

## Deaf Culture Question of the Week – Feb. 22 – 28, 2010

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Our Kindergarten/1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher posted pictures outside her classroom with the caption “How ASL Expresses Many”. The pictures showed our kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students demonstrating various ways that ASL expresses “more than one”/”plurals”. Given the question, How does ASL express many? Students thought about this, discussed it and came up with their examples of “more than one” in ASL. The pictures were naturally very cute but what these pictures represented was profound. Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> graders were examining their knowledge and use of ASL, thinking about and discussing the linguistic property of “more than one”. Next to these pictures was a similar poster with the caption “Sneaky S”. On it there were examples of the use of the letter “s” to represent “more than one” in English. Our K/1 teacher had drawn the connection between “more than one” in ASL with how this concept is represented in English. This is an excellent example of bilingual instruction and it is these posters in our school hallway that inspire this week’s Deaf Culture Question of the Week.

Which of the below is not an example of representing “more than one” in ASL?

- a. BOOK+++ (repeating the sign BOOK in three locations in space)
- b. BOOK CL:BB (signing BOOK and then showing a stack of books using two flat hands showing a stack of)
- c. BOOK+S (signing BOOK and then adding the “s” handshape)
- d. BOOK MANY (signing BOOK and then a quantifier like, SEVERAL, A-FEW, MANY)
- e. BOOK THREE (signing BOOK and then a specific number)

Scroll down for the answer.

Answer: “c” BOOK+s is the only example above that does not represent one of ways that ASL expresses “more than one”. This example comes from the signed English signing systems that were invented in the 1970s in an effort to represent English with hand signs. These systems with names such as Signing Exact English, Seeing Essential English, Signed English etc. are not natural languages. They are attempts to represent an oral/spoken language using manual signs. Examples “a”, “b”, “d” and “e” are examples of various ways that ASL expresses “more than one”.