

# 6. Sounds and Signs III

Introduction to Language (Ling 201)

Prof. Pentangelo

Spring 2026

# What we'll cover tonight:

- Sign language phonetics (first 2/3 of class)
- Midterm review (final 1/3 of class)

# Concepts and misconceptions

- Modality

What is modality?

What modality am I using right now?

spoken: oral-aural modality

signed: visual-spatial modality

- Language

Is all communication language?

Are all communicative sounds language?

- Grammar

What is grammar?

- Sign Language

Are all communicative signs language?

Are “sign language” and ASL interchangeable?

# Gestures vs. signs

- We use gestures to communicate all the time in oral-aural languages. What are some gestures we use in the American English context?
- Are gestures and signs the same thing?
- Do activity 1 on your sheets.
- Now try activity 2.

# Five parameters

What are the five parameters of signs?

- Location
- Movement
- Handshape
- Orientation
- Non-manual markers

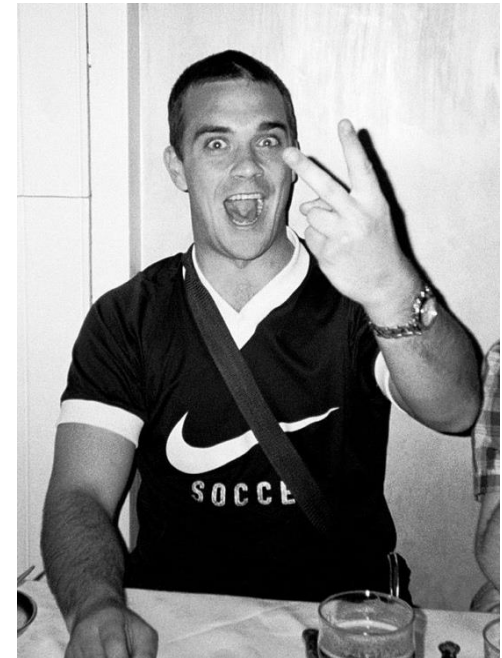


What's a "prime"?

What do these two gestures have in common?

Where do they diverge?

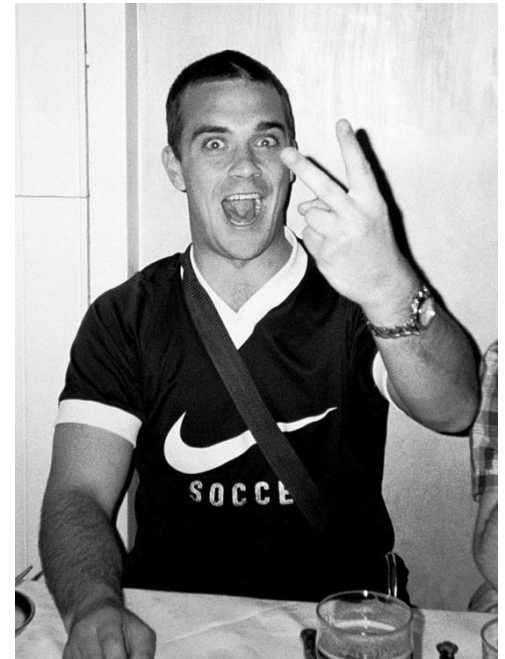
Do they have different meanings?



# Five parameters

What are the five parameters of signs?

- Location
  - Movement
  - Handshape
  - Orientation
  - Non-manual markers
- Throughout the next batch of slides, consider these parameters.





CRUEL (British Sign Language)

What's the location?

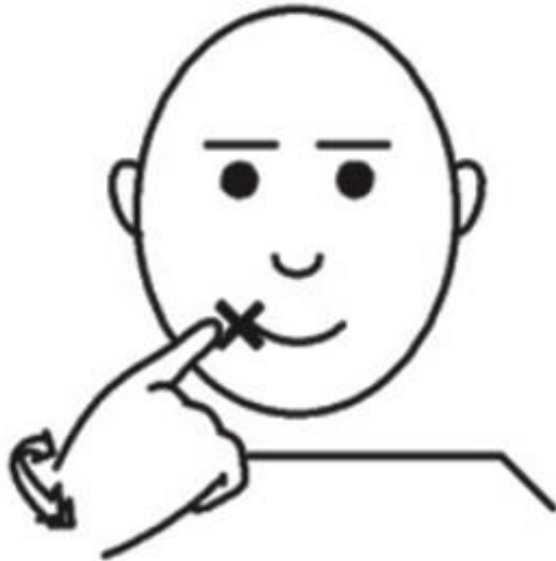
What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?





What's the location?

What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?

SWEET (British Sign Language)

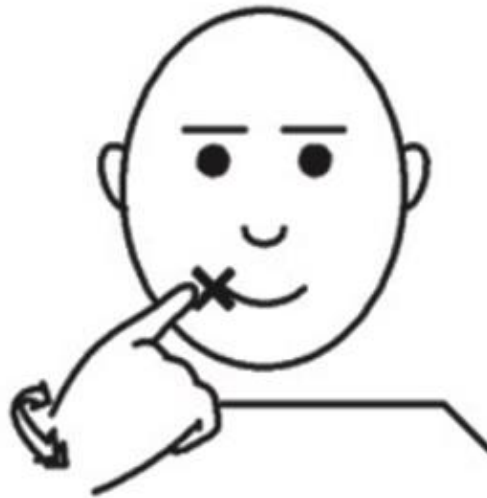
This is *sweet* in the British English sense, what we would probably call *candy*. It is not the adjective *sweet*, which is signed differently.



- What is the same between *sweet* and *cruel*?



CRUEL (British Sign Language)



SWEET (British Sign Language)

Handshape

Movement

Orientation

Non-manual markers

- What is different?

Location



SEE (Sign Language of the Netherlands)

What's the location?

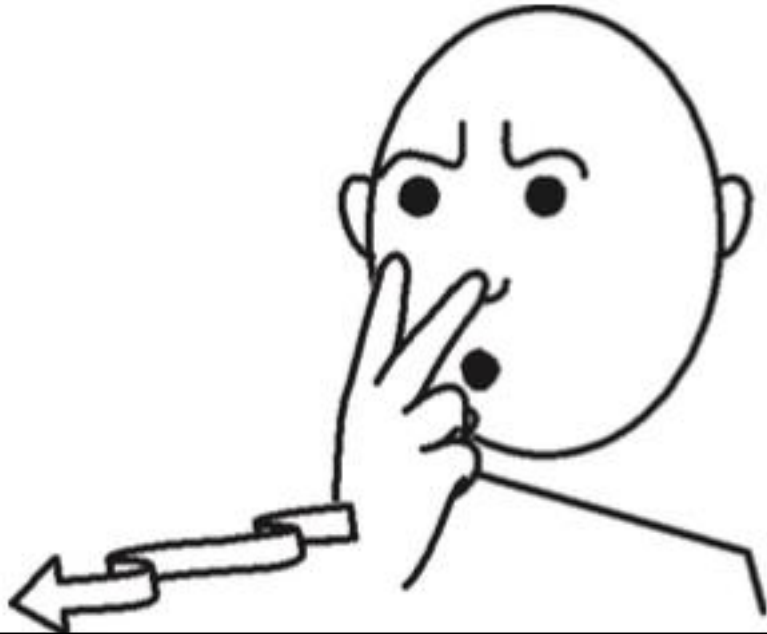
What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?





SEARCH (Sign Language of the Netherlands)

What's the location?

What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?



- What is the same between *see* and *search*?



SEE (Sign Language of the Netherlands)



SEARCH (Sign Language of the Netherlands)

- Handshape
- Orientation
- Location

- What is different?

- Movement
- Non-manual markers



What's the location?

What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?

LIVE (Sign Language of the Netherlands)

This is *live* as in “I live in Staten Island,” meaning ‘reside.’ Equivalent to Dutch *wonen* (as opposed to *leven*), Italian *abitare* (as opposed to *vivere*), etc.



Video clip from Gebarenwoordenboek



VACATION (Sign Language of the Netherlands)

What's the location?

What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?



- What is the same between *live* and *vacation*?



LIVE (Sign Language of the Netherlands)



VACATION (Sign Language of the Netherlands)

Orientation

Location

Movement

Non-manual markers

- What is different?

Handshape



What's the location?

What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?

MUSEUM (Sign Language of the Netherlands)



Video clip from Gebarenwoordenboek



What's the location?

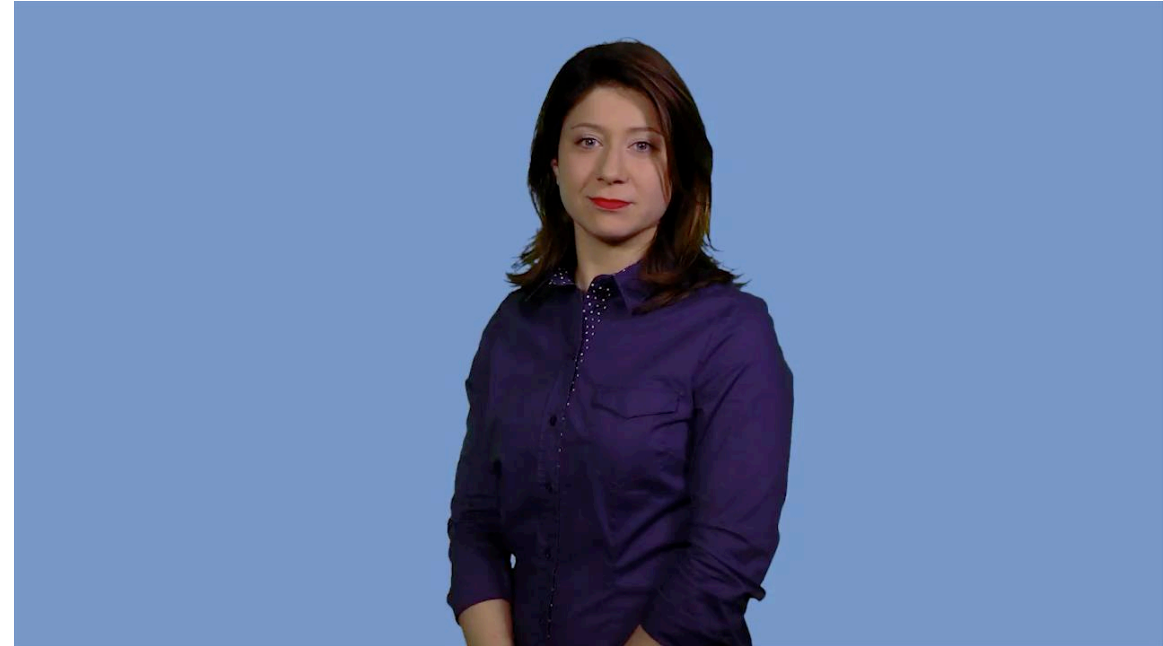
What's the movement?

What's the handshape?

What's the orientation?

Non-manual markers?

BOY (Sign Language of the Netherlands)



# Midterm Review

15 minute break now;  
we'll do the review  
when you get back

# Midterm

- Next week (23 March 2026)
- Open book for printed materials – handwritten notes, printed notes, printed textbook, printed slides – but not open laptop, phone, or other digital devices.
- You may not share printed materials with others.
- All multiple choice; bring a pen or pencil.
- 15 points in total, thirty questions, half-point per question.
- Self-timed, up to 9:50pm (class's end time).
- You can leave once you've turned it in.



# MIDTERM REVIEW RULES

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- Work in teams of 5 or 6 students. Choose names for your teams.
- Open book, but not open device (like the midterm itself).
- Members of each team will use their phone as a buzzer, by joining our game on the website **buzzin.live**
- Fifty questions, divided over two rounds.
- Each team earns one point per question correctly answered.
- In round 2, each team loses one point per question incorrectly answered.
- In both rounds, if your team answers incorrectly, another team gets to answer (if they want) before you can try again.
- The team with the most points at the end wins.
- All members of the winning team will receive 1 extra credit point on their midterm.

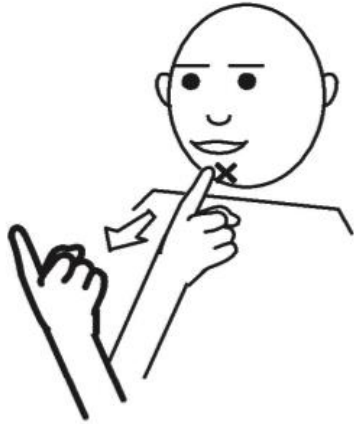
# Round One

25 questions

1 point for each correct answer

No penalty for wrong answers

1. What is different between the two pronunciations below?



ASL 'say,' citation form



ASL 'say,' in conversation

2. What is Proto-Germanic?
3. Name two languages that descend from Proto-Germanic.
4. What is articulatory phonetics?
5. In terms of articulation, what's the difference between [t] and [d]?

6. How do descriptivism (or descriptiveness) and prescriptivism (or prescriptiveness) differ?
7. What's a descriptive rule?
8. Give an example.
9. What's a prescriptive rule?
10. Give an example.
11. What's an idiolect?
12. What's a dialect continuum?
13. What are speech styles?
14. What's register?
15. What's style shifting?
16. What is "lexical variation" between dialects?

17. Humans have language. Does this mean all human communication is linguistic?
18. Why not?
19. How do you make a nasal sound?
20. What do your vocal folds do to raise your pitch?
21. What is core vocabulary?
22. Why is it relevant to language change?
23. What's the comparative method used for?
24. What are the parameters to identify consonants?
25. Are gestures the same things as signs? Explain.

# Round Two

25 questions

1 point for each correct answer

1 point deducted for wrong answers

1. What does it mean, anatomically, for a sound to be voiced?
2. Approximately how many vowels are there in English?
3. Where in a syllable structure can [i] appear in English?
4. What is the difference between vowels and consonants, in terms of syllable structure?
5. Which IPA symbol represents the coda of the word “crumb” in English?
6. Why is the IPA more useful for transcribing sounds than a script like that used for English, Russian, or Arabic?
7. Donna Jo Napoli wrote that language is “innate.” What does this mean?
8. Is there a scientifically-accepted distinction between dialects and languages?

9. What is mutual intelligibility?
10. Give two different languages with a high degree of mutual intelligibility.
11. Give two different languages with a very low degree of mutual intelligibility.
12. Many animals can communicate, including vocally. Does this mean animals have language?
13. Why not?
14. What's standardization?
15. For linguists, is the standard variety of a language better than non-standard varieties of that language?
16. Did English descend from Latin?
17. Does English contain words that descend from Latin?

18. Are “sign language” and “ASL” interchangeable?
19. Why not?
20. What are cognates?
21. What’s PIE stand for?
22. What’s IPA stand for?
23. What’s ASL stand for?
24. Did all languages descend from Proto-Indo-European?
25. Name two non-Germanic languages that descend from Proto-Indo-European.

# For next week:

- Study!