

Minnesota Deaf Heritage – Classifiers

Background Information

Video Information

This video was originally produced by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Metro Division (DHHSD) of the Minnesota Department of Human Services in 1996. The presenters were Robert “Bob” Cook (BC) and Dale Finke (DF).

Translation Notes

A note about translation of this video: The presentation was recorded in American Sign Language (ASL). The presenters used ASL as a first language, and the signed information was translated into vernacular or spoken English by interpreters.

This transcript is based on the spoken English information.

Actions are in brackets.

Transcript of Classifiers

Key to names:

BC = Robert “Bob” Cook (signs in American Sign Language, voiced in English by interpreters)

DF = Dale Finke (signs in American Sign Language, voiced in English by interpreters – he plays the “hand” and does some demonstrations)

Hand (played by DF): Hey, Hey. Come here! Bob! Bob! Get over here, now! C’mon!

BC: HI! My name is Bob Cook. I’m going to be explaining classifiers.

Hand (played by DF): Yeah, yeah, yeah. Classifiers. Classifiers. Right now. Yeah, c’mon Bob.

BC: Classifiers! We have a long list of them. We are going to be showing you them one at a time and then explaining what it can mean, so that you can understand them. We are going to start with the “C” shape. The bent C. It can be used for something like this. Cup. Bottle. Jug. It can be used for pipe. It can even be used to show a paperweight, like this.

The handshape for the letter “C” could be used to indicate a very thick book, or you could use it to show a car which is covered in a thick layer of snow.

A small “C” could be used to show a campaign button, a silver dollar, a large cookie or a hockey puck that flies through the air.

The “B” handshape is used to show something plain, a wooden board, books lined up on shelves or showing the shelves themselves.

The “A” handshape can be used to show glasses lined up, vases with flowers and where they are placed, or to show bar glasses lined up in a row.

The “F” handshape can be used to show buttons down the front of a shirt or on the cuffs. It can also be used to show coins or the tokens that you would use for a bus ride.

The “1” handshape is used to point up or down or to show somebody is walking, whether they’re skipping or they’re limping.

The “V” handshape could be used to indicate a rabbit, a bird or a horse.

The “4” could be used to show four people walking together and all of them sitting down.

The “bent 5” can be used to show where buildings are located, such as the Hollywood homes of the Stars.

There is a classifier for an airplane which can show how it takes off, flies through the air performing acrobatics and then lands again.

The “1” handshape can be used to show a pencil, showing it being sharpened, placing it behind your ear, chewing on it or tucking it in your pocket. It could also be used to show a person walking. Or, if there are two people walking, use 2 fingers. Add the thumb for a third person walking. You could say, “The three of us are going to play golf,” or, “The four of us are walking together,” with the use of four fingers.

The “bent 1” handshape can also be used to indicate a fishing pole. You can show the pole being set up and once a fish is hooked you can show the pole bobbing and going all over the place. When talking about someone parking their car at a meter, the “bent 1” can be used to show taking coins and putting them into the meter, or it can be used to show beams from a satellite.

The “G” handshape is used to indicate something thin such as a book or a road covered with ice. Or, use it to show you were wearing a very thin jacket.

An upside down “V” shape could be used to show an individual walking, show someone diving, show a person dancing, jumping around or could be used to show a saw horse.

[No voice is used in this section. Pictures are shown of a glider, piano keyboard, vegetable platter, and toothbrushes - twice - the second time also indicating the colors of the toothpaste. Dale then shows how they would be indicated in sign, using mostly classifiers, plus a few descriptors.]

Two people were walking along. It was night time and down came this white circular object. They thought, “WOW!” and wondered, “What is that?” The object came closer, and as it came closer it got bigger and bigger and landed right in front of them. They just stared in shock. They looked at each other and then at the object again. It was a huge flying saucer. Then the door opened and some kind of being came walking out with this huge head and green antennae and large eyes. They looked at each other in fright as their hair stood on end. And they took off and went running away.

BBRRRRR it's cold. Let's put on our jacket and pull on our mittens and pull them way up. Let's put on a helmet and slide the face shield in place. Slide on some knee high boots and head out walking. Hop on our snowmobiles, start it, rev it. Now we're riding along on the trail over the hills and valleys with the trees speeding by. And then gun it and the sled takes off leaving behind a rooster tail of snow.

A car pulls up and two people climb out. They walk up to the door and the automatic doors swing open. They get a cart and each starts walking down the aisle alongside the cart. One person picks up an item and puts it in the cart. They then pick up the second item, shake it and put it in the cart as well. They pick up a third item, a very thin item, asking the other person, "Do we need this?" "Yes," is the response, and in the cart it goes. They then see this huge item and want to put that in the cart. It doesn't quite fit so they have to put it on the rack underneath the cart. Well, the cart is so heavy with their load that the cart is tipping backwards as they try pushing it through the aisles. They bump into another customer with a cart and carefully maneuver around each other. They finally get through.

BOB: I had this idea, a vision and so I decided to go to the shop. I got this piece of wood; I laid it out on the table. I measured it and I took my pencil from behind my ear. But, it needs to be sharpened. So I sharpened it in the pencil sharpener and then began to measure and mark. I set the pencil aside and plugged in the saw. I got everything ready to cut and the blade was spinning. I began to cut the wood, and as I did, I cut off my finger and off it flew.

This is the handshape for an airplane. There were many airplanes taking off. They ascended into the air and into formation. The pilot scanned the horizon. As he did so, he spotted a fleet of ships. They too were in formation. He motioned to the other pilots to look down and then they all fell out of formation into a nose dive to attack the ships. They opened fire. The ships prepared their guns and returned fire at the aircraft. One of the planes got taken out and spun into the ocean in a blaze of fire. It soon sank to the bottom of the sea.