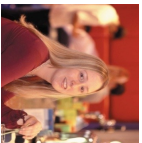




**DGfS-CNRS Summer School on  
Linguistic Typology  
Course “Sign Language Typology”**

**Typology of Deaf communities**



Prof. Ulrike Zeshan

International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies  
University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK  
uzeshan@uclan.ac.uk



Sign languages and signing communities

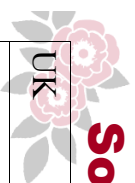
Linguistic/cultural minority sign languages

Sign languages in integrated communities

High level of institutionalisation

Low level of institutionalisation

A typology of sign languages and signing communities



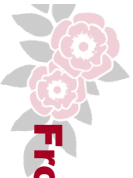
**Sociolinguistic variables**

UK	India	Bali
Small community of mainly deaf users	Large community of mainly deaf users	Small community of mixed users D/H
Linguistic minority; significant contact with dominant spoken language	Linguistic minority; limited contact with dominant spoken language	Integrated signing community; strictly monolingual deaf signers
Contact variety Signed English, fingerspelling and mouthing	No contact variety, very limited use of fingerspelling and mouthing	No contact variety, no fingerspelling and no mouthing
Official status for the sign language and special educational provision	No official status for the sign language; limited special educational provision	No official status for the sign language; no educational provision for deaf villagers



**Sociolinguistic parameters of variation (summary)**

- Age of the sign language
- Size of the user community
- Contact situation with other (spoken/written/signed) languages
- type of user community (L1-users, L2-users)
- Degree of endangerment



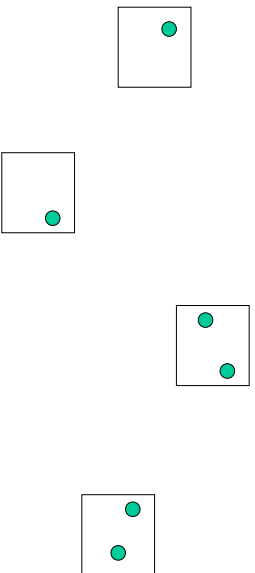
## From home sign to sign language

- There is a developmental cline with respect to variaties of visual-gestural communication.
- An equivalent phenomenon does not occur with spoken languages.
- The emergence of new sign languages is a common occurrence in developing countries.
- The development of sign languages necessitates the development of a signing community, either a Deaf community or a „shared signing community“.

5



Isolated deaf individuals

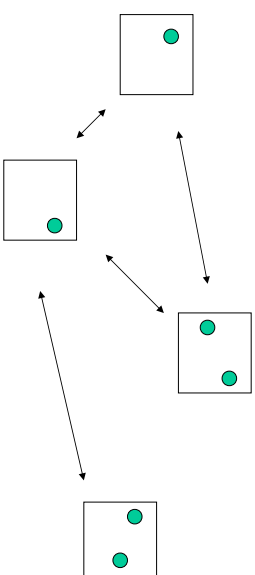


→ Home Sign

6



Isolated signers in sporadic contact over time

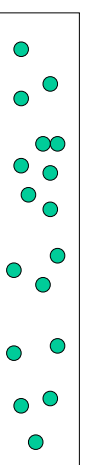


→ Communal Home Sign (this situation is poorly understood!)

7



Signing community



→ Fully developed sign language

8