

Social evaluation of variation in contemporary NZSL

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LALS Seminar, at VUW Aug 16, 2024



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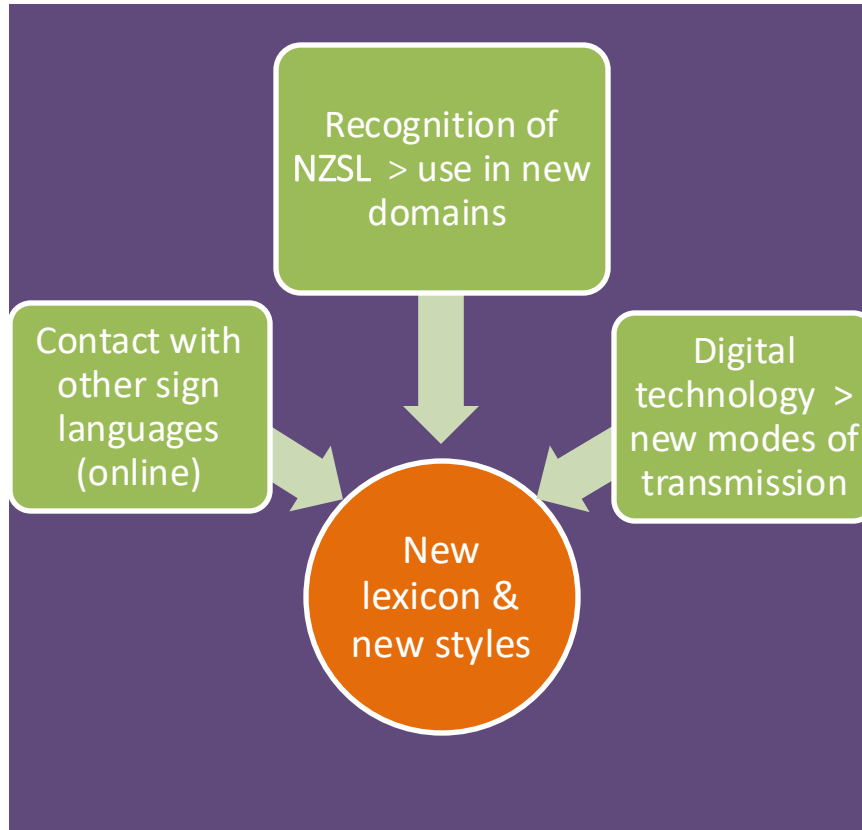
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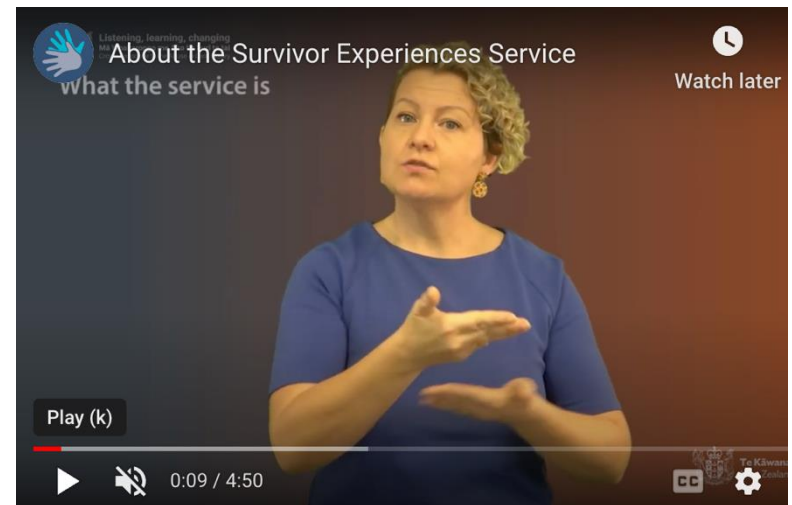
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Growth & change in contemporary NZSL



New genre: online informative videos by & for Deaf community



Genre/register features in sign languages

Formal/ Presentational

More two and double-handed signs (Crasborn 2005; Russo et al 2001)

Less 'weak hand drop' (Sutton-Spence & Woll 1991)

Use of space for referential contrast – pointing, locating, body & gaze angle (Simper-Allen & Mesch 2019)

Larger & slower signing – but smaller size on TV than stage (Zimmer 1989)

Less non-manual (facial) grammar

Less fingerspelling

Casual/ Conversational

- Phonological assimilation, reduction of two-handed signs ('weak hand drop'), perseveration (holding)
- More non-manual (facial) grammar
- More fingerspelling (Sutton-Spence & Woll 1991)
- More depiction and enactment (Sallandre et al 2019)

Research questions

How are (new) features used in online NZSL announcements - compared to F2F, conversational NZSL?

How do Deaf signers perceive these features? (evaluate social meaning)

Theoretical perspective on investigating sociolinguistic variation & change

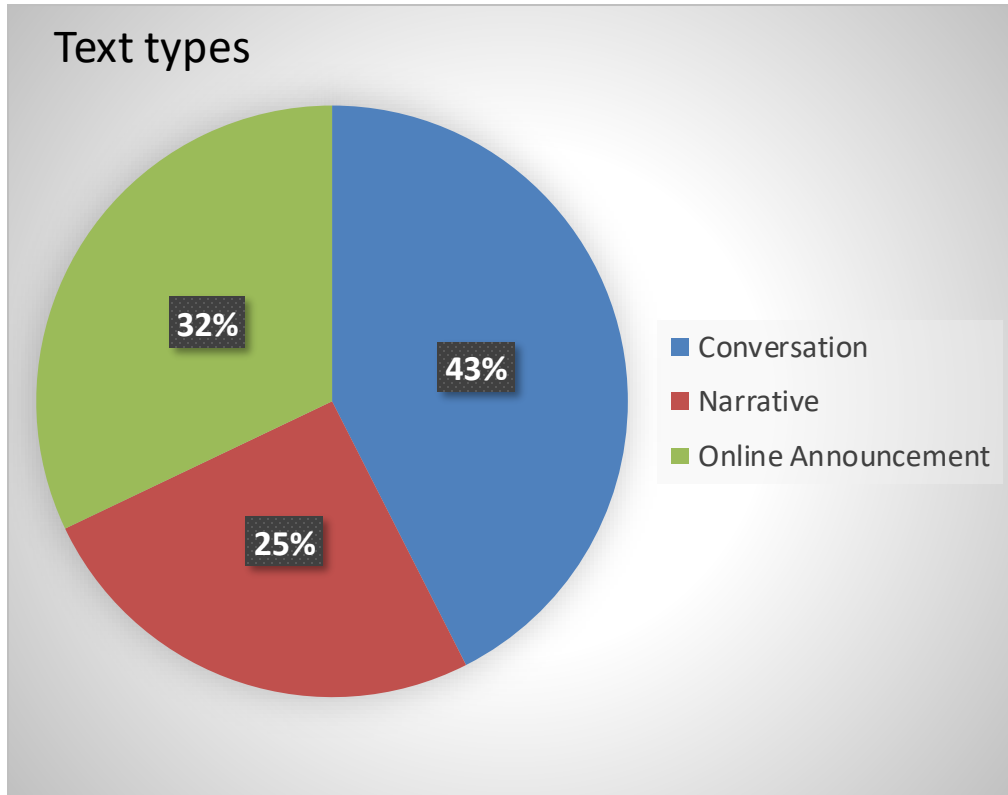
Contemporary (third wave) variation research foregrounds **style, genre and the local contextualisation of indexical meaning** (Coupland 2007)

“investigation of metalinguistic and metacultural discourses should be part of the account of sociolinguistic change. They are *part* of sociolinguistic change.”
(Coupland 2014)

“understanding the significance of a particular linguistic unit requires ... understanding of the beliefs and ideologies of the individuals who use and interpret it” (Eckert 2018)

Corpus: 78 texts, by 52 signers

13,336 tokens



Factors analysed

Linguistic

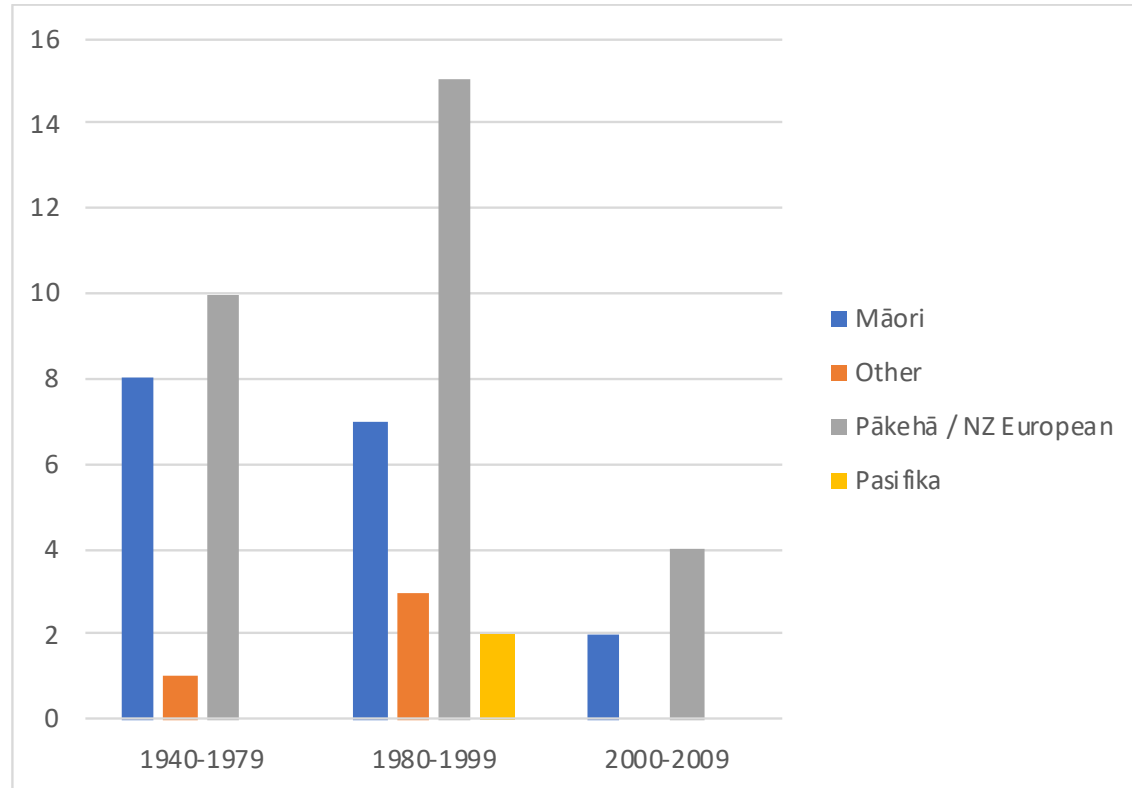
genre, mode (online, f2f),
hands in adjacent signs,
word class, lex frequency

Social

age, region, gender,
ethnicity, time of
recording

Participants (n=52)

Age group x Ethnicity



Corpus was annotated, coded in ELAN









The screenshot displays the ELAN 6.3 interface. At the top, a menu bar includes File, Edit, Annotation, Tier, Type, Search, View, Options, Window, and Help. Below the menu is a video player showing a woman with glasses and a yellow cardigan speaking. The video player includes playback controls and a selection range of 00:00:07.291 to 00:00:08.098. To the right of the video is a 'Grid' panel with tabs for Grid, Text, Subtitles, and Lexicon. The 'Grid' panel shows a list of annotations with columns for Nr, Annotation, Begin Time, End Time, and Duration. The annotation '9 WHAT-2266' is selected. Below the video player is a timeline with various annotation tiers. The 'DomH' tier is highlighted in red, and the 'nonDomH' tier is highlighted in blue. The 'Hands' tier is highlighted in green. The 'HandsVar' tier is highlighted in yellow. The 'DomH meaning' tier is highlighted in grey. A tooltip is visible over the 'Hands' tier, showing 'BT: 00:00:06.762, ET: 00:00:07.294 T+br' and 'Topic + eyebrows'. The 'Hands' tier has a value of '1' and 'Db' for the selected segment. The 'HandsVar' tier has a value of 'Dbl' and 'CF' for the selected segment.

Nr	Annotation	Begin Time	End Time	Duration
1	HELLO/ SALUTE-321	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
2	OTHER-2668	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
3	#ACE	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
4	WORK-797	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
5	BUY-3859	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
6	CREATE-7086	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
7	THING-6169	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
8	TOPIC-2873	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
9	WHAT-2266	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
10	EXCITED-1864	00:00:0...	00:00:0...	00:00:0...
11	TOPIC-2873	00:00:0...	00:00:1...	00:00:0...
12	JIGSAW PUZZLE-61...	00:00:1...	00:00:1...	00:00:0...
13	#MOSAIC	00:00:1...	00:00:1...	00:00:0...
14	WORK-797	00:00:1...	00:00:1...	00:00:0...
15	BUY-3859	00:00:1...	00:00:1...	00:00:0...





Tier	00:00:04.500	00:00:05.000	00:00:05.500	00:00:06.000	00:00:06.500	00:00:07.000	00:00:07.500	00:00:08.000	00:0
DomH [138]	WORK-797	BUY-3859	CREATE-7086	THING-6169	TOPIC-2873	WHAT-2266	EXCITED-1		
nonDomH [138]	WORK-797	BUY-3859	CREATE-7086	THING-6169	TOPIC-2873	WHAT-2266	EXCITED-1		
DomH gram cls [138]	NP	NP	VP	NP	NP	QM		Adj	
nonDomH gram cls [0]									
Topic comment [44]			T+br		T+br				
Rhetorical Q [5]									
Notes [5]									
Hands [138]	2	2	Db	Db	Db	1		Db	
HandsVar [138]	CF	CF	CF	CF	CF	Dbl		CF	
DomH meaning									

Feature 1: Hand doubling

One-handed signs are 'doubled' - made symmetrical

			
			
Verb UNDERSTAND	Question WHO	Exclamation THANKYOU	Pronoun ME

Feature 2: PRO pointing

Index-PRO first person	Whole-hand PRO first person	Index PRO non first person	Whole-hand PRO non-first person
			



*Both instances
also doubled*



Exploring Deaf perceptions

- Five online focus groups (15 Deaf participants)
- Review & discuss clips from data
- Thematic analysis of their discussion

Are Deaf signers aware of new style features?
What social meaning (impact, reasons) do they describe?

Hand doubling strongest factors



Phonetic environment

- Doubling more likely **following or before another double-handed sign** (phonological assimilation – ‘chaining’)

Word class

- **Discourse markers, negators and questions** – most likely to be doubled. (scope over a proposition). Adv, nouns, det, pro, numbers less likely to double

Genre

- **Informative presentation/announcements have more doubling: online announcements 21% v conversation 11%**

Doubling often follows another double-hand sign – ‘chaining’



Signer perceptions of doubling: Gain and hold audience attention

*Using double hands is **more powerful** to get the **attention** of an audience*

*It's easy to glaze over things, scroll past ... when looking at online material. So, it can be used to **keep people watching.***

Hand doubling holds online viewer attention to prevent scrolling away to other content (an online mode consideration)

Intensify the message

*It's going to be disseminated widely, so you want the video to be powerful **empower the message** in a way. To make it look stronger.*

*It shows an **increase of intensity**. Like how hearing people show an intensity in their tone.*

'Empower' the message – convey impact or importance of information

Emphasise - increase degree or affect

Phonological efficiency

*So if the sign before or after the doubled sign is already two-handed, then it may be **more efficient to carry on with both hands, rather than drop one then pick it back up soon after.***

Double handed signs occur with other signs using two hands, for 'smooth transition' between signs

Public address

*[It makes] things **clearer to see ... a two-handed WHAT is clear to see.***

*Doubling would be used more in situations where someone is **standing on a stage**, for example at Deaf club doing announcements. Whereas I imagine it would be used **less in one-to-one conversations.***

Large audience (e.g. Deaf club)

Doubling in presentations – both F2F and online

Maximise visibility (perceptibility)

'Weak prop' (adding a base hand)



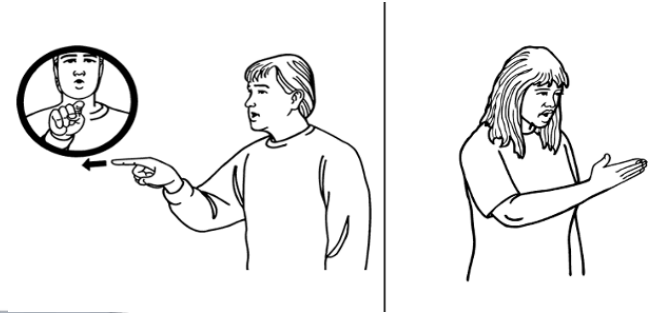
Base-hand added to a one-handed sign



Adding a 'base hand' to a 1H sign is more **frequent in public address style** - online announcements and informative bulletins

- 'Amplify' the sign
- Focus?
- Onscreen symmetry: keep both hands active in the signing frame rather than dropping one hand
- More common with prepositions and low frequency signs

Open-hand pointing: two main factors



Time: more frequent in recent texts, both F2F & online = 'modern' style

Indexicality: 1st person ('me'), and plural (you-all/ they-all)

Signers said a lot about open-hand pointing

Formal events and public speaking to a group - e.g., presentation, meeting, in professional role

Visibility on-screen

“flat hands are easier to see on camera”

Modern style

*“This is **more of a new thing**. Back then you would point using the index finger only.”*

Politeness (generally)

*“Open hand pointing is more **respectful, more gentle, nice, polite**”*

Ideas about accommodating -

(a) Hearing politeness & co-speech gesture norms

*“there's been an **influence from hearing culture** with hearing people saying that an **index finger point is rude**”*

(b) Māori co-speech gesture

*“**Māori cultural way** is to use the whole hand.”*

P1:

*I think it's more polite,
more formal. Pointing
can be seen as rude
possibly.*

P2:

*That's hearing culture,
not Deaf culture.*

P3:

*Yes, Deaf culture is
pointing.*

P4:

*If it's all deaf people in
the audience then I think
you would use pointing*

Summing up

Genre (text type/ presentation style) **has a stronger effect than mode** (online v F2F)

Recent increase in these features in online posts and metalinguistic evaluation of their use suggest their indexicality as part of a modern ‘broadcast’ style

Announcements & informative texts now exist mainly online (more than F2F) and are widely accessible → **likely spread** of these features into NZSL more generally

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our Deaf research participants for contributing to this work

Thanks to our research funder



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