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Feeling what we write, writing what we feel: Written sign language literacy and intersomaticity in a German classroom

1 Introduction

In 2012, in an experimental classroom in a German school, a young boy named Theo[1] sat down at the computer. He had been tasked with translating a German Sign Language (Deutsche Gebärdensprache, or DGS) sentence, which might be glossed as HE GOOD WRITE CAN, into written German.[2] The computer screen projected onto a large display, classmates watched as Theo typed his translation, "Er kann gut schreiben" (in English, "He can write well"). His classmates conferred, deemed his translation correct, and their teacher, Mr. Wöhrmann, concurred. Theo grinned and returned to his seat, as his classmate Omer rose to take his turn translating at the computer.

As in many bilingual-bimodal approaches to deaf education, in this primarily DGS-medium classroom, sign language use was understood to facilitate rather than detract from students' abilities to expand their communicative repertoires to include spoken and written languages (it should also be noted that signing was not seen simply as a means to such an end, but was understood as irreplaceably valuable in itself). However, in most such classrooms, spoken languages may be enacted across the modalities of speech and writing while sign languages are understood to be un-writable or only writable when mediated through spoken language glosses (e.g., see the classroom practices described in Bagga-Gupta 2000). Here, on the other hand, DGS as well as German appeared in written form. Indeed, Theo's DGS prompt for this particular translation assignment had appeared in writing on the worksheet on which he was to type his German sentence (see Figure 1).

1 All student names have been changed to pseudonyms.

2 I use terms like German and DGS (and later in the text, English and Nepali Sign Language) less as my own analytical frames than as recognition of these named languages as ideological constructs salient (in varying ways) to classroom participants, and with important consequences for how linguistic practices may be (or fail to be) recognized and ratified.

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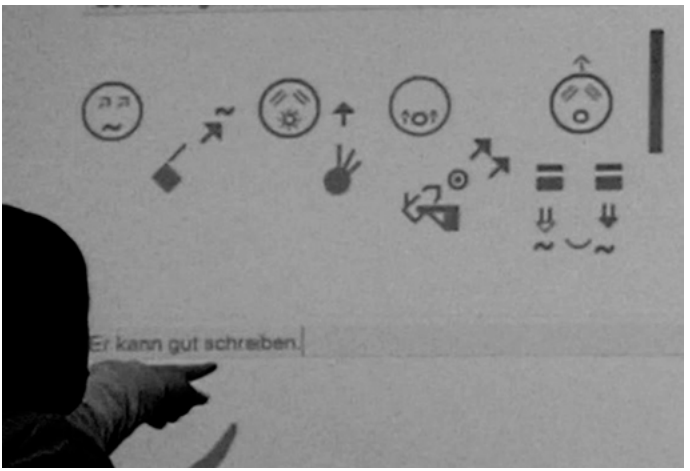

Figure 1. A video-still of Theo's translation exercise projected for the class.

In this classroom, DGS texts are produced using a writing system called SignWriting (SW), a feature-based system that iconically represents hand shapes, locations, orientations, and movements, as well as facial expressions, postural shifts, mouth movements, and other aspects of a bodily communicative ecology (including, but not limited to, those movements that have been analyzed as contributing to sign language phonology). When originally developed in the 1970s, SW represented these bodily features from what users term the "receptive" viewpoint, the perspective of someone observing another person signing. However, since the 1980s it has become standard to write from what users call the "expressive" viewpoint, the embodied perspective of a signer (Sutton 2014:13). As I have discussed elsewhere (Hoffmann-Dilloway 2018), this shift has accompanied a linguistic ideological reframing of SW from a writing system that focuses on the receptive visual modality of signing to one that stresses the felt movements involved in producing linguistic forms.

Linguistic ideologies, in this chapter, are understood to be the, "cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (Irvine 1989:255). Current iterations of the concept have productively widened the scope of this concept to encompass semiotic ideologies, beliefs about "what signs are and how they function in the world" (Keane 2003:419) and media ideologies: "how people understand both the communicative possibilities and the material limitations of a specific channel, and how they conceive of channels in general" (Gershon 2010:283). Such ideologies are not distinct from one another; as Gershon (2010:284) notes, semiotic,

linguistic, and media ideologies may be mutually constitutive, aligning to "generate or support locally persuasive perspectives." Further, perceived boundaries between the linguistic, the semiotic more broadly, and the modalities, media, and channels through which such signification occurs are not given but are ethnographically variable and themselves ideologically mediated.

In this chapter, I explore how the linguistic and media ideological framing of expressive SW as entextualizing felt experience reflects and affects broader local semiotic ideologies of how intersubjective relations are mediated through public signs. (Intersubjective alignment, or the "existential organization, recognition, and constitution of relations between subjects" (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 87), is understood here as a product as much as a precondition of social interaction (Hanks 2013).) Specifically, drawing on ethnographic research conducted in this classroom during the summers of 2010 and 2012, I analyze SW-based pedagogical strategies that treat this writing system as a tool to draw attention to the experience of producing and perceiving language. Crucially, these activities frame such experience not as a matter of individual subjectivity but as an object of intersubjective alignment. Ultimately, I argue that use of expressive SW in this ideological context provides a resource through which students cultivate a sense of intersubjective relationality achieved not only through shared languaging practices, but also, to an intersomatic (i.e., sense of shared bodily sensations (Csordas 2008)) orientation to the "feelings of doing" language (Harkness 2015:574).

2 Translanguaging and intersubjective relationality

In making this argument, I draw on and seek to contribute to the literature on transmodal-translanguaging, or communicative practices in which participants work to align their diverse multimodal linguistic repertoires in the context of situated interactions (e.g., Williams 1996; García 2009; Blackledge and Creese 2010; Canagarajah 2011; Reynolds 2014). Though conceptualized in different ways over the course of its development, use of the term typically signals a theoretical commitment to eschewing understandings of languages as discrete systems and rather to viewing linguistic repertoires as plurisemiotic ensembles (e.g., Garcia and Wei 2014) which, when taken as analytical starting points, facilitate the "disinvention" (Makoni and Pennycook 2007) of languages as monolithic. Many of those adopting the term highlight the political dimensions of how translanguaging practices are framed in particular contexts, often with an explicit focus on

strategies for intervening in pedagogical settings to make them more receptive to translanguaging practices.

While this literature theoretically accommodates analysis of the transmodal dimensions of translanguaging practices, as Kusters (2017) points out, very little of this work has provided sustained attention to a wide range of embodied semiotic practices, such as gesture, instead focusing primarily on the speech stream and on written literacy practices (likely due in part to how scholars' own language and media/modality ideologies affect where they direct their analytical attention). An ethnographic context such as the one explored here, in which classroom participants draw on a movement writing system to cultivate shared attention to embodied experience, does not accommodate a narrow focus on particular modalities, however. Instead, it directs attention to how people work to create (partially) shared worlds by means of multimodal embodied experience, including experiences of translanguaging practices.

Additionally, while the literature concerning translanguaging has productively drawn on the concept of language ideologies, most of this work focuses on how translanguaging practices explicitly challenge dominant ideologies that frame languages as discrete monoliths. In the case at hand, indeed, pedagogical practices disrupt a range of locally entrenched, explicitly articulated, linguistic and media ideologies (e.g., that speech and auditory skill training to the exclusion of sign languages is the best means for deaf students to acquire spoken language skills; that sign languages cannot be written; etc.). Analysis of such ideological clashes and their impact on the development and broader reception of innovative pedagogical practices is important in imagining new approaches to education that can disrupt rather than reproduce existing social hierarchies.

However, attention to the mediating effects of more implicit linguistic and semiotic ideologies on translanguaging interactions also yields valuable insights. In this classroom context, even as pedagogical practices radically challenge some educational norms, locally dominant ideologies about the relationship between communicative practices and intersubjectivity are not contested and, in being taken for granted, perhaps naturalized and universalized. Contrary to such an (implicit) stance, however, ethnographic research has shown that even if we assume that intersubjectivity universally entails awareness of, along with coordination and co-engagement with, others (Duranti 2010; Hanks 2013), there can be radical differences in how such alignment is understood to be achieved and signaled.

In many Euro-American contexts public signs are ideologically framed as primarily a resource for assessing the intentions, feelings, and knowledge of others (Searle 1969; Grice 1975). While interpretations of speech acts are mediated by conventional pragmatic norms in such settings, these norms often center

on divining the intention of the speaker. However, in many other contexts, for example in the Pacific and in Central America, ethnographers describe variations of what has come to be called a "Doctrine of the Opacity of Other Minds"; ethno-theories through which people frame others' internal states as unknowable (e.g., Rosaldo 1982; Robbins and Rumsey 2008; Duranti 2010; Danzinger 2013). Speculation about another's intentions, feelings, or knowledge may be seen as an inappropriate means of interpreting public signs in general, or in specific domains. In such contexts stress is often placed on interpreting speech with reference to established pragmatic norms that do not hinge on inferring speakers' intentions. As Danzinger (2013:3) notes, ethnographic work reveals that, "constant reading of others' minds is not actually necessary to the conduct of much everyday interaction."

Such a claim runs counter to assumptions built into widespread accounts of human development, such as the presumed universality and centrality of particular ways of displaying Theory of Mind (TOM) (e.g., Baron-Cohen et al., 2000). Within a frame that takes culturally contingent displays of "mind-reading" as a fundamental cornerstone of human relationality, failure to display such an orientation can be understood as failure to be a full person. Autistic self-advocates (e.g., Savarese 2017; Yergeau 2013) describe experiencing devastating effects from such naturalization of culturally specific modes of achieving and recognizing intersubjectivity (e.g., Baron-Cohen 1997). Both authors also stress how Euro-American ethno-theories of intersubjectivity treat co-engagement as a "primarily mentalist process" (e.g., all about somehow disembodied "minds") while downplaying embodiment and "visceral intersomatic connections between subjects" (i.e., physical, somatic, contextual components of co-engagement) (Groark 2013:285; Savarese 2017; Yergeau 2013). They suggest that attention to the specificity of embodied experience can help resist abstracted and ungrounded universalizing theories.

In raising their critiques of the TOM concept in this chapter, I by no means seek to conflate autism and deafness, but rather to draw attention to the potential "interpretive dangers of taking one culturally-particular form of intersubjectivity…as the standard against which all other forms of social knowing are to be measured" (Groark 2013:280). In the ethnographic context to which I now turn, implicit personalist language ideologies inform evaluations of students' linguistic and social practices and the pedagogical strategies designed to socialize them to locally legible ways of performing relationality. As the same time, however, I suggest that use of expressive SW also may disrupt a mentalist framing of personalism, by both reflecting and perpetuating attention to the intersomatic relations that underpin intersubjective alignment.

3 The Osnabrück classroom and SignWriting

Though the European Union of the Deaf continues to promote the recognition of sign language as a fundamental right for deaf Europeans, many deaf children in Germany (as in many contexts globally) continue to experience primarily oralism-based language socialization in home and school contexts, through which they are engaged in efforts to teach lipreading, speech, and written German, and are not given the opportunity to acquire DGS (Günther et al. 2009). Despite intensive surgical (e.g., cochlear implantation), technological (e.g., hearing aids), and pedagogical interventions, however, such an approach can fail to provide deaf children sufficient access to interactive language use (e.g., Spencer 2004).

At the time of my research, The National Training Center for the Hearing Impaired (*Landesbildungszentrum für Hörgeschädigte*), in Osnabrück (located in the Lower Saxony region), primarily provided an oralism-centered education. However, the school offered one DGS medium classroom, led by a hearing, but DGS fluent, teacher named Stefan Wöhrmann. Students were not assigned to this class until their teachers and parents decided that they were not acquiring appropriate linguistic skills through a strictly oralist approach. Most of the students were aged seven or older by the time the "last resort" of DGS was decided upon; thus, most entered the classroom with truncated linguistic repertoires (relative to their age peers), many showing effects of extended linguistic (and often, consequently, social) deprivation. These effects were a consequence of the often "either/or" framing of oralist approaches vs. signing (Humphries et al. 2012).

When discussing these effects in interviews, Wöhrmann expressed particular concern over his sense that many of his incoming students seemed to fail to take into account their peers' perspectives and knowledge. In so doing, Wöhrmann made clear his understanding that such perceived deficits did not arise from deafness, but rather from the socially contingent isolation from interactive language use created by educational and home environments that favored spoken over signed language. To stress this point, he cited his experience with Selma, the only deaf member of the class born to deaf signing parents, who entered his classroom with linguistic and pragmatic skills that he characterized as unquestionably on par with her hearing age peers (but which were simply enacted via DGS rather than German).

Indeed, a large body of literature points out that deaf children of deaf signers, who have sustained access to sign language from birth, do not suffer the social, linguistic, and cognitive delays that can affect deaf peers born to hearing parents and not exposed to an accessible language from birth (e.g., Humphries et al. 2012; Lederberg et al. 2013). This distinction has also been shown specifically in terms of performance on tasks designed to assess TOM, wherein studies have demon-

strated that deaf children not provided with sustained access to sign language early in life performed less well on TOM tasks, while deaf children acquiring sign language from birth showed no delays or deficits in TOM tasks compared with hearing peers (e.g., de Villiers 2005; Schick et al 2007). Such work makes clear the role of language socialization in understanding and displaying TOM in culturally legible ways. As I will discuss in the next section, written literacy instruction via expressive SignWriting, in addition to helping expand students' linguistic repertoires to include new modalities, codes, and genres, was also framed as socializing students to such perspective taking.

SignWriting is only one of a range of written sign language literacy and/or notation systems created over the years, including but not limited to Stokoe Notation, Hamnosys, Si5s, and ASLWrite (see Czubek 2006; Kato 2008; Snoddon 2010; and van der Hulst and Channon 2010 for discussions and comparisons of such systems, as well as for discussions of sign language literacies not dependent on writing). In interviews, *Wöhrmann recounted discovering SW in particular in 1999, when he contacted* Valerie Sutton, the system's inventor. She provided instructional materials and put Wöhrmann in touch with a transnational network of deaf and hearing SignWriters who communicated regularly by means of an email list-serv. This group of experienced users helped Wöhrmann in his study of the writing system and provided a forum in which he could discuss the adaptation of the system for his students' particular pedagogical needs. Becoming a part of this network of users was crucial, as Wöhrmann was largely isolated in his efforts to introduce written sign language literacy via SW in Germany (indeed, as he notes, most local schools were skeptical about using sign language at all, let alone written sign language literacy). Such isolation was and continues to be a fairly common experience for SignWriters; although deaf and hearing signers in over 30 countries use SW to produce texts in a wide range of genres, it is typical that groups of users in any given locale are small.[3]

3 For example, in addition to transnational networks of SignWriters mediated by the Internet, its use among local networks is growing rapidly in some contexts. In particular, Brazil contains fast growing centers for local SW use. Although I am unable to find a reliable current estimate of the number of users in the country, the very active Facebook group "SignWriting Brasil" has 1,743 members at the time of writing. Germany's networks of users has also grown since the 1990s, for example, through Wöhrmann's collaboration with the German IT company CI WPS GmbH and the University of Hamburg to create educational resources such as the Delegs (Deutsch lernen mit GebärdenSchrift or Learn German with SignWriting) software program, used at the time of my 2012 research trip in deaf adult educational projects designed as a bridge to employment or additional education programs in Hamburg.

Worldwide, signers have adapted SW to represent different sign languages because of the system's flexibility. SW is phonographic, i.e., made up of graphic symbols that represent signs phonologically at the featural, or sub-segmental, level (though the term "phonology" implies a focus on sound, signed languages also have phonology, as the concept centers on duality of patterning, rather than on the modality of the units that can be so combined (Stokoe 1960; Sandler 1989)). Originally derived from a dance notation system (Sutton 1973), SW did not emerge from a phonemic analysis of a particular sign language. Consequentially, its symbols are not mapped onto any one language's phonology.[4] Rather, it can be used to notate signing at a phonetic level, akin to the International Phonetic Alphabet (a notation system developed by linguists in an attempt to accurately represent the sounds used across all spoken languages).

SW does not formally distinguish between what linguists often frame as linguistic and paralinguistic phenomena (likewise this boundary is challenged by a translanguaging perspective). SignWriters, drawing on the representational resources provided by the system, choose how much and what type of detail to represent in a given text, depending on their analysis of what aspects of a signing ecology are significant for a text of a particular genre. As I have argued elsewhere (Hoffmann-Dilloway 2011), the need to make such choices, rather than having many of them encoded into a script, helps SignWriters explicitly articulate and challenge dominant, and often tacit, ideologies about the nature of language and writing. Furthermore, the wide range of variation in how SW is employed by different writers, and the comparison between texts afforded by forums like the SW focused listserv, also reveal and affect users' ideological perspectives on language, writing, and social formations.

One of the representational choices afforded by the SW system is the perspective from which texts are written. Because of its iconically motivated representations of bodily articulators and its diagrammatic representations of the spatial relationships between them, SW can encode signing practice from different visual vantage points. Texts can be written from what users term the "receptive" viewpoint, the embodied perspective of someone observing another person signing (see Figure 2) or from what they term the "expressive" viewpoint, the embodied perspective of a signer (see Figure 3).

4 In some contexts of use, however, SW orthographies have been proposed that focus on the phonological forms specific to particular languages, such as American Sign Language (Frost and Sutton 2013) or Maltese Sign Language (Galea 2014).

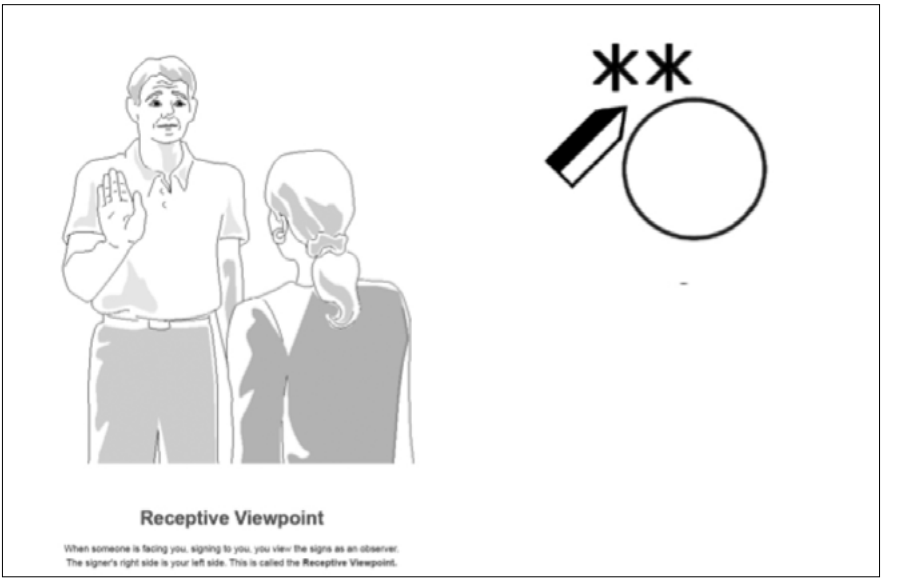

Figure 2. The illustration on the left, from a SW instruction manual, establishes that "receptive" SW is written from the embodied perspective of someone observing a signer. The text on the right shows an American Sign Language sign, TO-KNOW, written receptively (Sutton 2014).

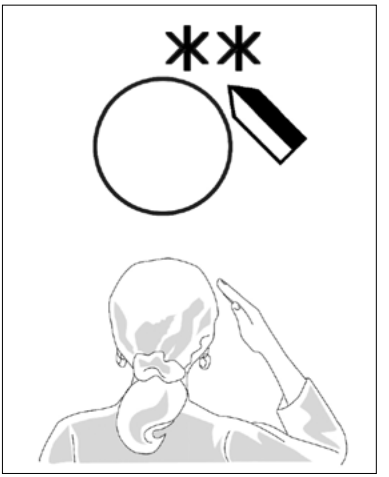

Figure 3. Also from a SW instruction manual, the figure below shows the American Sign Language, TO-KNOW, written from the expressive viewpoint (or that of the signer) (Sutton 2014).

When it was originally adapted from dance notation, SW was primarily written from the receptive perspective. However, in 1984, two early deaf adopters, Lucinda O'Grady and Meriam Ina Schroeder, encouraged SignWriters to write from the expressive perspective (Deaf Perspectives on SignWriting Video Series: How SignWriting Has Changed 1995; Sutton 2014). As Sutton explained to me in a 2010 interview, as a hearing person she was committed to allowing deaf users to drive the development of SW. And yet she initially objected to the switch to expressive writing, noting that some of the articulators encoded through SW (such as facial expressions) are not visible from the embodied perspective of the signer. However, O'Grady and Schroeder pointed out that they could *feel* all of their articulators,[5] even if they could not see them, an argument that persuaded other early deaf users (and Sutton). Today SignWriters around the world primarily take the expressive viewpoint as the default perspective from which to read and write SW texts and are taught to "write what they feel" (see Figure 4). Thus, in addition to framing signers as subjects, this shift ultimately came to ideologically highlight signers' subjective, multimodal experience of language use.

Of course, visual reception of actions and the felt experience of producing actions are interrelated processes. Indeed, skill in calibrating the proprioceptive (stimuli that track the positions and movements of the body) and interoceptive (stimuli that signal the status of the body's inner workings) sensations of producing signing with the visual targets provided by other signers is a vital part of learning to sign (at least for sighted signers). These processes are mutually reinforcing in that mastering the motions that characterize the production of particular signs can make them easier to parse visually when observing others producing them: "what our bodies know how to do is also what they are able to see" (Streeck 2015:422). Nevertheless, O'Grady and Schroeder, in advocating for a shift from receptive to expressive SignWriting, did not see this distinction as trivial. Rather, they argued that expressive writing signaled an ideological commitment to prioritizing the subjective experience of the signer, particularly in contrast to typically receptive recording and transcription techniques, which they felt objectified signers.

The framing of SW as a writing system that encodes a signer's felt experience has had additional consequences for how the act of reading someone else's expressively written text may be understood. When expressive SW is seen as ideally allowing the inner experience of a signer to be externalized, transduced into written text, and re-internalized by a reader, reading or writing from another person's perspec-

5 Note, however, that proprioceptive and interoceptive sensations are not necessarily available in the same way in everyone's sensory repertoires (e.g., some autistic people may orient to proprioceptive or interoceptive sensation differently than do neurotypical people).

tive can be ideologized as facilitating (if not guaranteeing) intersubjective experiential alignment and sympathy with that person. My concern in this chapter is not to demonstrate that expressive SW necessarily has this effect, but rather to explore how the framing of expressive SW as entextualizing and transmitting felt experience was taken up in pedagogical uses of SW in the Osnabrück classroom.

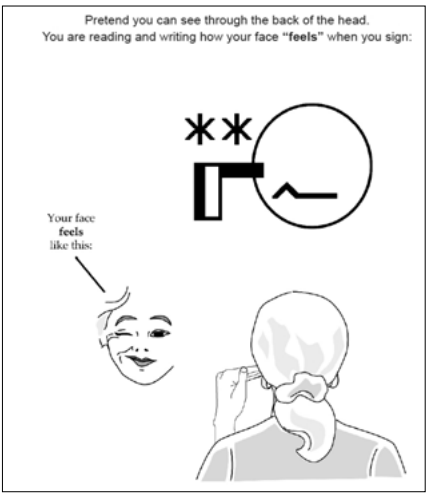

Figure 4. A page from a SW instructional manual (Sutton 2014)

4 SW literacy practices and intersomatic alignment in the classroom

The following examples of classroom interactions are drawn from my 2010 and 2012 fieldwork observing, participating in, and video-taping class sessions. Myself a hearing person, the languages in which I have the most comprehensive communicative competency (Blommaert and Backus 2011) are English and Nepali Sign Language. While I have less structural and pragmatic control of German and DGS, I had been intensively studying both leading up to and during my research and was able to follow and participate in lessons, particularly those aimed at the youngest students, whose control of these codes was also emerging. Moments in which I needed help to orient myself to the classroom activities, and my efforts to check my interpretations of video-recorded data with more fluent speakers and

signers, were useful as they often elicited explicit reflection on classroom interactions from participants.

But before turning to specific interactions, below I briefly situate readers with regard to the basic pedagogical strategies in this bilingual-bimodal classroom. As the introductory vignette suggests, classroom interactions involved a great deal of what is often termed "chaining" — "complex layering and mixing of communicative resources, including modalities" to create "bridges of links between the different language varieties and the different cultural meaning systems" at play in a given setting (Bagga-Gupta 2014:113; Humphries & MacDougall 1999). This process hinges on students' abilities to engage in resemiotization (processes yielding what is interpreted as "the same" or comparable signification across different semiotic systems or codes) and remodalization (processes realizing what is interpreted as "the same" or comparable signification across modalities) (e.g., Iedema 2003; Tapio 2014). (Again, I note that the boundaries between such systems and modalities are not given but are ideologically mediated.)

Thus, a frequent exercise involved providing students with a prompt in one code-mode configuration, and then asking them to translate/transpose it across other code or mode manifestations. For example, Wöhrmann might use DGS to prompt a student to use Signed German (*Lautsprachbegleitende Gebärden*), an invented code that mapped German lexical items and grammatical structures onto sign forms, to ask another student a question, with the student so addressed requested to answer back in spoken German. The shift from DGS to LBG was framed as a resemiotization (a change in codes) without a remodalization (a change in modes). The subsequent shift from LBG to spoken German was then framed as a remodalization without a resemiotization.

Such chaining practices also included writing, as in the opening example. Students might be given a SignWritten prompt in DGS and then asked to write down a referentially equivalent sentence in LGB using SW (changing code but not modality encoded or writing system), then write down a referentially equivalent sentence in German using SW (changing, from the original prompt, code and modality encoded, but not writing system), and finally in German using German orthography (changing, from the original prompt, code, modality encoded, and writing system).

The third step (writing spoken German using SW) was made possible by the ideological shift to framing SW as encoding expressive experience of language production rather than visual reception of signing. Indeed, in this classroom, SW is used to write not only DGS and LGB but also the movements of the lips, tongue, and palate involved in speaking German, not all of which are externally visible but all of which can be felt by the students. Incoming students typically first developed written literacy in SignWritten DGS, then in signed and spoken

German via SW (as its encoding of moments was understood to be more initially accessible than a German orthography based on sound contrasts). They built on these competencies, through chaining practices, to acquire written German literacies in German orthography. In past work (Hoffmann-Dilloway 2013), I argued that, in addition to facilitating the expansion of students' communicative repertoires, such SW-based literacy practices help students strategically blur or regiment perceptions of boundaries between the multiple codes they employ and the modalities through which they express them. In this chapter, however, I focus on how use of expressive SW in such practices was framed as a resource for highlighting common ground among the students' various sensory, as well as linguistic, repertoires.

As my first example shows, these goals are interrelated. In a 2012 lesson for students aged 12-15, Wöhrmann projected onto a large screen some photos of a Turkish city, in order to encourage Hazan, a student from a Turkish family, to sign a narrative about her memories of the city to the rest of the class. The class became sidetracked, however, when another student, Emil, signed in DGS a comment about the projector (see Figure 5). Wöhrmann, who often embedded requests that students translate across codes and modes into naturally occurring classroom conversations, asked Emil to spell the term for projector (in German "Beamer") using fingerspelling, a series of manual signs representing the letters of German orthography). Emil did so successfully.

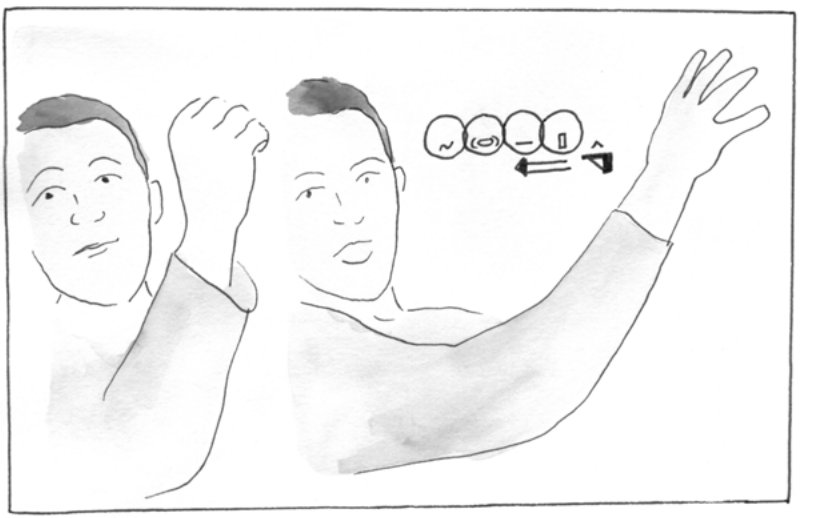

Figure 5. Emil signs BEAMER. I made this sketch from my viewpoint as a participant in the classroom. The sketch also includes a SW representation of Emil's sign, written from his embodied perspective. (I have been experimenting with graphic methods, incorporating sketches into both my fieldnotes and my practices for transcribing video-recorded data.)

However, Zeynep then indicated confusion at Emil's spelling. She performed the sign, which, like many DGS signs, included mouthings, lip movements that can be understood to resemble the act of pronouncing an associated German word (Baker and van den Bogaerde 2009) and in this case resembled the movements involved in pronouncing "Beamer". She then fingerspelled b-i-m-a, a German orthographic representation that she claimed mapped more clearly onto the performance of the mouth movements she associated with both the DGS sign and the German word (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Zeynep fingerspells b-i-m-a. This sketch was made from my viewpoint as a participant in the class, but includes SW representation of her fingerspelling written from her embodied origo.

In the midst of the subsequent discussion over the appropriate German orthographic spelling, Wöhrmann stepped over to the chalkboard and, using SW, wrote the mouth movements associated with saying, or signing, beamer or BEAMER. The students discussed his representation and agreed that the SW spelling represented the mouth movements they all felt when either signing or pronouncing the word. Only once this had been established did the class begin to discuss Emil's and Zeynep's divergent fingerspellings — ultimately determining that Emil was correct about the German orthographic spelling, but agreeing

that Zeynep's phonetic spelling was a reasonable German textualization of the mouth movements.

The fact that all three of the named codes (DGS, LBG, and German) at play in the classroom could be written with SW (and thus approached formally in terms of felt movement) meant that processes of remodalization did not complicate and were not conflated with processes of resemiotization. Thus, in this, as in many other classroom moments that I observed, the students treated expressive SW as the most likely means of objectifying and confirming a sensory and linguistic common ground from which to engage their different perceptions.

While this first example involved a classroom interaction that focused on aligning students' perceptions and experiences of language with the aim of achieving formal and referential specificity, another 2012 lesson, geared toward newer students aged 7–10, highlights the affective dimensions of co-engagement in languaging mediated by expressive SW. Wöhrmann, using SW, had written a DGS narrative on the board. In so doing, he wrote a sign as it was modified by context in the performance of the story, rather than in its citational form (i.e., phonologically realized as one-handed rather than two). The students were initially confused by this representation of the sign. However, because they had learned to read SW they were able to "feel it out" (decode how to perform it) despite not being sure about its referential meaning.

Before Wöhrmann provided clarification about the forms' phonological realization and reference, he stopped and waited, seeing that the students, having felt out the form, were repeating the sign over and over while giggling. As the students continued to laugh and play with the form independently of its meaning, they also watched one another perform the form, calibrating one another's affect laden performance of the SW text with their own experiencing of performing the movements. Wöhrmann allowed them to carry on in this way for some time, continuing the lesson only after they seemed to have had their fill (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. These sketches are drawn from my viewpoint as a participant in the class (my hand is visible in the first panel). First, the three students "feel out" a sign written on the blackboard. The second panel shows the students laughing and observing one another while playing with the sign's form. In the third panel they have stopped repeating the sign and their giggling is winding down.

I frequently saw classroom time devoted to allowing students to experiment with the "phenomenological potential" in such poetic play "to immerse interlocutors in an affective zone" of intimacy (Ochs 2012:151). Such classroom practices afforded a mutual orientation to the "feelings of doing" language (Harkness 2015:574), not just in terms of cultivating an ability to objectify the physical sensations of producing forms, but also the social dimensions of alignment to and through them.

In offering an example in which referential meaning is (briefly) set aside as a matter of focus, I do not downplay the importance of ensuring referential understanding among deaf students (who were not able to take such understanding for granted in oralist classrooms) (see Friedner (2016) for more on the importance of understanding in deaf epistemologies and ontologies). However, I suggest that a sense of the shared-ness of the experience of producing and perceiving language was also something that could not be taken for granted in the students' previous oralist classrooms and thus appeared to be relished and valued in this classroom.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to follow the example of scholars (e.g., Friedner 2015:4), who have encouraged researchers not to assume normative and uniform sensoriums among their research participants, but to attend to how the "social processes of trying to understand and make collective understanding happen" yield different kinds of "sensory culture." I have explored some strategies through which, in a particular classroom, participants recruit expressive SignWriting as a tool to generate and confirm a sense of intersubjective and intersomatic experience among students.

In addition to providing information about this particular ethnographic context, this chapter seeks to highlight the ways in which people must be socialized to culturally specific ways of conceiving of and performing intersubjectivity. Thus, it was necessary to attend to the broader explicit and implicit linguistic, media, and semiotic ideologies about the relationships between intersubjectivity, public-social signals, and phenomenological experience that underpinned both the belief that engagement with expressive SW texts facilitates the externalization and re-internalization of felt experience and the specific practices through which these ideologies were enacted. As Hanks (2013:266) notes, ethnographic understandings of intersubjectivity require "careful description of the corporeal, cognitive and affective dimensions of co-engagement." Research, such as the burgeoning literature on transmodal-translanguaging, which hopes to yield more just pedagogical practices, must take into account the ethnography of different dimensions of co-engagement in order to attend to the ways in which interactants' repertoires may be diverse not only in the kinds of semiotic resources they employ, but also in terms of their ways of understanding and performing communicatively mediated alignment between persons.

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