Who are bimodal bilinguals?
Bimodal bilinguals are individuals who have received early exposure to languages in two different modalities: signed and spoken. This group includes both hearing children of deaf parents (kodas) and, increasingly, cochlear implanted children who are learning both signed and spoken language.

Project background
Previous research on sign language development has focused on deaf children of deaf parents, trying to learn what natural and "ideal" development in ASL looks like. This project extends the domain of study to include hearing children of deaf parents (kodas), and deaf children with cochlear implants who are learning ASL. Investigations of these bimodal bilingual children offers us a more comprehensive picture of ASL acquisition. For instance, we already know from studies of bilinguals learning two spoken languages that they use a lot of mixing and code-switching from very early ages. This mixing is normal, but it requires us to revise our theories of language development, which are based on acquisition of one language only. This project aims to make a careful and systematic study of the language of bimodal bilinguals, so we can compare this with (1) monolingual ASL development by Deaf children and (2) monolingual English development by hearing children. This is especially important because some educators still worry that bilingualism can cause language delays in children, and they cite mixing as support for their argument. Many parents of bimodal bilinguals have fascinating stories about how their children use ASL and English together in creative, innovative ways, and we feel intuitively that these children are not "confused," they are simply using normal code mixing. Ultimately, we hope that if people understand how mixing works in natural koda language, they will no longer see it as a sign of confusion or language delay.

What this project involves - data collection studies
We are seeking participants for our data collection studies. The participants are bimodal bilingual children ages 4-7 - both kodas and deaf children who sign and also use cochlear implants. We engage the children in fun activities that we can use to assess their language - activities such as naming, describing a picture, or copying made-up words. We collect a full range of responses in both ASL and English, on separate occasions. Our trained researchers interact with the children using age-appropriate materials.

There are two different options for our data collection studies. On one option, we will work with the children at school, with the permission of the school personnel. In this case, the data collection will take place gradually over a period of a few weeks. On the other option, we invite the children and their families to a data collection fair held on a Saturday. The children take part in a series of studies, with plenty of time in between for breaks, games, activities, and lunch. During these fairs we also have informational programs for parents, as well as time for them to get to know each other. We will work with families to choose the data collection option that works best for them.
Criteria for participants

This project includes both hearing and implanted participants. We are currently recruiting children for our data collection studies who:

• receive input in both ASL and English on a regular basis (either from home or school)
• if Deaf, received a cochlear implant by two years of age
• will be between 4 and 7 years old at the start of filming
• are talkative, enjoy interaction with other people (including people outside the family)
• have no known health complications or learning disabilities (to keep the data as consistent as we can)
• are available for either a data collection fair or data collection at school
• are *not* receiving regular exposure to a third or fourth language

Who to contact

If you are interested in this project and would like more information, please contact the principal investigator closest to you:

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This project has been approved by the Gallaudet and UConn Institutional Review Boards (IRB) for the protection of human participants.