

Deaf Culture Question of the Week - Feb. 1-5, 2010

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Which ASL verbs below are “Subject/Object Incorporating Verbs”?

- a. To-think**
- b. To-meet**
- c. To-give**
- d. To-live**

Scroll down for the answer.

Answer: “b” **to-meet** and “c” **to-give** are Subject/Object Incorporating Verbs.

What are Subject/Object Incorporating Verbs? Because ASL is expressed with motions of two hands and arms and uses space in front of the signer it has a unique property. A complete sentence can be expressed using one verb sign. There are a subset of verbs in ASL that can tell “who did something” = the subject of the sentence and “to whom something was done” = the object or indirect object of the sentence all in one sign.

For example, holding the dominant signing hand with index finger extended near the chest and the non-dominant signing hand with index finger extended out in front and in the direction of the person you are signing with and moving the dominant signing hand forward to touch the non-dominant hand, the signer expresses the sentence “I meet you.” The subject “I” and the object “you” are incorporated into the verb sign. Only one sign is needed to express a complete thought. Because space and movement are used all of the sentences, for example, “You meet me.” “I meet he/she.” “He/she meets me.” etc. can be expressed.

To-give uses one hand in the configuration of holding something with fingers and thumb, palm in upward orientation. Moving this handshape from space immediately in front of signer's chest outward toward person one is communicating with will mean "I give to you." Moving the hand from the "you" location in front of the signer back toward the chest area of the signer will mean "You give to me." One sign expresses a complete thought, a complete sentence.

Verb signs like **to-think** and **to-live** cannot be used in this way. Subjects and objects must be expressed with separate signs when these verbs are used. Thus, "I live in Vancouver." would be expressed **Me/I live Vancouver**. Three separate signs are needed to express this sentence. The verb **to-live** cannot be moved in space to incorporate the subject and the object. The same holds for the sign **to-think**.

Subject/object incorporating verbs ---- Pretty cool, huh?