Language as sign special type of system

A sign language (also signed language or simply signing) is a language which uses manual communication and body language to convey meaning, as opposed to acoustically conveyed sound patterns. This can involve simultaneously combining hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions to fluidly express a speaker's thoughts. They share many similarities with spoken languages (sometimes called "oral languages", which depend primarily on sound), which is why linguists consider both to be natural languages, but there are also some significant differences between signed and spoken languages.

Wherever communities of deaf people exist, sign languages develop. Signing is also done by persons who can hear, but cannot physically speak. While they utilize space for grammar in a way that spoken languages do not, sign languages exhibit the same linguistic properties and use the same language faculty as do spoken languages. Hundreds of sign languages are in use around the world and are at the cores of local deaf cultures. Some sign languages have obtained some form of legal recognition, while others have no status at all.

A common misconception is that all sign languages are the same worldwide or that sign language is international. Aside from the pidgin International Sign, each country has its own, native sign language, though they may share similarities to signs used in another country.

In linguistic terms, sign languages are as rich and complex as any spoken language, despite the common misconception that they are not "real languages". Professional linguists have studied many sign languages and found that they exhibit the fundamental properties that exist in all languages.

Sign languages are not mime – in other words, signs are conventional, often arbitrary and do not necessarily have a visual relationship to their referent, much as most spoken language is not onomatopoeic. While iconicity is more systematic and widespread in sign languages than in spoken ones, the difference is not categorical. The visual modality allows the human preference for close connections between form and meaning, present but suppressed in spoken languages, to be more fully expressed. This does not mean that sign languages are a visual rendition of a spoken language. They have complex grammars of their own, and can be used to discuss any topic, from the simple and concrete to the lofty and abstract.

Sign languages, like spoken languages, organize elementary, meaningless units (phonemes; once called cheremes in the case of sign languages) into meaningful semantic units. Like in spoken languages, these meaningless units are represented as (combinations of) features, although often also crude distinctions are made in terms of Handshape (or Handform), Orientation, Location (or Place of Articulation), Movement, and Non-manual expression.

More generally, both sign and spoken languages share the following common features that linguists have found in all natural human languages.[citation needed] 1) Mode of communication 2) Semanticity 3) Pragmatic function 4) Interchangeability 5) Cultural Transmission 6) Arbitrariness 7) Discreteness 8)

Displacement 9) Productivity These nine features serve to define the notion "language".

Common linguistic features of many sign languages are the occurrence of classifiers, a high degree of inflection, and a topic-comment syntax. More than spoken languages, sign languages can convey meaning by simultaneous means, e.g. by the use of space, two manual articulators, and the signer's face and body. Though there is still much discussion on the topic of iconicity in sign languages, classifiers are generally perceived to be highly iconic, as these complex constructions "function as predicates that may express any or all of the following: motion, position, stative-descriptive, or handling information" It needs to be noted that the term classifier is not used by everyone working on these constructions. Across the field of sign language linguistics the same constructions are also referred with other terms.