



Administration of Standardized Aphasia Batteries in American Sign Language

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Abstract

For more than 20 years the Laboratory for Cognitive Neuroscience at The Salk Institute has studied Sign Language Aphasia. This research program utilizes a variety of standardized Aphasia tests used in diagnosing spoken language Aphasia. The use of these tests has raised a number of issues worth considering before administering tests to a deaf user of American Sign Language (ASL). This poster will highlight issues related to testing in ASL, illustrate adaptations we have made in order to utilize standardized tests and introduce a web-based utility for those who may need to assess a sign language user for aphasia in the future.

Background

Brain Organization: Clues from Sign Aphasia Research Program

- More than 20 Years of Research
- Team of Deaf and Hearing Researchers
- Use of “Salk” Diagnostc Aphasia Examination (our modified version of the Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination)
- We also use other language and visuospatial probes
- Used with brain damaged deaf signers and control deaf subjects

Problems with Using Current Standardized Tests Designed for Hearing People with Deaf Signers

- English and ASL are Different at Every Linguistic Level, in fact signed languages in general differ from spoken languages
- Instructions May Not Translate Well into ASL (the intent of the directions may not be clearly conveyed)
- Some Test Items May be not be good for use with ASL
- Some Tests are Not Suited to ASL

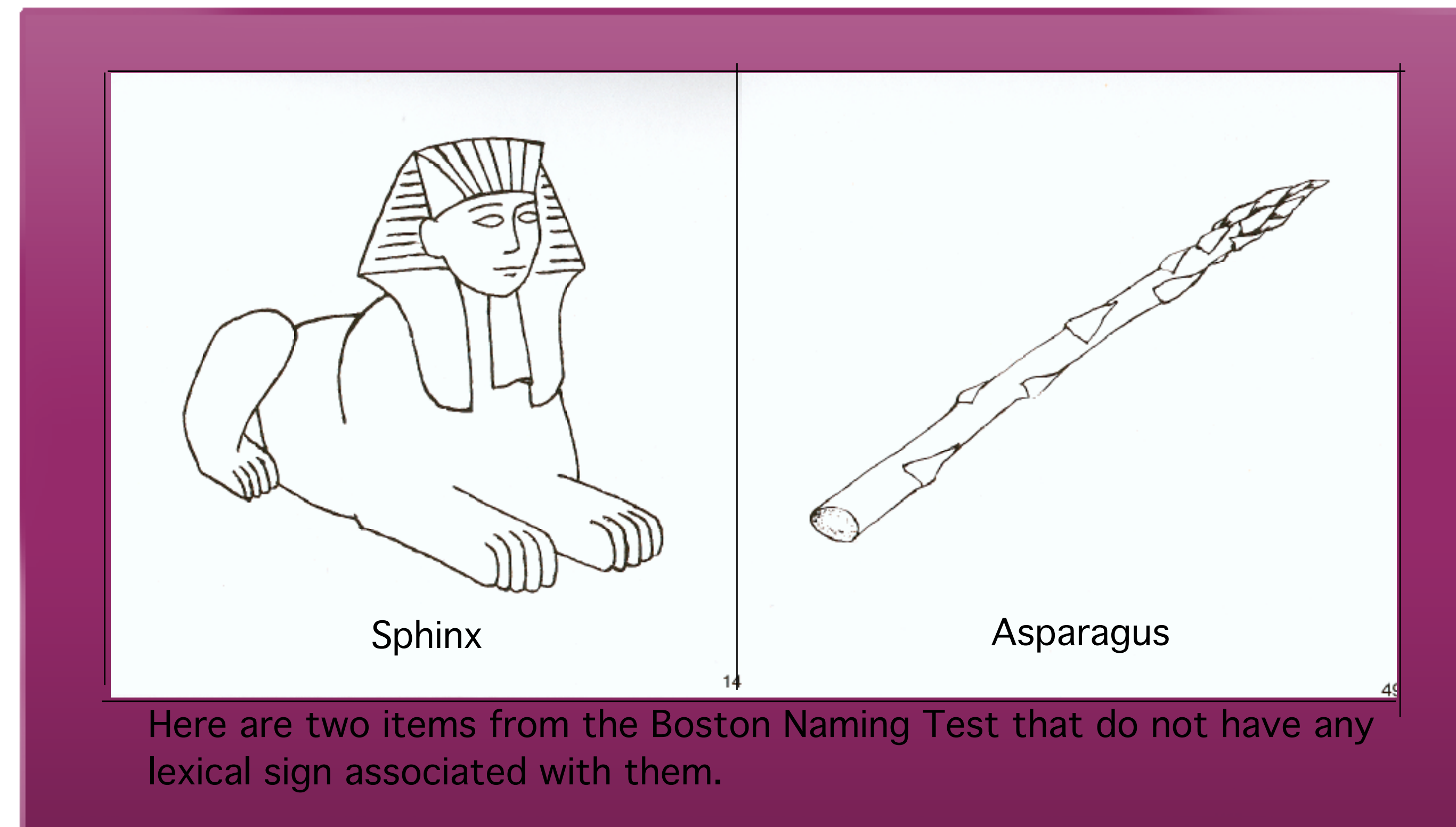
Difference in Languages

- Tests are best given by a trained native signer
- Testing situations with a certified interpreter of ASL may still be problematic
- Even using a certified interpreter will require advance prep time to adequately administer the tests

Instructions may not Translate Well

- Certain instructional words do not translate well into ASL
- Interpreting instructions as given may not convey the desired directions as well as the examiner hopes.

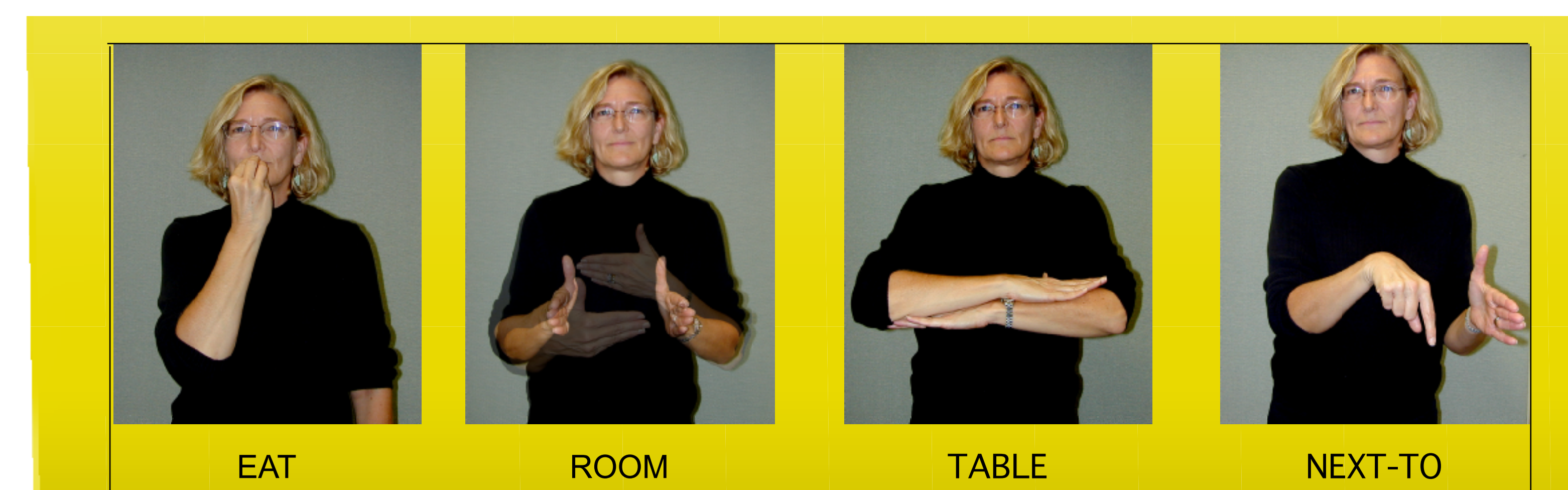
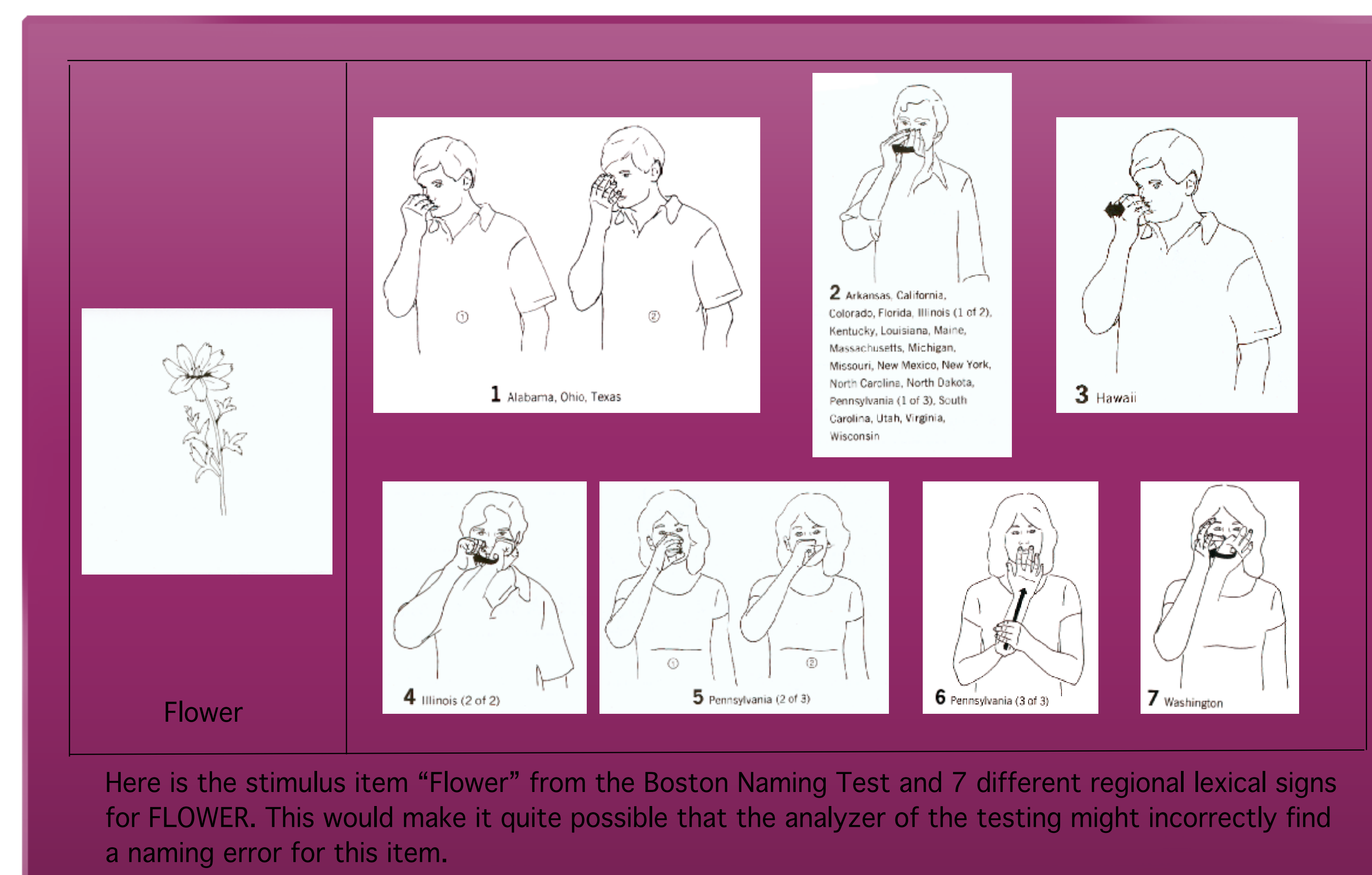
An example of this is the instructions for the Cookie Theft Picture. The spoken English instructions are: “Tell everything you see going on in this picture.” A gloss of how it might correctly be signed would be “LOOK-ALL-OVER, EXPLAIN EVERYTHING YOU-SEE HAPPEN.”



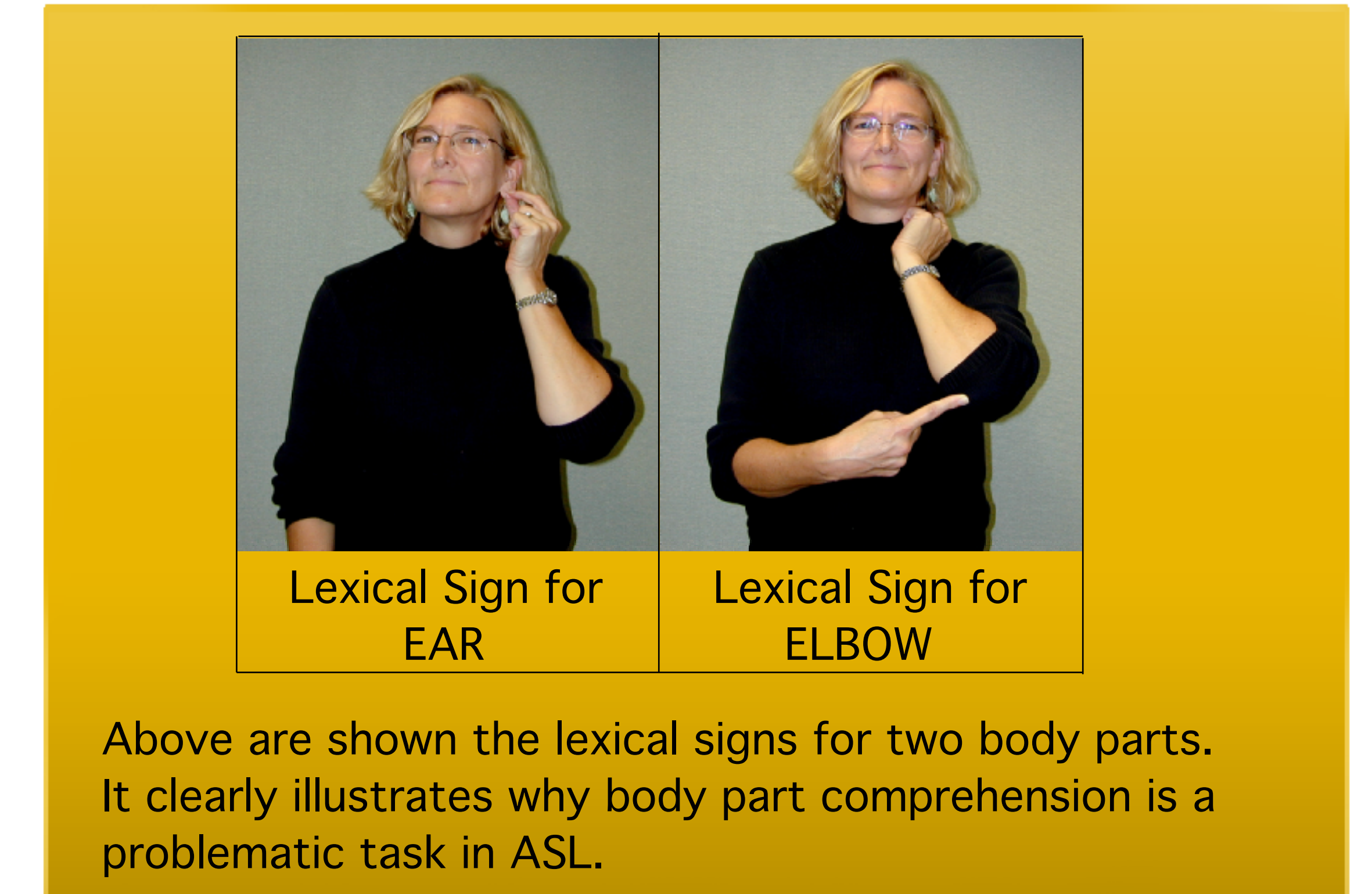
Test Items may not be good for use in ASL

- Some lexical items in English have no equivalent lexical sign in ASL, rather they are fingerspelled which is a much different skill than finding a lexical sign
- Some items have a wide variety of regional signs associated with them, this can be problematic for scoring
- Sentences describing spatial layouts are made utilizing classifier constructions, which are unique to signed languages

We found that many of the stimulus items on the Boston Naming Test had no lexical sign associated with them and several items had ASL lexical signs with too many regional variations of possible signs so we have had to create our own naming test that is now in the process of being normed.



A sample item in the repeating phrases subtest is, “Near the table, in the dining room.” This could be correctly signed as shown above making it much different in substance than the original item.



Some Tests are not Suited for ASL

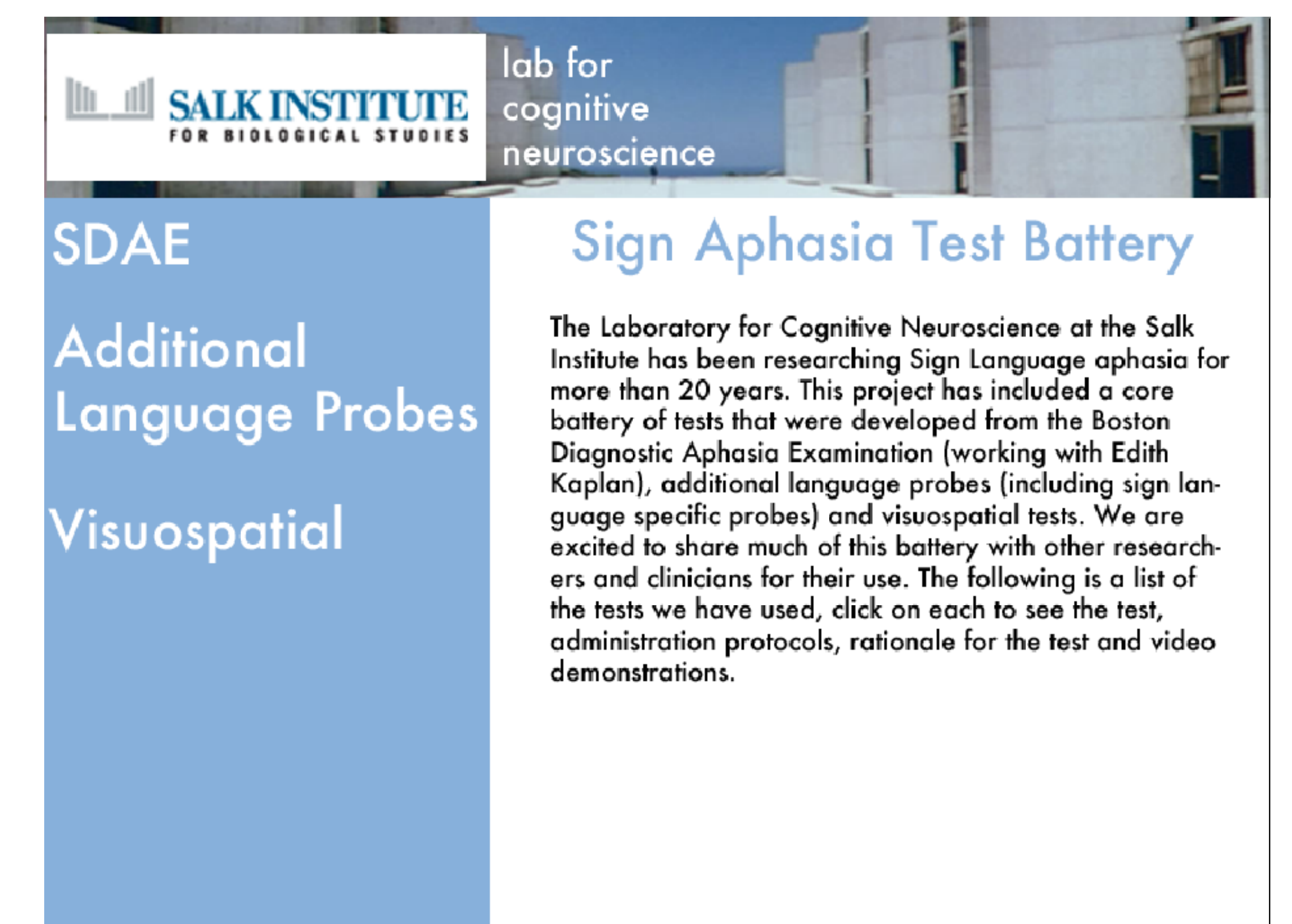
- ASL is a visuospatial language
- Hands, arms and face are articulators
- These can greatly alter the type of information a test may generate

An example is shown(whenever it is shown) with body part identification test from the BDAE. The signs for many body parts are generated by simply pointing to those body part. This greatly reduces the comprehension ability needed and turns it into a more of a repetition task.

Web Page

The Sign Language Aphasia Team at The Salk Institute is creating a website that contains the adaptations we have made for a variety of our tests.

- This will be a resource for people to use and gain more insight into how to adapt tests for use with ASL users
- We do not adapt tests for other people, we hope what you see helps you do this on your own



Visit our website at signaphasiatests.salk.edu