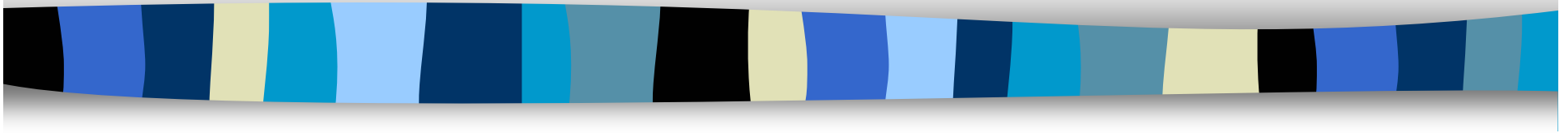


American Sign Language

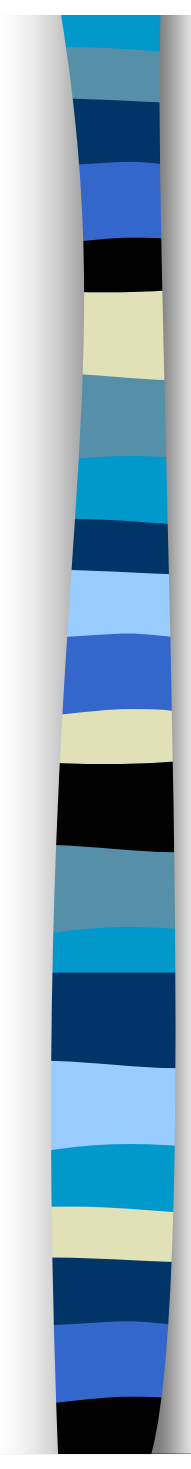


John Goldsmith
Winter 2005



Some history

- Rise of communities of deaf people in Europe with the emergence of the city. Groups of deaf in Paris, Madrid, and elsewhere led to the formation of sign languages.
- 18th century: Abbé de l'Épée learned French sign language, used it to teach French to French Deaf.



In early 19th century: Thomas Gallaudet goes to England and France to find a way to teach a deaf child. England was oralist; Gallaudet went to France to learn more from the work there, and persuaded Laurent Clerc, a Deaf man, to return to the United States.

In 1817, they established the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons (now American School for the Deaf, Hartford CT).



Sign language families around the world

- Many different families, some in the French Sign Language family, spread largely by the influence of the Roman Catholic church. Includes ASL, Irish SL, Québécois SL (LSQ).
- Others, including British, Israeli SLs.



Issues

- Orality versus signing
- Written form of language: not really.
- Attitudes of linguists, of educators, of the Deaf community.
- Deafness as a medical disability vs alignment with Deaf culture



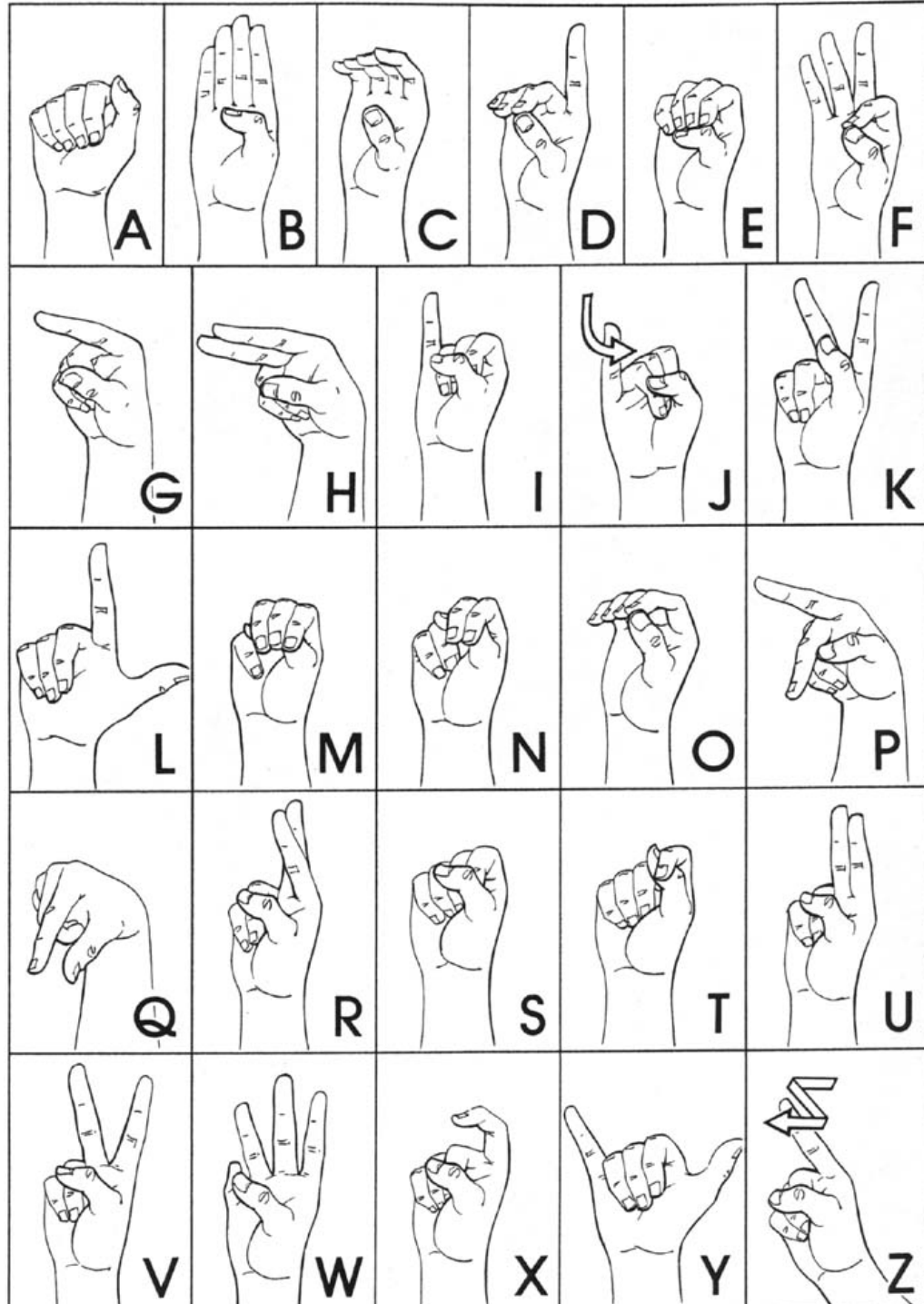
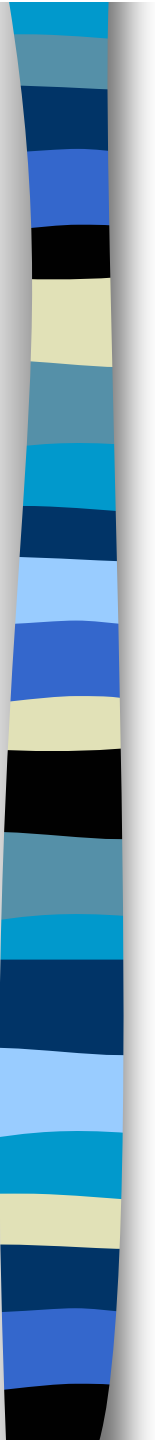
Linguistic analysis

- William Stokoe. Major published work in 1960.
- Ursulla Bellugi-Klima, and then a large number of psychologists and linguists.
- Carol Padden, Deaf linguist at UCSD, for example; Diane Brentari; David Perlmutter; and others.



Iconicity

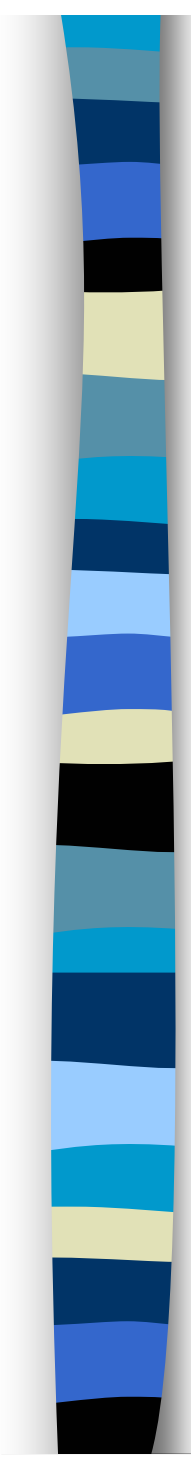
- does the perceptible form of a sign match up with the object or action being represented?
- Is spoken language iconic? Is ASL iconic?
- ASL is more iconic than spoken language, but its iconicity is limited.
- How do new signs develop?
- How do speakers of different signed languages communicate?





Finger spelling

- First approximation: finger-spelling is used to borrow words from English.
- Second approximation: words may become integrated into the structured lexicon. Examples: WHAT, YES, BUS, DOG

- 
- Excellent source is *Linguistics of American Sign Language*, Clayton Valli and Ceil Lucas.
 - More generally: *Seeing Voices*, by Oliver Sacks; *Deaf in America*, Carol Padden and Tom Humphries



Phonology-morphology in the lexicon: Stokoe-Battison system

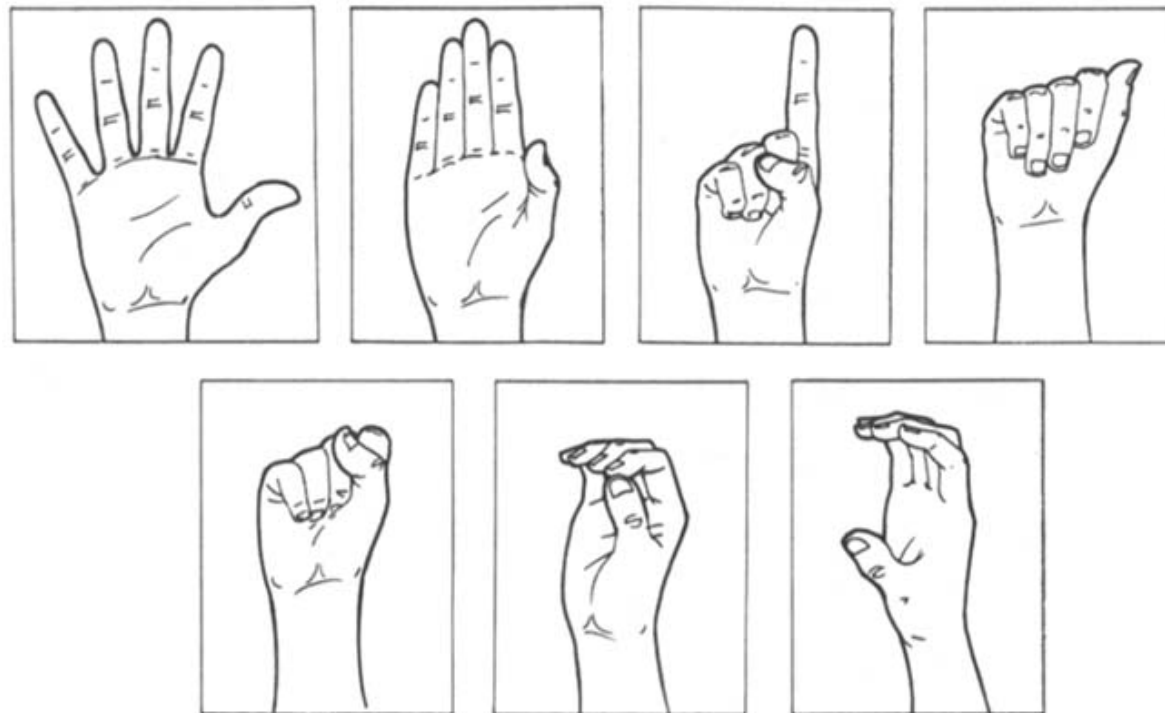
Signs are defined along four dimensions:

- Handshape (19 to 45)
- Orientation
- Location (12 to 25)
- Motion

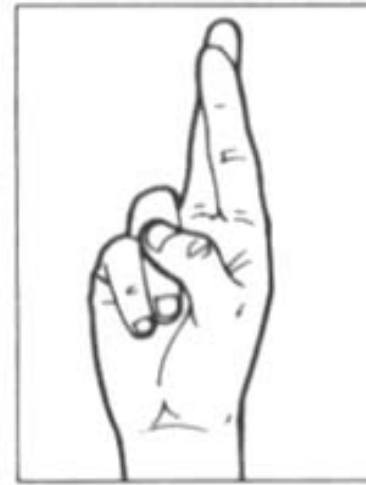
Thanks to UPenn lx course website

Handshape

- Stokoe: 19 handshapes
- Battison's 7 unmarked handshapes



Additional handshapes, available only for the dominant hand





Examples

- Difference in Handshape: CAR WHICH
- Location: MOTHER FATHER
- Orientation: CHILDREN THINGS;
NAME CHAIR; change in orientation:
DIE
- Movement: NAME SHORT



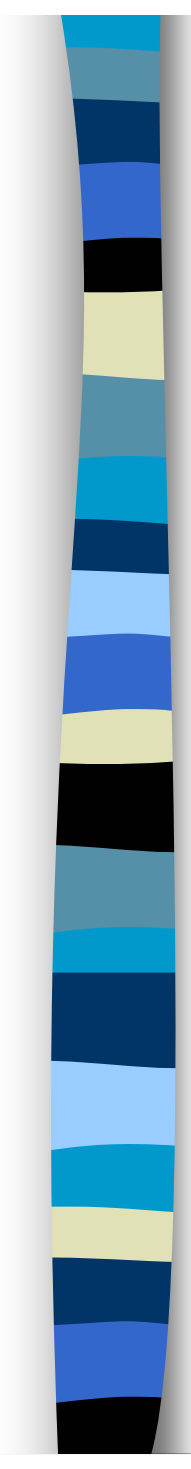
Stokoe-Battison analysis

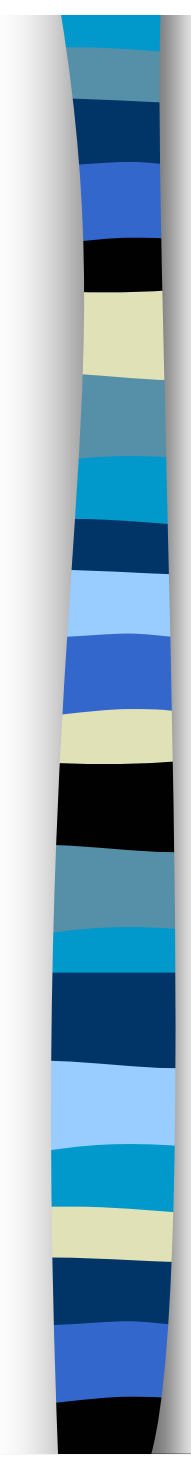
■ 1-handed

■ 2-handed signs

- Type 1: 2 handed, same HS, same movement (in or out of phase); same location or symmetric location. MAYBE, WHICH, DRIVE. SINCE, SIGN, DIE,
- Type 2: 2 handed, same HS, non-dominant stationary. COLLEGE, NAME, TRAIN, BRIEF, SIT, CHAIR
- Type 3: 2 handed, different HS, non-dominant stationary. Only 7 Non-D HS's: B A S O C 1 5. MONEY, WORD, HELP, DISCUSS, SODA

■ Compounds

- 
- Most signs have one specification for 3 of the dimensions, and 2 specifications in the 4th; otherwise, there is a change inherent in one of them.
 - E.g.: MOTHER: HS stays fixed, location changes
 - UNDERSTAND: Location stays fixed, HS changes

- 
- Orientation: Stays fixed in MAYBE; changes in DIE
 - 2 Locations: KING, CONGRESS



Symmetry condition

If both hands move independently, then same HS, same Loc, same Movement (same or 180 degrees out of sync); orientation is either same or symmetric.

- SINCE (UP-TILL-NOW) versus WHICH



Dominance Condition

If the hands of a 2 hand sign are distinct
(Type 3), then the nondominant must be
A S B 5 G(=1) C O.



Compounds

- FATHER-MOTHER (PARENT)
- SIMULTANEOUS = TIME-SAME
- AGREE= THINK-SAME
- WIFE, HUSBAND
- HOME (FOOD-SLEEP).....



Phrasal phonology

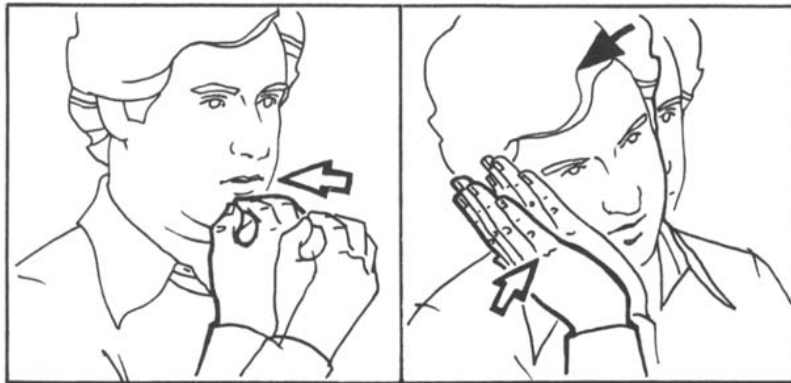
- FATHER has two contacts in isolation; but in FATHER STUDY, it has one.



Metathesis

- Reversal of 2 sounds: ask/aks, [nukyulr] for *nuclear*, [k^mf tr bl] for *comfortable*
- ASL: PARENTS; DEAF
- FATHER DEAF vesus GIRL DEAF: in FATHER DEAF, location moves downward in DEAF, while in GIRL DEAF, location moves up.

EAT-SLEEP >> HOME





Semantic groups

- City-7: Chicago, Indianapolis, Rochester, Philadelphia



Syntax: Subject/object agreement

- Location of 1, 2, 3rd (etc) person in signing space.
- These locations are used with many (not all verbs) to mark agreement.
- An overt subject or object is not necessary.
- Carol Padden: (i) Plain verbs (ii) agreement verbs (iii) spatial verbs



Plain verbs

- LOVE, SORRY, ACCEPT
- No subject or object agreement.



Syntax: verbal agreement

Some verbs mark subject/object (S/O) agreement with orientation:

I SEE YOU. HE HATES HIM.

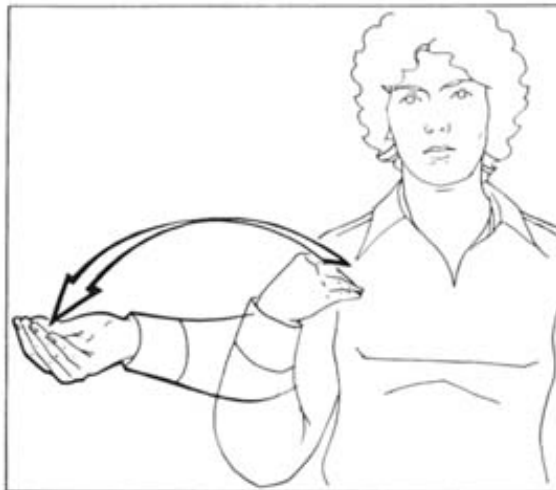
Some verbs mark S/O agreement with location: e.g., HELP.

Some use both: SAY-NO-TO; GIVE; ASK.

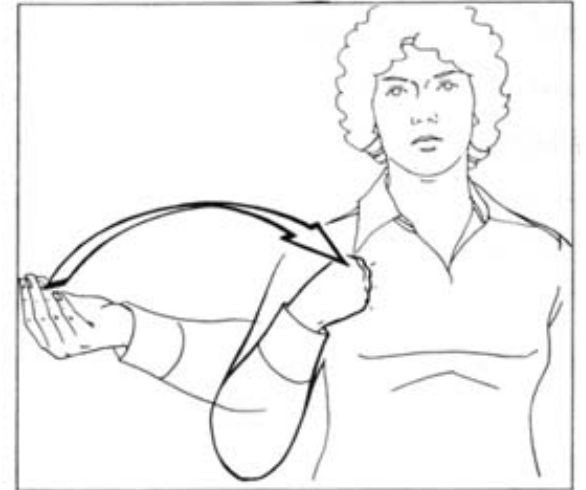
GIVE



me-GIVE-TO-you



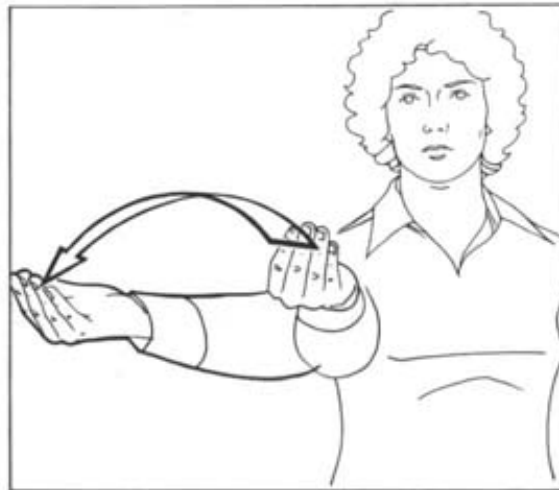
me-GIVE-TO-him/her



s/he-GIVE-TO-me



you-GIVE-TO-me



you-GIVE-TO-him/her



s/he-GIVE-TO-you



■ STARE-AT, HELP



“inverted” agreement

- Object agreement comes first in time: INVITE; COPY.

Reciprocals

LOOK-AT-EACH-OTHER



LOOK-AT-EACH-OTHER

FIGURE 32. A reciprocal verb.



they-LOOK-AT-“each other”



we-LOOK-AT-“each other”



Spatial verbs

- Spatial verbs differ from agreement verbs in that with spatial verbs, *space represents space*, while with agreement verbs, *space is divided into sections, with each participant (subject, object) being assigned one section.*



Topicalization

■ KID, FATHER LOVES



Examples (from Padden et al)

Jack: I RECENTLY SEE MOVIE
INTERESTING. ITSELF OLD MOVIE,
SIGN LECTURE B-Y G-E-O-R-G-E V-
E-D-I-T-Z. YOU SEE FINISH YOU?

TOM: [NOT-YET I]. [V-E-D-I-T-Z WHO?]

JACK: HIMSELF DEAF, PRESIDENT N-
A-D LONG-AGO 1913. SIGN HIS CAN
NOTICE OLD, DIFFERENT.

TOM: [MAKE MOVIE WHAT FOR?]whq

JACK: N-A-D FINISH COLLECT 5,000
DOLLAR, MAKE MOVIE. IT WANT



SAVE, PROTECT SIGN FOR FUTURE
DEAF.

TOM: I WANT SEE MOVIE.
[WHERE?]whq

JACK: LIBRARY HAVE SHOULD. YOU-
ASK-IT LIBRARY.



Dialog 4

- BILL: [KNOW-THAT HAVE PERFORMANCE NEW?] q DEAF PERFORMANCE GROUP THERE L-A ESTABLISH. [WANT SEE YOU?]q
- Jack: I WANT. CHAIR LEFT HAVE?
- Bill: SHOULD HAVE LEFT CL:5. I-TTY-IT, TWO-US RESERVE CHAIR. TICKET COST 3-DOLLAR.
- Jack: I-PAY-YOU NOW CAN I.