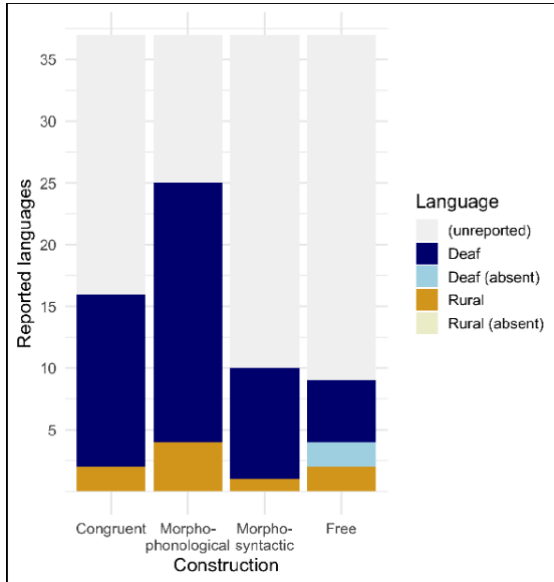


Implications of ideology and unequal distribution of resources on sign language typology/

Language ideology and language documentation in sign language typology

Language documentation is impacted by language ideologies and access to resources: ideology determines what is thought to be linguistic, and resources determine if documentation occurs. Mouthing in SLs are mouth movements that correspond to those made in the articulation of specific spoken language words (Boyes Braem & Sutton-Spence 2001). Their association with spoken languages and differences in how linguistic nature is measured makes their status in SL grammars unclear (compare Crasborn et al. 2008; Johnston et al. 2016; Bank 2014; Giustolisi et al. 2017; Lin 2019). Deaf and rural SLs are two major groups in SL typology. A distinction is that in deaf SLs, acquisition and emergence are tied to formal deaf education, while in rural SLs they occur in the home and community. The deaf-rural SL divide also roughly corresponds to the Global North-Global South divide, which is linked to access to education and documentation resources.



In examining the distribution of 4 mouthing constructions (cxns) across a convenience sample of 37 SLs (27 deaf, 11 rural¹), effects of language ideology and unequal distribution of resources on typology are found. The mouthing cxns are as follows: (i) *congruent*: mouthing and manual sign have the same meaning (ii) *free*: mouthing occurs without a manual sign (iii) *morpho-phonological*: mouthing picks out a specific meaning within a semantically-related family that all use the same manual form (iv) *morpho-syntactic*: the mouthing and manual sign have independent meanings that combine to form a complex morphosyntactic cxn with composite meaning

The following patterns emerged (see figure): (i) Mouthing data is limited: mouthing cxns are more often unreported than reported as present/absent, which may be linked to ideologies about their linguistic status. For example, mouthing is reported as a marker of disfluency in Kailge SL (Reed & Rumsey 2020: 147). The difference in reporting of morpho-phonological and congruent mouthing also suggests bias in linguistics. Congruent mouthing may go unreported because the mouthing does not add new meaning to the manual sign. This contrasts with the morpho-phonological cxn where the mouthing is often described as distinguishing minimal pairs. (ii) Most data

comes from deaf SLs: deaf SLs account for 70% of the sample, but in all cases but free mouthing, they account for more than 70% of reports. This is likely to be linked to the Global North-Global South divide — since most deaf SLs are associated with the Global North they are more likely to be documented. To illustrate, Glottolog 4.0 (Hammarström et al. 2021) lists 40 sources for American SL, but just 59 in total for all 11 of the rural SLs in this sample.

These patterns suggest that mouthing cxns may be under-documented because of negative ideologies to phenomena indexed with spoken language and/or to language contact. A tendency in linguistics to prioritise documentation of phenomena linked to meaning differences could also mask potential cross-linguistic patterns in language use. Finally, the Global North-Global South divide parallels the deaf-rural SL divide. This means that deaf SLs are systematically over-documented and calls into question structural distinctions posited between them and rural SLs.

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¹ These proportions reflect their proportions in Glottolog 4.0.