

https://dspace.org/

Influence of race and formality on Black SASL (South African Sign Language)

Mkhize, Simphiwe

2022
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/34172

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

This dissertation explores sociolinguistic variations in South Africa Sign Language (SASL) with a special focus on how a Black Deaf person in South Africa would change his signing depending on whom he is talking to, as well as the level of formality. Previous studies suggest that the racial background of the addressees as well as different registers would affect the language use of signers. However, little research has been done on the language variety based on race, especially Black South Africa Sign Language (Black SASL).

One Black Deaf male signer was chosen as a main participant to this study He was asked to give a formal presentation to an audience of mixed race. Then he was asked to have a one-on-one conversation with a Black participant, and a one-on-one conversation with a White participant. The topic for these three registers was the same (voting in South Africa). The participants in this study have never met before. Five linguistic features (mouth patterns, eye gaze, choice of handedness, size of signing space, and speed of signing) and four discourse features (turn-taking, repetitions, cohesion and conversation repairs) were used for the analysis. It was found that the Black signers did indeed change his way of signing depending on the race of the addressee as well as different contexts.

Various theories on register variation in sign language, as well as Hall (1975)'s notions of high and low-context cultures were used to explain such adaptation by the Black signer.