

This paper examines mouthings in two endangered sign languages of the Pacific: Hawai‘i Sign Language (HSL; Hawai‘i); and Sinasina Sign Language (SSSL; Chimbu, Papua New Guinea-PNG). HSL and SSSL are both used in highly multilingual communities with three prevalent spoken languages: an endangered local Indigenous language (Hawaiian, Kere); a creole (Hawai‘i Creole English-HCE, Tok Pisin); and English. HSL and SSSL each were initially reported in the 2010s and have fewer than 100 signers currently (Lambrecht et al. 2013, Rarrick 2020). Language documentation and description efforts for HSL and for SSSL are ongoing and have already revealed typologically unusual features, including non-manuals. Here, I compare patterns of mouthings in HSL and SSSL, arguing that there may be distinct trends of obligatoriness and function across the two languages. However, a full analysis of mouthings, mouth movements, and typological tendencies of these non-manuals requires knowledge of the languages spoken in the communities where HSL and SSSL signers live. The analysis of mouthings I present here highlights the importance of contextualising our linguistic research and creating multimodal, multilingual language documentation whenever possible.

Typologically unusual non-manuals, including lexical items and aspectual markers, were noted in early work with HSL and with SSSL. In HSL, a high rate of mouth movements and non-manual signs was investigated as this is typologically unusual (Clark et al. 2015). Initially, the HSL research team, only noted the spoken English connection to the non-manual verb ‘have’. As non-manuals were documented further, HSL signers started to explicitly state that many of the obligatory mouth movements and optional mouthings had connections to words from the spoken languages used in their community, HCE and Hawaiian (Clark et al. 2015). By drawing on this finding in HSL and transforming our documentation efforts with Kere into multilingual multimodal research with Kere and SSSL, we have been able to identify comparable instances of mouthings and multimodal language use more consistently in PNG.

The comparison of high frequency mouthings (five from HSL, six from SSSL) presented here suggests that mouthings in both languages tend to come from the local Indigenous language or creole more frequently than from English. Otherwise, there are few similarities in HSL and SSSL mouthings. In HSL, mouthings and mouth movements are often obligatory while a manual component may be optional. Typologically, this is highly unusual, and the opposite seems to be the case for SSSL. Two of the HSL signs analysed are lexical items (the verbs ‘have’ and *make* ‘die’); three are TAM markers (completed aspect *pau* and remote future *bambai*). One of the SSSL signs analysed marks completed aspect (*pinis*); the remaining five distinguish signs with more than one sense (e.g., *abla* ‘woman’, *ami* ‘breast’). The broader implications of these differences between HSL and SSSL mouthings and mouth movements are still under investigation. They could be related to typological tendencies, context-specific contact phenomena, or a range of common challenges in working with small languages, such as drawing from an inherently limited sample.

Future research with HSL, SSSL, and other small sign languages has potential to better address these remaining questions. It also has potential to contribute significantly to linguists’ understanding of typology and linguistic diversity, especially in the Pacific where signed languages are still largely underdocumented and underdescribed. The analysis of mouthings in HSL and SSSL presented here serves as a reminder that the languages and language users with whom we work do not occur in a vacuum. Without an understanding of the multilingual contexts in which research often takes place, language-specific findings and contributions to broader typological patterns will be inherently limited. Multilingual, multimodal language documentation, projects like our work in PNG with Kere and SSSL can address this and lead to more accurate analyses.

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Lambrecht, L., B. Earth & J. Woodward (2013). “History and Documentation of Hawai‘i Sign Language: First Report.” 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, Honolulu.

Rarrick, S. (2020). “Sinasina Sign Language (Chimbu, Papua New Guinea) - Language Snapshot.” *Language Documentation and Description* 19: 79-86.