

Language Variation



Language Variation by Community Membership:

Dialect = Variation Across Regions

Sociolect = Variation Across Social Classes

Chronolect = Variation Across Time/Generations

Genderlect = Variation Between Genders

Ethnolect = Variation Between Ethnic Groups

Most Frequent Points of Variation =
Vocabulary and Pronunciation

Register Variation

Who's Talking to Whom?

What are the Talking about?

Where is the Talking happening?

How is it Happening? (sound, image, texture)

Common Linguistic Changes

Lexical - Word Choice

Syntactic - Word Orders

Common Paralinguistic Changes

Volume / Signing Space

Pitch / Facial Expression

Idiomatic Language Use

Native Pronunciation

Register-Appropriate Vocabulary, Syntax

Sociolect Matching

Pronunciation

Lexical Choice

Paralinguistic Features

Volume

Speed

Pitch / Tone

Language Contact

Code Switching - Changing Languages

Code Mixing - Merging Languages

ASL

English



**Contact
Language**

Traditional ASL/English Continuum

William Stokoe's "Possible Communication Behavior of American Deaf Persons"

English

- lipreading
- clear articulation

ASL

- facial expression
- manual symbols
- gesture

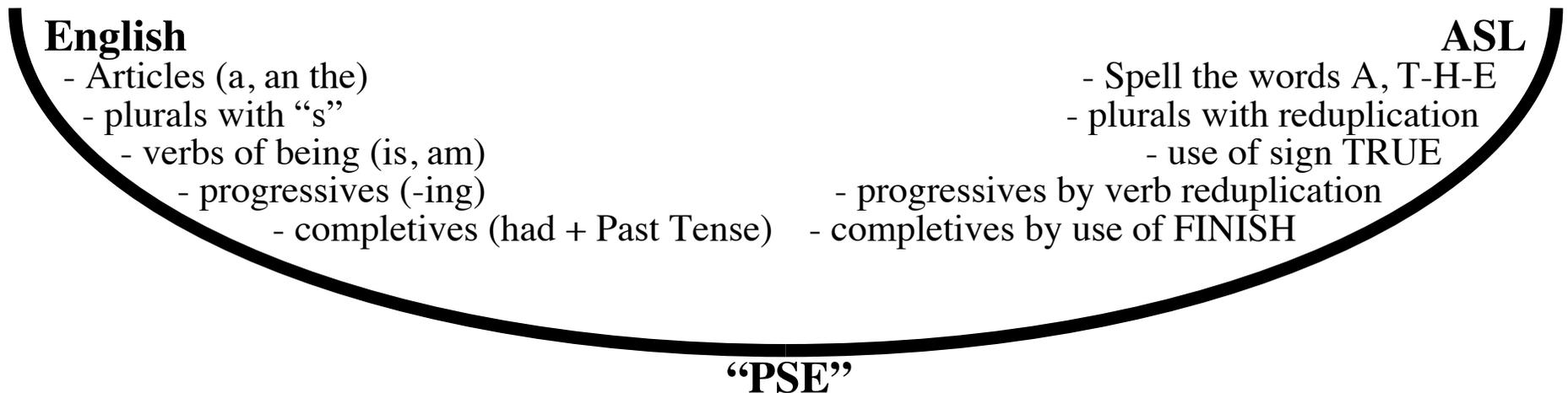
William Stokoe's "Observed Communication Behavior of American Deaf Persons"

- clear articulation
- facial expression
- lipreading
- manual symbols
- gesture

James Woodward's Original "Diglossic Scale"



James Woodward's Original "Elements of PSE"



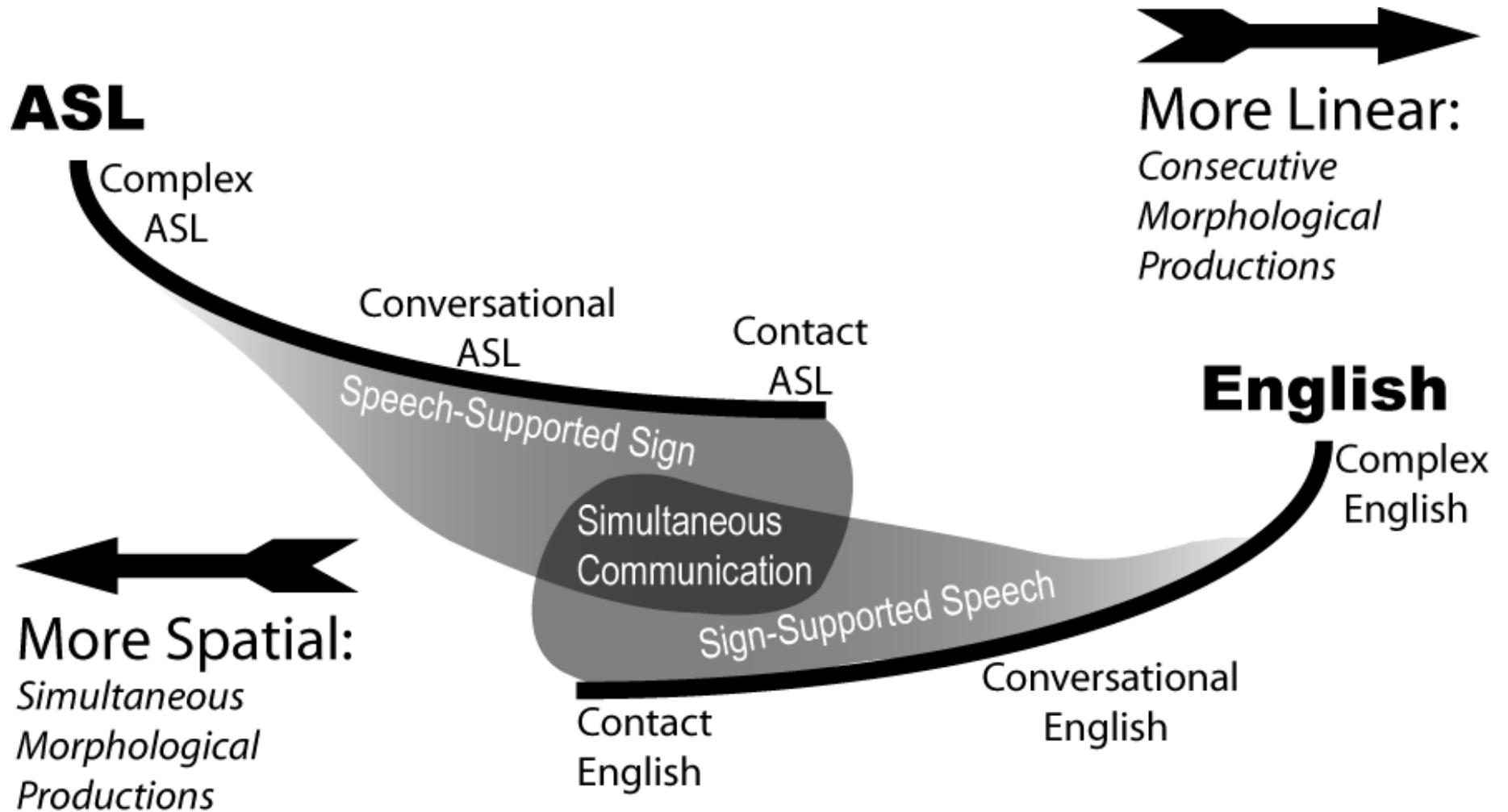


“Contact Signing”

Ceil Lucas and Clayton Valli (1992)

English Features Used	English Features NOT Used	ASL Features Used	ASL Features NOT Used
Conjunctions (and, because, but)	Verbs + prepositions (go with, look at)	Agreement Verbs (subject / object)	Aspect Inflection (duration, intensity)
English mouth patterns	Relative Clauses	Signs without mouthing	Topicalization
Prepositions	Comparative "more"		ASL Determiners (indexing/pointing)
English order (?)	Determiners (the, this, that)		ASL word order (?)
Subordinate clauses	Modal Constructions (can, must, etc)		Role Shifting

Language Continua: ASL and English



Review Questions

1. What four variables influence the development of sociolects?
2. What is the difference between sociolects and dialects?
3. What year did William Stokoe first identify variation in ASL?
4. Which level of the linguistic pyramid was the focus of the first study of American Sign Language?
5. Identify the three phrases other than “Contact Signing” which have been used to describe language contact between ASL and English.
6. What label did Woodward develop and why is that label now understood to be inaccurate?
7. What was the primary flaw with attempting to represent language contact between ASL and English with a single continuum line?
8. Where are complex grammatical structures of ASL and English located on the revised ASL/English continua?
9. What are the three descriptors used to define the space between ASL and English within the revised ASL/English continua?
10. Flanagan et. al. (1995) identified the occurrence of true *Foreigner Talk* within ASL. How is *Foreigner Talk* different than *Contact Signing*?

Suggested Activities

1. Think of a common children's story, such as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," and tell it (in either a signed or spoken language) as though you were from another part of the country using a different dialect of the same language. Try telling the story again using different sociolects of the same language (class, gender, ethnicity, generation). Tell the story in different registers, as though it were a news report, a play-by-play sports broadcast, a suspense-filled mystery, or an academic lecture.
2. Observe three different examples of communication in very different settings (such as a church, a grocery store, and a classroom). Identify at least ten ways that each kind of communication is different from the other kinds (including gestures, postures, pronunciation differences, vocabulary choices, and complexity of grammar).