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Shorter but richer versus longer with less information: linguistic differentiation between British Sign Language and sign supported English

Abstract: The distinction between natural sign languages and sign-supported speech is a controversial topic and difficult to assess purely on structural terms because of language contact. Here, we consider British Sign Language (BSL) and Sign Supported English (SSE) with reference to Irvine and Gal's (2000. Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In P. V. Kroskrity (ed.), *Regimes of language*, 35–84. Oxford: Currey) framework on linguistic differentiation. Using interview data from 121 deaf BSL signers from the BSL Corpus, we show that this framework allows us to better understand how BSL and SSE are defined by BSL signers. We refer to the semiotic processes of this framework: iconisation, fractal recursivity, and erasure. BSL, including its varieties, is strongly associated with deaf communities in Britain. Specific grammatical forms in BSL that differ markedly from English constructions are presented as exemplars of sign language use (iconisation), oppositions between deafness and hearingness are repeatedly applied to different social groups (fractal recursivity and iconisation), and occurrences that may not align with this opposition are rarely acknowledged (erasure). We suggest that these semiotic processes are motivated by language maintenance and educational policies. We conclude with a discussion on how deaf signers distinguish between BSL and SSE, suggesting distinctions made are ideologically driven with political and historical roots and better understood from a translanguaging perspective.

Abstract and keywords in British Sign Language (BSL) can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtZomy9ab2U.

Keywords: British Sign Language; sign supported English; language attitudes; language ideologies; linguistic differentiation; translanguaging

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1 Introduction

Sign languages used by deaf communities are typically in constant contact with one or more spoken languages. Due to the modality differences (i.e., differences in the channel used to convey meaning such as speech, sign, print etc.), it may seem obvious how sign languages are different from the surrounding spoken languages – e.g., British Sign Language (BSL) and English in the United Kingdom. However, the contact between signed and spoken languages and the majority status of spoken languages means that signing varieties are influenced to varying degrees by spoken languages. Additionally, beliefs about how languages differ from each other (i.e., language ideologies) influence language behaviours, including interactions between different languages. In this paper we explore attitudes and ideologies toward BSL and Sign-Supported English (SSE) in the UK.

2 Signing in the United Kingdom

2.1 British Sign Language

BSL is a natural language used by Britain's deaf communities. To fully understand different varieties of BSL, including the extent of English influence on BSL, it is necessary to delve into deaf education. As 90–95 % of deaf children are born to hearing families (Mitchell and Karchmer 2004), deaf children are likely to get most of their sign language input in educational settings. This means that deaf children's educational placements have (and have always had) a huge impact on their sign language development.

The emergence of BSL as we know it today is often associated with the establishment of deaf schools in the 18th and 19th centuries (Brown 2020; Quinn 2010; Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999). This is how it is thought that most sign languages emerge, when deaf people form a community as in the context of the beginning of deaf education (cf. the recent case of Nicaraguan Sign Language; Kegl et al. 1999). The first school for deaf children in the UK was set up in Edinburgh, Scotland by Thomas Braidwood in 1760. There is some evidence that 'deaf signing' (as it was known at the time) was used as a method of instruction; however, it is likely that the structure of signing followed the order of English (Kyle and Woll 1985). In 1792, Joseph Watson, the nephew of Thomas Braidwood (who worked at Braidwood school), set up the first public school for deaf children in London. Joseph Watson pushed for 'natural signing' (Watson 1809), which seems to refer to deaf children's natural sign language communication without pushing them to incorporate features from English, including structure.

For about over 100 years, from 1760, sign language was used for educating deaf children (likely to varying degrees) in the UK. By 1870 there were 22 schools for deaf children around the UK, many of them residential and many with former deaf pupils who later became teachers (Kyle and Woll 1985). At the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf held in Milan 1880, sign language was 'banned' in deaf education, in favour of educating deaf children using spoken language (known in deaf communities as 'oralism').

From the Milan conference in 1880 to the 1970s, deaf children were rarely taught, if ever, in sign language. What Joseph Watson called 'natural signing' (likely the precursor to modern BSL) was likely to be largely restricted to social gatherings outside of educational settings, e.g., at deaf clubs or in deaf, signing families. There were fewer deaf teachers during this period and less use of signing in the classroom (Brennan 1992). English and English-based signing were given more prestige. 'Deaf signing' was considered inferior, even by deaf BSL signers themselves, who formed internalised, negative attitudes about sign languages, after a century of linguistic oppression in education (Ladd 2003).

In the late 1970s, there were two main developments that affected the use of signing in deaf education. The Warnock Report (1978) recommended that deaf children be sent to integrated schools alongside hearing children. This resulted in the closure of many deaf schools in favour of mainstream education. Also, the Conrad Report (1979) found that deaf 16-year-olds were leaving school with a reading age equivalent to 9-year-old hearing children. This pushed schools with deaf pupils across the UK to encourage the use of speech with (some) BSL signs simultaneously (known as "Total Communication"), believing this would enable better English and improve reading (Ladd 2003). However, hearing educators still held almost no respect for BSL, as they believed signed languages are "lesser-than" therefore not deserving of the same respect given to spoken languages. Negative language attitudes played a large role in the decimation of direct education in signed languages (O'Brien 2021).

Towards the late 1970s and early 1980s, BSL started to gain more prestige for various reasons, starting with the recognition of BSL by linguists as a natural language (Brennan 1975). Bilingual education (BSL/English) began in the 1980s which further increased the status of BSL (Swanwick and Gregory 2007). In 2003, BSL was 'recognised' by the British Government as the fourth indigenous language used in Britain.[1] Even with this recognition (and subsequently the BSL Act Scotland in 2015

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1 Although the British government recognised BSL as a legitimate language in 2003, this acknowledgement did not carry any legal consequences. It was only in 2022, with the enactment of the British Sign Language Act of 2022, that BSL finally attained legal status throughout the UK, similar to spoken Welsh and Scottish Gaelic.

and UK BSL Act in 2022), BSL is still not seen as having the same level of prestige as English. Its use in education was discouraged until the 1980s. Even today, families with deaf children are still being advised not to sign with their children (Humphries et al. 2017; Rowley et al. 2022).

The systematic historical and ongoing oppression of BSL has had an impact on how it is used. For example, there are clear differences between BSL signers of different ages in relation to fingerspelling, mouthing and lexical signs, which reflect changes in educational policy (Brown and Cormier 2017; Proctor and Cormier 2023; Stamp et al. 2014).

Although BSL is a different language from English, it remains a minoritised language in constant contact with English. As a result, signers often incorporate English features such as mouthings[2] and fingerspelling (a manual representation of the English alphabet). Also some elements of English and BSL can be produced simultaneously, known as language mixing which is unique to sign languages, e.g., silent mouthing of English words while producing signs; a process known as 'code-blending' (Emmorey et al. 2008). However, the extent to which BSL signers use linguistic elements from English varies substantially, dependent on numerous factors including the signer's speaking/writing ability in English as well as the perceived abilities of their interlocutors (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999). This high degree of variability is one reason why we have more recent research arguing for translanguaging i.e., use of switching between and mixing of various semiotic resources from different languages and/or modalities – rather than just code-blending between a signed and spoken language (De Meulder et al. 2019; Kusters 2019; Proctor and Cormier 2023). Henner and Robinson (2023) pointed out that translanguaging reflects the reality of how people use languages in opposition to fixed ideas about how languages should function.

BSL is influenced by the majority language (English) for various reasons including oppressive education policies, as described above, which also relates to the power imbalance between BSL and English (Palfreyman and Schembri 2021). Importantly, BSL is not simply English on the hands. Many linguistic descriptions of BSL have demonstrated how its structure differs from English. For example, the order of signs is often different to English, with some structures typologically unique to sign languages. Examples include depicting signs[3] and indicating verbs,[4] and taking advantage of simultaneity and spatial modification for grammatical purposes

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2 English mouthings refer to when signers mouth English words, often accompanied with a BSL sign.
3 Depicting signs, also known as classifier signs or classifier constructions, are verbs of location, motion and/or handling.
4 Indicating verbs, also known as agreement verbs or directional verbs, are a class of verbs that index locations associated with the agent/patient, moving in space between these locations.

(Cormier et al. 2012; Schembri et al. 2018). There are also mouth gestures i.e., mouth patterns that are not related to spoken language (Boyes Braem and Sutton-Spence 2001).

2.2 Sign Supported English (SSE)

When signers use the term 'SSE', they are referring to a contact variety of signing that involves a mixture of BSL and English, with English as the matrix (dominant) language. This usually means that signed utterances follow English grammar but use BSL signs. However, distinguishing between BSL and SSE can be difficult because of constant language contact between BSL and English. Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999) note that with SSE, the "key words of a sentence are signed, while the person speaks. This means that the main vocabulary is produced from BSL, but much of the grammar is English on the mouth" (p. 16). If English is very dominant, the resulting production may more closely resemble spoken English with co-speech gestures resembling or identical to BSL signs.

It is difficult to pinpoint the origins of the term "Sign Supported English". However, it is quite likely that it is a variety that has come about from extensive language contact reflecting translanguaging practices used by deaf signers. Historically, many children at deaf schools were born hearing and became deaf later (Brown 2020), suggesting many already had some proficiency in English; however, with their deaf peers, they would sign, suggesting code-blending/translanguaging. In the 1970s, when linguistic research on BSL began, linguists believed that spoken and sign language existed on a diglossic continuum and that SSE was somewhere in the middle of that continuum (Deuchar 1977).

A separate but related concept to SSE is Signed English: English-based signing i.e., speaking in English with signs (including signs for English functors) used simultaneously. This method was used in the U.S. using ASL signs (Signing Exact English i.e., SEE – cf. Supalla and McKee 2002). Specific signs were invented for certain words in English not available in ASL e.g., 'was' and verb endings ('ing', ed' etc.). There is no equivalent to SEE (i.e., formal creation of signs for function morphemes) in the UK. This may be partly due to early criticism of English-based signing by Joseph Watson, the headmaster of England's first non-fee-paying deaf school, because of his pushing for "natural signing" (Watson 1809), as noted above. Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999) argued that Signed English differs from SSE in that it incorporates signs that represent grammatical markers such as articles and past-tense markers. So, although signs for English grammatical functors were not explicitly created by educators like they were in the US for SEE, it seems that they may have emerged naturally, particularly in education settings in the UK.

There are several problems with systems relying on signs for grammatical markers like Signed English does. They can become longer and therefore unnaturally slow, with many letting speech take over while dropping some signs (Johnston and Schembri 2007; Ladd 2003; Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999; Supalla and McKee 2002). Another issue is that it is often not possible to match English and BSL lexically. Many phrases or sentences in English can be represented by a single sign due to BSL's rich morphological system e.g. 'I ask you', 'drink from a mug' etc. (Johnston and Schembri 2007; Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999). Additionally, some English words are represented by 2 or more BSL signs such as 'weapon', 'multilingual' etc. Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999) state that traditionally, Signed English is not used in regular communication but only in classes for children to learn English – and that it may be beneficial for learners because it is easier for their hearing teachers.

3 Language mixing: BSL and English

Producing language in the visual-gestural modality makes it possible to incorporate linguistic elements from two languages; one signed and one spoken – simultaneously (Emmorey et al. 2008; Quinto-Pozos and Adam 2015). Rather than thinking about BSL and English as two separate languages, linguists have described the extent to which the two languages can come into contact on a continuum (see Figure 1). This model was based on existing models of sign language varieties around that time (e.g. Lucas and Valli 1992; Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999) and the authors' own perceptions of BSL used in the deaf community.

In Figure 1, BSL and English are on opposite ends of the continuum. At the far-left we have BSL with minimal English influence and on the far-right, spoken English. In the middle, we can think of BSL with English code-blending hovering more on the left-side of continuum (with less code-blending on the left, and more code-blending on the right). On the right-side, closer to spoken English, we have SSE with signed utterances heavily influenced by English. If Signed English was included in this continuum, it would come to the right of SSE but to the left of spoken English. Figure 1 is shown here to provide an overview of the understanding of the relationship
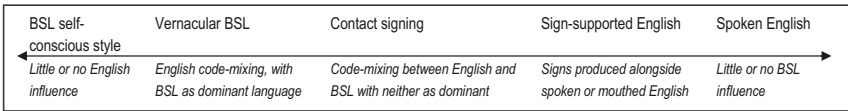
BSL self-conscious style	Vernacular BSL	Contact signing	Sign-supported English	Spoken English
Little or no English influence	*English code-mixing, with BSL as dominant language*	*Code-mixing between English and BSL with neither as dominant*	*Signs produced alongside spoken or mouthed English*	*Little or no BSL influence*

Figure 1: A continuum of language-mixing varieties in the British deaf community (Schembri et al. 2013).

between BSL, SSE and English in the present-day U.K. It is important to note however that – somewhat ironically – linguists' conceptualisation of the two languages interacting on a linear continuum such as Figure 1 is ideological in itself, and this can also influence language practices in deaf signers.

The continuum shows English influence to be almost always present to some extent, e.g., fingerspelling (signs that represent English orthography) which is used by all BSL signers. In addition, English mouthing is used to varying degrees (Proctor and Cormier 2023). Adam and Braithwaite (2022) discuss mouthing in sign languages saying that it is a complex area of sign language ideologies. Some view mouthings as an intrusion from spoken language that resulted from prevalence of oralism and colonialism in deaf education (Ladd 2003), whereas others view mouthings as integral to sign languages (Boyes-Braem and Sutton-Spence 2001). Adam and Braithwaite (2022) point out that oralist practices in deaf schools have influenced mouthings in sign languages.[5]

Overall, it can be quite complex to try and distinguish between BSL and English-based signing varieties. Most manual signs used in English-based signing are from the BSL lexicon. Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999) say that "the whole area of Signed English is complex. It takes most of its vocabulary from BSL. If it is 'pure' Signed English, with all English grammar, then it is not much like BSL. Certainly, its vocabulary is much more limited because it does not have many of the ways of creating signs that BSL does. However, many deaf people use signing that is influenced by English for various reasons, and they often feel it is BSL. In the end we must rely on a social definition: does the person believe that the language they use is BSL?" (p.20).

4 BSL and SSE in the deaf community today

How we understand the relationship between SSE and BSL is relevant still today. This is partly due to the changing prestige of BSL and English in the deaf community.

BSL has had a strong presence in the media since 1981 when BBC launched See Hear, the first deaf magazine programme. In the beginning, See Hear's presenters used spoken English and fingerspelling in their BSL when presenting. In the late 1980s, most presenters used more BSL and started to avoid using English (Sutton-Spence et al. 1990). Nowadays, there are numerous programmes available in BSL and interpreted mainstream programmes e.g., BBC news. There are deaf BSL-signing

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5 In addition, Adam and Braithwaite note that mouthing seems to be more prevalent in Global North societies where formal education for deaf children is more common. In rural or isolated areas, where formal education is less likely or non-existent for deaf children, there is very little mouthing in sign languages, e.g., Guyana, Bay Islands.

actors in mainstream programmes. Deaf actors are often monitored by BSL experts, who advise them on their signing (Kusters and Fenlon 2021).

Since recognition of BSL both by linguists and the British Government, and with the increased presence of BSL in the media, more hearing people have become interested in learning BSL. Hearing BSL learners now outnumber deaf BSL signers, and a large portion of the UK's population (over 150,000) knows some BSL, adding to BSL's prestige and viability (Woll and Adam 2012).

While BSL's prestige has steadily increased in recent decades, the use of SSE is still highly debated. In 2018, the British Deaf Association (BDA) made a statement[6] about BSL and SSE in response to these debates. Their description of SSE aligns closely with Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999), referring to the tendency to speak and sign at the same time and the production dependent on the signer's language skills. Because of the difficulty in defining SSE, the BDA note that they do not support its promotion. Instead, they stress that it is important to acknowledge that BSL and English are languages that are continuously in contact with one another.

Overall, there are still ongoing debates on how BSL and SSE differ. Many descriptions are as above mainly structural e.g., use of BSL signs in English order. We propose an alternative means for understanding the two through the lens of language ideologies and linguistic differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000). Importantly, while there are clear structural and typological differences between BSL and English-based sign varieties, we argue that the distinctions BSL signers make between BSL and SSE are ideologically driven.

5 Language ideology and linguistic differentiation

Irvine and Gal (2000) identify three semiotic processes by which people construct ideological representations of linguistic differences: iconisation, fractal recursivity, and erasure. With iconisation, specific features become iconic representations of social groups or activities. For example, certain dialects or accents can be associated with specific social classes or regions. Some dialects or accents will be considered more prestigious than others, while others are seen as non-standard or stigmatised. Those linguistic distinctions between dialects and/or accents become symbols (icons) of social identity. With fractal recursivity, a dichotomy is created, i.e., linguistic differences form social identities and judgments are made on those who speak specific dialects/accents (creating stereotypes). Lastly, erasure is the process in which some aspects of the language or language community are made invisible. For

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6 https://bda.org.uk/the-difference-between-bsl-sse/.

example, a social group or language may be imagined as homogeneous with its internal variation disregarded.

In their work, Irvine and Gal (2000) describe how these semiotic processes can be used to understand motivations behind language change, in linguistic descriptions in grammars and dictionaries, and in political debates. One such case involved 19th century linguistic descriptions and maps of Senegalese languages. Irvine and Gal (2000) referred to (1) the assumed relationships between each language, its speakers, and the territory as *iconisation*; (2) the simplified sociolinguistic situation, whereby multilingualism and variation had been from context, as *erasure.*; and (3) assumptions about how the different languages arose via history of European conquest and conversion in Africa that (it was assumed) paralleled hierarchical relationships between Europeans and Africans, as *fractal recursivity*. In this paper, we propose that these semiotic processes can be applied to the ideologies and language attitudes in deaf communities towards BSL and SSE regarding language maintenance.

We also draw upon other works on ideological representations of linguistic differences. Jaeger (2018) for example described how sociolinguistic variation is conceptualised within the German Sign Language (DGS) community. Jaeger collected qualitative data from 31 deaf DGS users discussing "authentic" and "inauthentic" signing. Authentic signing was characterised through its frequent use of intense facial expressions, mouth gestures, unstructured or 'messy' signing – more visual/ animated and picture-like signing, and fluid and relaxed production. In contrast, inauthentic signing was characterised through weak or stiff facial expression, repeated use of German mouthings, structured and 'clean' grammar, lack of picture-like signing and signing that appeared stiff and abrupt. In addition to this, the code-mixing of DGS and German was considered inauthentic. These descriptions are consistent with Irvine and Gal's (2000) 'fractal recursivity' in that opposing linguistic features were associated with authentic/inauthentic signing. Importantly, Jaeger's participants frequently referred to authentic signing produced by deaf people (e.g., from signing deaf families) on the one hand and inauthentic signing produced by hearing people (e.g., late learners or 'new signers' as termed by De Meulder (2018)) on the other. This is consistent with Irvine and Gal's (2000) notion of 'iconisation', where linguistic features are associated with particular social groups. Similar distinctions are made when comparing BSL and SSE in our BSL Corpus data.

Prior to describing our methods, we feel it is important to explain the authors' positionality within deaf, signing communities in the UK. The first author is a deaf BSL signer from a multi-generational deaf family who mixes with signers of all backgrounds on a regular basis. These positions afford her rich deaf cultural capital with unique insights in different attitudes, histories and ideologies (O'Brien 2021). The second author is a hearing American and a late learner of BSL resulting from her

move to the UK in the early 2000s. Her good proficiency in BSL is because of her strong and long-term working relationships with deaf researchers.

6 Methodology

Data were taken from the interview component of the BSL Corpus (Schembri et al. 2014). The BSL Corpus includes video data, filmed between 2008 and 2011, from 249 signers between the ages of 18 and 65+ living in 8 cities in the four home nations (Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, London, Manchester, and New-castle). Where possible, participants were mixed for age, gender, social class, language background (deaf or hearing family), ethnicity and BSL teaching experience. Most participants (over 90 %) reported that they learnt BSL before the age of 7. Participants were filmed in pairs and took part in conversation, completed a lexical elicitation task, told a story in BSL, and were interviewed about their beliefs and attitudes about BSL (Schembri et al. 2013). In the interviews, participants were asked 13 questions in relation to their understanding of sociolinguistic variation and change in BSL. For this paper, we focus particularly on responses to the question, 'What do you think the following terms mean: British Sign Language – BSL, Sign Supported English – SSE? Please explain, including examples of how they differ.'

To explore attitudes and beliefs surrounding BSL and English-based signing, we selected 120 participants from Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, London, Glasgow, and Manchester, aiming for a balanced mix of social factors, as much as possible (see Table 1). It is important to note that a recruitment criterion was that participants' preferred language must be BSL; thus, this article reflects the views of BSL users rather than SSE users.

6.1 Representation in the BSL corpus

Before proceeding, we want to highlight some issues on participant representation in the BSL Corpus. We aimed to recruit deaf people who learnt to sign in their first few years. However, many deaf people learn to sign later, and thus the BSL Corpus does not reflect the full picture of BSL signers. In relation to ethnicity, during our 2008–2010 recruitment drive, we aimed to ensure 10 % of the sample were from ethnic minorities (around 8 % in our corpus). The 10 % aim was based on the census of England and Wales (Office for National Statistics 2011), showing 10 % of the general population were from ethnic minorities (mostly Afro-Caribbean and South Asian). However, this is now considered too low, as it was 20 % in the 2011 census

Table 1: Social factors of participants (*n* = 121), including age, gender, family background, BSL teaching experience and region.

	Belfast	Birmingham	Bristol	Glasgow	London	Manchester	Total
Age group							
16–40	8	9	6	8	6	7	44
41–64	9	7	11	6	10	7	50
65+	3	4	4	6	4	6	27
Gender							
Male	10	10	11	10	10	10	61
Female	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
Family background							
Deaf	7	10	13	6	10	7	53
Hearing	13	10	8	14	10	13	68
BSL teaching experience							
Yes	11	8	11	6	12	5	53
No	9	8	10	6	5	6	44
Unknown	0	4	0	8	3	9	24
Total participants in each region	20	20	21	20	20	20	121

(Wilson et al. 2015). We highlight these issues to recognise the importance of balance and representation in sign language datasets.

6.2 Data annotation

Data annotation consisted of first translating the data from BSL into written English using an English translation tier in ELAN (Wittenburg et al. 2006). Translations were done by qualified BSL/English interpreters and translators and checked by first author Rowley. We then annotated prominent themes in the interview translations, again using ELAN. Interview responses from each participant were coded in a single ELAN file, but with a view of their interlocutor for context (see Figure 2 for example). Responses from the interlocutor were translated and coded in a separate ELAN file. After exporting themes to Excel, we conducted a thematic data analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved six stages: (1) data familiarisation, (2) generating some initial notes and codes for emergent themes, (3) searching for those themes, (4) collating those themes together, (5) searching and reviewing themes and then (6) reporting analysis of those themes. Data was analysed by the first author. Given her deaf background, this helped us to understand in detail some of the responses e.g., their educational backgrounds.
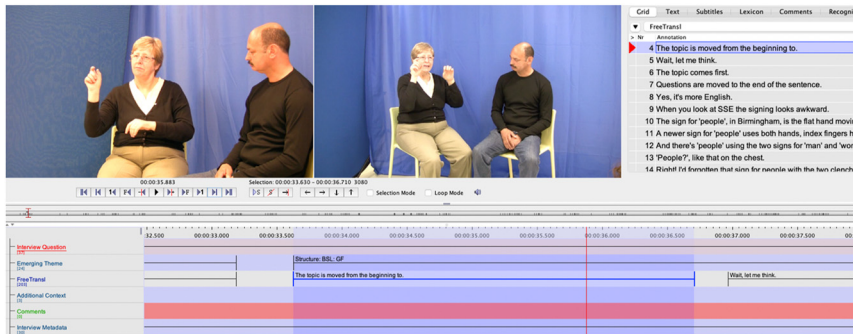
Figure 2: Example of annotations within a single ELAN file. The FreeTransl tier refers to English translations of the participants' BSL responses.

In the first stage of thematic analysis, general notes were generated highlighting patterns that emerged from the data. For the next two stages, each interview response, and general notes from stage one was examined to develop themes that emerged from the data (stages two and three). Themes were not predetermined and were identified as they emerged from the participants' responses. Once themes were assigned, the data was exported to Excel and themes were reviewed and re-analysed to ensure each theme was clearly demarcated (stages four and five). Finally, a summary outlining each theme was written up (stage six). Exporting of the data from ELAN to Excel after coding and reviewing themes enabled the grouping of statements according to each theme.

7 Results and discussion

Here we present and discuss the emerging themes in response to the BSL/SSE interview question. We organise our data according to four themes: structure, domains of use, evaluative statements and expressions of preference, and meta-linguistic awareness (relating to BSL/English language varieties and the continuum). We also discuss our qualitative findings in the context of Irvine and Gal's (2000) framework for understanding ideologies related to linguistic differentiation, focusing on the three semiotic processes outlined in their framework; 1. Iconisation, 2. Fractal recursivity and 3. Erasure and how they related to each other. As a reminder, quotes provided in this section are English translations of deaf signers' BSL responses in the interviews. Videos and annotations/translations are available at http://www.bslcorpusproject.org.

7.1 Structure

Structure was the most prevalent theme and made up 58 % of the tagged data. Structure is discussed according to several sub-categories (e.g., sign order, omission, length and speed, visual expression, mouthing and fingerspelling).

7.1.1 Structure: sign order

The definitions of BSL and SSE provided by interviewed participants were frequently form-based and many focused on sign order. Several pointed out BSL's tendency to place the question sign at the end of a sentence and sometimes mentioned the preference of BSL signers to structure information according to topic followed by comment, as in (1) and (2).

(1)   The topic is moved from the beginning to… Wait, let me think… The topic comes first. Questions are moved to the end of the sentence. (BM06)

(2)   'What's BSL?', 'My name what?', 'Michelle', 'I live where?', That's BSL. (BM14)

Participants did not seem to consider that it is possible for BSL to have English-like structures, e.g., wh-question signs at the start of the sentence even though these do occur with high frequency in BSL (Hodge et al. in press) – this is an example of erasure. Furthermore, many participants overstated the word order differences between BSL and SSE, putting both on opposite extremes, is an instance of fractal recursivity.

In addition, participants stated word order flexibility in BSL i.e., used 'in any order' (BF09), and wasn't 'strict like English' (BM17). Others described BSL as 'messy' (BF10) and 'mixed up' (LN14). LN21 stressed that these differences from English (i.e., the flexibility) shouldn't be perceived negatively as shown in (3).

(3)   People mistake BSL for being 'bad English'., But it's not English and is differently ordered. It has its own grammar and word order. (LN21)

Many participants described SSE as using English order. This tendency was often framed in a way where English appears to be the matrix or dominant language, where signing is seen as being controlled or driven by English (as in 4).

(4)   SSE is really based on English and follows its word order. It is Sign Supported English and follows that. (GW17)

While word order in BSL was described as flexible, SSE was described as strict ('inflexible') and more formal. Participants said, 'SSE is very proper, correct English' (BF11), and 'a more formal, rigid form of signing' (LN10).

7.1.2 Structure: use or lack of functional items

Although much of the discussion regarding structure centred on sign order, some participants described the lack of English function items in BSL. They were often regarded as unnecessary in BSL, as in (6).

(6)   BSL is 'me, name, Sandra', that's it. You take out the 'is' and 'my'. (LN12)

While the tendency to not include functional items was described as characteristic of BSL, some participants specified that, when using SSE, 'every word get signed out, one by one, with each word shown on the lips' (BF05) and that with SSE, 'it includes the words *the, a, in, if*' (BM21). They note that English morphemes are often fingerspelled or specific signs exist for these morphemes (signs indicating the past tense or the copular verb 'is') that may not be viewed as something belonging to BSL (6 & 7).

(7)   The sign 'was' over the shoulder., 'Was' with 'go', makes 'went'., Using a sign to show the past tense. (BL13)

The extent to which it is believed there are manual signs in SSE representing English words varies between participants (some say every English word is signed, others say specific signs or fingerspelling are used for function morphemes are not present in BSL). Some note spoken/mouthed English when signing in SSE. These descriptions of the presence or lack of functional items puts BSL and SSE on opposite ends, an example of fractal recursivity. Furthermore, there is evidence that sign languages, including BSL, have functional items like pronouns, determiners, and prepositions; however, they are expressed differently in BSL and English, e.g., pronouns in BSL are often expressed through pointing and can incorporate plurals (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999). BSL signers do not mention this, an example of erasure.

7.1.3 Structure: length and speed

Participants considered BSL in a positive light as being shorter and quicker while SSE was described as longer and slower (8). SSE was 'where you use big, long sentences like *my name is Richard* but with BSL it's shorter as you take the *is* off' (BF02). Another participant said that 'the sentences are shorter in BSL while SSE includes *the* and *is* and is longer' (BM04).

(8)   One word in BSL, you have to think that it could mean a number of things. Just in one word. With SSE you have to give five or six different words. All the equivalent of only one sign. (GW03)

With SSE, 'explanations are longer and go on and on' (GW23). In contrast, BSL 'says things quickly' (GW02). Some said that the shorter time it takes to say something in

BSL was 'better' (BM29), making BSL 'more dynamic and engaging' (GW02). Overall, BSL and SSE are put at opposing ends of the spectrum in length and speed, further evidence of fractal recursivity.

7.1.4 Structure: expressive and visual nature of BSL

Despite being shorter, participants stressed that BSL was richer in content. This richness was encoded in the hands, facial expression, and body, producing 'so much information' 'missing nothing through the use of facial expressions and signs' (BF17) and with 'use of facial expressions which is richer' (LN05) as argued in (9). Some explained that BSL 'is more like a picture being illustrated with signs' (LN25) or that 'signing in BSL is like creating a picture' (LN24).

(9)   When we sign like this, our storytelling is expressive, animated and physical. (LN09)

In contrast, participants felt that there is 'less facial expression and body language used in SSE' (BL32) or 'much less compared to BSL' (MC13). SSE was considered to be 'without emotional expression' and 'formal' (BL22). One explained how BSL incorporated specific facial expressions to show meaning while SSE relied on the meaning of the English word, expressed via mouthings or fingerspelling (10).

(10)   In BSL, you sign 'far' with puffed cheeks. In SSE, you sign 'far' but slower and mouthing is 'too far'. So, it's using the BSL sign; SSE relies more on the mouth. This is BSL for 'too tired'. In SSE, you would fingerspell 'too', then sign: 'tired'. SSE adds a lot onto the mouth. (LN11)

Others felt that using more English in their signing meant that things were lost in SSE, particularly facial expression. According to BL23, this is because by thinking in English, speaking, and signing at the same time, the spoken part is more likely to take over, dominating the language output and eliminating facial expressions.

The belief that BSL is shorter and richer compared to SSE is consistent with early studies comparing rate of signing versus speaking. Bellugi and Fischer (1972) compared ASL-signing with English-speaking rate. They found that the articulation rate of ASL signs was slower than English words, but the proposition rate (information flow) of ASL compared with spoken English was the same. They argued that this difference can be attributed to ASL's rich spatial grammar and facial expressions with little need for functional items in a natural sign language therefore making up for the slower rate of lexical production in the signed modality. Such research has not been done on BSL, but we would expect similar findings.

Participants regularly described BSL to be more visual, animated, and expressive, while SSE is not. Again, this is an example of fractal recursivity. While there

have not been direct comparisons of visual elements (facial expressions) between BSL and SSE, there is much evidence that non signers incorporate visual elements in speech – i.e. that speech is multimodal (Vigliocco et al. 2014). Thus, it is likely that even those who typically use a lot of English in their signing will display some visual elements, including facial expressions (Chovil 1991; Swets and Krahmer 2020), in their utterances. Some participants mentioned SSE being less expressive and others said there aren't any 'emotional facial expressions' in SSE, which may not be the case and if not, this is another example of erasure.

7.1.5 Structure: mouthings and fingerspelling

Two aspects of language contact – mouthings and fingerspelling – were often mentioned and much more strongly associated with SSE (12), yet another example of fractal recursivity as participants describe a contrast. The use of fingerspelling is seen as influencing SSE utterance length because 'it takes so long with spelling' and 'you have to spell out every letter' (BF02). Some said that 'SSE is fingerspelling' (BF25) or 'predominantly fingerspelling' (BF13).

(12)   SSE would be more like 'The man came to the', by including fingerspelling and all the words. (BM16)

Respondents observed that BSL had few mouthings with lots of facial expressions. Others noted that some people who use BSL do produce a lot of mouthings and wondered whether their signing should instead be labelled SSE (BM15). LN11, a BSL teacher, went further by describing how English mouthings in BSL do happen on nouns but are typically absent when signing verbs. SSE, by comparison, relied 'more on the mouth' (see ex. 10 above) with 'more mouthings' than expected in BSL (LN14).

Some participants suggested that speech (not silent mouthings) was characteristic of SSE. MC28 said SSE was 'signing and talking at the same time'. Although both were produced, it was English that was considered to have the dominant effect. BL23 said, 'the sentences are spoken and there is some signed vocabulary'.

Fingerspelling and English mouthings are language contact features and exist in even the 'purest' forms of BSL, yet participants rarely talked about those features when describing BSL (this is an example of erasure). Some signers reported that English mouthing occurs more frequently with some signs (nouns) which has indeed been found to be the case (Boyes-Braem and Sutton-Spence 2001; Rentelis 2011), but mouthing does also occur on verbs, particularly plain verbs (Proctor and Cormier 2023). One fact not mentioned is that transitive sentences in BSL, when expressed with overt verbs and subject and object NPs, often have SVO order like English (Brennan 1994; Johnston 2019). This is another instance of erasure.

7.2 Context of use

The next theme, context of use, was frequently discussed. Participants gave examples of when SSE would be used and who they believed used SSE. The main domains associated with SSE users were oral/mainstream education and hearing people. These domains often overlapped with one another. In contrast, the use of BSL was associated with the British deaf community and for creative purposes, e.g., for storytelling. Associating BSL and SSE with specific groups of people and/or in specific domains in these ways are examples of iconisation.

SSE was described as an 'oral approach' (MC07), and associated with mainstream oral schools (i.e., schools for hearing children). Participants described how deaf adults who went to mainstream schools (ex-mainstreamers) tend to use SSE and that SSE is a product of mainstream education (e.g. 13). GW09 described young mainstreamers as being 'forced' to use and interact in SSE. Recent reports show that teachers and/or other professionals working with deaf children in mainstream schools who tend to be hearing are unlikely to be fluent in BSL thus may use signing that is heavily influenced by English (CRIDE 2023; DfE 2023). This would inevitably affect the variety of signing acquired and produced by the children. In addition, ex-mainstreamers may also not be aware that the signing that they use is different from BSL.

(13)   I blame children being in mainstream school, from lip-reading and speaking, thinking that the signing learned is the same as BSL. It is not, it will be SSE. (GW24)

GW23 discussed how they attended one deaf school in Scotland where "everyone deaf used BSL" and then later moved to a hearing school where "the signing was different", where BSL and English were mixed to a greater extent. Other participants (14) associated their SSE with their educational experience but also described how they began to use BSL after leaving school or ceased using SSE once they had left.

(14)   I asked what the difference was, I realised that I had grown up with SSE too. That had happened at school, with how I was taught English, so I had previously thought that I hadn't signed SSE, but I had, much to my chagrin! Next, I left school, and got on, and I do sign BSL. (BL10)

This was not always the case for everyone. Some commented that people continued to use SSE after leaving school because they hadn't been taught BSL or had not been exposed to BSL in the deaf community or came from hearing families (15). Consequently, they continued to use SSE 'out of habit' (LN03),

(15)   It means that the people you were talking about grow up with teachers who can't make any adjustments. They continue using SSE all the time or they come from a hearing family. (LN03)

As well as associating SSE with mainstream schools using oralist approaches, SSE was discussed in context of oralism more generally (e.g. 16). Participants described BSL as being "more for the deaf" while SSE "is more for the oral or the hearing" (BF16).

(16)   I'm a strong BSL user and sign fluently, when someone replies to me in SSE I think, 'oral pfft'. (BL11)

In addition, the use of SSE was associated with hearing people (e.g. 17). BM09 described how they 'changed' to SSE when they married a hearing person or would 'sign and speak' with hearing family members. GW24 described how they used SSE with a hearing person, or a hearing person tended to 'be SSE' because they 'speak and sign' (GW10). GW25 described how hearing-parented families may use SSE but deaf-parented families would use BSL signing.

(17)   With parents who are hearing, it is different. That language is different, and communication is confused. Having deaf family, deaf families use BSL signing. (GW23)

In contrast to SSE, BSL was described as a language used in the British deaf community (e.g. 18). It was a part of 'deaf culture' (BM10), people used it when they were with the 'deaf community' (BM09) and something that 'deaf people know and do' (BM08). Whilst SSE was associated with educational settings and the teaching of English, MC06 described BSL as 'our sign language' and 'the national sign language of the deaf community'.

(18)   Storytelling? I think stories rely on accents and intonation. Facial expressions are how sign languages show that. (BM21)

7.3 Evaluation/preferences

The next theme frequently provided value judgments on BSL/SSE, which Irvine and Gal (2000) attribute to iconisation. As mentioned earlier, Irvine and Gal (2000) explain that some dialects or accents are deemed more esteemed than others, while others are seen as non-conventional or stigmatised. Generally, respondents expressed more positive opinions, with many stating their preference for BSL over SSE (as in (19)), which suggests participants had higher regard for BSL compared to SSE. One said that they understood BSL-using interpreters much better. BSL was described as 'natural' (BF23), 'easy to understand' (BF07), and 'perfect' (MC06) – best for explaining everything.

(19)   I met some deaf children…. Their BSL was so rich and beautiful to watch. (BF12)

In contrast, opinions about SSE were more negative and users of SSE were viewed more negatively compared to those who used BSL. SSE was could 'put you to sleep' (BF05), 'awkward' (BM06) and 'flat' (GW01). There was 'more effort involved' (BF17) because 'the signing takes longer and drags on a bit' (GW01). Many said that they preferred BSL, feeling comfortable in it as a 'natural language' whereas SSE was considered to be 'artificial' (BL17) and 'robotic' (BM21). The value judgements of BSL and SSE here exemplify fractal recursivity, evident as BSL and SSE are positioned at opposite ends, positive versus negative.

BSL fluency was discussed – i.e. it can be 'signed fast and fluently' (BL22), as a language that 'flows' and more 'animated' (BM07). Its informal, casual nature meant that respondents felt conversing in BSL was easier and more effective therefore smooth and uninterrupted, unlike SSE (20).

(20)   When you are signing with other deaf people, using BSL, it flows…
Sometimes, with SSE, the conversation is not as smooth. There can be interruptions, asking what you mean… Sometimes, they don't understand at all, then I am left wondering how to say what I want to, and they go off the point. That's if they aren't fluent signers. Communicating with someone the same as me, in BSL, is effective. (GW07)

Some discussed whether they understood other people using BSL or SSE (e.g. 21). Respondents said that BSL was 'easy to understand', partly based on facial expressions used (BF07). Others signed that interactions in BSL with other deaf people were 'more funny, quick-witted and sharp' (GW01).

(21)   I know that my mother signs in BSL. My father signs in SSE and I feel more of a bond with my mother. I just do feel more connected to her. (BF02)

In contrast, some respondents, particularly older signers, said that they could not understand SSE (e.g. 22). MC06 said that when speech was added to BSL, it was difficult to follow.

(22)   Some people who are SSE have come up to me and I don't understand them and ask. They don't bother, and they go, that's fine, we are both happy. It is their choice and their right. (GW14)

Three respondents did frame SSE as being useful for encouraging good literacy in English and with spelling (BF06). BF10 was grateful to have SSE to enable access to English, 'I have to say thanks to SSE for allowing me to learn [English]'. One mentioned that BSL was used to educate him, resulting in him having a poor

education, indicating negative language attitudes for BSL. BL32 said they used both, depending on who they were with, 'adjusting to match how they sign'.

7.4 Awareness of language status

Language awareness here refers to when participants are aware of signing style differences and are conscious of what style they adopt themselves. Many felt that BSL and SSE are completely distinct signing styles. BM24 said, 'it's definitely different because BSL uses much stronger facial expressions, is denser and has its own slang'.

As noted in Section 2.1, prior to the 1970s, BSL was referred to as 'signing' or 'deaf sign' before it was known as British Sign Language (BSL). This subject came up a few times with BL10 mentioning this in the way sign language was labelled, 'it wasn't known as BSL then, it was 'deaf people's signing', and that was until people started talking about BSL and SSE'. LN29 reported that there are older deaf people still saying they are not BSL signers, not understanding the label. They view 'BSL' as a new language (23).

(23)   I remember when we were surprised to see this new thing, BSL, then there was SSE too. (LN29)

Some older people commented that they do not use BSL as it is something used by younger people (as noted in 24–25 from signers aged 60 and above).

(24)   What I follow is gesture. From a long time ago, I have signed. I have seen this new BSL, I don't understand what their hands are doing, I can't get it. I follow traditional signing and always have done. (GW20)

(25)   I'm in an older group. The younger ones are all BSL now, we older ones just carry on the same. (BL03)

Older signers in the BSL Corpus (typically 65+) reject the label 'BSL' as a descriptor of their signing and view BSL as something new, something that younger people do. BL10 in their 40s said that 'those in my age group and older from my circle' are BSL signers implying that younger signers used SSE. Both are examples of iconisation, as BSL and SSE are attributed to people of specific age groups.

Some people said they were not sure what SSE was, having 'never heard about SSE' (BM26) or were previously unaware of SSE, thinking they were using BSL. As discussed earlier, the transition between their realisation about using SSE and the time when they began to use BSL overlaps with leaving oral education and joining the deaf community (as in 26 from a signer in their 60s).

(26)   I know what BSL is but that other one you said, 'S, S' I don't know, that's the first time I've seen it said. Is it English? Well, that's the first time for me, no, I don't know it. (BL05)

Some reported learning BSL linguistics in their BSL teacher training (27 & 28) from signers in the 41–65 age group.

(27)   I learned late too. It was through Durham University that I learned in depth about the principles and structure of BSL. (LN05)

(28)   Growing up, I went to an oral school. Of course, I signed, but I had no idea that there was 'BSL' and 'SSE'. It was like that until I left school at sixteen years old. … Then, I went to Durham University. … I got to understand the difference between BSL and SSE. That was quite late, and not that long ago. (LN06).

7.5 Being aware of the continuum

In our review, we described how varieties of sign language use can often be considered as occurring on a continuum. LN25 explained 'there is a range of forms which goes from very strong BSL, to somewhere in the middle, along to SSE at the other end'. Some descriptions of SSE in the data, however, do point to some awareness amongst participants of this continuum. BF01 explicitly stated that although they used the term SSE all the time, they wondered if it was the right term because 'one person using SSE and another person using SSE are still different from each other' and that 'you can't say that SSE is this since it depends on the person'. BL08 thought SSE was a part of BSL and 'it sits under the umbrella of BSL'. BL08 again described SSE as 'a clash between two languages (English and BSL)' which suggests some awareness of SSE being a result of language contact (although framed in a negative way). BM16 stated sometimes they 'think people who are signing SSE have BSL in there too'.

    Based on the structural descriptions above, while some deaf signers do recognise a continuum, it appears that BSL and SSE are for the most part defined by referring to extremes i.e., sign order in BSL is described with reference to specific examples in non-English-like order (e.g. question signs are placed at the end) while SSE follows English. This is an example of fractal recursivity.

8 General discussion

Descriptions of BSL and SSE structures by deaf BSL signers can essentially be viewed in opposition to one another: BSL is seen as messy, creative, and shorter and SSE

ordered, mediocre and longer. This polar opposition is an example of fractal recursivity. Signers explain differences in signing styles when mixing with different people. This association of particular styles with particular groups is an example of iconisation. Internal variation within BSL and SSE, as well as within social groups is disregarded in favour of homogeneity, which is an example of erasure.

On a broad level, we see that BSL is associated with deafness and SSE with hearingness. This association has been projected onto other groups within the deaf community, such as non-signing deaf people being viewed as "more hearing". This is apparent in their associations with different groups i.e. iconisation: BSL with the deaf community and SSE with hearing people, ex-mainstreamers, and oral deaf people. This includes differences in signing used with deaf people vs. with hearing people and differences in signing used at schools with hearing teachers vs. outside school with other deaf people. In addition, participants explained that those who grow up signing usually stay in the deaf community whereas oral deaf people with some hearing disappear once they leave school.

Discussions on BSL/SSE in the BSL Corpus seem to correlate with what Jaeger (2018) found in the debate on authentic/inauthentic signing (respectively) in the German deaf community. This indicates that distinctions between varieties within sign languages, based on the extent of influences from majority spoken/written languages on sign languages, may be a part of a wider ideology in relation to language status.

These ideologies, putting BSL and SSE on opposing ends, have political roots. The deaf community is an oppressed minority and the use of BSL has been suppressed since the beginning of deaf education in the United Kingdom. English, on the other hand, has been promoted through what the deaf community considers as oppressive educational policies, hence the negative ideologies surrounding English-based signing. The different opinions (put forth by several participants in our data) suggest that distinctions between signing varieties have a socio-political/historical/ideological basis.

8.1 Language differentiation in BSL teaching and sign linguistics

Irvine and Gal's (2000) semiotic processes can be clearly seen in BSL curricula and teaching materials. Sign language textbooks/sign language instruction books (e.g., City Lit 2008) often describe BSL with reference to specific structures (e.g., emphasis on topic comment structures, wh-final elements, and non-English sign orders), despite their low frequency (Hodge et al., in press). The reverse of this is also seen i.e., where English-like structures are downplayed (Fenlon 2019). For example, the

Signature BSL Level 2 assessment criteria require use of "BSL sign order", where full points are given when the "candidate is able to use BSL sign order, with no English structure, most of the time" (Signature 2022). The focus on infrequent constructions, the least similar to English, and the lack of acknowledgement of frequent constructions in BSL that actually are English-like points to erasure. Some aspects are also fractal recursivity, as BSL and English are described on extreme ends of the continuum. There is no mention of language mixing in curricula, nor is this allowed in assessments.

It is interesting to consider whether the ideology that BSL is totally different from English exists in the deaf community and this is reflected in the BSL teaching curriculum, or vice versa. Either way, this ideology may well have its roots in the early linguistic recognition of sign languages as legitimate languages. The push by linguists to show that BSL is not simply "English on the hands" may well have resulted in the fractal recursivity that we see between BSL and SSE. This could be compared to the ongoing debate within sign linguistics about the role of gesture in sign language (e.g. Quer 2020; Schembri et al. 2018). That is, the push to show that sign languages are not the same as gesture used by non-signers has led many linguists to reject outright the possibility that any part of what signers do might be gesture or gestural. These academic ideologies are sometimes reflected in the deaf community but sometimes resisted or transformed (Kusters and Sahasrabudhe 2018).

8.2 Language mixing as translanguaging

In terms of what SSE actually is: a translanguaging framework provides a useful explanation. This framework views language practices not as separate, bounded systems but as dynamic and fluid. Within this perspective, signers use various resources from both BSL and English when they communicate from whatever they have available in their linguistic repertoire, including signs, words, gestures, writing etc. Lines between what gets called BSL and what gets called English may well be drawn partly on modality, but what sits in between also involves social/political issues and power dynamics. Because of this, when the visual modality is involved, and questions arise about whether what is produced is BSL or SSE – that cannot be determined on a structural basis alone. As noted by Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999), it does in large part come down to what the signer believes they are producing. We conclude that it is difficult to distinguish between BSL and English-based signing varieties. We suggest that those varieties are better understood from a translanguaging perspective where the amount of English influence on BSL utterances is largely dependent on the signers' knowledge of BSL and English, as well as context. It can also depend on how signers perceive each other's language skills. For example, if

each person knows that the other can understand a wide range of signing varieties, they may use any of the semiotic resources they have. But if one knows that the other person does not know many varieties, then they will accommodate accordingly (Moriarty and Kusters 2021). Translanguaging practices like these in deaf communities have been widely discussed, particularly by deaf scholars, with De Meulder et al. (2019) explaining that deaf people do engage in translanguaging practices, and they can be quite creative in using communicative strategies – therefore "translanguaging is central to the deaf experience" (p. 11).

Translanguaging is a recognition of the communication practices adopted by bi/multilingual people, including deaf signers, to achieve mutual understanding. However, some are concerned that 'the 'translanguaging turn' (García and Li 2014) challenges the six-decade long project of sign language linguistics and by extension deaf studies to legitimize the status of sign languages and, correspondingly, the right of deaf people to acquire and use a sign language in educational and community settings' (De Meulder et al. 2019: 2). Deaf scholars argue that translanguaging practices in deaf communities should be recognised and valued. However deaf children still have a right to be exposed to fluent models of natural sign languages, providing them with much needed access to language to develop ways to interact with the world around them (Henner and Robinson 2023).

9 Conclusions

In this study we have found there are clear differences in how members of the British deaf community view BSL and SSE. Most provide clear distinctions between BSL and SSE, putting each at the extreme ends of a language-mixing continuum, which seem to be ideologically driven and likely influenced by social, political, and educational policies in the United Kingdom. However, in reality we are more likely to see varying degrees of language-mixing, which reflects translanguaging practices amongst deaf signers. It is possible that opposing distinctions are deemed necessary for purposes of language maintenance and policy. However, translanguaging is increasingly becoming a recognised practice amongst bi/multilinguals, and "allows us to graduate from the goal of 'language maintenance', with its constant risk of turning minoritised languages into museum pieces, to that of sustainable practices by bilingual speakers that thrive in spatial and functional interrelation with the sustaining linguistic practices of other speakers" (Otheguy et al. 2015: 283).

Using sign language corpora (usage-based linguistics), future research could study and compare in more depth attitudes in different groups in the deaf community (older/younger signers, deaf of deaf signers or from hearing families, and signers who are BSL teachers and vice-versa).

There are many benefits to studying minoritised language ideologies within the British deaf community. This enables us to gain a deeper understanding of how language use is shaped by language ideologies. This has many implications for the vitality of and ongoing policy relating to BSL, particularly important given the recent BSL Act (2022). Understanding the nuances of minoritised language ideologies can also improve educational outcomes for deaf students, as it enables us to provide them with instruction that is more culturally and linguistically relevant and ultimately reflects the values of the British deaf community.

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