discussions about life on the news. You know at home we've already set up using ASL at dinner. We all sit around the table, and we talk. Once in a while my hearing child will start talking and then realize oh, I'm sorry and we have to bring them back to signing We already set up that ASL will be done at home.

Christine: It's cool to set that up when they're younger so that dinner becomes an enjoyable family time. If you set it up early, it will become customary when they're in their preteen years then if you wait to try to set it up later. It will become more difficult. If you set it up early on it

will become an expectation. Really, it's never too late. You can always add more exposure to kids and take them to different events.

With their language they won't learning ASL and English parallel. They may learn more ASL some or English some. It won't always be simultaneous. When they are home, they're going to be exposed more to ASL then at school they are hearing English and more vocabulary.

The more we're able to catch up and show them the signs that match with new vocabulary and being able to tell them more stories and show them different signs and ways to sign things. English they're learning adverbs and adjectives and they always have their language base. There's a lot of options for communication not just ASL or just English.

Lisa: I wanted to add something related to that example. How they can learn simultaneously with exposure of English and ASL. Maybe we go to a restaurant and explaining to them that the food is great and maybe expand on the history of that and other countries the food is derived from. Maybe they don't care about that restaurant but still having that dialogue with them and going into a deeper conversation. Another example with my husband's power washing business. Explaining the understanding of owning a business and the steps you have to do. It's kind of the same concept of learning what you do first, second, third and fourth. Learning the steps. The same thing in ASL. Like where money comes, from you know it just doesn't appear and so just kind of talking about the online banking and that type of in-depth interaction and being able to teach them receptively and including all of that. 10:47

Christine: I know one cool skill that many Kudas and Codas have is being able to function voicing and signing. They haven't developed the skill yet 2 step back to be able to do that type of interpretation. To be able to analyze my language. Being able to look at my facial expressions and say that's really cool how you expressed that. Maybe work with them on what is the equivalent sound of that in English maybe huffing and puffing is something that is equivalent. Maybe what in English version making it more fascinating more exciting and maybe what ASL makes it dramatic or more interesting. To finally start realizing what their strengths are in ASL what their strengths are in English. Or maybe a funny pun in English but to sign it it's not funny how can I make it funny Puns with ASL you know doing that back and forth with English and ASL and giving them that metalinguistic skill so they can analyze each language if you help develop that it's very powerful.

Lisa: Yes! Something I just thought of, that's a perfect example. There are a lot of stories you can incorporate this in to. With books for example, one time with my child we were reading a story about a whale, I showed them the sign for a whale. My child and I talked about the whale we talked about different things you know what some other animal signs with that handshape a rhino, then a cow just seeing that "Y" handshape being able to play with ASL. It's really not connected to that particular book but we're talking about the one hand shape and we're able to

expand on that. We can include that in the language and maybe you can use that as an example as well.

Christine: That's really cool. A CODA told me her mom was particularly skilled at telling stories. Her mom was able to come to her class to teach sign and tell the story the woman who ate everything. The way the book went she did these same signs after every page and by the end of the book the classmates were all just laughing and doing those signs. When the class went to lunch the kids were still doing these signs the whole time. That rhythm for that in English that there is a lot of repetition and it of connected in ASL as well.

Lisa: That's wonderful. The other side concept may be different events in your area. Something that is popular now is pickleball. Maybe Deaf hosted events, just different things in the community most of the time it's not adults only you can bring your kids with you so they can get that exposure to other signs. They are able to see the culture and the tendencies in the communities and having that experience. Maybe like my book club for example. When the women are chatting, my son will come up and observe I don't make him leave I actually let him get that exposure. He chuckles and then leaves. And that's fine because that's part of his being raised in the exposure that he needs.

Christine: We talked about Pickleball tournaments. Take them to those tournaments. Maybe plan a vacation, look at the maps to figure out how you're going to get there. Discuss the many English cities burg or town. It's the same as our signs for these different cities. We have patterns in ASL we have patterns in English. You see those and that opens their world.

Lisa: I love going on road trips and playing the alphabet game, like C for Chevy and then they have to describe what it looks like. If it's a truck give those descriptions of the car different things and just play those games in the car. It's not going to be perfect, but they are learning and having fun and that will help it stick with them.

Christine: The mentality that school will take care and teach our children is not right. As a family we must teach and give them the tools to support their language growth and development for both signing and English. Family is very key in that growth and development. Parents giving them that support will make them more confident and will give them more skills in the future. For example, negotiation, common sense, and street skills that we want to encourage. Being able to communicate with different people we as parents must give them that support.

Lisa: Another example like war stories. Look at what your kids are attracted to, what motivates them. For example, marvel movies, my son loves marvel movies, Spiderman is one of his favorites. Working with him on how he's able to suspend his web and we go back and forth and just kind of make up signs. The point is to let them be creative and let their creativity come out.

Christine: Is it deaf community? No, it's deaf communities. We each have our own ethics, my local community, my family, my culture. It gives kids the opportunity to be immersed in that

culture the more you sign to them. A good example learning Black ASL, they need get to get that opportunity that rich exposure while they are young. It's a nice opportunity to discuss different Stand-up cultural views. Some words maybe you are talking about someone that is cheap but can work and show different signs person is thrifty or knows how to budget. Discussing the difference of those perspectives. It can be the same, but it makes kids understand the community values or the family values. Talking about donations and what does that look like not giving everything but knowing how to give wisely. Just talking about values community values and family values are always important.

Lisa: That's very important. World events and things that are going on those things will impact community. Talking about different holiday. There are so many events that you can talk about. For example, they are going to school and hearing all these things. Maybe kids are talking about things that are going on in the world and culture. Maybe they're coming home and they're feeling torn, and you be open to having that dialogue with them. Puling it up on your phone to say here is what is on the news. Having that discussion with them is so important. Asking why they're having that feeling and just give him that exposure will allow you to connect and help them grow.

Christine: Sometimes parents and teachers worry with signing and speaking that it is too much. They say you need to focus on one but actually across the world most people are bilingual. America is kind of odd, most people only know one language. Really two languages give such exposure to the brain being able to switch back and forth between 2 languages and learning them simultaneous. It gives the child a lot of connecting skills like self-management, self-discipline, having good judgment, understanding details. Processing information and digesting that information being able to understand key points. Being able to connect to a variety of people and not be sheltered under your core circle. This is because they become comfortable in 2 languages. It helps you develop the skill to be able to handle switching between languages with no problem. That will benefit them as they grow and as they become older it helps with brain processing it's a huge benefit growing up bilingual.

Lisa: You are right! Generally, all over the world they tend to view that you should only learn one language at a time, or there are concerns that if you try to learn both languages at the same time one will outweigh the other. If you allow them to absorb as much as they can learning sign language and English for example, if they go to the store, they're able to hear things also learn in sign language at the same time. With their grandparents they know how to turn it on and off for both languages. They can open more knowing 2 languages and learning how to decipher which one to use. Experiencing every day life helps with that.

Christine: Discussing languages, you always need to discuss if there are errors with kids. Sometimes you'll see different patterns with your kids maybe they're using handshapes maybe the wrong way, but the concept of the sign is right. For example, my daughter she signed that this way and yes it was cute but if I left it like that as an adult it would be wrong. We don't want to say, hey that was wrong! Maybe mirror what they're doing and sign it the correct way

or maybe they're doing signs backwards. Always answer back with the correct sign to show them what is right. It might not change right away but eventually they'll understand. Sometimes, discussing the sign and say you know you had the location, movement, palm orientation and sign right, just the handshape was wrong. Explain to adjust that because you got four out of five right. Recognize what they're doing right, and this helps encourage them. Sometimes you may see them signing more English because trying to overlap two languages sometimes is hard. I will sign and mirror and clean up that ASL, but it should be more of natural flow of thing. Kids need to see something 15 to 20 times to absorb it fully. When they're around their peers the same age signing there's more of a chance that they'll be able to adjust faster. Parents preaching to them of course our impact goes up and down depending on their age and what our relationship is. But peers if you happen to get with other Koda family's, other families with deaf kids. They'll pick up from other adult's other kids and it's just a lot of exposure it's really cool.

Lisa: That is a perfect example, with my second child the sign for except they would sign accept. They also signed kids this way. It was cute but, we always showed them the correct way to sign it. They will eventually adapt to that this helps them expand on their vocabulary in English as well. Working with them on different vocabulary words helps expand their mind. Once we have the foundation down it is mind blowing for them. It's very rich for them to be able to learn both languages.

Christine: Codas will often sign things incorrectly. Like the sign for alive they would sign a lion! For sushi they would sign it this way that looks like hot dog. They would think it sounded like something the way the brain works they were grabbing things fast. They weren't wrong their brain is just working so fast, and it jumps before they can think. And we laugh about it and that helps them though. It's OK for us to have family signs. We sign broccoli like this because it sounds kind of like a motorcycle. Its kind of like a family joke. Telling other people, we sign it this way they would look at us crazy. We make sure and tell the this is a secret family joke. We don't take this outside our family. That's part of playing with the language.

Lisa: That's truly things that you cherish! Cherish your sign, cherish your experiences. Expose your children to as much as possible for both languages, both cultures have that pride with deaf parents and cherish all of that.

Christine: Two languages are really a gift! If you invest in your kids they are shining because of your investment. Thank you for watching good luck and good luck raising your kids

Thank you. Love to all!