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International Sign and American Sign Language as Different Types of Global Deaf Lingua Francas

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Abstract

International Sign (IS) and American Sign Language (ASL) have both been used as lingua francas within international deaf contexts. Perspectives on the uses of IS and ASL as lingua francas in such contexts are connected to discourses pertaining to the form, function, status, value, languageness, and global reach of IS and ASL. While there are some historical and usage-based parallels between IS and ASL, they are different types of lingua francas, and their uses as lingua franca are evaluated differently in different contexts.

INTERNATIONAL SIGN (IS) and American Sign Language (ASL) are both used as global deaf lingua francas within international deaf encounters and events, associated with different patterns of emergence, spread, and circulation.

ASL is a national sign language that emerged in the United States in the nineteenth century (Supalla and Clark 2014). ASL (or its lexicon) has been introduced in various forms by missionaries, educationalists, and developmental workers in a significant number of countries in Africa, Asia, and South America (Parsons 2005; Woodward 1996). Deaf people from all over the world have attended universities in the

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United States (such as Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, an ASL–English bilingual university) and often brought ASL signs to their home countries (Parks 2014). ASL is abundantly present on the internet in the form of video blogs (vlogs), stories, and online (academic) journals. In deaf communities outside of the United States, ASL is often seen as a language with more status, depth, breadth, and/or complexity than other sign languages (McKee and McKee 2020; Schmaling 2003). ASL has also been associated with linguistic imperialism and the loss of linguistic diversity of sign languages outside the United States (Moriarty 2020b). While ASL is thus widely used and widely known, in addition to often being preferred for international communication, there are also "anti-ASL" discourses preventing or curtailing its use in international contexts (Kusters 2020).

IS use is seen when signers of different linguistic backgrounds come together. IS emerged during international encounters since the nineteenth century or before, mostly in Europe (Murray 2007). IS showcases a higher rate of iconicity than is generally the case in standardized national sign languages such as ASL (Rosenstock 2008). An important ideology underlying IS use is that it is (or should be) more transparent and therefore easier to learn and understand than national sign languages such as ASL. Its use is variable and dependent on the geographical, political, social, cultural, and linguistic context in which it occurs and the backgrounds of the people who use it (Mori 2011; Zeshan 2017). IS typically incorporates signs from national sign languages (including ASL) and often includes mouthings from English and other spoken languages. There are conventionalized and less-conventionalized uses of IS (Whynot 2016; Zeshan 2015), and these versions are typically used together in the same communicative contexts (such as deaf international events). The question of whether IS is a language is hotly debated. Conventionalized versions of IS are considered to be more language-like (Best et al. 2015; Hansen 2015).

Deaf international gatherings have been documented since at least the nineteenth century, when deaf people, most of them white men, were communicating with each other across international borders at deaf-organized banquets and conferences (Gulliver 2015; Murray 2007). Breivik, Haualand, and Solvang (2002), in their multi-sited ethnography, studied international deaf conferences and sports events

(such as the Deaflympics), and they concluded that deaf signers often see themselves as part of a transnational deaf community (also see Breivik 2005). Analyzing such experiences of sameness, Friedner and Kusters (2014) identified a discourse termed "deaf universalism," meaning a belief in a connection between deaf people around the globe, grounded in deaf ways of being in the world and in deaf language practices.

International contexts where IS and/or ASL are currently used include conferences, sports events, arts events, camps, leadership programs, academic courses, development initiatives, nongovernmental organization (NGO) initiatives, research, and religious missions (Friedner and Kusters 2015). Other forms of signing are also used in international contexts, such as pan-Arab Sign Language in the Middle East (Al-Fityani and Padden 2010).

Opinions on which is *the* lingua franca in a given context will depend on who is asked, for what purposes the language is used, and on the contexts of use (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). While both ASL and IS are used in international deaf encounters, one is often generally preferred or privileged over the other. A pervasive argument in considerations about such preferences is that "IS is not a language" and thus not suitable as lingua franca. Following discussions in the General Assembly of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) about the linguistic status of IS in 2003 and 2007, a report was compiled for the WFD, called "Perspectives on the concept and definition of International Sign" (Mesch 2010). The report lists four claims about ASL as lingua franca versus IS as lingua franca, which can be summarized as follows: (1) a specific sign language, most likely ASL, should be the lingua franca; (2) IS has become a more international type of ASL; (3) knowing ASL does not guarantee good communication in IS, even though some uses of IS contain numerous ASL signs; and (4) people should be able to use IS for networking, and the use of ASL as lingua franca should be avoided. As shown in this article, these are some of the key claims that are generally uttered in debates over the status of IS and ASL as lingua francas.

What does not really come through in these claims, however, is that ASL and IS are associated with different linguistic categories: ASL is a vehicular language (a native language of a group of people,

which is also used for international communication), while IS has been called a pidgin, a koiné, gestures, and a process of translanguaging (De Meulder et al. 2019; Moody 2002; Supalla and Webb 1995; Whynot 2016). As a result, ASL and IS are distinct types of lingua francas.

Lingua Franca was initially the name of a now-extinct Mediterranean pidgin used in the first half of the second millennium (Ostler 2010). It later became a common noun used for pidgins and trade languages. Currently, the meaning of "lingua franca" has further expanded in that it is now used for all vehicular languages (Brosch 2015). Lingua francas are not necessarily global: Samarin (1968) distinguishes several kinds of lingua francas: (1) *Natural languages*: these are native languages or mother tongues of some people, acquired by others as a second language, such as Latin, English, or Chinese, and thus come to function as vehicular languages; (2) *Pidgin languages,* such as Swahili, Lingala, and Hawaiian English; and (3) *Planned languages* such as Esperanto. It is possible that ASL could be called a *natural* lingua franca; however, as noted below, some authors argue that natural/vehicular languages are not "true" lingua francas, in contrast to pidgins for example. As set out further in this paper, IS has been called a pidgin, but some authors argue that IS has no real equivalent in spoken pidgins.

This article reviews literature that documents the historical and current international uses of IS and ASL. It then briefly explores parallels of IS and ASL with types of spoken lingua francas, ending with a consideration of the types of lingua franca that IS and ASL represent.

American Sign Language

ASL in the United States

ASL has its roots in old French Sign Language (*Langue des Signes Française* [LSF]) which was brought to the United States in 1817 by the French deaf teacher Laurent Clerc, as well as in, for example, home signs brought by deaf students to the first deaf schools in the United States and some signs from the island of Martha's Vineyard (Shaw and Delaporte 2015; Supalla and Clark 2014). Linguistic research on ASL

has been undertaken since the 1960s. This research, as well as the formation of the discipline of Deaf Studies in the 1970s in the United States (Murray 2017), has had worldwide reverberations. In comparison with most other sign languages, ASL is a well-researched, well-established, and well-institutionalized language. It is taught at a range of institutions including high schools and universities throughout the United States. It is used as a language of instruction in a number of academic institutions, such as at the Gallaudet University, a bilingual ASL–English liberal arts university in Washington, D.C., which was founded in 1864 and is attended by students from all over the world. Other American academic institutions where ASL is used on a large scale are the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (Rochester) and California State University (Northridge).

There are variants of ASL, such as Black ASL, which was initially used in segregated schools for black deaf children (McCaskill et al. 2011/2020), and Pro-Tactile ASL (PTASL), which Edwards (2014) argues is actually not a variant of ASL but a new language altogether. However, generally, ASL is often described as a monolithic sign language with limited variation, which may be related to the lack of study of ASL sociolinguistic variations other than the abovementioned works and the work of Lucas, Bayley, and Valli (2001).

ASL Export

Elements from ASL have been introduced in other places all over the world—in various forms and in various contexts—by various actors. The idea that ASL has spread in its current form is a myth. Much of the (old) ASL (signs) introduced in other countries were offered within a Total Communication framework (in which speech typically is used at the same time as signing), already *before* ASL was widely called "ASL" in the United States (Foster 1975; Parsons 2005; Moriarty 2020b). Initially, this import mostly happened in the contexts of deaf education, missionary work, and development projects.

Some sign languages include a high proportion of (old) ASL (-influenced) lexicon because of the introduction of those in *emergent* educational systems, such as in Thailand in the 1950s (Woodward

1996), in Costa Rica in the 1970s and 1980s (Polich 2005; Woodward 2012), in Cambodia in the 1990s (Moriarty 2020a), but most no-tably in Africa. Dr. Andrew Foster, a deaf African American man who had studied at Gallaudet University and two other universities, established thirty-two deaf schools in thirteen African countries and also trained deaf teachers between 1957 and 1987. Foster was a Total Communication supporter, at least for some of the time he worked in Africa (Foster 1975). While Foster apparently did not object to the use of local signing, lexicon from (old) ASL was dispersed over a wide geographical territory in the process of establishing schools (Runnels 2020).

In addition to ASL, a number of European sign languages (or lexicon from these languages) have been imported into Africa, such as Danish Sign Language and German Sign Language in Botswana (Schmaling 2003) and Finnish/Swedish Sign Language in Eritrea (Moges 2015). Similarly, Auslan (Australian Sign Language) has in-fluenced sign languages in the Asia–Pacific region (Reed 2020). How-ever, ASL is probably the most frequently imported language around the world. ASL-based sign languages, or sign languages that have had a lot of ASL (lexical) input, are the first languages of many educated deaf people.

In some contexts, ASL importation and exposure was not a one-time occurrence but has happened repeatedly over a period of de-cades: language resources for ASL and/or Signed English (such as dictionary books, video home system [VHS] tapes, digital video disks [DVDs]) were taken abroad by various actors such as missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers, and educators from the United States or who had visited the United States (see, e.g., Polich 2005). Thus,the fact that ASL-based forms of Signed English are used (using signs in English-based grammatical structures) in large parts of Africa is not only related to Foster's activities (Lutalo-Kiingi and De Clerck 2016).

ASL was not only imported in contexts where the use of a national sign language was not yet institutionalized. Teachers in some deaf schools first started out using a local or national sign language and then switched to ASL, for example, in a school in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s (Braithwaite 2018) and in a school in Mali at

the end of the 1990s (Nyst 2012). The status of ASL and/or the availability of materials in ASL are likely important factors in these shifts, at least in Trinidad and Tobago (Braithwaite 2018).

ASL and Sign Languages in the Global South

In countries in the global South, where ASL was brought into the country *before* a national deaf education system had been established, it would exist alongside local/indigenous sign languages; replace them; and/or the ASL would morph and incorporate indigenous signing (Parks 2014). So, ASL or an ASL variant may exist alongside (an)other sign language(s) in a country (Braithwaite 2018); and to make things even more complicated, the other sign language(s) *also* may have had some ASL and/or Signed English influence at some point in time, for example, in Kenya (Morgan et al. 2015).

Even though ASL may be used alongside one (or more) other sign languages in a country, the use of ASL or (old) ASL-influenced sign languages in the global South is often associated with the reduced use and status of other national or local sign languages (Nyst 2012; Parks 2014). Local sign languages are often solely used in informal and noninstitutionalized contexts and are therefore often seen as inferior to ASL (or ASL-influenced sign languages). ASL is often perceived as having higher prestige and more potential for development, because of its worldwide use and its association with educational opportunities in the USA. Time and again, ASL has been seen as a "better" or "real" sign language in contrast to local sign languages, which have been labeled "gestures" or "not-language" (Moriarty Harrelson 2019; Nyst 2012; Schmaling 2003).

Certain ASL signs and structures may not fit the sociocultural contexts in which they are used; and US-based ASL may lack the lexicon to name local foods, drinks, clothes, plants, trees, crafts, and religions (Schmaling 2003), fueling the spontaneous or planned process of sign language indigenization in many countries. For example, in Cambodia, the import of ASL by a French NGO happened with the intent to "Khmerize" it over time by coining new signs specific to the Cambodian context (Moriarty 2020a). Such processes may ignore the fact that local signs are already in use. The ideology that

rural or indigenous unschooled deaf people who use local signs and gestures "have no language" is instrumental in this pattern of neglect (Moriarty Harrelson 2019).

Since deaf advocates and sign linguists have argued that ASL use negatively impacts on the institutionalization and maintenance of indigenous sign languages, there has been resistance against the use of signs associated with ASL in the vocabulary of many national sign languages (Palfreyman 2019; Parks 2014). Parks (2014) summarizes the different responses toward imported ASL in South America and the Caribbean: (1) adoption and acceptance, typically in countries where ASL was the first institutionalized sign language; (2) adoption and distinction, whereby ASL is adopted in certain domains but distinguished from the country's own sign language, which is used in other domains (i.e., diglossia); (3) mixing and rejection, whereby ASL use has become increasingly integrated in the country's sign language, becomes mixed up with it, and inspires purification projects, removing ASL influence from the country's sign language by reclaiming old signs or developing new signs.

There also has been some pushback against the notion that ASL has spread through the world like a virus, contaminating and/or displacing local/national sign languages. For example, Kamei (2006) writes that in Cameroon, Benin, and Gabon, a common sign language is used, which is called ASL but is French-influenced in the form of mouthings, loan words, idioms, and the modification of initialized signs to reflect French rather than English words; it also includes indigenous signs. Kamei suggests calling this language *Language des signes Franco-Africaine* (LSFA) and emphasizes that LSFA is not a "killer language" since

> LSFA itself was not introduced from foreign countries, but rather, was created within African Deaf communities. [. . .] The spread of this sign language was not a process of oppression, but rather, a creative one, constructed by African Deaf educators and communities over a span of many years. Referring to it as 'LSFA,' and not 'ASL,' will provide new perspectives for researching this language and its relationship to African Deaf history. (Kamei 2006, 7)

And while there are critics of Foster who claim that Foster engaged in ASL colonialism, there are many African deaf people who feel

deeply grateful to him for his role in establishing deaf education and institutionalizing sign language use across Africa (Aina 2015; Kiyaga and Moores 2003).

Naming and Labeling Uses of ASL

Differences between US-based ASL and ASL used elsewhere can be recognized without replacing the name "ASL." For example, in the Dominican Republic, some people state that while they use ASL, it is not the same language as the ASL used in the United States, since they do not understand American deaf people well. Others in the same country state that their sign language is Dominican Sign Language and distinct from ASL (Parks 2014). Similarly, in many countries, sign languages with influence of ASL (signs) have been given a national name (e.g., Ghanaian Sign Language, Thai Sign Language, and Filipino Sign Language) by sign linguists and/or deaf organizations. This pattern follows the monolingual nationalist ideology of "one state—one language," which is relatively recent (Makoni and Pennycook 2005). In some cases, these national sign languages (still) share a lot of cognates with ASL (Woodward 2012).

While these languages may not be called ASL by official sources or linguists, people may recognize (and name) them as ASL(-influenced) nonetheless. As noted above, calling these languages "ASL" can gloss over the facts that much of the influence may have been through forms of Signed English or Total Communication; that languages have evolved and changed and often include indigenous signs; and that there often were influences of several foreign sign languages and not only ASL. For example, there is much influence of LSF in European and African sign languages (Kamei 2006); but the practice of naming a sign language as related to ASL (as opposed to its more distant genetic relative LSF) seamlessly fits into discourses about ASL imperialism.[1]

Therefore, resistance exists toward labeling sign languages used outside the United States as "ASL." In Nigeria, some scholars think that Nigerian Sign Language should be called Nigerian–American Sign Language (N-ASL) because of the similarities with ASL and because many signers believe they sign ASL. Asonye, Emma-Asonye,

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1. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

and Edward (2018, 7) resist this ideology: "the linguistic status of Nigerian Sign Language has been misrepresented and misconstrued as a variety of ASL." Another example of resistance through naming is Kamei's (2006) abovementioned use of "LSFA" instead of "ASL."

In brief, there is a tension between recognizing a national sign language's roots in (forms of) ASL versus the urge to foreground how it diverges from ASL and/or the urge to foreground a national linguistic identity for deaf signers.

Recent and Current Import/Influence of ASL

Apart from countries where ASL seems to have formed or impacted the foundation of national sign languages, there are also situations where large-scale exposure to ASL seems to be more recent and happens not primarily within the context of deaf education. Instead, current ASL spread around the world happens in the forms of social media exposure; in the context of international mobility; and in courses to learn ASL as a second sign language.

Worldwide, deaf people who know about or imagine deaf lives in the United States often associate ASL with deaf rights, charisma, progress, confidence, and development. The United States is often pictured as a place with good accessibility in the form of ASL-interpreting services and as a place with a rich tradition of deaf storytelling, theater, poetry, movies, television series, vlogs and signed songs in ASL, many of which can be accessed online and are popular abroad (De Meulder 2019). ASL vlogs and ASL songs are popular, for instance, in Turkey (İlkbaşaran 2015), Africa (Kurz and Cuculick 2015), and New Zealand (McKee and McKee 2020). Because of the high number of ASL students in the United States, many ASL resources and learning materials are freely available online, such as English–ASL dictionaries, videos with ASL lexicon, and corpora.

People also pick up ASL through interactions with foreigners, such as ASL-using visitors to their country (e.g., in Nepal, see Green 2015), or attempt to acquire some ASL before engaging in international encounters. Travelers from the United States to other countries, as well as researchers, have been asked to formally or informally teach ASL, since ASL is seen as a valuable linguistic resource (see, e.g., Cooper 2015; İlkbaşaran 2015; Nakamura 2006). ASL is also used as

an intermediary language when foreign visitors learn the local sign language (Boland, Wilson, and Winiarczyck 2015).

ASL as a linguistic resource is often embraced as "a tool to facilitate upward international social mobility," for example, by leaving the local community temporarily to access resources by studying in the United States and then returning (Parks 2014, 208). Active in the spread of ASL are many non–American students who study at previously mentioned academic institutions where they become fluent in ASL. When these students return to their country, some of them take up influential leadership positions and are seen as (linguistic) role models. Some of these ex-students, or other people, use ASL signs to fill perceived lexical gaps or use ASL signs alongside semantic equivalents in their national or local sign language. For example, Nakamura (2006) reports the use of ASL loan signs in Japan, as do McKee and McKee (2020) for New Zealand. While this is an often-lamented development in social media discourses, for example, in European countries, people take different perspectives in relation to these developments. McKee and McKee (2020) report, in their study of ASL and IS influences on New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), that many NZSL signers do not see the use of ASL lexicon in NZSL as threatening the vitality of NZSL, nor do they see it as a political problem but, rather, as a source for modernization of NZSL.

Knowing ASL has thus clear advantages because it enables deaf people to access resources and to interact with deaf people from different countries all over the world and with the international political and academic deaf elites who often are conversant in ASL in addition to IS and one or more other sign languages. However, even though ASL is used in international deaf encounters, ASL is not often *taught* as a foreign or second sign language in countries in the global North. There are some exceptions to this, for example, in Japan where there is a Japanese ASL Signers Society (npojass.org) offering classes on ASL as a foreign language or contact language, as well as tours, for Japanese Sign Language signers, since they see ASL as the primary lingua franca for international deaf contacts.

Cooper (2015) mentions the import of deaf ASL teachers from Australia to teach local deaf tour guides to communicate with deaf travelers to Việt Nam with this same underpinning ideology that ASL

is a worldwide lingua franca. Similarly, some people, for example, in Ghana and Nigeria, believe that ASL (or signs they label as "American") is used around the world (Kusters 2015; Schmaling 2003). This belief creates a tension between concerns about linguistic vitality (of, e.g., Vietnamese Signed Languages) caused by the spread of ASL on the one hand and the position of ASL as an income-generating language and the potential for mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with people and organizations that use ASL (Cooper 2015).

International Sign

History of IS

Some authors have suggested that the use of IS could be traced back to international deaf encounters in the nineteenth century, more specifically, a series of international deaf banquets starting in 1834 in Paris and a series of deaf international conferences starting in 1873 (Murray 2007). Paris was a central meeting place for (mostly European) deaf people hailing from different countries (Desloges 1779), including deaf artists who were internationally mobile (Mirzoeff 1995). Paris also housed one of the first deaf public schools in Europe (*Institut National de Jeunes Sourds*), which was established by Abbé de l'Epée in 1760, and which is well known for its role in the establishment of deaf education throughout Europe and beyond, implying a spread of LSF signs (Supalla and Clark 2014).

European conventionalized types of IS probably have their roots in the international deaf gatherings in Europe, in which mostly a white male middle- and upper-class elite took part. While it is probable that these Parisian gatherings, early deaf conferences, and sports events in Europe were among the incubators for the forms of IS that are currently used in international deaf organizations, there are no video-recordings of IS from that time. Therefore, we can only speculate on its forms, relying on the sparse and anecdotal written resources describing the signing used by people on the stage as "elegant gestures" or as "slow and natural" (Murray 2007, 79).

At the time, deaf communities were developing what are now seen/named as separate sign languages, which were, for example, called "British signs" or "American signs" (Murray 2007), but the

nationalist ideology of "one sign language per country" had not yet gained momentum. Instead, in the context of the French Enlightenment, sign language was seen as "the universal language" and was eagerly discussed by philosophers of that time as well as by a white male deaf elite (Baynton 1996; Murray 2007; Rée 2000; Rosenfeld 2001). Historical ties among European and American sign languages (mostly through LSF) were probably a factor in the intelligibility of international signing (Murray 2007). Moody (2002) suggests that some signs that are widely used in IS may have originated from old LSF. Internationally mobile deaf people came to Europe for extended stays (i.e., not for few days, as is now typical for international deaf events), which may mean that there was opportunity to learn and use LSF. Thus, the LSF used in the nineteenth century may have not only informed the roots of modern ASL (brought to the United States by Laurent Clerc) but also the roots of IS. Therefore, it may be possible that the influence of old LSF and modern ASL in IS could be conflated.

In the twentieth century, IS has become the main form of communication of the largest international deaf organizations, including the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD, formerly *Comité International des Sports des Sourds* [CISS]), established in 1924, and the World Federation of the Deaf, established in 1951. It is used at the global scale, not only in international events but in a range of international encounters between deaf people, including in contexts of tourism and migration. There are different forms of IS, which is reflected in linguistic debates on the nature of IS.

Practices and Strategies in IS

IS encompasses more- and less-conventionalized language use. IS variation has been understudied, so there is not much known about its various uses and whether and how to distinguish variants. The unconventionalized versions of IS, used when two deaf people with very different linguistic repertoires meet each other for the first time, are also called cross-signing, which "can be thought of metaphorically as a jointly created communicative toolkit, a shared conceptual space that, in the absence of a conventional shared inventory for communication, includes an array of multilingual and multimodal

resources" (Zeshan 2015, 3). The name "IS" has traditionally been used as an umbrella term or hypernym that *includes* the practices of cross-signing, but some linguists (e.g., Zeshan) who use the term "cross-signing" use it in *opposition* to IS, reserving the term "IS" for the more-conventionalized versions used by, for example, the WFD. In this article, "IS" is used as a term that includes cross-signing, and cross-signing is described as one type of IS.

Cross-signing practices and more-conventionalized IS both rely on shared resources and strategies. When people adopt IS, they tend to expand the use of iconicity, which is already natural to sign languages, to refer to common (deaf) experiences and common interests, to break down the message to the essentials, and to go to the heart of the message. On the lexical level, people may unmark signs (i.e., simplifying handshapes), use signs that they regard as relatively transparent and/or as widely known, and use periphrasis (a description apart from the flow of discourse) to introduce a lexical sign that is then onward used. Often, two or more semantically equivalent signs for a concept are offered (two or more IS signs and/or national signs), and this process helps to know more than one sign language (Moody 2002; McKee and Napier 2002). Mouthings in English or other (vehicular) spoken languages, such as French or Spanish, can either help or obscure the process of making oneself understood (Kusters 2020).

Especially in individual interactions, but also in various contexts where audiences are addressed, signers are very aware of the need for monitoring whether the signs are understood (Green 2014). Research on cross-signing identified factors impacting understanding (Zeshan 2017) and identified a wide range of repair strategies that are used when something is not immediately understood: repetitions, clarifications, and circumlocution (Byun et al. 2018).

Values Embedded in IS Use

Green (2014) writes about IS as a *relational phenomenon*. She argues that "communicating in IS relies on and produces mutual moral orientation among signers" (2014, 445), and that many people value the labor involved in doing IS. What is important is that signers who engage in IS are attentive toward each other, have a desire to communicate and a willingness to work to achieve understanding. She de-

scribes how IS is experienced as *good* (in the sense of enjoyable, even if it may also be hard) and is valued not "DESPITE the work involved, but rather BECAUSE of it" (Green 2014, 455, her emphasis). Communicating in IS is also experienced as *right*: communicating directly with people from different language backgrounds entails a moral obligation, a "should." In other words, "moral orientation constitutes the conditions of possibility for, and characterizes and motivates the work involved in, communicating across difference" (Green 2014, 447). It is through this orientation and its related practice that people learn to do IS by trial and error while communicating (although people increasingly [also] learn it through absorption by watching informative or entertaining videos and vlogs on social media in IS).

Of course, this "moral orientation" is modified by pragmatic considerations, experienced barriers, and language ideologies. Being able to use and understand the more-conventional versions of IS is related to mobility, privilege, and the ability to make use of certain linguistic repertoires, including a range of literacies (İlkbaşaran 2015). Furthermore, signs with iconic motivations are not always transparent for people who are not familiar with the (often white/European/Western) cultural practices and artifacts behind these signs. Moriarty and Kusters (2021) build on Green's work, showing that communication in IS is not *always* seen as right or more moral in international deaf contexts.

IS as a Language Contact Phenomenon

Most linguistic studies on IS approached IS as a language contact phenomenon. Supalla and Webb (1995) conducted one of the first widely known studies on IS, arguing that IS is a pidgin because it has features in common with spoken-language pidgins: it is only used on specific occasions; has no stable community of users (two features that are no longer the case); and has a limited conventionalized lexicon (also see Allsop, Woll, and Brauti 1995). However, IS does not show the grammatical reduction that is typical for many pidgins (Supalla and Webb 1995). The affordances (such as the emplacement of concepts in space, use of visual buoys, constructed action, and so on) of the visual–gestural modality support grammatical complexity and lexical transparency. Furthermore, genealogical relationships between sign

languages (such as the family that includes LSF and ASL) and the fact that themes of many conversations are informed by common experiences support a certain amount of mutual intelligibility (Moody 2002; Supalla and Webb 1995; Woll 1990).

Considering these mismatches between IS and spoken language pidgins, Supalla and Webb (1995) ask whether IS is a koiné. A koiné is a language based on language contact between mutually intelligible languages/dialects/varieties sharing a similar grammar, sometimes also called "standard language," "lingua franca," or "language convergence." Koiné or Common Greek was one of the earliest known lingua francas (Barotchi 2001; Mesthrie 2001). Calling IS (or certain versions of IS) a koiné implies a strong emphasis on conventionalization or convergence, such as in classrooms (e.g., Best et al. 2015).

Currently, there is an increasing tendency to study different forms of IS separately (e.g., separating unconventionalized cross-signing from the study of more-conventionalized IS used in classrooms or on the stage at conferences) and to categorize these forms accordingly. In an example of this, Bradford, Michaelis, and Zeshan (2020) argue that the closest equivalent between cross-signing and spoken language research is that of jargons: jargons are "unstable individual ad-hoc solutions to communicate between speakers of different languages who occasionally interact for various purposes, whereas pidgins are stabilized languages with clear grammatical and social norms" (129). Pidgins develop when speakers with no common language have a need to communicate, in which the grammar and lexica of the languages in contact are simplified and form a new variant (Thomason and Kaufman 1988). In short, scholars have thus identified parallels between language contact situations of spoken languages and IS. Given the broad range of types of IS, such comparisons seem to be productive when they are limited to a particular type of IS, such as cross-signing or a particular conventionalized variant of IS.

IS Standardization

In relation to conventionalization of IS, debates on the standardization of international signing erupted from time to time, such as in 1900 (Murray 2007) at a large international congress in Paris (when the signing used was not called "IS" yet). A few years after the WFD

was established, the WFD decided to standardize the signing used in their meetings and gatherings. A committee selected "naturally spontaneous and easy signs in common use by deaf people of different countries" (British Deaf Association [BDA] 1975, Preface), a process that lasted more than fifteen years and led to the creation of the *Gestuno Dictionary* in 1975 (BDA 1975). However, deaf people soon complained that the Gestuno signs were not transparent or iconic enough. An oft-repeated example is the debacle of the 1979 WFD World Congress in Bulgaria, where Bulgarian interpreters who were trained in Gestuno plugged the Gestuno vocabulary into the word order of the Bulgarian spoken language and exhibited a lack of facial expression (Moody 2002).

Gestuno interpreting was organized until the 1983 WFD conference and was then replaced by IS interpreting (Nilsson 2020). The term "Gestuno" gradually fell into disuse; Moody (2002) reports that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, some people used the term "International Gestures." Calling IS "International Gestures" rather than "International Sign" meant it would not be confused with "sign language." Lumping IS together with gestures is telling, as well as typical of the era; gestures were only recently ideologically separated from signing in the early 1960s, when sign languages were endorsed as actual languages (McBurney 2012).

The Gestuno debate is an extreme manifestation of the efforts to standardize international signing by selecting a core lexicon for international use. Recently, there have been some indicators of processes of standardization that are more natural than the Gestuno enterprise. Examples include the creation of IS dictionaries, organization of IS courses (Oyserman 2015), and conventionalized (expository) uses of IS by leaders of deaf organizations and IS interpreters.

Understanding Expository IS

At the beginning of events, conferences, or courses, people do not always have extensive knowledge of the conventionalized uses of IS. International deaf events where IS is a/the official (or working) language are often key spaces of rapid IS learning for new IS signers. Many contexts where IS is currently used on the stage (i.e., "expository IS") are contexts where IS interpreting is provided, such as in

conferences of WFD and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), which comes with its own issues, strategies, and challenges (McKee and Napier 2002; Sheneman and Collins 2015; Stone and Russell 2015). An important development is a recent increase in employing IS interpreters in "hearing" contexts such as at the United Nations, the European Parliament, academic conferences, and so on. An accreditation process for IS interpreters was therefore established in 2015 by the WFD and the WASLI, contributing to the process of formalizing and institutionalizing IS interpreting (de Wit, Crasborn, and Napier 2021).

IS is thus increasingly connected with *providing access* in international events and institutions in the form of simultaneous intepretation. The increased quality, provision, and professionalization of IS-interpreting services parallel a noticeable decrease in national sign-language-interpreting services at WFD conferences (Nilsson 2020). There is an expectation that deaf audiences can understand and access conventional expository interpreted IS, which is problematic.

Rosenstock (2015) and Whynot (2016) studied the comprehension of IS in conferences. Rosenstock (2015) found that both signed and interpreted versions of IS are easier for diverse audiences to understand than ASL, and that users of ASL and European sign languages have an advantage when trying to understand IS. According to Whynot (2016, 292), expository IS (i.e., on stage) is typically only partially understood; she argues, "A contact system [IS] appears inadequate for in-depth, scientific, or academic exchange of ideas and in other high-stakes arenas where deaf audiences require complete, fully detailed information."

On the other hand, in events where IS is used on the stage with no simultaneous interpreting processes, direct exchange through IS has been valued by many stakeholders (Green 2014). Many participants in international deaf events (where interpreters are not provided) value direct communication, IS learning, and IS development in an all-deaf environment more than understanding every detail of the presentations. When people feel that they do not understand (enough), they attribute it to the lack or the abundance of ASL and/or English (in the form of mouthing, fingerspelling, and text in PowerPoint presentations [PPTs]) (Kusters 2020). In these contexts, the practice of

informal interpreting in audiences and onstage is foregrounded as proof of the shortcomings of IS *and* as a scaffolding practice that supports rather than hampers direct communication in IS (Green 2015). In these contexts, IS is seen as enabling (because of direct communication) or limiting understanding (e.g., because it is harder to understand than the national sign language), depending on the signer and the receiver. People from the global North are generally privileged in terms of the ability to bring national sign language interpreters and also having the resources to access expository IS (Green 2014; Haualand, Solvang, and Breivik 2015).

Naming of IS

Over the years, many labels were affixed to IS; these were not necessarily synonyms. Some are hyponyms and hypernyms describing overlapping phenomena, as already mentioned above: "signing," "Gestuno," "International gestures," "International Sign," "International Signs," "International Sign Language," "international sign," "international signs," "cross-signing," and "Universal Signs." The perceived dominance of certain sign languages, places, or contexts in IS is reflected in some of the ways that deaf people refer to IS. Green (2015) writes that IS, as used at WFD conferences, is signed as "wfd" (world federation of the deaf)/international sign in Nepal, and İlkbaşaran (2015) writes that IS is signed as "european sign" in Turkey. Sometimes, code-mixing of two sign languages is also called IS, for example, in ASL and another national sign language (Sheneman and Collins 2015). And importantly, often in signed discourses, people use other terms to describe IS, including verbs such as "signing," "adapting," "accommodating," "calibrating" (Moriarty and Kusters 2021); so, people do not always *name* IS.

Terms to label IS are, to a large extent, related to what people think IS is: conventionalized or not, a form of gesturing or not, a language or not a language. The status of IS as a language has been rejected for either political or linguistic reasons (or both); resulting in the WFD designating it as International Sign rather than International Sign Language. Linguistic reasons are related to, for instance, its variability (Hansen 2015), but political reasons include concerns that national sign language development and services in national sign

languages would be seen as redundant if IS were to be categorized as a language. As mentioned previously, there has been a marked decline in the provision of national sign language interpreters at WFD conferences (Nilsson 2020). Another example of the shortcomings of provision of tailored interpretation services is the use of conventionalized IS in reception centers for refugees in Finland (Sivunen and Tapio 2020).

ASL in IS

The use of IS and ASL as lingua francas may be converging, as both are used in an increasing number of overlapping contexts (e.g., online and at conferences). In IS, people often draw from shared linguistic knowledge. Since ASL is a widespread resource, it is not surprising that people draw upon ASL as many people are likely to know some ASL. This has inevitably led to versions of IS in which a lot of ASL signs are in use (Kusters 2020). Some researchers (e.g., Rosenstock 2004; Whynot 2016) have tried to quantify the number of ASL signs used in IS, which is a challenging enterprise because some IS signs are used in multiple sign languages, not just ASL. In this context, it could be more productive to talk about "ASL-concordant" signs rather than "ASL" (McKee and McKee 2020).

When people talk about IS as looking more like ASL, they have used terms such as "International ASL," "global ASL," "European ASL," "ASL light," and "bad ASL." There is a gray area between ASL-influenced IS on the one hand and global or simplified forms of ASL, characterized by a narrowed lexicon, reduced fingerspelling, reduced use of initialized signs, nonuse of ASL numbers, and the omission of typical ASL idioms, determiners, and tag words (Kusters 2020).

People's responses to the use of ASL in IS are in some ways similar to responses about ASL influences in national sign languages (as in the abovementioned contexts of Africa, Asia, and South America, where local signs were displaced by ASL). Both local/national sign languages and IS are often seen as less language-like than ASL, and in these cases, people have reacted against what they perceive as overuse of ASL. For example, in European deaf professional contexts, many people try to curtail the use of ASL signs in IS (and expect the same

from others), stating that the more ASL is used in IS, the more people struggle in understanding IS. When people talk about the influence of ASL on IS, they treat IS not as a nonlanguage but as a conventional language with boundaries and rules about what belongs or does not belong in it. In this way, maintaining boundaries between IS and ASL is an investment in the flourishing of IS (Kusters 2020).

What Types of Lingua Francas Are ASL and IS?

Against the background of this general overview of scholarly works on international uses of IS and ASL, as well as the ways in which both are converging, I now consider what types of lingua francas IS and ASL represent.

Some scholars underestimate or downplay the function and importance of IS in comparison with ASL (e.g., Kellett Bidoli 2014) or of ASL in comparison with IS (e.g., Hiddinga and Crasborn 2011). For example, in their consideration of hierarchies of sign languages around the world, Hiddinga and Crasborn (2011) engage with de Swaan's (2001) model of a "global language system," in which all languages of the world can be ordered in different hierarchical layers:

- Hypercentral (holding the world language system together): English
- Supercentral (international languages you can travel widely with, commonly spoken as second languages, i.e., vehicular languages): Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili
- Central (written, taught in schools): one hundred languages, for example, Dutch
- Peripheral (largely oral, rarely having official status): thousands of languages, for example, Frisian

de Swaan (2001) argues that English, as a hypercentral language, connects speakers of central and supercentral languages. For example, people speaking supercentral languages would speak English as a bridging language with speakers of other supercentral languages. Peripheral languages are usually not seen as useful in multilingual encounters. Hiddinga and Crasborn (2011) believe that in the global context as outlined by de Swaan, all sign languages are peripheral. However,

subsequently applying the model on the context of international *deaf* encounters, they suggest the following classification:

- Hypercentral: IS
- Supercentral: English
- central: all other spoken languages
- Peripheral: all sign languages, for example, ASL

Hiddinga and Crasborn (2011) suggest that ASL is peripheral, similar to other sign languages, because neither ASL nor other sign languages have functioned as hypercentral or even supercentral: "Although ASL appears to be slowly acquiring a dominant position in [deaf] international academic gatherings (. . .), it does not occupy a central (let alone supercentral or hypercentral) position, as it does not serve to connect whole language communities" (2011, 497). The model proposed by Hiddinga and Crasborn overlooks the influence of ASL on many sign languages and downplays the worldwide multifarious uses of ASL:

> While ASL has been relatively dominant among higher-educated Deaf people because of international participation in higher education at institutes like Gallaudet University and the Rochester Technical Institute for the Deaf (sic), the use of webcams and broadband Internet facilitating long distance contacts may well decrease the relative dominance of ASL world-wide in the coming decade, however small this dominance may have been. (Hiddinga and Crasborn 2011, 498)

As outlined above, ASL is not only used among American-educated deaf people. As access to the internet grows, the use of ASL has increased as networks and domains become more interconnected (see, e.g., McKee and McKee 2020). ASL, its variants, (American) Signed English, or ASL-influenced sign languages are (part of) the national sign language in many countries; ASL is learned and used as an additional sign language by many other people; and elements of ASL are used within IS. It is partially because of its worldwide utility that using ASL as a lingua franca (or treating it as one) is resisted by people who are concerned that such a recognition will fuel linguistic imperialism and thereby sideline or "overtake" IS.

Barotchi (2001) argues that lingua francas are usually auxiliary languages such as pidgins and planned languages (which are *not* typically primary or native languages). He avoids labeling dominant international vehicular languages such as English or Arabic as lingua francas. Similarly, Phillipson (2009, 263) resists calling English a lingua franca—and criticizes the naming of the field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), a field that focuses on English as a contact language in multilingual/international encounters:

> I would claim that *lingua franca* is a pernicious, invidious term if the language in question is a first language for some people but for others a foreign language, such communication typically being asymmetrical. I would claim that it is a misleading term if the language is supposed to be neutral and disconnected from culture. And that it is a false term for a language that is taught as a subject in general education.

Phillipson (2009) asks if we should instead see English as a "lingua frankensteinia" that drives processes of linguicide rather than as a neutral instrument used for international communication. Brosch (2015, 77) points out that the original Lingua Franca was a "more or less neutral, simple, functionally reduced and geographically unbound idiom" and that real pidgins are typically learned later in life, after childhood, and with some effort. In line with Phillipson's argument, Brosch (2015) states that the conceptualization of vehicular/natural languages as lingua francas can be misleading: "it connects a positive feature of the original Lingua Franca, viz. linguistic equality, with a language with native speakers like English, which implies a totally different distribution of power in communicative situations and economic resources in language learning" (71). Brosch (2015) remarks that most definitions of ELF *include* native speakers of English, but he supports definitions that *exclude* them from lingua franca communication (while acknowledging that it is impractical to exclude native English speakers from such an analysis).

Applying Phillipson's (2009) and Brosch's (2015) reasoning to ASL, it would be problematic to portray ASL as a lingua franca in situations that include native ASL signers, because of the power differences and the cultural and linguistic privileges many ASL signers have over

others. Not labeling ASL a lingua franca is also potentially problematic, because that may mean we overlook the ways people appropriate the language and make it their own, as well as ignore that people may consciously choose to use ASL in international interactions. The wide adoption (and adaptation) of ASL in educational systems, in combination with the abundance of online ASL (learning) resources, suggests that the use of (global, simplified) versions of ASL (or ASL-influenced IS) may be more equalizing and be seen as morally "just" than the use of IS in some contexts, especially outside of Europe (cf., Moriarty and Kusters 2021). It is important, however, not to make simplified generalizations, such as "deaf people from the global South understand ASL better than IS"; Kusters (2020) points out that ASL is often associated with nonunderstanding and fixity, and IS is associated with understanding and flexibility.

To restate, ASL is not "peripheral" in the international deaf landscape. In an application of de Swaan's model, both ASL and IS could be labeled as hypercentral or supercentral. Positioning IS as a hypercentral *language* means it is included in the typology as languages that are understood as bounded, which contradicts understandings of IS use as context-based and/or a process of adaptation. Complicating the model is the factor that IS can include features from ASL and can skew toward ASL, that is, as global lingua francas, ASL and IS are not always experienced as clearly distinguishable (Kusters 2020).

The worldwide use of English further muddles the picture: English can be combined with ASL and IS in the form of mouthings, fingerspelling, grammatical structures, and so on, as well as being used in parallel with ASL and IS in written resources such as PPTs. Whynot (2016) shows that IS used by deaf people in conference presentations incorporates a large amount of English mouthings co-occurring with lexical signs in IS, also by deaf people from countries where English is not an official language. In other words, English, in its written modality and in the ways it is incorporated in signing, may be hypercentral for deaf people since deaf people live in a world where English *is* a hypercentral language—and English is often present in some form in the same contexts where ASL and IS are used. Indeed, Kellett Bidoli (2014, 104) points out that "allowance must be made for ELF [English as a Lingua Franca] to include a written and

not just spoken language variety used between non-native speakers (NNSs) of English who speak or sign different first languages" (also see Kellett Bidoli and Ochse 2008). English, ASL, and IS thus can hardly be entirely separated on different levels as in de Swaan's model, or even as entirely different languages.

Taking the above considerations into account, how do we then frame or define a "hypercentral" IS if its status as a language is contested? Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) point out the need to approach a lingua franca not with a focus on *lingua*, that is, a fairly stable linguistic system, but

> as something that emerges in practice: If we view lingua francas through the lens of modernist language ideology, where a lingua franca becomes a learned object, we have put language as an entity before the process of communication. If, however, we view a lingua franca as an emergent mix that is always in flux, that indeed should not be predefined as "English" or any other pregiven language, then we can place the processes of interaction before an assumption about the medium. (175)

Taking this perspective, it could be argued that deaf people who engage in IS are *translanguaging*, a term that has been coined to frame "the complex language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities," that is, the intermingled and contextualized use of diverse linguistic resources (Garcia and Li 2014, 20). The term has recently been used to describe languaging practices of deaf signers (Kusters et al. 2017; De Meulder et al., 2019). However, the translanguaging concept is a catch-all phrase, not accounting for the fact that IS is *named as an entity* by many different actors (sign linguists, deaf organizations, and so on). In other words, IS—in some of its variations (e.g., cross-signing) is arguably a form of translanguaging, but IS is more than that. Translanguaging is not a lingua franca; it is a practice that can lead to the emergence of a lingua franca.

Considering flexible languaging practices *within* lingua francas, Canagarajah (2007, 925) opts for the idea of Lingua Franca English (LFE) rather than ELF, since speakers "activate a mutually recognized set of attitudes, forms, and conventions that ensure successful communication in LFE when they find themselves interacting with each other." The willingness of the interlocutor to communicate flexibly is

an important element in the analysis of the interactions. Canagarajah (2013) uses the term "cooperative disposition" to talk about this ethical dimension, a term that recalls Green's (2014) "moral orientation" and Moriarty and Kusters' (2021) "calibrating." They are dispositions but also strategies that people may bring to contact zone interactions, for example, treating language norms as open to negotiation, treating language as a constellation of multimodal resources that can mixed and meshed, and having a strong ethic of collaboration. As such, LFE is highly context dependent since it is "intersubjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction" (Canagarajah 2007, 925). This perspective "challenges the assumption of other models of global Englishes that sharedness and uniformity of norms at different levels of generality are required for communicative success" (Canagarajah 2013, 75). It would be productive to consider parallels of the global uses of both ASL and IS with LFE.

Returning to the theme of IS as a lingua franca, how do we account for the *global* scale of IS and its different localized and contextual uses around the world, that is, how do we account for IS as a situated phenomenon? Here is where Blommaert's (2012) concept of *supervernacular* may be useful. A supervernacular is a deterritorialized sociolinguistic resource consisting of an unlimited number of dialects. Blommaert argues that

> Such vernaculars have all the features we commonly attribute to "languages"; yet, sociolinguistically they operate in a very different way, not predicated on the traditional connections between languages and speech communities. (3–4)

Supervernaculars are like languages in the sense of being *imagined,* ideological objects to which we orient, as a kind of *template*, "a model for meaning-making in which rules, norms and conventions are suggested which, when followed and applied, will generate recognizable meanings" (Blommaert 2012, 4). It is for this reason that there are *only dialects* of the supervernacular: "instances of locally constrained and 'accented' realizations that display an orientation to the ideological 'standard supervernacular'" (4). In sum, a supervernacular consists of "an *abstract and ideological* globalized core—the 'standard' template of the supervernacular—paired with an *actual, situated, englobalized-and-*

deglobalized realization" (Blommaert 2012, 12). This description is more specific than "translanguaging," and encapsulates the notion that different scales (global, national, and local) can operate simultaneously when people use IS as a lingua franca. The ideological and abstract core of IS, or, rather, the notion of IS as a prototype, could then include a set of linguistic strategies and a belief in their affordances, and also facilitate the use of a core lexicon to build from. Approaching IS as a supervernacular allows for the understanding of the actual realizations of IS as local and context-dependent.

Conclusion

Both ASL and IS are widely used as lingua francas in deaf international settings. While ASL, which originated in the United States (and to some extent, France), is established in educational institutions in North America and has influenced language use all over the world, the use of IS is built into the infrastructure of international deaf institutions and organizations such as the WFD. ASL and IS are ideologically constructed as entirely separate phenomena even though there are parallels in their historical origins and current usage (e.g., old LSF influences in ASL and IS; and ASL influences in IS).

"IS" and "ASL" are sweeping terms that cover a wide variety of language use. In the case of IS, this can be, for example, both cross-signing in first-time encounters and conventionalized expository signing at conferences. In the case of ASL, this can be exemplified in the use of (old) ASL lexicon in practices such as Total Communication or Signed English and the current online use of ASL. "IS" and "ASL" as designations appear alongside a range of alternative names and terms that reflect (in the case of IS) ideas about its conventionalized or nonconventionalized nature and languageness and (in the case of ASL) ideas about national linguistic identity and localized/globalized uses of ASL.

In discourses on ASL versus IS as lingua francas, ASL and IS are often juxtaposed in that ASL is seen as "fixed" and IS as "fluid," but this juxtaposition overlooks the fact that ASL (in the sense of its global and local uses) is also fluid and variable, and there exist conventionalized (and thus "fixed") versions of IS. Discourses about the nature

of IS are increasingly entangled with discourses about the circulation of ASL, which indicates that both are used as global lingua francas in increasingly overlapping contexts. Where ASL and IS overlap in their uses, their linguistic and ideological distinction becomes blurred.

In terms of "types" of lingua francas, ASL is a vehicular lingua franca and a source language of sign languages around the world, while IS could be seen as a supervernacular that is conceived of as a deterritorialized resource, or in other words, a prototype that draws on local and global resources. There are clear parallels between ASL and spoken lingua francas such as English (in terms of their global use and existence of variants) and, to a somewhat lesser extent, also between IS and LFE (in terms of the cooperative element, flexible variation, and context-dependency). Both ASL and IS can be used in parallel with a spoken lingua franca (typically, English).

An important difference between IS and ASL as global lingua francas are the nonshared linguistic resources that need to be negotiated, language ideologies about those resources, and the related moral implications of their use. IS is framed as a neutral meeting ground for people from different language backgrounds, supposed to defuse geopolitical tensions and imperialist histories. IS is thus portrayed as international at its *core* (in ideologies surrounding its use, and in its very name) even though its more-conventionalized versions emerged in mostly European, white, Western contexts and its use is not always preferred in international deaf encounters. ASL is still seen as "from America," even though it is globally used, and it is often associated with linguistic imperialism and contamination of local sign languages and with nonunderstanding. In contrast, IS is idealized as a leveler and equalizer, underpinned by a strong moral component of cooperation, which can be crucial to its comprehension. These widespread and dominant ideologies are not without problems and opposition: the use of (basic) ASL can enable and empower, while the expectation to use IS can be experienced as limiting and oppressive.

The processes of institutionalization of expository IS, as well as the conventionalization of (online) uses of IS, have resulted in the widening of the perceived gap between IS as a flexible practice (also known as cross-signing) and the more-fixed, conventionalized IS. The notion and use of IS as a flexible process of adaptation and a valued

process of direct communication may be increasingly connected with small-scale contexts in which direct communication happens. If this gap between conventional and unconventional uses of IS continues to widen, the current emphasis on structural and lexical differences between ASL and conventionalized IS may become less pronounced. However, in its contemporary incarnation, there is a salient practical and ideological distinction between these lingua francas and their contexts of use.

Acknowledgments

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