

Heritage Language Learners Video Transcript

Module 3 Part 2

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 Lisa Perry Burkart I'm a deaf mom and I have two children. My oldest is deaf he's 14 and the other is 12 and is a KODA.

Christine: I have four grown children that are CODA's. Their ages are 25, 23, 20 and 18. We use CODA for those that are over 18. We both work at Sorenson with many Codas who have a goal of becoming an interpreter. Here at Sorenson we have a program called Compass. It is a condensed 1-year interpreter training program that helps develop their language and understanding of interpreting technology as a whole. 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. This helps us in being able to know how to support them. I think this correlates with being able to help KODA's and support their development of language.

Lisa: Yes, we value our KODA children in their everyday lives. They're not only able to hear they're also able to see receptively and be able to hear and get all that exposure able to be influenced by your families and all of that is amazing.

Christine: All over the world most people know two languages. It's very odd here in America because we only know one language. Most are able to speak French, German, Two or three different languages. So being able to do that and having that exposure is amazing. Plus, they have a field of study called heritage learners to support kids and heritage learners. They speak one language at home, and they go to school and learn a different language. They have all of that to best support the kids. They're able to take their theory their structure and to give that to figure out how to best support their kids.

Lisa: That's beautiful! One thing I thought of was, maybe you've experienced talking with your children with books. When I look back with my children and books I've always gone ahead and signed all the way through to where they can receptively see it and I can ask them what happened in the end. And they can sign back to me the things I've signed, so receptively they're able to see and show me what they saw. And then sometimes again we will open the book and will look at the pictures and they can make connections and then I take the book away and say tell me what you remembered of the book. It might not be perfect but it's still they're reading, and receptive skills are connecting and the expressions and all of that helps them be able to express. It might be for example during playtime we do descriptive signs with them to show a whale and water. And then I might say hey for that Y handshape what another animal you can

you sign with that. They'll say oh a rhino, and a cow, that's ASL! Maybe the English word you know maybe you might think it's off topic but it's not!

Christine: I love to be able to play with signs. Playing with the language. You can't just be concrete with a book like flower, ball, cookie. Don't limit your children! Don't limit to just nouns. Teach them signs like dream, peace, and love. Teach them abstract things, discuss different words play with the language. Plus, it's important to think about what the kids are around if the kids only see signs at home, it might be signs like grandmas coming, clean your room and time to eat are common words. Don't just limit it to home conversations. Find out what different subjects they're learning in school like, don't be a bully, or the safety processes, more complicated terms. Make sure you show them different perspectives at home different complicated signs. What's happening in the world. Take your kids to deaf club or deaf church with other friends. Look for opportunities outside of home. Take them to work, take them to the deaf school, different sites. Take them to your doctor's appointments with an interpreter so they can learn different medical terminology. This allows them to grow their vocabulary and not just home vocabulary.

Lisa: Your examples are wonderful. I've got some additions to that. My kids father owns a shop. And we went there and looked around and realized the things that he has to have at work are different than what he has to have at home. You know at home we teach them this is what you do first, second, third. Like you have to get up, get ready, and go, you know life everyday skills. We connect that with work like where money comes from. Explaining to them about a credit card, how does the money get on the card. You know just simple exposure figuring out a budget, interest things like that. Explaining things from start to finish and how you have to do it over and over and over again sometimes just a vicious circle and their minds are blown from everyday world life. The simple thing to do is to bring them out and expose them to different things. Going to the store, how people interact and then watching how I text back and forth with someone. That's the kind of exposure they need.

Christine: Talking about money, maybe taking kids to the bank. Helping them set up a savings account. How checking and savings account work. Showing them how to take money from their birthdays or from things that they earn and putting it in the savings account. Letting them learn how all that works explaining credit cards and how that works as well. Talk about taxes and about finances. This helps them have a rich understanding of the world. One thing that's powerful you need to start when they are young, is having your kids sit around the dinner table together with you. Set it up to where everyone at the dinner table must sign. When you're out and about during your day that's not necessary but when you're at the dinner table signing is a must. Even when grandparents come to visit make sure you tell them the rule is everyone must sign at dinner that way everyone is included in the conversation. We can talk about our day bad or good and we can make plans for the weekend or whatever it may be. If you set that up early on it will continue through the teen years. Because with teenagers it can be rough so setting that up having dinner together and signing only will go a long way.

Lisa: You're right that's very important at the table. In my home we're not all deaf there's two hearing and two deaf. Myself and my oldest son are deaf. My husband signs but he's hearing but he sounds and then of course my other son is a CODA. He doesn't label himself as hearing. In this house we set it up as an ASL home. We make sure we can see the language around. Yes, sometimes we have moments outside that we speak but when we're in the house at the table sitting around, we do sign. That's very important to set that standard and expectation up in the beginning.

Christine: One thing you can discuss at the dinner table, maybe something happened during my day maybe my boss wants to delay my project things like that. It brings them to questions like you have to negotiate with your boss? And I explained that things have to be a priority and I have to figure out my timeline and looking at what is our priority and how I figure out to set vacations and such with my family. Second kids can see how language can be used as a tool. Or maybe even related to school kids might talk about they have two papers do at the same time and I say let's practice, how you would talk with your teacher. Maybe say I want to do my best for this paper but at the same time I have another paper that is due can I have an extra day for my paper so I can do my best. And assign and use that language but it helps them to use metalinguistic skills. The technical structure helps them to be able to take a step back in both ASL and English, so they become better communicators not just using sign language but maybe learning the best way to ask. Not just using sign language and speaking but maybe taking a step back for the purpose of what's the best way to ask. What my goal is? And how can I convince clearly what happened. And how to use a language for a purpose.

Lisa: Maybe you might be worried that they might learn ASL more than English. That won't happen, as a CODA they're able to learn language together. They will be exposed to English and ASL at the same time. Having ASL & English exposure they'll overlap each other up all the time. The world tends to learn new languages and they're able to pick up and support each other in both languages. I have a great example that made me think about my youngest son and his science class. He reads reviews and studies for his test and was struggling. I was thinking, he is a visual learner. I had him explain it and describe to me what it looks like, and he was able to. He had a picture in his mind and then now expressing he can focus on the words and what the words mean. He was able to spell it out as he went through the he's able to connect all those again. He was able to allow the two languages to connect and it helps with his school learning.

Christine: It's very important to give them the connection with ASL and English. You can't expect schools to take care of the kids your kids cannot be split between ASL and English they will overlap. Their mind wants to express the best way they can, so you must help your kids connect and navigate through English and ASL. Help them find their patterns. For example, in English many English phrases for like burg or town also have ASL signs so maybe show them the same sign for the city like Chicago, Rochester, Tucson. That way they're able to connect. Leaving their schoolwork alone will never be enough. They will always be behind. Always support your kids with learning language. They will learn ASL and English sometimes at the same time sometimes not. You will have more exposure to ASL at home and at school they'll be exposed

more to English. Give them the words they need in ASL. Fill in those blanks. This will help them grow.

Lisa: That's beautiful being able to see the possibilities of them growing. Other things we talked about maybe their exposure of knowing what's the appropriate approach. How to speak with supervisor, the news, different happenings, or different events. I know with school and when you ask your kids how your day was, they usually answer fine or good, that's it, they kind of close that window there's no conversation. I don't like it! I want to pull that information out of them. I will elaborate and say in social studies did you talk about what's going on in the news, they usually answer yes and maybe they're talking about voting. I'll ask them you know what's going on with voting and that gets them to talking. That opens the doors and opens the opportunities to ask me for a particular sign. That way I can give them a sign back and they're able to remember that.

Christine: I love when they ask me. Often CODAs will sign what it sounds like, my kids would sign a lion for alive! Or we signed Sprite with this sign. We laugh and figure out together and kind of play detective to figure out what sign goes with that word. We don't ever want them to feel like they must know everything. The process of we are learning together and communicating while it's happening.

Lisa: When you were talking about your son for Sprite and the misunderstandings about that I had a similar example. With my child the sign for except they would sign accept. I kept having to ask them what they were accepting. Yes, it was cute but, we went back and forth till they understood what it meant conceptually. They might do this sign for long backwards. They might sign kid this way. When they're doing something wrong always mirror back what the correct sign is. Those signs will eventually correct themselves.

Christine: Most people will adapt their register by being around their peers. If they're around other deaf kids it'll be a more chance of being able to adjust the signs to being natural. If it's only their parents or a few deaf in the family, you'll have to figure out how to mirror and discuss the correct ways. Also, teaching how signs have five parameters handshape, movement, palm orientation, location, and facial expressions. For example, when they do the sign the wrong way, encourage them on what they got correct. Sometimes, discussing the sign and say you know you had the location, movement, palm orientation and sign right, just the handshape was wrong. Make sure we're encouraging them and not discouraging them when they are signing. Make sure we are positive when we are giving them feedback. Try to be as supportive as possible. Playing games with everyone. Make it a family project. If you invest in your kids now, as adults you will be able to have great conversations. Don't tell them you will teach them later. It's never too late to invest in your kids. So have a family celebration! You will be able to get together with your grandkids and those future generations. The brain can handle two languages! It's easy the benefits are unbelievable. It's a big gift for your children to be able to do two languages! Support that gift!

Lisa: Yes! It is a gift! One of my most inspirational experiences was we're seeing the gift of many different things that popped up. Going to school for class discussion, the teacher asked how many of you know any other languages? My son Trey raise his hand and she said do you know Spanish or French and he said no ASL! And the teacher asked could he show it in class. He was able to show the days of the week and the months and different animals. The teacher was really excited to see this, and he was able to show his identity. That truly is a gift!

Christine: Pride, confidence, collaborating, family it's worth investing! Thank you for watching!