

Dunham, J. K. (1985). *The transparency of manual signs in a linguistic and environmental nonlinguistic context*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette. Lyle L. Lloyd (Advisor): 83 pages of text, 141 references, 5 appendices, 17 tables, and 2 figures.

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This research is designed to investigate the iconicity of manual signs within both linguistic (two-sign combination) and environmental nonlinguistic (background locales) contexts. Iconicity is the degree to which a sign visually represents its referent. Transparency, one type of iconicity, is defined as how guessable a sign is without the referent present. Previous transparency research has been conducted using single signs in neutral settings. To date, there have been no studies exploring the effects of iconicity in two-sign combinations, an important step in the development of linguistic competence. The sign combinations used in this study were verb + noun phrase and varied in iconicity. Professionals assert that functional communication training should take place in the natural environment. Again, there have been no studies conducted to determine whether signs are more transparent or guessable in environmental contexts. It was hypothesized that the guessability of signs could be increased when presented in linguistic and environmental non-linguistic contexts to moderately retarded adolescents. A two-way analysis of variance revealed that the presentation of signs in both linguistic and environmental contexts did not have significant effects on subjects' (Ss') guessing accuracies under four scoring categories. Further analysis indicated that this conclusion did not change even when the iconicity values of the signs, as judged by normal adults, were taken into account.

Item transparency values for Ss in the present study were compared with normal adult data resulting in extremely low, nonsignificant correlations. Thus, low transparency scores obtained from normal adults under stringent laboratory conditions (single sign in natural context) do not relate well to scores obtained from moderately retarded adolescents. Nevertheless, an error analysis revealed that although normal adult Ss possess a large vocabulary, the two S groups possess many common errors or exhibit similar guessing behaviors.