

Holiday

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Introduction

Most users of a spoken language understand a sentence by processing the order that the words happen in. In the sentence 'Jamil was laughing' we know that it was Jamil who laughed, because the name 'Jamil' came before the word 'laughed'. However, in signed languages, learners have to open their minds to a grammar that relies on a 3D space, not a chronological order. They have to alter their thinking from, "What sign comes next?" to "What sign moves where?"

Activity Aims

This activity will encourage you to examine the way that British Sign Language (BSL) uses the signing space to convey grammatical information. It will help you to recognise different types of placement and how subtle changes in movement and pace can influence meaning.

Level

Intermediate Plus

Time needed

Approx 3 hours +

Pre-task activity:

1) In groups or on your own, write down all the associated vocabulary that you might expect to see used (or you may have used) when talking about a holiday e.g. booking flights, destinations, hotels etc.

2) Watch the BSL clip first and write down the main concepts/ ideas of the story. Watch the clip again.

Don't worry if you don't get all the information first, second or even the third time. We will be working through the meaning in the activity.

Tip: This activity is very useful as it will help you prepare for what you are about to watch. It can also help you to recognise new signs or finger-spelling.

LANGUAGE AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

1 Fingerspelling

a) Read and rewrite the sentence below:

“I smetmes feel that I do nt undrstnd words tht are fger-splt. I nw knw tht I cn use cultural knowledge to fl n the gps. I need to look for ptrns in wrds and frequently ocuring ndings”

I sometimes feel that I do not understand words that are finger-spelt. I now know that I can use cultural knowledge to fill in the gaps. I need to look for patterns in words and frequently occurring endings.

Tip: Even though some words may not be easy to understand your brain fills in the gaps. You'll find that it is the same with fingerspelling. So instead of trying to capture each individual letter, look for the first couple and any other common patterns (e.g. I. N. G., or G.H.) and then let the context and your brain fill in the gaps for you.

b) List the 2 instances when the signer uses incomplete or inaccurate fingerspelling

Name	Actual fingerspelling	Timings
Thomas Cook	Thompson Cook	(0.37)
Montego Bay	Mon...bay	(1.42)

Tip: Although information may not always be spelt correctly is it clear what is meant because we can use our contextual or cultural knowledge to determine the meaning.

c) What strategy does the signer use to give us the name of the hotel? (2.07).

This is done initially through finger-spelling and then reinforces with a literal sign STAR and FISH.

Tip: This technique is used to create a sign name in order to avoid finger-spelling the name over and over again. It may also be used to aid the receivers in case the finger-spelling was not picked up or unclear.

2 Verb Behaviour

a) Some verbs can convey extra information by their hand-shape or movement. For example, we know *where* the signer goes, because the verb GO moves towards his destination. Look at the table below for further examples, and use the video clip to help you fill in the blanks.

Can the verb below change to show:	Subject - Object (see glossary)	Tense (when, e.g. I go, I went)	Number (How many, e.g. Six of us went)	Location (Where things are happening, e.g. I walk from home to work.)	Explain how the verb changes to show these features (Use examples from the clip or from your own knowledge).
GO	X ✓	✓	✓	✓	<p>Subject: GO cannot usually show this. However, there are occasions when the verb's starting point is at the same place as the subject, indicating that it is they who are going. This is particularly evident when the handshape changes into the person classifier (index finger up, rest of hand closed)</p> <p>Tense: The signer changes the standard form of GO to incorporate a flicking movement (1.04 and 0.23). This is commonly glossed as BIN or BEEN and indicates past tense. It changes GO to WENT.</p> <p>Number: (0.23) the sign changes into the 5 hand classifier to show more people going to Jamaica,</p> <p>Location: The start and end point of the sign GO can give information about location. This is only grammatically correct if the verb movement uses the locations placed within the signing space (1.02).</p>
TEXT	X ✓	X	X	X	<p>Subject / Object: The direction of the sign TEXT changes to indicate that the signer is sending a text to his sister (1. 22). Note that physical limitations make it difficult to sign SISTER TEXT ME, and so the signer clarifies this by pointing to his sister before signing TEXT. This would be the same for YOU TEXT ME, and therefore indicates that the sign cannot change to show subject and object in most instances.</p> <p>Tense: N/A</p> <p>Number: N/A</p> <p>Location: N/A</p>
FLY	X	X	✓	✓	<p>Subject / Object: N/A</p> <p>Tense: N/A</p> <p>Number: If you use both hands you can show two planes flying. To show more than two planes we need to add puffed cheeks and show the handshapes moving in multiple directions.</p> <p>Location: the movement of the verb shows where the subject is flying to and from in conjunction with the placement in the signing space. (1. 39).</p>
CONFIRM	X	X	X	X	<p>Subject / Object: N/A</p> <p>Tense: N/A</p> <p>Number: N/A</p> <p>Location: N/A</p>

Tip "A few verbs in some BSL dialects differ depending on whether the action is in the past or present e.g. WIN/WON, SEE/SAW, ..." (Sutton Spence and Woll 1998:116). Other verbs don't change to show tense so you need to add a separate sign, for example, LAST YEAR'. We could also use the same principle to show the future – 'NEXT YEAR I GO'. This adverb of time often comes at or near the start of the BSL sentence.

b) If the verb does not change to show number, tense, subject or location then how can you convey that information? Translate the following examples into BSL:



**MANCHESTER (point) JAMAICA (point to a different space)
MY FRIEND (point) FLY (move FLY from Manchester to Jamaica)**

PAST MY FRIEND (point) JAMAICA (point) FLY

ME WORK (point in space at front of body, nod head for affirmation) TEXT

ME TEXT MANY texts. (number)

WE (use generic sign for WE or point to specific people set up in signing space) FLIGHT CONFIRM.

ME TRAIN TICKET CONFIRM BEEN (tense)

Now based on your observations, complete the following sentences:

Subject

**point to the subject before signing the verb, e.g. – Compare the following examples:
I PHONE YOU – the verb PHONE moves from the subject to the object, so you do not need to point to I or YOU separately.
I LIKE YOU – the verb LIKE does not move from the subject to the object, so you will need to point to I and YOU.**

Tense

add an adverb of time to your sentence, e.g. – Tomorrow, last year, etc. These items are usually signed at or near the start of the sentence

Number

add a sign to indicate 'how many'. A quantifier can be added before or/and after the noun, e.g.- 2 CAR, CAR 2, 2 CAR 2. The sign MANY can also be added, see the example in 1b iv. Compare the following examples –

AUDIENCE LOOK (The audience look at me) – the number of people who LOOK is indicated using the 5 hand classifier (all fingers pointing towards the signer) to show many people looking. The verb can show number in this instance.

ME TEXT MANY (I send lots of texts) – The verb TEXT can't change to show number so you need an extra sign (MANY).

Location

If the verb doesn't give information about location by where it moves to and from,

point to the location you are referring to or add WHERE before the adverb of place. For example:

**ME PLAY WHERE PARK (I play in the park)
PARK (point to park) ME LIKE**

c) At (1.43) and (1.45), the signer uses the same handshape and movement to express different meanings. What are these meanings?

- i. 1.43 **land (the plane)**
- ii. 1.45 **airport**

d) How does the signer differentiate between the meanings?

The signer uses lip-pattern on AIRPORT. As a general rule, try to use English lip-pattern on nouns and not verbs. BSL uses the face and mouth to show how we do the verbs (e.g. WORK HARD puffed cheek), and it isn't possible to do this and mouth the words at the same time. For further reading on the use of lip or mouth patterns in BSL see (Sutton Spence and Woll 1998: 81)

e) What is your sign for PLANE? In the signed sentence "We got off the plane" (1.47), how does the signer's handshape for plane change from what you know?

It changes to a flat handshape, palm face down.

f) Take a look at 3.24 and 2.00 for further examples of this. Why do you think his handshape changes from the original sign? What does it allow him to show?

This alternative handshape allows the signer to show how the sign interacts with its environment. Think of the sign CAR, and now try and use that handshape to show how you get in it. Tricky isn't it? Now do the sign for CAR, followed by the flat hand classifier and show a person getting in.

The classifier handshape can also offer flexibility if you want to show plurality (just repeat the sign across the signing space) or how the object moves. It is difficult to show a coach going around a corner if you use the original sign, but not if you use the classifier.

These alternative handshapes are known as classifiers in sign linguistics and are very common in BSL.

g) Think of a journey you have been on and set up the places within your signing space. Now, using the signs FLY and then DRIVE, describe how you got there. Consider using a visual map in your signing space and place the locations according to where they are in real life. How would you sign TAKE OFF, LAND, BOARD, DISEMBARK, etc.?



Tip: For example, if you were flying from Scotland to London, in which direction would the sign fly go? Consider where your locations are and how you would refer to them in the signing space after setting them up.

3 Manner

a) What extra information does the signer convey about manner through his non-manual-features (NMF's) at the following points:

Tip: Manner in BSL is shown through the use of Non Manual Features. In English we may say 'I walked slowly' using a separate word (adverb) to explain how we walked. In BSL this is done simultaneously using non manual features.

i. Receiving a text message (1.22 – 1. 28)

The signer shows the audience the manner in which he viewed the text – with surprise. This is indicated through his use of NMFs (intake of breath, wide eyes, open mouth, raised eyebrows) NB: He doesn't need to use the sign SURPRISE because it is there on his face.

ii. Seeing the children with no shoes (5.02)

He signs looking and the manner in which he looks is shown in his non manual features (wide eyes, open mouth) showing amazement

iii. Eating (2.53)

The sign to eat gives added meaning through the manner in which he eats – i.e. the idea of over-indulging. Non manual features (slight open mouth, narrow eyes + negative expression showing that he tends to over indulge).



b) Look at the following sentences and consider how you would add the adverb of manner in BSL.

Tip: Even though there are specific signs for SLOW, GREEDY, and QUICK, consider whether you need them. Is there another way to convey the information?

- i. read slowly
- ii. eat greedily
- iii. sign quickly

4 Pace

a) Pace can be used in BSL to add impact. How does the signer use it within the following examples?

i. Fly - Manchester to Jamaica (1.38)

The sign FLY is performed at a slower pace with added non-manual features (puffed cheeks and narrowed eyes).

ii. Rain - (4.02)

He signs the drop of rain at a slower pace however the down-pour is signed quicker and with non manual features (eyes closed, mouth pattern [pow]-imitating the action of a downpour) showing the intensity of the rainfall.

iii. Running home (4.07)

He signs RUN quickly and adds non manual features (narrow eyes, clenched teeth).

5 Translation Task

(a) What phrases or words might be used in English to express the downpour?

Answer: heavens open, raining cats and dogs, torrential rain, pouring down, tropical down pour, a deluge (formal)

(b) What other idiomatic expression is used within the clip in relation to the heat (1.50)? How would you express this in English?

The heat was so intense; it was like being in an oven. It was sweltering/scorching, Oppressive heat.

(c) Practise translating the following idiomatic expressions into BSL. Consider the meaning. What non manual features would you incorporate? Do any of these translate into BSL quite literally?

- i. My sister likes to beat around the bush.
- ii. I'm hitting my head against a brick wall.
- iii. I eat chocolate once in a blue moon.
- iv. My boyfriend drinks like a fish.

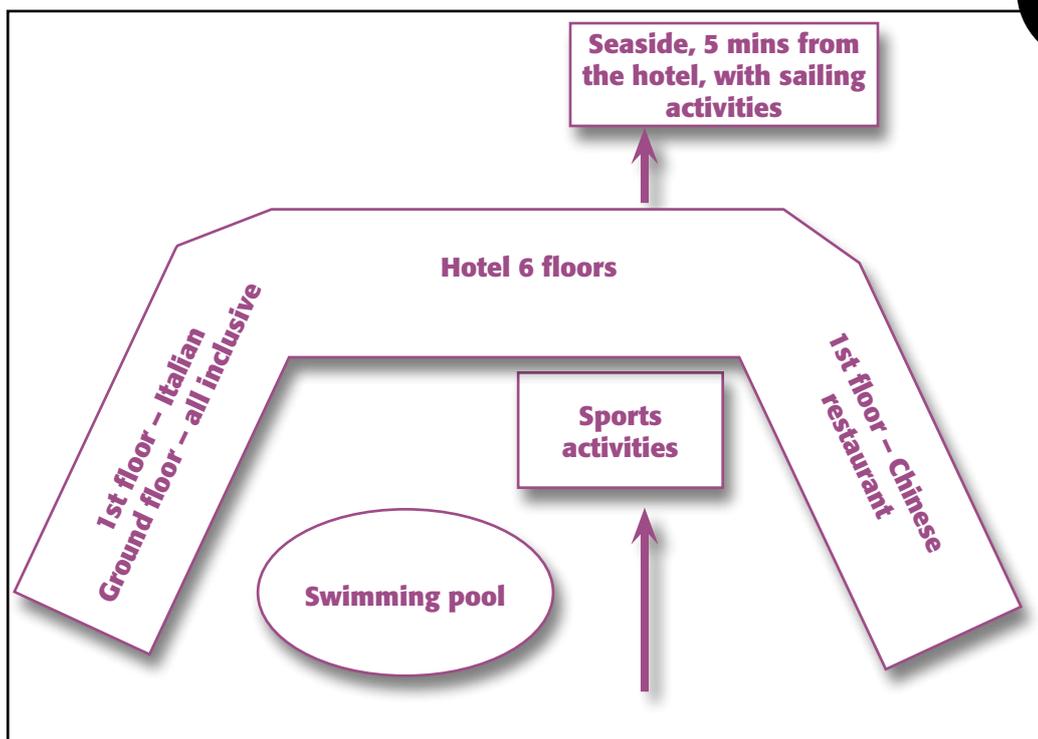
Ask your BSL tutor or a fluent sign language user for advice.

6 Placement and Visual Representation

a) Within the section (1.30 – 1.34) of the clip, how do we know that the signer is still referring to Jamaica?

The signer uses the same space to indicate Jamaica. This space had been set up previously.

b) Draw the Hotel Complex (from 2.12). (Note: building, number of floors, how it's built, what is around it and behind it, where are the restaurants, etc.)



i. How does the signer show that the hotel overlooks the pool? (2. 22)

Non manual features(eyes looking down, neutral facial expression, mouth open/dropped jaw) + body movement forward (imitating the action of looking down over a swimming pool).

ii. Using your drawing, sign the hotel complex. Consider the techniques that the signer uses in the video and try to incorporate them in your version.



c) Think of a place you have visited or a place you would like to visit, e.g. a holiday complex. Using the same language features as the signer describe the place you have in mind. Consider different heights, distances, sizes, use of placement, non manual features, manner etc.



7 Distance

How does the signer indicate distance in the following examples?

Section	Examples of distance
Plane flight from Manchester to Jamaica (1. 38)	He uses a slower pace to show distance, the places are located further from each other in the signing space.
Referring to the sea (3.34)	The signer shows the distance to the bottom. The sign from the eye going down, gets smaller as it moves away (showing that something is getting smaller) and adds quantifier – only 25 feet.
In relation to sailing (3.28)	He signs (FAR SAY ROUGHLY 5 MILES SAIL (using a classifier at the end). His Non manual features (narrowing of the eyes and slightly puffed cheeks) show the distance.
Talking about running home (4.08)	He uses the sign not far plus non manual features (narrow eyes/ narrow lips).
Distance to sea (3.06)	He signs about 5 mins walk with non manual features (narrow eyes narrow lips, expression indicating not far) to show the distance.

8 Number

What strategies does the signer employ to show number?

Concept/ time on the clip	Answer of how number is shown
Animals (4.49)	He signs the various animals and then finishes with the sign various/ different repeated.
Houses (4.52)	The sign for house is duplicated or repeated to show many houses.
Food types (2. 31)	The types of foods are given and then the sign various/ different is added.
Brothers and sisters going to Jamaica (0.22)	He signs brother and sister and then uses a classifier to show them going, this indicates there are many, i.e. brothers and sisters.
Trees (1.54)	The sign for tree is articulated using both hands and then repeated in a row. To indicate a row of trees.
The family have grown up... (4. 46)	This is indicated by using the sign to grow up with both hands. This shows more than one person growing up.

9 Vocabulary

Do you know any variations of the following signs? Ask around at the deaf club or your BSL class for any regional or generational differences:



Sign Used within the clip	variation
Mother (0.29)	
Slavery (5.0 8)	
Africa (5.05)	(perhaps an old sign)
Holiday (0.13)	
Blue (3.14)	
Miles (3.28)	
£800 (0.50)	
£100 (1.08)	
White (relating to sand) (3.09)	

10 Reflection

Well done – you’ve nearly completed the worksheet. Your final learning activity is to take a moment to think back over the tasks you have attempted and the language you have seen. Jot down what you have learned, or any areas where your understanding has deepened (e.g. new signs, new linguistic terms, BSL grammatical features etc.)

References

Sutton Spence and Woll (1998) *The Linguistics of British Sign Language* CUP: England.