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South African Sign Language

School of Literature, Language and Media

University of the Witwatersrand



Defining Visual Vernacular in South African Sign Language (SASL): Exploration of how the visual vernacular form is represented in creative SASL

By

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South African Sign Language: MA Dissertation

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Disclaimer

I, Atiyah Asmal, student number 986668, as a Deaf student and researcher, would like to state the following regarding my masters research titled: “Defining visual vernacular in South African Sign Language (SASL): Exploration of how the visual vernacular form is represented in creative SASL”.

I was born Deaf and grew up having South African Sign Language (SASL) as my home language. SASL is a visual language, whose linguistic and discourse structures are very different from those of any written language. My written English is sufficient for daily communication, as well as studying for undergraduate and Honours courses. However, I struggled with writing for my masters dissertation as the level of academic English required at this level is much more advanced.

First, I tried to write my dissertation by myself. When I found it challenging, I decided to ask assistance from a sign language interpreter to edit my grammar (but not the content). Upon completion of my first draft, I gave my supervisor the edited draft, chapter by chapter, to which she tried to offer relevant feedback. This turned out to be still quite problematic, because very often it was not simply the grammar but the way I tried to express certain ideas and arguments that was confusing for a reader. I could clearly explain my ideas in SASL but not in written English.

In the end, my supervisor and I decided to work together in finalising my written essay in the form of face-to-face consultations. Wherever my explanation was not clear, my supervisor asked for clarity, and I explained in SASL. She would then edit my English accordingly.

Therefore, I declare that the academic English used in this dissertation is not entirely my own writing. I received tremendous assistance from interpreters and my supervisor.

Atiyah Asmal



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Abstract

This research explores a storytelling style called visual vernacular (VV), in creative South African Sign Language (SASL). VV is known as a highly visual, gestural and cinematic way of telling stories in sign language. However, the exact nature of VV in SASL has never been explored in depth. In 2018 Morgan and Kaneko created a collection of SASL poems and stories. I used this collection to identify elements of VV in SASL poetry.

I first explored the notion of VV to find out more about the essence of VV in relation to other closely related terms such as constructed action, visual narrative, classifiers, cinematic techniques, anthropomorphism and so on. There are two types of storytelling techniques in sign language: one is to *show* and the other is to *become* (Sutton-Spence and Kaneko, 2016). These two types correspond to the notions of 'genteel' (more linguistic) and 'vernacular' (more theatrical) art forms proposed by Pollitt (2014). Visual vernacular is key to understand the 'becoming' of sign language narratives and to investigate the 'vernacular' form of creative sign language.

Secondly, in order to identify how VV is actually used by SASL poets, I went through the 70 poems collected by Morgan and Kaneko (2018). I identified elements of VV in 25 poems. I selected nine poems (seven that contain VV and two that have no elements of VV) and explored their accompanying features, focusing on eye gazes, eye aperture, and mouth gestures. These features are related to the distinction between action-based VV and description-based VV used frequently in signed poems and stories (Asmal and Kaneko, 2020). I did not find any meaningful correlation between elements of VV and any of these non-manual features. The results suggest each performance of VV is unique and tied to the co-occurring elements (such as different themes, elements of action and description, anthropomorphism and so on) of a poem or story. Finally, I had an in-depth discussion with two groups of participants (one group consisting of experts in sign language poetry; the other group consisting of members of the Deaf community who do not have any particular knowledge of sign language poetry) regarding their views of VV

in the South African context. I found that while the term VV was not widely known in South Africa, Deaf people have been using the same/similar technique when they tell stories in SASL.

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First of all, I would like to say a massive thank you to my supervisor, Dr Michiko Kaneko: Thank you for all your patience and all the effort and time you put in, and all the knowledge you shared with me. You never give up on me, you always had time for me and were willing to listen and give me guidance and you always encouraged me to believe that I can do it. Your encouragement and your support will be forever appreciated.

A huge thank-you to the SASL Department at Wits University and Dr Ruth Morgan in particular for allowing me to use their footage of the poetry festival.

To my partner: Thank you for your moral support during my involvement in this study. You encouraged me to believe that I can achieve my goal. You always put my studies before you, and you made sure that I did not give up. You always said: "You can do it". My study would not have been possible without your support and love.

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Thank you, Dimakatso Motimele, for helping me with English editing and supporting me throughout my MA. You were not simply an editor but a friend who guided and advised me with your wisdom.

I would like to say huge thank you to Naomi Janse Van Vuuren for your support and advice. You always have time for me and guided me through my MA. Thank you for your friendship.

Thank you to my father and my late mother who never had access to formal education in literature, but they believe in me that I can achieve any goal. I believe they are proud of me for

having come this far. I am dedicating this research to my parents who raised me through SASL as our home language. They showed me that sign language is a beautiful language with which you can do anything you want to. They gave me insight and passion to the creative use of sign language which led me to study poetry.

Finally, I would like to thank Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) for their bursaries, which financially supported me throughout my MA.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"The poets who do not write… they make poetry out of handfuls of air"

John Lee Clark[1]

1.1 Background

"The signer zooms in from the sky to a stadium full of enthusiastic supporters waiting for a World Cup Rugby game to begin: a rocket is launched as people hold their breath and watch: an anthropomorphized book with a charming smile opens up and entices a reader to read it: all these are vividly portrayed in creative texts in South African Sign Language (SASL) using a visual storytelling method akin to cinematography" (Asmal and Kaneko, 2020: 131). This is how my co-author and I started our article on visual vernacular (VV), illustrating the rich imagination of a Deaf poet utilising a unique storytelling technique called VV.

This research explores how South African Deaf poets use this particular storytelling method, known as *visual vernacular* (VV) in their creative art sign. VV refers to elements of creative sign language that employ several visual and gestural techniques as well as theatrical mime (Lerner & Feigel, 2009). VV comprises a strong sense of body movement, dramatic facial expressions, iconic and mime-like elements as well as so-called cinematic features.

Before exploring this research topic further, I would like to first introduce myself and position myself within this research. Not only am a Deaf researcher but I also a sign language poet. I come from a Deaf family of three generations. My parents never had access to formal education or training in literature. However, when I was young, my late Deaf mother and aunt used to tell me stories in SASL. I was fascinated with the creative storytelling they shared with me, and I learnt a lot from my mother and aunt. As I grew up, I became involved in various workshops – for example, the one organised by the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA) called "Show of Hands" where I created a few stories and poems. Then I went to an

[1] Cited in Polansky (2013: 1)

organisation (NGO) called Sign Language Education Development (SLED) where they offered poetry workshops through which I grew to understand the world of sign language poetry. I became a poet myself. I was invited to perform at SHAW2 (Signing Hands Across the Water 2, a series of international poetry festivals) in 2014 with other international poets. I was invited to another international festival in 2016, called 'International Festival of Deaf Folklore' at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Florianópolis in Brazil. I presented a workshop of South African Sign Language poetry and met famous Deaf poets and artists. There, I saw many artists using VV for the first time. I was amazed by this storytelling technique and was surprised that I had never heard of it. I met a renowned Deaf artist/performer Giuseppe Giuranna at that festival when he performed his VV poetry. Since I had never heard of the term before, I asked him about VV. When he explained t it, I became even more curious about it. I wanted to find out if VV could be considered part of sign language poetry or if it was something on its own. I also wondered if South African Deaf people knew about VV.

By then, I had completed my Honours degree in SASL literature, so I had background as a researcher specialising in the creative use of sign language. The combination of my research background and the exposure to VV as a poet is the motivation for choosing VV as my Masters Research project. I aim to contribute to the analysis of SASL poetry and VV from a unique perspective of a Deaf researcher and poet. Most of the existing research on sign language poetry and VV was conducted by hearing researchers - it is essential to include more research conducted by Deaf researchers.

1.2 What is visual vernacular in sign language poetry?

The term 'Visual Vernacular' was coined by Bernard Bragg in the 1960s, but the practice of telling stories using cinematic techniques has been around for a long time in the Deaf communities. Bauman, Rose and Nelson (2006: 244) define VV as "a distinguishing feature of ASL that involves the use of film like cuts, such as shifting between characters and cutting to show different perspectives of a scene or action."

There seems to be a discrepancy between the widespread practice of such cinematic storytelling in the Deaf community and the awareness of VV as a term, especially in South

Africa. The term VV has been introduced to the Deaf communities in America, Brazil, England and France, but it is yet to be introduced to the Deaf community in South Africa. However, this does not necessarily mean that South African Deaf people do not have the tradition of telling stories visually, or that they cannot understand the concept of VV. Rather, it seems to me that simply the term "visual vernacular" is not known. In social events, I informally discussed this with a few people who were poets, storytellers and researchers in the South African Deaf community. Most of them had never heard or seen the word VV – but when I explained the concept of VV, they all understood what it referred to and could explain it using different terms such as constructed action, cinematic features, visual narrative and anthropomorphism. Following this, I was interested to know if VV widely in South African Sign Language poetry, and its relation to other terminologies that are more familiar to the South African Deaf community.

British Sign Language (BSL) linguist, Rachel Sutton-Spence, explains that signed poems and stories have long been recognised within the Deaf community and Deaf culture in many countries (Sutton-Spence, 2010). According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), poetry and storytelling in general is an important tool through which linguistic and cultural heritage is passed on from one generation to the next. This concept equally applies to the South African Deaf community, given that it is defined as a cultural and minority linguistic group. In particular, the use of sign language as a medium of artistic expression is crucial. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 11) mention that "sign language literature is the literature of deaf people in the language of the deaf." Visual vernacular is an important part of the literature of Deaf people because it is based on the visual gestural modality unique to sign language.

This study explores the concept of VV in South African Sign Language expressive art. The aim of this research is to describe VV in SASL poetry in the most appropriate manner based on empirical findings and observations as well as discussions with SASL poets. Before engaging with the empirical data, however, this study first discusses VV in relation to other notions such as constructed action, visual narrative, cinematographic techniques, classifiers[2] and the notion

[2] I am aware of the debate in sign linguistics regarding the appropriateness of the term 'classifier' given that sign language classifiers originate from an error in spoken language classifiers. I understand that there are other terms, such as depicting signs, which may be academically more appropriate. However, this is not a study to discuss

of "*tell*, *show* and *become"* (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016). Terminology used to refer to this phenomenon varies considerably, and it is often unclear how these term contribute to the meaning of VV.

The concept of VV is largely under researched, especially in South Africa. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) briefly mention visual vernacular in the South African context. More recently, my own work with my supervisor was published in the form of an article (Asmal and Kaneko 2020). This article is based on the preliminary findings from this MA project. To the best of my knowledge, these are the only two publications that mention VV in SASL literature. For this reason, the American and European models of visual vernacular are used as the initial guide to my research.

1.3 Research Aims

The overall aim of this research study is to explore how visual vernacular is constructed and expressed in SASL (South African Sign Language) poetry[3]. Although the term visual vernacular is widely used in America and Europe, its precise definition has never been established, especially in relation to other related terms. My first aim is to clarify the meaning of VV and specify its scope (i.e., what is considered to be VV, and what is not) in order to achieve transparency and consistency in the understanding of VV. Secondly, I identify and describe instances of VV in existing SASL poems and describe three non-manual features (eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions). Lastly, I discussed the nature of VV in creative SASL with other established Deaf poets.

1.4 Research questions and objectives

There are three research questions, each with its own objectives. The table below provides the detailed objectives for each of the following questions:

1) What is the essence of VV?

classifiers per se, and since the term 'classifier' is more widely known in the Deaf community, I have decided to use it.

[3] As Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) claim, there is no clear distinction between poems and prose in sign language. Often, the term "sign language poetry" is used to refer to all kinds of creative (artistic) sign language.

2) How is VV expressed in poetic SASL?

3) How do Deaf poets view VV in the South African context?

Research questions	Objectives
What is the essence of VV?	1) To explore existing studies about VV in American and European contexts and extract the essence of VV 2) To explore other related terms, such as constructed action, (CA) visual narrative, classifiers, cinematic techniques and anthropomorphism in relation to VV
How is VV expressed in poetic SASL?	1) To identify instances of visual vernacular in 70 poems/stories in SASL 2) To describe features of visual vernacular that have been identified in selected poems in relation to three non-manual features – eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions
How do Deaf poets view VV in the South African context?	1) To gain insight into the nature of VV in SASL poetry based on in-depth discussions with Deaf poets

Table 1-1

My first research question ("What is the essence of VV?") is going to be answered in my literature review. For this reason, my literature review has two functions: it provides background to the study but it also forms an active part of the research. My second research question is based on a large number of existing poems and stories in SASL. I will first go through 70 works to see how many of them exhibit the elements of VV. Then I will use a selection of poems to look closely at the linguistic features of VV, focusing on three non-manual features: eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions. These three features have been selected because based on my preliminary study (Asmal and Kaneko 2020) they seem to play an important role in expressing VV. The purpose of the last question is to gain insight into the knowledge and awareness of the current South African Deaf community about the notion of VV.

1.5 Research rationale

This study is the first of its kind in applying the model of VV to South African Sign Language. It aims to contribute to the body of research on creative sign language available in South Africa by

exploring the literary form of visual vernacular in relation to the South African Deaf community. While this research makes use of the American and European models of visual vernacular, the aim to establish if they are truly applicable to SASL poetry. This research also aims to contribute to the analysis of corpora of creative South African Sign Language, which not only will bridge the current gap in existing research but may also add value to the current material available to learners in Schools for Deaf learners Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, extensive research in the field of sign language poetry have been conducted mainly by hearing researchers. As a Deaf researcher, I aim to contribute to the analysis of SASL poetry from a truly Deaf perspective.

My background as a poet is also extremely important. The major issue with VV is that it has not often been the subject of formal *academic* research. As mentioned above, Deaf people seem to intuitively know what VV is and how to express it (even though they may not know the term 'VV'), but it has not been analysed by researchers. My position as a poet and a native signer of SASL, as well as a trained researcher, is ideal to conduct this research, as I can use both a poet's intuition and a researcher's analytical skills.

Another important motivation to conduct this research is that very little research has been conducted on VV. To the best of my knowledge, only a few academic works focused exclusively on VV Valentini 2017, BA thesis by Van Brandwijk 2018 and Asmal and Kaneko 2020). People have discussed VV, but no research so far has used a substantial number of poems/stories to explore what it is. I will use 70 poems to identify and describe VV. Thus, I hope my analysis will conduct significantly to the discussion of VV.

1.6 The structure of this dissertation

This chapter (Chapter 1) explains the aim and context of my research. In Chapter 2 (Literature Review), I explain various concepts which are relevant to VV, referring to existing studies for each concept. I also make connections between these concepts and VV. This chapter aims to answer my first research question, "What is the essence of VV?"

Chapter 3 presents methodologies that are used in my research in order to answer my second and third research questions which involve empirical data. I explain both methods of data collection as well as analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the results from the analysis of poems in SASL in terms of the co-occurring elements (i.e. the context in which VV typically emerges), as well as correlation with three non-manual features that accompany VV. This analysis will enable me to answer my second research question: "How is VV expressed in poetic SASL?" It is followed by Chapter 5, which discusses these findings in more depth, and also discusses the findings from the two workshops that I organised in order to answer my last question: "What are the views of Deaf poets toward VV in the South Africa context?"

The final chapter includes a brief conclusion to summarise my findings, discuss limitations of my research, and suggest future directions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The empirical establishment of visual vernacular as a literary tool is a source of contention amongst linguists and Deaf poets. This chapter will first introduce the background to sign language literature and review the linguistic foundation of visual vernacular. It will then examine related notions in sign language such as constructed action, gesture and mime, classifiers (also known as depicting signs), visual imagery and anthropomorphism, to understand VV as an overall umbrella term used as a unique literary device in sign language poetry.

The second part of this literature review will focus on explaining three linguistic features (eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth gesture) as they will be analysed in relation to VV in my project. Each of these features will be reviewed to provide an analytic framework towards empirical findings that support VV as a literary device.

2.2. Background to sign language literature

Poetry in sign language is defined by Klima and Bellugi (1979) as an artistic use of parameters in sign language (such as handshape, movement and location) in order to produce something aesthetic and creative. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), sign language poetry and storytelling form an integral part of Deaf culture, because cultural information is mostly passed “orally” from generation to generation. “Oral” here does not mean transmission through speech but refers to live, face-to-face performance with an audience, which is not recorded in a written format. This tradition has shifted significantly with the invention of video technology. Krentz (2006: 51) explains how filming has influenced ASL literature since the 1980s. Prior to this, all communication through ASL happened face-to-face. The development of filmography in the twentieth century enabled people to capture and preserve what had once seemed transitory. Film began to alter not only ASL, but also sign language literature around the world.

Sign language literature across different sign languages exhibits similar features due to the shared visual nature. Hernandez (2006) compares ASL and English and emphasises that ASL is three-dimensional while English is two-dimensional: ASL has movements while English is stationary in its text. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) state that sign language can directly represent a visual image, almost like creating visual cinematography. In sign language literature, a visual image is very important to ensure that the poetic message is effective and it needs to generate emotions in the audience. Skilled signers have the ability to fluently operate elements of their signing to make visual images clear.

When critically analysing the discourse type and features the Deaf community implement in its literature, one can identify a global trend to employ specific discourse features that make use of the visual and kinetic nature of sign language. We also must consider the shared history of the Deaf community as a marginalised community.

Historically, Deaf people have been oppressed and there has been little appreciation of their literary tradition. In recent years, the South African Deaf community has adopted an advocacy stance regarding their language. There has been a particular focus on the recognition of South African Sign Language as the 12th official language. Given this background, cultural preservation has become central in Deaf discourse. This comes with a realisation that SASL has a rich, undocumented archive of poetry and creative SASL, each of these showing an aspect of Deaf people's own moral and value system, humour and creative use of language. There is evidence that the South African Deaf community has its own folklore, even though there is little research on the literary history of SASL (see, for example, the work done by SLED to collect old recordings of SASL, as well as the fact that Wits University has a course titled "SASL Literature and Folklore"). The first workshop of SASL poetry was hosted by DeafSA called *Show of Hands*. The poems generated from this workshop were published as VHS videotapes which constituted the first archive of SASL poetry (Morgan and Kaneko, 2018).

In 2015, SASL as a home language subject was implemented in school for Deaf learners for the first time in the history of Deaf education in South Africa. This "new dawn for SASL" (Batchelor, 2016: 14) has positive implications for SASL literature as it points to the need to create materials

in SASL literature. Different stakeholders, especially SLED, has been playing an important role in creating SASL poems and stories for educational purposes and at the same time developing skilled poets and storytellers. Now there are well-known poets and storytellers like Abram Moyaha, Atiyah Asmal, Ismael Mansoor, Modiegi Njeyiyena, Troy Painino and Zoliswa Fleskisi. Those poets were mentored by SLED.

Research on SASL literature only started in the late 2010s (Asmal 2016, Asmal & Kaneko 2020, Baker 2017, Kaneko & Morgan 2019, Mesch & Kaneko 2017, Morgan & Kaneko 2017, 2018; Morgan & Meletse 2017). *Journal of African Studies* published a special cluster of four papers on SASL poetry in 2017. Morgan and Kaneko (2018) analysed 73 poems in SASL and provided the first overview of thematic features in SASL literature.

Date	**Event / Publication**
2000	DeafSA "Show of Hands"
2002	SLED was formed
2014	SHWA2 Poetry Festival
2015	SASL became a home language subject at deaf schools
2017-	Academic publications on SASL poetry (Baker 2017, Morgan & Kaneko 2017, 2018, Morgan & Meletse 2017, Kaneko & Morgan 2019, Asmal & Kaneko 2020)

Table 2-1

2.3. Visual vernacular and related concepts

In this section, I will explain the key concept of visual vernacular and relate it to other concepts such as *showing* and *becoming*, observer and character scale, classifiers, constructed action, and so on.

2.3.1. Visual Vernacular

In 1960, an American actor and founder of the National Theatre of the Deaf, Bernard Bragg coined the term visual vernacular which is based on cinematography. Bragg (1995: 20) mentions that visual vernacular (VV) is an artform in sign language, which has universal appeal to Deaf performers and audiences alike. VV can be defined in many ways, but this study refers to VV as a literary device drawing from various theatrical artforms. VV as an artform does not

involve lexical units, but relies on visual and three-dimensional filming techniques, natural movements of the human body, and so on. Bragg (1995) and Riggs (2003) list the instances of VV as:

- long shot
- fast/slow motion
- zoom, panoramic view
- role shift

Cook (2006) observes that VV allows the performer to stay in one place without moving and show different characters and camera angles. This technique gives clear visual illusion to the audience just like movies do. The performer can also alternate roles among different characters like reported speech in spoken language. However, VV as artform allows for a clearer shift in character roles compared to reported speech in spoken languages. It allows the performer to become characters as well as take on different roles. The performer goes beyond performing – s/he can be a narrator, several characters, an editor, a prop, a background at the same time, so the audience can experience the story world directly and be immersed in it (as if they are watching a movie)

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) are of the opinion that VV based on cinematography may serve as a framework in the analysis of sign language literature, because like film, sign language literary devices aim to construct visual and emotive impact. In fact, many sign language stories or poems - often created at Deaf schools - are based on what has been seen in movies. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 65) further describe how sign narrative and poems delivered in this visual vernacular style become a solo performance of a film in which the signer is the narrator, the characters, the scenery, as well as the camera and the editor. When the signer is acting as the camera, they produce images by means of different angles and movements referred to as cinematographic techniques.

There has been very little academic work that focuses entirely on VV. The BA thesis by Van Brandwijk (2018), which explores VV in Dutch Sign Language (NGT[4]) is one of the exceptions. She claims that VV is part of the art form repertoire of Deaf artists, and that it is usually considered as part of sign language poetry and not as a specific category on its own. Van Brandwijk (2018) explains that VV is part of sign language literature which consists of different categories such as poetry, stories with constraints (e.g. one handshape stories, in which signers must create a story using only one handshape), and narrative. She also makes distinctions between classifier stories and pantomime. She compares VV with pantomime – and claims that while not identical, they are very similar to each other.

Asmal and Kaneko (2020) propose a classification of VV into two types: action-based VV and description-based VV. Action-based VV involves a series of actions and characters (many of which include *anthropomorphised* non-human characters), and uses rich facial expressions, character's gaze, and *enacting mouth gestures*. (The terms in italics will be discussed below.) Description-based VV may not involve actions or characters but fulfil the essence of VV through cinematographic descriptions of people, objects, and places (Asmal & Kaneko, 2020).
As we can see, a precise definition of VV is elusive, but it roughly encompasses a movie-like description of a scene within a poem or story, often characterised by pantomimic (theatrical) use of body and rich facial expressions.

2.3.2. *Showing* and *Becoming*

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 53) explain three important ways to represent visual images in sign language, from which the signers can choose. They explain it using the example of someone reporting a car accident. First, they can *tell it* – they explain what they are talking about, identifying the people and objects in the scene by using the vocabulary of that language (i.e., established signs). For example, CAR and ACCIDENT in which the signer would sign CAR as steering wheel and ACCIDENT would describe how two entities bump each other. This utterance uses lexical items from the established lexicon and therefore is an example of 'telling'. This is

[4] Nederlandse Gebarentaal

close to the English sentence "[There was a] car accident" (Figure 2-1a). Another option, which is unique to sign language, is to *show it*, where the signer can more directly illustrate what they are talking about by using classifier constructions (which will be explained in depth in 2.3.2.1). As mentioned in the previous section, these constructions use several productive signs that show the shape, location, and movement of the referent. Instead of 'telling' that there was a car accident, the signer uses both hands in B-handshape, which are SASL classifiers that represent the two cars, and show directly how they crashed into each other (Figure 2-1b). The third option is to *become it* – the signer becomes the people involved in the event and directly acts what happened. In this sense it can be called constructed action. For example, the signer can take the role of the people who were involved in the accident and show what happened and their emotions through facial expressions and body movement (Figure 2-1c). Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 60) mention that "the visual image of the character is made stronger by showing audiences where the characters are within the story scene, what they look like and how they behave, especially by becoming the character through constructed action."



a) ACCIDENT b) CL: CARS-CLASH c) Becoming a person involved in a car accident

Figure 2-1

Out of these three – *telling*, *showing* and *becoming* - *show it* and *become it* are two primary literary devices in creative sign language (i.e., storytelling and poetry). On the one hand, the performer can 'step back' and *describe* a scene using classifiers (showing). This is also known as "transfer of situation" (Cuxac & Sallandre, 2007). This type of storytelling relies on conventionalised language (such as which handshape to choose). On the other hand, the performer can (literally) *embody* a character and 'tell' a story from his/her perspective (*becoming*). Different terms have been used to capture this phenomenon, such as role shift, constructed action (Padden 1986, Metzger 1995; Cormier et al., 2015). Transfer of person

(Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016), and so on. This requires fewer linguistic skills and is more theatrical and gestural.

Skilled signers are expected to combine both. For example, when the performer wants to represent a person walking, s/he has a choice – either s/he becomes the real-size person using their face and body, or s/he uses a classifier sign (1-handshape) to show how the person walks from a distant perspective – or combine both of these. See Figures 2-2a-2-2c below. Figure 2-2a shows how the signer 'becomes' a real-size person walking (with additional information about how she is feeling with a grumpy face), Figure 2-2b shows a classifier that represents a person walking using the 1-handshape; and Figure 2-2c is a combination of both.



a) Becoming a person b) CL: PERSON-WALKING c) PERSON-WALKING

Figure 2-2: Role shift and classifier signs

These two types of storytelling (*showing* and *becoming*) correspond to the notions of 'genteel' (more linguistic) and 'vernacular' (more theatrical) artform proposed by Pollitt (2014). Her argument is that there are two different types of Signart.

The 'genteel' form is language dominant, more readily comparable with poetry in English, and traditionally more highly regarded (Pollitt, 2014). Sign language poetry utilises artistic features which include anthropomorphism, repetition, handshape, symmetry, use of space, neologisms and ambiguity. Storytelling by 'showing' (the use of classifiers) relies on one's linguistic knowledge and can be seen as part of this genteel form.

In contrast, 'vernacular' art form is image dominant, more theatrical and gestural. It is less researched compared to 'genteel' form. According to Pollitt, visual vernacular is part of this vernacular form. She defines VV as:

> …an art form developed in the deaf community where the performer tells a story with high visual effects. Not in a specific sign language like ASL or BSL but using grammatical tools of sign languages such as role shift or personal transfer to make the story intelligible (2014:25).

In visual vernacular, there are many different styles of performing. Consistent features are that performers use their own bodies and mime-like gestures, as well as dramatic expressions to create a theatrical, physical art form.

Smith and Cormier (2014) use different terms to describe a similar idea in terms of signed narratives: character's perspective and observer's perspective. From character's perspective the narrative is told from the perspective of a real-size character and from observer's perspective the narrative is told from a distant perspective. Each perspective may or may not use constructed action. According to them, there are four types of 'scales': character scale with CA, character scale without CA, observer scale with CA and observer scale without CA. See Table below which illustrates the different types.

Type	Description	Example
Character scale with CA (CS-CA)	Signers use constructed action and the space surrounding them as a real-world space. They use a real-world scale and take the role of a real-size person.	A person starts a fire.
		The signer becomes a person and strikes a match
Observer scale without CA (OS-no CA)	Signers take an observer's perspective and describe what happen in the event through entity classifiers or lexical signs.	A dog walks past the tree
		The signer's one hand represents the tree. The other hand represents the dog
Observer scale with CA (OS-CA)	Signers take an observer's perspective (entity classifiers or lexical signs) and simultaneously use CA.	Pink Panther hides behind the tree while a man walks past him.
		The tree and the man are represented by entity classifiers. Pink Panther is represented by CA.
Character scale without CA (CS-no CA)	is when the signers take an observer' perspective using entity classifier in relation to their own body.	A person walks upstairs.
		The person is represented by the 1-handshape moving forward and upwards.

Table 2-2

1. Character scale with CA (CS-CA) is when the signers use constructed action and the space surrounding them as a real-world space. They use a real-world scale and take the role of

a real-size person. E.g., a person starts a fire (the signer becomes a person and strikes a match).

2. Character scale without CA (CS-no CA) is when the signers take an observer' perspective using entity classifier in relation to their own body. E.g.: The person walking upstairs.
3. Observer scale with CA (OS-CA) is when the signers simultaneously take an observer's perspective (entity classifiers or lexical signs) and use CA. E.g. Pink Panther hides behind the tree while a man walks past him (the tree and the man are represented by entity classifiers while Pink Panther is represented by CA)
4. Observer scale without CA (OS-no CA) when the signers take an observer's perspective and describe what happen in the event through entity classifiers or lexical signs. For example: A dog walks past the tree (one hand representing the tree and the other representing the dog)

For VV, we expect the performer to mainly use character scale with CA as it has strong theatrical elements of 'becoming', while it may be possible for VV to be accompanied by entity constructions (with more features of the observer scale).

Visual Imagery

Two main types

VISUAL IMAGERY	
SHOW	**BECOME**
Classifiers (depicting signs)	**Constructed action(CA)**
Characteristics – Language-based – "Genteel" form – Need signing skills to understand – Can learn	**Characteristics** – Theatrical /gestural – "Vernacular" form – Not much need of sign language knowledge – Natural – hard to 'teach'
Related concepts – Transfer of situation – Out of the story world – Observer perspective	**Related concepts** – Transfer of person, cinematic features, gesture, mime, anthropomorphism – In the story world – Character perspective

Table 2-3

Table 2-3 explains that there are two main types of visual storytelling in sign language: *showing* is first and *becoming* is second. *Showing* is more based on linguistic form where we follow sign language rules and grammar for which we need skills, knowledge and understanding of sign

language. This is important as sign language literature is the literature of Deaf people in their language (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016). While skilled poets are said to have the 'knack', it is possible to teach and learn these poetic rules. It also corresponds to observer perspective/scale in which the performer uses entity classifiers to describe a scene.

Becoming is closely related to constructed action, role shift and used mostly in theatrical, gestural "vernacular" form style which includes cinematic features, mime and gesture as well as anthropomorphism. These skills are hard to teach or learn because they do not follow explicit linguistic rules. This corresponds to character perspective/scale as it describes what characters do, what they look like, and how they feel in a direct manner.

In the next section, I will explain each of these concepts in more depth, and I will attempt to relate them to the notion of VV.

2.3.2.1. Classifiers

As seen earlier, classifiers are part of 'showing' a story. The term 'classifiers' refers to a productive system that depicts movement and location of a person or an object in space and their precise locative relationships. Classifier handshapes provide information about the class of the referent and the size and/or shape of the referent by means of specific handshapes (e.g., a 1-handshape is used to refer to a person or a pencil and a flat B-handshape is used to refer to a car). This choise of handshape may vary among sign languages. Classifiers are different from CA. While CA uses the entire body and face to become a person, classifiers use handshapes that represent people and objects, but together they form an important part of storytelling/poetry in sign language.

Slobin et al. (2003) explain that classifiers establish a link between the shape of the referent and the shape of the hand representing it. Sallandre (2007) and Cuxac and Sallandre (2007) identify different transfers that allow the signing to show, illustrate and demonstrate while telling (see Figure 2.3, for example). Poetry and storytelling in sign language often use classifiers to create a clear visual image. Slobin et al. (2003) note that classifiers allow signers to choose among

different perspectives and viewpoints which provide multiple means of encoding the same event or participants, which is useful for creative sign language.

Classifier handshapes are categorised as follows (Johnston & Schembri 2006):

- handling handshapes
  - hand acts as if handling, manipulating, interacting with object – e.g., holding a stick or using a pair of scissors.
- entity handshapes
  - hand *becomes* all or part of a referent - e.g., 1-handshape to represent a person, flat B-handshape to represent a book, a vehicle, a bent-V-handshape to represent a pair of legs or feet of animals, and so on.
- size and shape specifier handshape (SASS)
  - Provide descriptive (adjectival) information about the size and shape of an object by drawing its outlines with hands - e.g., a thin pipe or a thick tree trunk.

Classifiers can be observed in sign language storytelling in the following examples (Cuxac & Sallandre 2008):

1. Location and movement of the referent are two central types of information provided in stories and can be illustrated using entity classifiers. Example: PERSON-BE-AT, in which the downwards movement of the 1-handshape has the meaning of 'be at' as well as indicating that the referent is not moving. In PERSON-WALKING, the movement of the handshape indicates actual motion of the referent.
2. Stories often display adjectival descriptions using SASS classifiers – such as THICK-TREE, NARROW-RIVER – which describe a particular thickness or narrowness of tree and river. Facial expressions also play a crucial role in describing the size (such as puffed cheeks for THICK-TREE and sucked-in cheeks for NARROW-RIVER).
3. Entity classifiers also represent what Cuxac and Sallandre (2007) labels *transfer of situation*. It is important in storytelling as it describes a scene or situation that happens in

the story and clarifies the relationship among objects/characters involved in the scene (e.g., HORSE-JUMPS-OVER-FENCE – Figure 2.3a). This is in contrast to *transfer of person*, which mainly uses CA (see below) to represent the emotions through facial expression more directly (e.g., HORSE-FACE - Figure 2-3b).



Figure 2.3a HORSE-JUMP OVER-FENCE

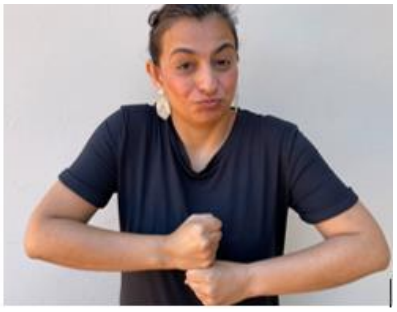


Figure 2.3b: HORSE FACE

While entity classifiers are commonly used to 'show' the situation or scene, handling classifiers are more gestural (e.g., opening a door, combing the hair, drinking – the above example of HORSE-RIDING in which the signer demonstrates how he holds the saddle) and are closer to 'becoming'.

2.3.2.2. Constructed action (CA)

Constructed action is another term that is used to represent 'becoming'. According to scholars (Padden, 1986; Metzger, 1995; Smith & Sevcikova, 2015), constructed action is a discourse feature that assists in the productive illustration of a narrative by means of a direct visual gestural sign system. Padden (1986) refers to constructed action as role shift in sign language – i.e., to 'become' someone to show their perspective.

CA has also been referred to as role playing, role shift, and taking on the role of a character, reported action, performatives, spatial mapping, referential shift in discourse and shift in perspective. Constructed action is based on the intimation of any real-world action by a signer. For example, in describing a woman putting on make-up, the signer often becomes the woman and illustrates exactly how she applies the make-up. Killion (2017) explains that in constructed

action the signer copies an action performed by another person and then expresses it in the same way. This has also been referred to as role task. The generally accepted term, however, is constructed action.

CA is used widely in sign language storytelling to represent a referent or a character's actions, utterances, thoughts, feelings and/or attitudes as the signer uses his/her face, head, body, hands, and/or other non-manual cues. Killion (2017) mentions that CA is not only used in storytelling, but also in poems and is even a feature in day-to-day conversational discourse.

Metzger (1995) describes the concept of reporting utterances, thought and actions to others through constructed action with limited use of actual lexical signs and limited classifier constructions. I will unpack Metzger's types of CA in detail below. These will include physical constructed action, non-manual constructed action and indirect constructed action.

According to Metzger (1995), *physical constructed action* shows a direct action where the actions are constructed entirely by the body and face of the signer with little or no use of lexical signs or classifiers. The signer fully becomes a person. This phenomenon is also described as a 'transfer of person' by Cuxac and Sallandre (2007), as explained in the section on classifiers). See Metzger's example below:

(1)__ gaze down __gaze to addressee ____ gaze left _____head shifts left to right
E.g. GRAB-HIT AWFUL MAN FIST-HIT-CHIN FALL DOWN FROM-CHAIR
"And the guy hauls off and hit him, it was terrible. Knocked the guy right of his chair"

In the above example, both GRAB –HITS and FIST- HIT-CHIN are used to "report" the actions that the signer has witnessed. During these constructions, the signer entirely *becomes* the guy as if he is hitting himself.

The second type identified by Metzger (1995) is *non-manual constructed action*. This refers to the representation of the action of the body and face with some signs or classifiers accompanying

the non-manual constructed action. It contains simultaneous direct and indirect actions. For example, a sign LOOK-UP, in which a signer will use a lexical sign LOOK-UP (as in ME LOOK-UP TREE) which will be accompanied by a head and gaze looking upward to the location of the tree.

Indirect constructed action, the third type identified by Metzger (1995), is where the narrative is primarily describing the event through lexical signs with limited use of body movement. The lexical signs are seen as comments of a character being described. For example, if a signer wants to say, "The girl is sad and she is moping", s/he can use a string of lexical signs (GIRL IX SAD MOPING – see Figure 2-4) to comment on the girl's emotional state.



Figure 2-4: "The girl is sad and she is moping", expressed using lexical signs (telling)

In storytelling, however, it is more common for the signer to *become* the girl who is moping and sad (Figure 2-5), therefore acting out the emotions without relying on lexical units ('Transfer of person' in Cuxac & Sallandre (2008)'s terms).

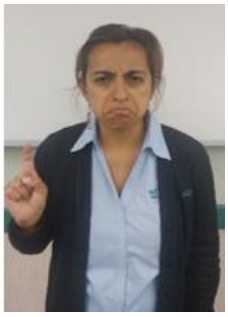


Figure 2-5: "The girl is sad, and she is moping", expressed using a constructed action (becoming)

As we can see that these three types of CA move in a continuum from 'becoming' (physical constructed action) to 'showing' (non-manual constructed action) and to 'telling' (indirect constructed action).

Smith and Sevcikova (2015) note that Metzger's (1995) description of CA is an umbrella term that encompasses all inferred actions, utterances, emotions and commentary as a discourse tool.

According Quer (2013: 12), "sign languages have been shown to share a strategy to mark reports and quotes known as role shift or role taking". Often such role shift fulfils the function of showing interaction with more than one character in sign language. Like spoken language reported speech, for example, a signer becomes one person who says she likes ice cream, and quickly becomes another person who disagrees and says she hates it. This can be done by shifting body posture, head position and eye gaze. As sign language stories often involve many characters, such function of role shift to differentiate more than one character is important.

CA is used to establish and describe two or more characters in one story. Most of the multiple characters are shown through successive representations of characters, going back and forth between them. For example, Figure 2-6 shows the hunter and the dog in one story, in which two different characters are shown by the same poet using CA, although it is important to note that, while the poet's hands are seen as the hunter's hands in HUNTER, his hands in DOG are not those of the dog but are understood as a classifier showing his ears.



HUNTER DOG

Figure 2-6: Two different characters (Peter Cook[5])

[5] This is a performance by Peter Cook based on Bernard Bragg's story of the Hunter and the Dog.

2.3.2.3. Essence of VV in relation to different terms

Cook (2019) associates VV with role shift (*becoming*) and clearly separates it from classifiers (showing). He claims that classifiers are part of the linguistic features of sign language, while VV is more theatrical in nature. However, he also states that this distinction is not dichotomous but forms a continuum. On one end, we have the use of a classifier by itself. On the other end, we have full VV without any classifiers. In between, a performer can choose to use both – classifier with varying degree of non-manual features making it more mime-like.

While there is no precise definition of VV, it is clear from the above explanation that VV is a form of becoming, through CA and other related techniques. It involves a more theatrical, gestural and vernacular style. Visual Vernacular is a form of art, rather than language, mostly performed by Deaf artists. It combines many different elements such as cinematic techniques, gesture and mime, anthropomorphism, together with strong and dramatic body movement and face expression, which makes it a very expressive storytelling style.

2.3.3. Related terms

In the following sections, I will discuss concepts that are primarily related to *becoming*: cinematographic techniques, gesture and mime and anthropomorphism.

2.3.3.1. Cinematographic techniques

First of all, *becoming* is closely associated with cinematographic techniques in sign language, which refer to the application of various film terminology to creative sign language. This is very different from spoken language narrative. Oliver Sacks refers to spoken language as using a "narrative structure" and to sign language as using a "cinematic structure" (https://www.handspeak.com/learn/index.php?id=182).

According to Bahan (2006), many ASL stories are based on film. Movies are very popular in Deaf communities around the world. Deaf people enjoy watching them and turn them into sign language stories. A Deaf signer chooses a specific film then retells exactly from the movie or make it his/her own story using cinematic techniques s/he learnt from the movie. Bahan (2006) mentions that action movies as a film genre are most popular amongst Deaf people, because it is most visual and does not require translation from spoken language.

According to Bahan (2006: 30), signers or performers often rely on intertextual information from motion pictures and implement filmographic techniques in their discourse which include: close-up, zoom in, zoom out, medium shots, and even combining different shots or angles, while telling stories. This is done to create dramatic effect in storytelling. For example, see Figure 2-7 below. In a sequence that can be translated as "The sea was quite soft and gentle. Then it starts to wave closer and closer with heavy waves", the performer (Giuseppe Giuranna) first describes the sea waves from different angles: from far, and facing away from the signer, towards the audience (Figure 2-7a) and close up and facing towards the signer, away from the audience (Figure 2-7b).



a) b)

Figure 2-7: Different descriptions of waves

There are several terms used in film analysis that can be applied to sign language art (which is also a moving art form). The basic terms are *camera*, *shot* and *editing*. VV makes use of these cinematographic techniques. When a performer uses features of VV in their stories or poems and applies cinematic techniques, it helps the audience to have a clear visual image of the real-world the artist is sketching. See Table 2-4 below for more detail (Hernandez, 2006).

VV makes use of these cinematographic techniques. When a performer uses features of VV in their stories or poems and applies cinematic techniques, it helps the audience to have a clear visual image of the real-world the artist is sketching.

Term	Function
camera	records everything in from different angles and positions
shot	records different scenes or pictures in a segment on a strip of film
editing	adds or removes certain effects after the movie is shot to make the story more appealing

Table 2-4

2.3.3.2. Gesture and mime

In sign language story-telling, the use of gesture and mime as artform can be observed (Crouch 2009). This section explores the concept of gesture in sign languages as a poetic or literary device and investigates its application to VV.

Gestures can generally be understood as movements of the body, hands and arms, with or without speech, that express an idea, emotion, attitude or intent, without following linguistic rules. Common examples are clapping the hands, shrugging the shoulders and shaking the head. Crouch (2009) claims that gesture used with spoken language is useful in storytelling, which is distinct from reading a story where we would not expect the use of gesture. Gestural actions involve the use of the fingers, hands and limbs (waving and pointing), facial features (blowing a kiss, a grimace) and body movements (bouncing up and down). Gestures enhance meaning for both speaker and listener. They also help define the unique interaction style of each person when telling the story.

McNeil (1992) introduces Kendon's continuum which explains different categories of gestures based on reliance on speech, ranging from gesticulation (which must be accompanied by speech) to sign language (which is completely independent of spoken language). *Gesticulation* (also known as co=speech gestures) is spontaneous gestures that accompany speech with very little grammar and also can convey meaning in particular contexts. Gesticulation can be iconic, beats and pointing gestures. McNeil (1992) states that gestures can also be metaphorical, representing abstract concepts and creating a rich imagination in the mind of the speaker. *Language-like gesture* is similar to gesticulation except that it does not require speech. Instead, it 'fills in' an

empty slot in speech. Neither gesticulation nor language-like gesture is shared by the community in a highly standardised way (Kendon 1995). *Pantomimes* involve imitating real-life activities with objects and people being physically present and it is said to be similar to sign language because they use 'empty-handed gestures' (handling classifiers). It also uses strong facial expressions which is important in showing both personalities and emotional states. Often mime artists must tell stories by acting out real time, a feature shared by Deaf storytellers (Sutton-Spence & Boyes Braem 2013). *Emblems* are conventionalised gestures often using a specific handshape, location, and movement linked to a specific meaning - for example waving (meaning 'hi' or 'bye') or thumb-up gesture (often meaning 'good' in many cultures). It also can replace speech. Finally, *sign language* is composed of linguistic forms and grammar, which are totally independent of spoken language, which is standardised in each signing community.

Many gestures are cross-cultural and overcome the barrier created by different (spoken) languages or any formal communication systems. However, it is also important to remember that some gestures (such as emblems) are culture specific (Kendon, 1995).

It is also important to note that gesture per se is not necessarily an artform and can rather be classified as an alternative communication tool. However, gesture can be used as part of artistic sign language in terms of effective use of role shift and facial expressions. It therefore makes it worthwhile to consider how VV has either intentionally or unintentionally drawn from gestural elements.

As seen above mime is one type of gesture (McNeil, 1992). The main difference between gesture and mime is that mime is often seen as a theatrical artform as opposed to gesture, which is mostly used as ways and means to augment communication.

The more specific definition of mime in art is the theatrical technique of suggesting action, character roles, or emotion without words, by using only gesture, exaggerated facial expression, and dramatized movement. Mime can be explained as a dramatized modelling of the real-world through overt theatrical techniques. It is important to note that, in this definition, mime is not a communication system or a tool. This study defines mime as an artform that VV borrows to enhance the artistry associated with VV. Mime can also be explained as the acting-out of

emotion, as comic relief or social commentary (Crouch, 2009). Mime as artform has no grammar and no system, which makes it a visual representation of the real-world accessible to all and may be a tool to cross language barriers and cultural barriers.

Some studies investigate possible parallels that may be drawn between VV in sign language and mime as a visual-gestural artform, both of which implement features such as role shift, dramatic movement and facial expressions. Sutton-Spence and Boyes Braem (2013) conduct a study on the comparison of sign language poets and mime artists, as well as attempting to understand what mime is and its features. Their study shows that sign language poets rely on conventionalized sign language vocabulary and classifiers - i.e., "words" - to express and present a message and thus is clearly very different from mime. At the same time, sign language poets also show the elements of 'mime' through 'becoming'. The mime is not "acting without words but it is acting beyond words" (Sutton-Spence & Boyes Braem, 2013: 248). They also state:

> To the extent that sign language poets sometime appear to have moved beyond the conventional vocabulary of their language, we may say they are also often not using the "words" of their language. In this sense, it would seem that these definitions of mime can thus encompass elements of what sign language poets also produce. (Sutton-Spence & Boyes Braem, 2013: 249).

It is clear from the above that mime artists only have one way of performing (by doing, becoming) while Deaf poets/performers can choose from different options: *tell* (established signs), *show* (classifiers) and *become* (CA, gesture and mime).

Although mime is not a language system, it is worthwhile to investigate its application to VV as a visual artform in sign language. Mime is especially useful in personification/ anthropomorphism commonly used in VV (becoming nonhuman referents), which I will explain in the next section.

2.3.3.3. Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism can be defined as 'giving a non-human form, human characteristics of human behaviour' (Gregersdotter & Hållén, 2015). Anthropomorphism is when the narrator/poet takes on the attributes of an animal or an object. Sign language poetry often uses anthropomorphism to 'embody' nonhuman attributes. Although anthropomorphism is a separate poetic tool focusing on the representation of non-humans, it contains the elements of 'becoming' that are linked to VV.

According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), nonhuman characters in sign language poetry or storytelling reveal three levels of anthropomorphism:

- descriptive
- pre-linguistic
- linguistic

The descriptive level represents the basic expression and behavior of non-humans (usually animals) which do not go beyond what we see in the real life. For example, a dog looking for a cat or for food. At the pre-linguistic level, a non-human character starts to reveal elementary levels of personality where the poet often looks deep into their thoughts or feelings. They sense pain, cold, heat and other sensations as well as emotions. For example, a fish is feeling lonely as it does not have any friends. The last level is the linguistic level where non-humans are given the same level of intelligence as humans and have the ability to speak/sign. This allows them to interact with other characters (both human and non-human) in the story. For example, we have a signing fish, or a signing bear, as a character in a story (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016).

Anthropomorphism is one common style of artistic sign language that often utilises VV. In VV the signer uses the body to give a clear visually produced description of the story. The signer will completely transfer into a non-human character (becoming). VV is involved when the signer anthropomorphises referents at pre-linguistic level and linguistic level, where actions and emotions are clearly shown.

2.3.3.4. Summary of the essence of VV

As we have seen, methods of storytelling can be divided into two main types: that is, *showing* and *becoming.* It is clear that VV fits into the mould of *becoming* because when the performer uses VV as a "vernacular" form, they use CA (role shift), a theatrical pantomimic performance style. I agree with Cook (2019) who makes a distinction between classifiers and VV. While classifiers are more linguistically established, VV is more of becoming a character and describing a scene using cinematic features. It also supports the view of Bernard Bragg who claims that VV is more of a theatrical method, rather than relying on linguistic knowledge of sign language. The performer would want the audience to 'see' and 'feel' the world of their story directly, rather than having to explain what is happening using established vocabulary. This is in accordance with Pollitt (2014) who asserts that Signart consists more of linguistic "genteel" form and less of linguistic "vernacular' form. As the name suggests, Visual Vernacular matches her notion of a "vernacular" form style.

2.4. Non- manual features

Having grasped the essence of VV, the rest of the literature review will focus on three non-manual features that this research will look at: eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions. They all form part of facial expressions which are important in creative sign language. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 194) "signing storytellers and performers, like actors can show emotional differences through facial expression". Facial expression is an important part of sign language literature. Facial expressions shows emotions and use different facial features such as eye gaze, squinting eye aperture, and mouth actions which can be observed in sign language literature. This allows the audience to identify different characters very easily.

2.4.1. Eye Gaze

Eye gaze refers to the direction and the length of one's look. Signers use eye gaze to convey both linguistic and non-linguistic features. It also provides important information in artistic sign

language (Kaneko & Mesch, 2013). Eye gaze often shows different degree and type of involvement of a poet into the story world, but it varies according to the style of the poet. For example, some poets prefer eye contact with the audience throughout the poem and other poets prefer not to. Eye gaze often shows modes of narration, i.e., who is telling the story (narrative point of view and narrative voice). Eye gaze can be seen as useful in VV as it contributes to the clarification of different characters' roles as well as showing different angles of shots. Kaneko & Mesch (2013) propose different types of eye gaze in creative sign language based on different gaze directions and functions as well as the relationship with manual signs. They identify the following types of gaze: gaze to audience, character's gaze and gaze to hand. I will also discuss referential use of eye gaze, identified by Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999).

Gaze to audience is when the poet signs and looks straight into the camera or at a live audience. Dorothy Miles, a British Deaf poet, emphasises the importance of maintaining eye contact with the audience (Kaneko & Mesch, 2013). The performer often looks at the audience in order to build and maintain a relationship with them and also to draw the audience's attention into the story world and make the story more effective.

Secondly, *character's gaze* refers to seeing the story world through the eyes of a character. The signer takes on the role of a character, and his/her eyes become those of that character which means the poet becomes the character and tells the story through the character's eyes (i.e., character perspective). For example, the poet anthropomorphises and becomes a house. Kaneko and Mesch (2013) mention that gaze displays the character's personality more directly, so that the performer can create strong empathy with an audience.

Gaze to hand, also known as "spotlight gaze" is identified when the gaze follows the signer's hand while articulating a manual sign (Kaneko and Mesch 2013). The performer wants his/her story to be more directly presented towards the audience by highlighting the signs themselves. For example, when a rose petal is falling down the poet looks at his/her hand moving down slowly. Another example is when the hand shows how a plane moves, the gaze follows the manual sign, highlighting its movement (Kaneko and Mesch 2013).

Apart from the above three gaze patterns adapted from Kaneko and Mesch (2013), I also want to explain *referential use of eye gaze*. (Sutton-Spence and Woll, 1999). It follows the location and movement of referents in space, but the referent may not be explicitly stated using hands. For example, after the expression CAR CL: CAR-MOVE-FORWARD, the signer looks at an invisible car passing by.

Table 2-5 below describes each gaze pattern with an example. There is no established transcription conventions that allocates symbols to each gaze type, but I added them to use later in my transcription.

Symbol	**Gaze type**	**Definition**	**Example**
A	Gaze to audience:	Gaze can be direct to the audience (or to camera); the performer looks straight to the audience.	
C	Character Gaze	The performer becomes the character which means it tells the story through the character's eyes.	
H	gaze on hand	The gaze is following the hands	
R	referential gaze type	To point to a referent or trace its movement	

Table 2-5: Eye Gaze

2.4.2. Eye aperture

Eye aperture involves the degree of opening of the eye (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016). It shows the size of the eyes which provides additional information. *Squint* is used to indicate size and shape of the object. For example, a small or thin object is accompanied by a squint. Squint can also be used to show there are many of something. For example, when the poet describes a row of houses s/he can use a squint. Squint also shows emotions, such as feeling sad or depressed. *Wide eyes* can indicate the size of a large object or emphasise a particular feeling (surprise, shock or anger)**.** *Closed eyes* (closed for a longer duration than a blink) cuts off the performer from the audience, but it can indicate a strong emotion which the performer wants the audience to experience directly. *Blinking* can be used poetically to add extra effect, such as blinking with abnormal frequency to create busy impression or lack of blinking shows intensity. Another example can be that blinking creates an auditory image (sounds of something popping or camera shutters). Finally, eye aperture can be *normal* when the eyes are open for normal width. Table 2-6 below shows each type of eye aperture with examples.

Symbol	**Name**	**Definition**	**Example**
S	Squint eye	Squint eyes can symbolise a small object or emotions of a character.	
W	Wide eyes	Wide eyes show various emotions or it could indicate a bigger size object	

C	Closed eyes	Closed eyes can indicate a pause which emphasises a particular sign or moment	
B	[repeated] blinks	When poet blinks repeatedly to emphasise	
N	Normal	When there is no notable change of eye aperture	

Table 2-6: Eye aperture

2.4.3. Mouth actions

Mouth actions may accompany manual signs to provide an extra layer of meaning. There are two main main types of mouth actions: mouthing and mouth gestures (Boyes Braem & Sutton-Spence, 2001; Crasborn et al., 2008; Schermer, 1990). Mouthing is borrowed from the spoken language that is associated with the sign. For example, the signer may use the English word “dog” with the sign ‘DOG’. Mouth gestures are not linked to spoken language but originate from sign language to provide additional information visually (such as puffed cheeks representing something big). Crasborn et al. (2008) provide a finer framework which categorises mouth action into five types (mouthing and four types of mouth gestures), which will be used in this research.

Mouth gestures often show a vivid sensory image through different visual appearances such as open or closed mouth, tense or relaxed mouth, or puffed or sucked-in cheeks. Mouth gestures

play an important role in creative language in which the basic information is carried by the hands but the mouth provides a rich sensory image to make the stories more interesting.

Crasborn et al. (2008) identify four types of mouth gestures: E-type, A-type, W-type and 4-type. I will explain each of these types below.

Echo mouth actions (E-type) refer to the mouth that 'echoes' the movement of the manual articulators. It happens almost automatically due to our physiology, and the mouth action itself does not carry an additional or independent meaning (although more recently, scholars such as Johnston et al (2016) claim that this type of mouth feature does carry meaning). For example, the mouth action "pom" accompanies the hand that opens and closes quickly in signs like LIGHT-TURNED-OFF. Another example is the mouth action 'pow' to accompany the manual sign CL: CAR-MOVES-FAST-AND-DISAPPEARS. The intense air coming out of the mouth indicates the fast speed of the car.

Adverbial mouth actions (A-type) provide adjectival and adverbial information in addition to information specified by the manual part of the sign. For example, the sign PLANE-LAND can be accompanied with a tense mouth action to add the meaning of "The plane landed too fast or too roughly".

Whole face mouth actions (W-type) are identified when the mouth appears to be part of the whole facial expression, often providing a full meaning with a whole face. The mouth cannot be separated from the rest of the face. For example, the whole face shows the emotion of surprise, and an open mouth contributes to it. In storytelling, the signer uses the whole face mouth action to show different emotions of characters. For example, being happy or sad.

Enacting mouth actions (also called mouth for mouth or 4-type) occur when the mouth performs a non-linguistic action, such as chewing, biting or screaming. It refers to the action of the mouth itself. For example, the signer's mouth enacts the act of singing.

Mouthing (M-type), once again, is to move the mouth to almost pronounce a corresponding word in spoken language. In other words, the signer borrows a word from spoken language that

matches the meaning of the manual sign and mouths this word. While mouthing more often accompanies established signs in day-to-day signing, according to Sutton- Spence and Kaneko (2016), it can also play a part in creative sign language.

Kaneko (2020) proposes an additional type of mouth gesture - onomatopoeic mouth gesture (O-type) - in creative sign language. According to Kaneko "the onomatopoeic mouth gestures evoke a vivid sensory image associated with referents (sound, vision, touch) through modifying the aperture or the shape of the mouth and different ways of releasing the air from the mouth" (2020: 467). A Deaf signer can copy the sound and describe it as a visual image. Onomatopoeic mouth action effectively illustrates sounds and other sensory images. Kaneko (2020) mentions that the performer allows the audience to experience the same sensory events, adding realism and authenticity to creative language.

Table 2-7 below summarises mouth actions with examples. The symbols are taken from Crasborn et al. (2008) and Kaneko (2020).

Symbol	name	Definition	Example
E- Type	Echo	Echo or Empty mouth actions copy the manual movement. E.g., when hands move in slow and prolonged manner, air comes out of the mouth continuously	
A-type	Adverbial	Mouth actions provide adjectival or adverbial information. E.g., The plane landed very fast and in an intense manner.	
W- type	Whole face	The mouth appears to be part of the whole facial expression providing meaning as a whole (e.g., surprise, shock, happiness, etc.)	

4-type	Enacting	Mouth-for-mouth: the mouth performs an enacting action, such as chewing, screaming or eating. E.g., the image on the right shows that someone is singing.	
M- type	Mouthing	Mouthing borrows the mouth movement from the corresponding words in spoken language. E.g.,the sign WISE accompanied by the mouthing 'wise'	
O-type	Onomatopoeia	Mouth gesture that describes a sensory image such as sound, vison and touch (Kaneko 2020) E.g., the picture on the right shows the sound 'pom' that is produced with can-making.	

Table 2-7: Mouth Actions

In their preliminary findings (Asmal & Kaneko, 2020) all four types of mouth gestures (A,4, E and W) are used in VV. Due to VV involving 'becoming' and 'enacting' characters, it is not surprising that VV performers often use 4-type (mouth for mouth) and W-type (mouth as part of the whole face). A-type (adverbial mouth actions) and E-type (echo mouth actions) are also useful as it allows the performer to set up the scene by describing people and objects in both action-based and description-based VV. Especially echo mouth gestures show cinematographic descriptions of the scene which is important in VV. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4 and 5.

2.5 Summary

As mentioned in the first half of this chapter, there are two very different approaches to storytelling: to *show* (making use of linguistic constructions of classifiers) and *become* (enacting

through constructed action). In artistic signing, these correspond to the different types of artform proposed by Pollitt (2014) which are the "genteel" form (relying on linguistic and poetic rules) and 'vernacular' form (spontaneous, mime-like performance, without relying on linguistic knowledge). VV is part of the latter – the vernacular artform that makes use of *becoming*. I have explored features of VV through the concepts of constructed action (role shift), cinematic features, gesture, mime and anthropomorphism, through which a performer shares their stories by providing direct sketches of people and scenes.

The second half of this chapter explored the three non-manual features that I will explore in my data. I chose to analyse these features because I believe that they may correlate with VV (in other words, they may aid in defining or clarifying what VV encompasses). For example, I expect that VV makes less use of gaze to the audience compared to non-VV signing as performers are more 'enacting' than 'explaining' their story world to the audience. I also expect VV to make use of a wider range of eye aperture as it adds to the dramatic expressions that are characteristic to VV. For mouth actions, I expect VV would use very little mouthing as VV is a highly visual performance, not reliant on established signs that are more likely to be accompanied by mouthing. As pointed out by Asmal and Kaneko (2020), VV would use more W-type and 4-type mouth gestures as the performers 'become' characters and show their emotions more directly. VV may use onomatopoeic gestures to show sensory images which represent sound, vision and touch, as they are also important in cinematographic representations of VV.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3. 1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology I used in order to answer my three research questions:

1. What is the essence of VV?
2. How is VV expressed in poetic SASL?
3. How do Deaf poets view VV in the South African context?

To answer the first question, I collated and reviewed existing research on VV in Chapter 2. I used the existing research to identify certain related features, upon which I expanded in the literature review. Such existing research per se does not refer to VV – for example, Crasborn et al. (2008) do not mention VV. Yet I managed to extensively relate them to the notion of VV. My conclusion was that VV is an umbrella term that includes several creative performative features, including cinematic features, constructed action, classifiers, mime, and so on.

In this chapter, I will explain the methodology used to answer the second and third questions. In order to answer the second question, I collected 70 existing poems in SASL, which I will explain below in 3.2. For the third question, I organized two workshops with the South African community, which will be explained in 3.3.

3.2 Methodology for research question (2)

3.2.1 Collection of poems

In order to answer the second question, I collected 70 existing poems in SASL that are available in the public domain: such as DVDSs and websites by Shush Productions and Deaf African Web TV which provided the footage of the sign poetry festival in 2014 called SHAW (*Signing Hands Across the Water).* Please see Appendix A for the names of the poets and the titles.

I firstly focused on identifying instances of visual vernacular (VV) in these 70 poems. I created an Excel spreadsheet to capture all the poems I collected, in terms of their titles, performers, whether they contain VV or not, and some notable linguistic and poetic features (See Appendix A).

I have viewed these poems in depth and determined whether they contained elements of VV or not. This was an extremely difficult task. As I showed in Chapter 2, there is no single (or a set) of features that can define VV. VV may contain classifiers or may not, it may contain anthropomorphism or not, and so on. Rather, as Peter Cook (2006) said, VV is a performative style that provides a clear visual illusion like movies. As a poet, I intuitively know when I see a style that is VV, which is clearly different from a poetic style or narrative style.

A visual Vernacular style heavily depends on cinematic features (its impact comes from a strong visual imagery, rather than a well-crafted plot or the use of figurative language), whereas poetry uses more literary devices such as repetition, symmetry, handshape, and so on, and a narrative style relies on a clear structure (plot, repetition of events, etc.) and clear interaction between characters through role shift.

Apart from using my intuition and experience as a poet to guide me through the process of identifying VV, I also used Polit (2014) framework of Signart, which, as explained in my literature review, distinguishes 'genteel' form (more linguistic art form – which corresponds to poetic and narrative styles) and 'vernacular' (more visual and gestural – corresponds to VV style). I also relied on Bragg (1995)'s description of VV in terms of cinematography. Asmal & Kaneko (2020)'s explanation of description-based VV and action-based VV also assisted me in determining whether a poem/element can be seen as VV.

I discovered that 25 out of 70 poems contained VV. However, not all of these 25 poems contain 'full' VV. Sixteen poems contain VV fully (i.e., the entire poem is conveyed through VV); nine only have partial VV (i.e., there are sequences during which no VV was used) and 50 poems contain no VV at all. In other words, I identified three groups of poems – poems with full VV (16 poems) poems with partial VV (nine poems, and poems with no VV (50 poems). Figure 3-1 below illustrates this.

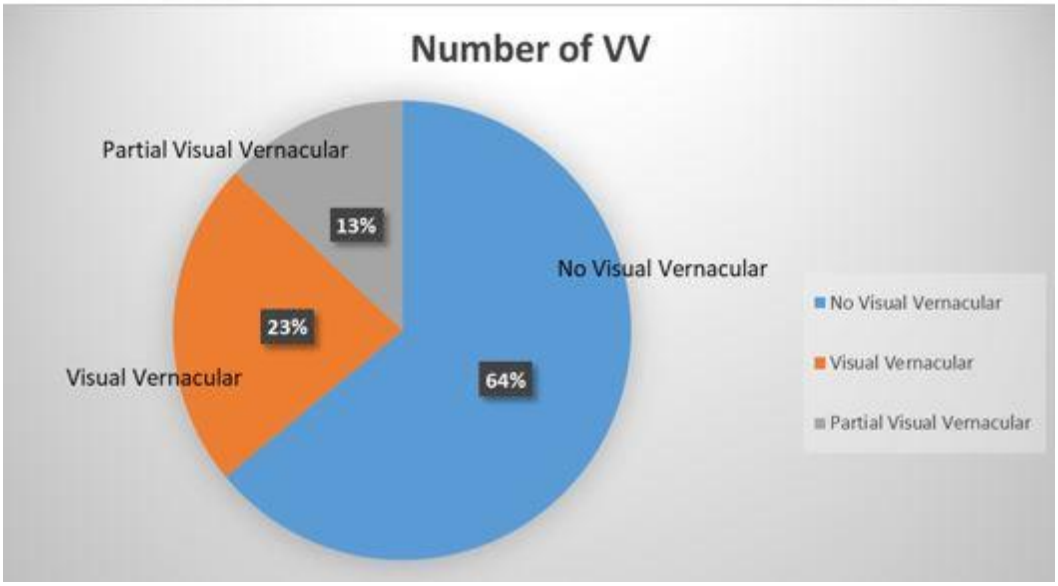


Figure 3-1: Proportion of visual vernacular in 70 SASL poems

Out of these poems, I decided to focus on nine poems. This is because the scope of this study did not allow for more poems to be analysed. I chose poems from each group – five poems that contain full VV, two partial VV, and two poems that do not contain any VV (for comparative purposes). These nine poems come from three established SASL poets/storytellers: myself (Atiyah Asmal), Troy Paimio, a white Deaf man in his 50s and Modiegi Njeyiyana, a black Deaf woman in her 40s. All of us are known as skilled and experienced performers in the SA Deaf community.

Table 3-1 introduces these nine poems. Translations of poems from SASL to English can be found in Appendix B. Four of Troy's poems and three of Modiegi's show the VV skills of the poets[6]. One of Modiegi's poems as well as one by myself were chosen as examples of poems which do not contain VV. Figure 3-1 below shows the proportion of VV in each poem. The proportion of VV for Atiyah Asmal's *For my Aunt* and Modiegi Njeyiyena's *Days of Weeks* is zero as they do not contain VV. The five poems which have full VV, and obviously, reached 100%. The other two poems (Modiegi Njeyiyana *Soweto* and *The Book*) use partial VV around 70% to 88%.

	Name of the performer	**Title of the poem/story**	**Summary**	**VV**
1.	Atiyah Asmal	*For My Aunt*	The story of the bond between the poet and her aunt, the poet represented as a bee and a rose.	None
2.	Modiegi Njeyiyena	*Days Of Weeks*	The poet describing what each day has been doing.	None
3.	Modiegi Njeyiyena	*Soweto*	The everyday life in a township seen through the eyes of Soweto.	Partial
4.	Modiegi Njeyiyena	*The Book*	The poet become a book in a library which is read and mistreated by readers.	Partial
5.	Modiegi Njeyiyena	*Trucking*	A truck driver gets angry with drivers of smaller cars on the road.	Full
6.	Troy Painino	*A Moment*	The poet is doing the actions (getting dressed formally, carrying a case, entering a room with a crowd, etc.) without revealing what he is doing – at the end, it turns out that he is a violinist at a concert hall.	Full
7.	Troy Painino	*Blast Off*	Rocket taking off being watched by a crowd.	Full
8.	Troy Painino	*Canned*	Shows the step-by-step process of manufacturing tins from liquid metal to transporting them away.	Full
9.	Troy Painino	*World Cup Rugby*	1995 World Rugby Cup in South Africa, which describes crowds in the stadium, a band playing the music, the team coming onto the field, singing the anthem, referee blowing whistles, kick-off	Full

Table 3-1: The list of the poems and their synopsis

[6] I understand that in formal academic writing it is the norm to refer to poets using their surnames. However, since both the poets and myself belong to the same Deaf community (and I know all of them in person), it would be strange to refer to them by surnames. Following our Deaf cultural norms, I decided to use their first names.

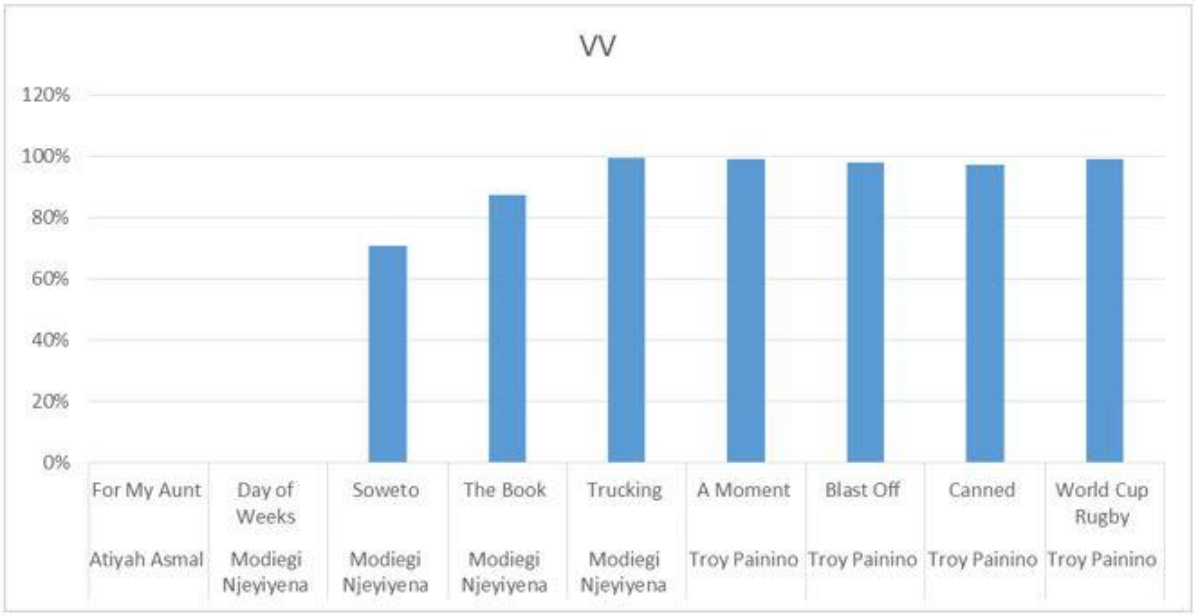


Figure 3-2: Proportion of VV in the nine poems

3.2.2 Transcription

I have transcribed these nine poems using ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator), software that is used to annotate linguistic data in video format, which is suitable for sign language. It allows researchers to annotate sign language data in tiers of their choice. I have chosen to use the tiers listed below. Also see Figure 3-3 which illustrates these tiers in an ELAN file,

1) Glossing
2) VV
3) Eye gaze
4) Eye aperture
5) Mouth action

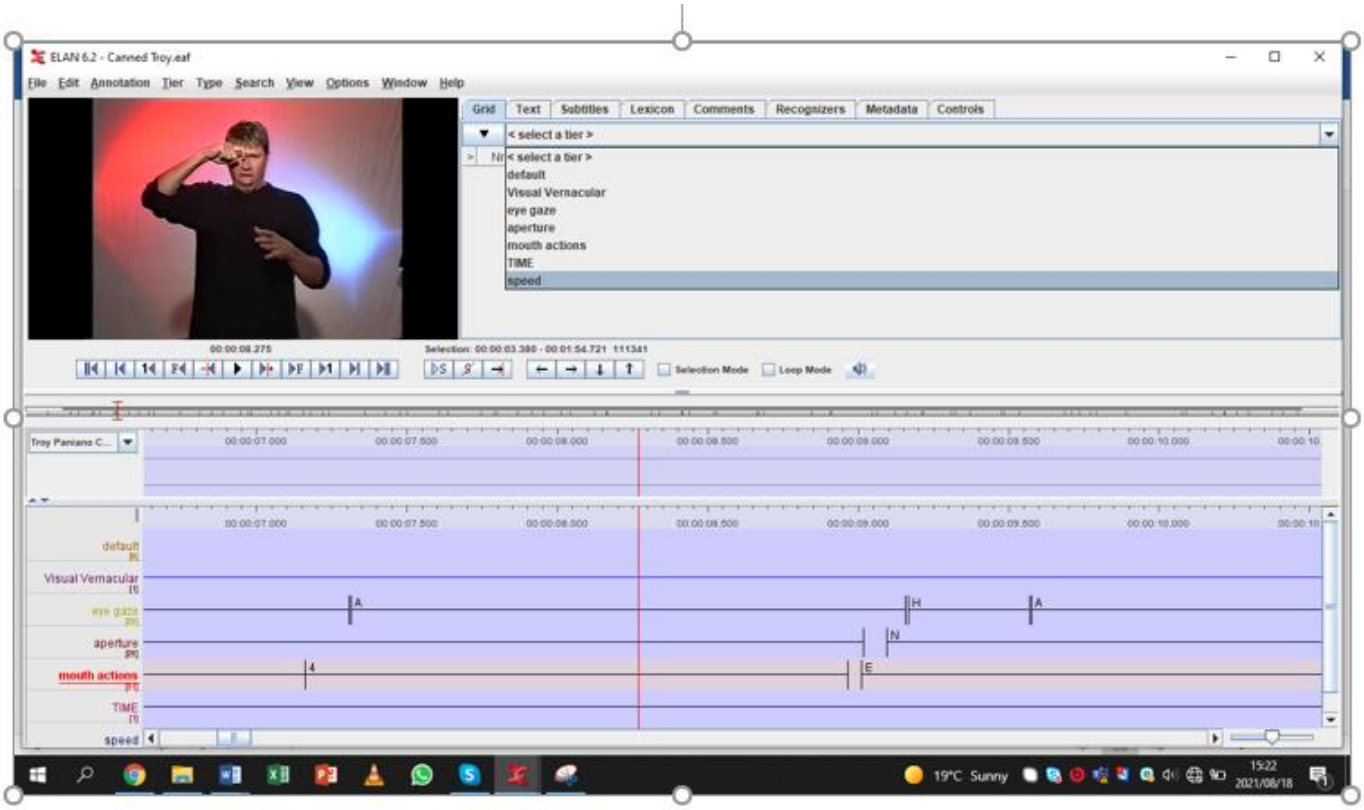


Figure 3-3: Screenshot of ELAN

For glossing I followed the standard convention of using equivalent English words for signs. The tier of VV captures the section where elements of VV are observed.

For classification of eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions, I followed the frameworks proposed by previous researchers: Kaneko and Mesch (2013) for eye gaze, Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999) for eye aperture, and Crasborn et al. (2008) and Kaneko (2020) for mouth actions. I used the symbols in Table 3-2 below (see my literature review for the explanation of transcription keys for each feature).

Feature	Types	Symbol /key
Eye gaze	1. To the audience 2. Character gaze 3. On hands 4. Referential gaze	A C H R
Eye aperture	1. Squint 2. Wide eyes 3. Closed eyes 4. Repeat Blink	S W C B

	5. Normal	N
Mouth action	1. Echo	E
	2. Adverbial	A
	3. Whole face	W
	4. Enacting	4
	5. Mouthing	M
	6. Onomatopoeia	O

Table 3-2: Transcription keys for each group of features

3.2.3 Analysis

I analysed these nine poems in terms of:

i) the context in which VV appears (elements that co-occur when they use VV in their poems and stories);

ii) correlations of VV with three specific linguistic features: eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions.

My aim is to see if there is any difference in these features between poems that contain VV and those that do not.

For i), I looked at each poem and observed the environment in which VV appears. For ii), I exported the ELAN data into an Excel spreadsheet to see the distribution of different patterns for each linguistic feature, in hope to see if VV favours particular types of eye gaze, eye aperture or mouth actions. I first created an overview of distribution of patterns, and then for each category (e.g., for eye gaze, gaze to the audience, character's gaze, gaze on hands, etc.) I provided the number of instances for each poem. This allowed me to offer comparisons between poems that contain VV and those that do not.
In Chapter 4, I will discuss the results.

3.3. Workshops with the Deaf community

In order to answer the third question (How do Deaf poets view VV in the South African context?), I have organized interactive workshops (group discussions) with members of the South African Deaf community. I decided to have two separate workshops. The first workshop was open to the Deaf community in general, who are not experts in this field. For the other

workshop, I specifically invited experts in SASL poetry, such as storytellers, interpreters, lecturers, and researchers, to discuss the essence of VV.

The interactive workshops were conducted at Wits University, each of which lasted for two hours. The aim of the workshop was to elicit the participants' views about the concept of VV.

3.3.1. Workshop Group One

The programme for the first workshop was as follows:

1. The researcher explained the aim of the workshop and consent forms.
2. The researcher gave a short presentation on "What is VV?"
3. The researcher explained and showed examples of VV from international and South African sources (video).
4. Group activities to create VV
5. Group discussion



Figure 3-4: Participants of the first workshop

There were ten Deaf people who came to the workshop. I first explained the aim of the workshop and the aim of the research, as well as the ethics procedures. (See section 3.4 below for more detail.) After I explained the concept of VV, participants created their own poems using VV techniques. These poems have been filmed and kept for future research at the department of South African Sign Language at Wits but will not form part of my MA data. The discussions among participants were filmed and translated and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.3.2. Workshop Group Two

The second workshop was also held at Wits University and involved seven experts on SASL poetry and storytelling. The programme was similar to that of the previous group, but I did not do a group activity. I focused on in-depth discussion with experts. I had two groups, each of which discussed their understanding of VV.



Figure 3-5: Participants of the second workshop

3.4. Ethics

The poems collected for the first part of my research are all in the public domain and I did not need to obtain permission.

For the second part of my research (workshops with Deaf people), I obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee (human non-medical) and made sure that I followed all relevant ethical procedures stipulated by them. I prepared participant information sheets, general consent forms and video-recording consent forms (see Appendix C). I also obtained permission from Wits University to use their venues.

The participants were given an information sheet which provides the details of this study. I explained this form to the participants in SASL, and participants were offered an opportunity to ask questions. Then each participant was asked to sign a general consent form before they took

part in this research. A separate consent form seeking their permission to be filmed, their images (and footage to be used in my research) was signed, which is essential in this research (see Appendix C for the video consent form).

Chapter 4: Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the analysis of the data collected. As explained in the previous chapter, in order to answer my second research question (How is VV expressed in poetic SASL?), I collected 70 poems, and conducted an in-depth analysis of nine poems. In order to answer the third question (What are the views of Deaf poets toward VV in the South Africa Context?), the discussions from the two workshops will be introduced and explained.

From the 70 SASL poems collected from the public domain, I focus on nine poems: two contains no VV, five contain full VV, and the other two contain partial VV (see Table 3-1 for the list of poems).

These nine poems are first analysed in terms of the context in which VV appears. Then I focused on three linguistic features (eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth action) and see if these features apply differently to poems that contain VV and those that do not.

4.2 The Visual Vernacular and co-occurring elements

I will first discuss what I found in these nine poems in terms of how and when VV appears because I noticed that the VV did not appear randomly. The nine poems that I analysed display an array of co-occurring elements, and I wanted to see if poems that contain VV have any similar themes. I found that VV often involves actions such as sport or driving, or is used to establish scenes in events, accompanies constructed action or mime, or is used to describe an event (e.g. a rugby game or a car chase).

4.2.1 Interactions between characters

First of all, VV often appears when the poem describes interactions among different characters. VV is used to indicate a very quick and subtle change in the roles of characters. For example, Modiegi's *The Book,* she switches between two different characters, namely, an anthropomorphised book and a reader. This switch is instantly and subtly done as if we are

seeing different shots in a movie. Unlike more traditional roles shift, the performer hardly changes her body posture – she only changes eye gaze direction and chin position to quickly become a book or a person. Figure 4-1 shows two different characters:



a) BOOK b) READER

Figure 4-1: Signs from Modiegi's *The Book*

Figure 4-1 a) shows the book becoming human. It describes how the book feels. It is like opening a book and seeing that the book feels excited. Figure 4-1 b) shows that the person is reading the book and is surprised or shocked.

This is in contrast with the poems without VV. Atiyah Asmal's *For My Aunt* does not show clear interaction between its two characters (the bee representing the poet and the rose representing the aunt). "Days of Weeks" does contain interactions between a child and an adult, but it is conveyed more linguistically, rather than cinematically – i.e., through entity classifiers and clear roles shift with shifts in body posture.

4.2.2 Anthropomorphism

Interactions can be between human characters. When characters are not human, the poet can personify an object to show their interaction with another character. This is called anthropomorphism. VV frequently uses it. In my data, many poets use VV as part of their attempt to anthropomorphise non-characters, such as a house, a teddy bear, or a tree. Most VV contains anthropomorphised characters and VV is used to show the emotions of a nonhuman

character. For example, Modiegi Njeyiyena's *Soweto* shows the house's emotion seen in Figure 4-2 below:



a) HOUSE SLEEPING b) HOUSE COUGHING c) HOUSE SAD

Figure 4-2: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

Figure 4-2 a) shows the house is sleeping and b) shows the house is coughing because of the smoke in the area. The last picture c) shows the house is feeling sad that the family in the house has gone to work. The poet uses facial expressions to show how the house is feeling. The actions, emotions and feelings of anthropomorphised characters are often shown by VV in highly visual and cinematic ways.

As mentioned in the literature review, there are three levels of anthropomorphism (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016): *descriptive* (basic description of nonhuman targets), *pre-linguistic* (animals/objects are now given complex emotions but they cannot speak/sign yet) and *linguistic* (animals/objects are given full human characteristics, including communication through language). Relating these to the data I collected, I found that anthropomorphism cooccurs with VV mostly when it is realised at pre-linguistic level as well as linguistic level. This is perhaps because VV focuses on showing emotions as seen in the above examples of Modiegi's *Soweto*. VV also focuses on showing interactions, and thus some instances of anthropomorphism at linguistic level are observed (as in *The Book* in which the book and the reader have a quick conversation in SASL).

Let us now explore anthropomorphism in poems that contain no VV. For *My Aunt* does contain instances of anthropomorphism (the bee and the rose, representing humans). However, they remain more at the descriptive level – emotions are shown but not in complex ways, and there is no language used. It also follows the poetic structure (such as repetition of three, keeping the same handshape, rhythm), rather than using cinematic techniques (see Figure 4.3). Days of Weeks", the other poem without VV, does not contain any instance of anthropomorphism.

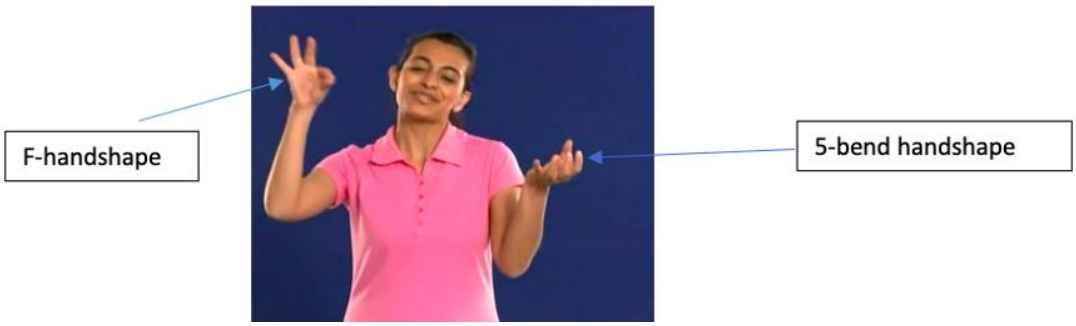


Figure 4-3: F-handshape representing a bee and 5-bend handshape representing a rose from Atiyah's *For My Aunt*

4.2.3 Establishing a scene

VV is also often used to establish a scene especially at the beginning of the story. For example, *World Cup Rugby* Troy Painino uses different type of cinematic techniques to introduce the stadium, the field, the crowds, and the planes. VV allows the performer to give clear visual illusions to the audience just like movies. According to Bragg (1995) and Riggs (2003) the VV performer can make use of fast or slow motion, zoom or panoramic view to establish a scene or characters. See the images below in Figure 4-4:



a) RUGBY FIELD b) RUGBY STADIUM c) CROWD

Figure 4-4: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*

In Figure 4-4 a) he describes what the rugby field looks like and the shape of the field. Figure 4-4 b) he describes what the rugby stadium looks like with two pole posts. In Figure 4-4 c) he describes what the crowd looks like and how excited the crowd are. These offer very clear visual descriptions as if watching a movie.

A similar way of setting up scenes can be observed in *Blast Off* and *Canned*, another set of poems by Troy. In both poems, Troy starts with offering a panoramic view of the place, then zooms in (with slow motion) to describe more detailed aspects of the scene.

This is different from the two poems that do not contain VV. Neither Atiyah Asmal's *For My Aunt* nor Modiegi's *Days of Weeks* involves such cinematic beginning of establishing visual scenes*. For My Aunt* starts with a string of statements about her aunt, using established signs ("She was wise, she was caring" and so on). *Days of Weeks* starts immediately with a classifier of a person walking and knocking at the door. There is no visual establishment of the scene.

4.2.4 Constructed action

As explained in the literature review, constructed action (CA) plays an important role in VV, as it is the means to *become* someone to show their perspective. 'Becoming' involves more visual description using mime and gestures, rather than simply to tell (through established signs) or to show (through classifiers).

Thus, it is not surprising that in my data, VV often involves instances of CA. For example, Troy Painino's poem A *Moment* fully contains VV and it hardly contains established signs. He uses gestures and mime in his poem to become a person performing very specific actions. An example of this is when the performer checks the time (Figure 4-5a) or opens the door (Figure 4-5b). He uses visual gestural artform features of CA, including facial expressions and body posture.



a) CHECK THE TIME b) OPEN DOOR

Figure 4-5: Signs from Troy's *Moment*

In *Blast off*, Troy switches between different characters using CA (the general audience, the TV crew the rocket pilot, and so on). Although these shifts are performed very subtly and quickly, it is not confusing as each character is clearly differentiated from another (See Figure 4-6).

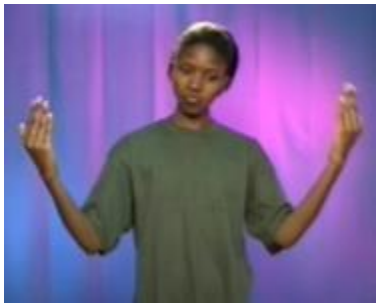


a) GENERAL ADUIENCE b) T.V CREW c) NEWS REPORTER

Figure 4-6: Signs from Troy 's *Blast Off*

Modiegi Njeyiyena uses VV to describe the driving from the perspective of the truck driver (and sometimes the truck itself) in her poem *Trucking*. She describes what the truck looks like, the

window, truck bonnet, truck sides mirror and wheels, but most of these are done from the perspective of the driver or the anthropomorphised truck. She uses constructed action extensively in this sequence of VV. At the same time, she also uses her hands to show the passing trees and the car, and mirrors, which are understood as classifiers. See Figure 4-7 below.



a) TRUCK DRIVER

Figure 4-7: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

Figure 4-7 shows how she 'becomes' (anthropomorphises) the truck, using her hands as a set of side mirrors with the facial expression showing the irritation of the truck.

For My Aunt, in contrast, does not contain any CA. The story is told from an external perspective (not character's viewpoint), mostly through classifiers. *Days of Week* does contain CA, but it is mainly used to indicate clear role shift between a child and an adult (accompanied by classifiers) and not to produce an in-depth visual portrait of each character. The interaction shows a conversation between a child and an adult about each day of the week and is highly dependent on the use of classifiers. For example, she signs DAY ONE (MONDAY) then she changes it to a classifier: CL: person walking to the door. This is seen as a child (representing the day of the week) visiting the house. When the adult opens the door and asks who the child is, s/he describes what Monday is like. Then she signs DAY TWO (Tuesday) which changes into CL: two children walking to do the door – this process is repeated for all days of the week. See Figure 4-8 for Day Four:





a) 4 –classifier DAY 4 PERSON- WALKING b) Role shift (adult) – DOOR-OPEN

Figure 4-8 Signs from Modiegi'*s Days of the Weeks*

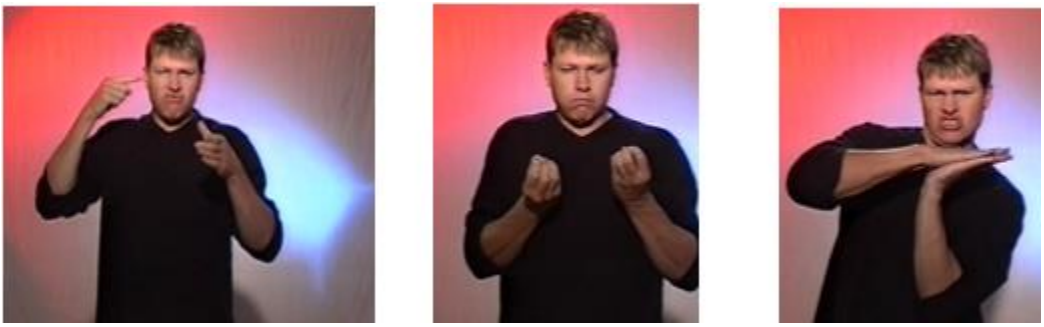
Figure 4-8 b) shows how she becomes an adult to show that she opens the door for the child to come in. This can be considered as VV but she shows clear role shift (she changes into a child's role immediately after this sign) which makes it closer to a narrative style, rather than a VV style. As you can see, this interaction follows established patterns, and there is no specific visual portrait of each character like in other poems that contains full VV such as *Trucking* and *Blast off*.

4.2.5 Description of a Process

VV can also be used to describe a less dynamic process. This is perhaps similar to a movie or TV show that visually illustrates a process of making something. It is still cinematic, as the poet directly presents visual details as if you were watching a movie. There seems to be no central protagonist who performs actions during the story. This seems to be in line with the point made by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) that not all stories in sign language have a plot or an "ending" but their main aim is to give visual entertainment.

Troy Painino's *Canned* does not contain any plot (storyline) or characters. It simply shows how to make tins in a step-by-step process of transforming liquid metal into tin shapes and of transporting them from the factory. This poem is creative and uses VV that gives very precise

visual details and cinematically describes the different stages of production at a factory. Troy shows this by using classifiers. See the examples in Figure 4-9.



a) POUR (CANNED) b) BOILED(CANNED) c) BEND(CANNED)

Figure 4-9: Signs from Troy's *Canned*

Neither of Atiyah Asmal's *For My Aunt* and Modiegi Njeyiyena's *Days of Weeks* contains any such detailed visual descriptions. They follow more poetic or narrative styles.

4.2.6 Switching from non-VV to VV (in poems with partial VV)

When the poem contains VV partially, it is interesting to observe the moment when the performer switches to VV (and the moment they come out of it). In my data, I observed that the poet's eyes often indicate the beginning or the end of VV. For example, Modiegi's *The Book* starts with the description of a bookshelf using classifiers. This sequence does not contain any elements of VV, and her gaze follows her hand. Then her eyes start looking around as a character. This is the moment we know VV starts, as we are suddenly drawn into the story world through direct visual images of an anthropomorphised book (See Figure 4-10).



a) SHELF b) BOOK c) READER

FIGURE 4-10: Signs from Modiegi's *The Book*

A similar pattern can be seen in Modiegi's *Soweto*. It starts off with an established sign for DARK – then she switches to VV, becoming/anthropomorphising Soweto. Her eyes change from closed (non-directed) eyes to character's gaze representing Soweto (Figure 4-11).



a) DARK b) SOWETO

Figure 4-11: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

4.2.7 Summary

As seen above, there is evidence of some loose patterns regarding the context in which VV tends to appear. VV emerges when there are actions or interactions between characters, when establishing scenes, or describing a certain process. It is also accompanied by constructed action.

However, VV also shows the different stylistic choice of performers. Some performers use VV almost all the time while other poets only use it occasionally. For example, Troy Painino used full VV in all of his works. Modigei Njeyiyena seems to use more poetic features such as handshape symbolism or symmetry.

4.3 Non-manual features

Based on the previous research (Asmal & Kaneko 2020), I decided to select three formational features of **eye gaze, eye aperture** and **mouth actions** that co-occur with VV. I evaluated how the poets use these features in poems that contain and those that do not contain VV.

Eyes and mouth actions contribute to the overall facial expression. Facial expression is an important part of sign language literature. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 194) "signing storytellers and performers, like actors, can show emotion directly through facial expression". Facial expressions show emotions and different facial features such as eye gaze, eye aperture, and mouth actions contribute to performance and storytelling. This allows the audience to identify different characters very easily, which is important in VV.

4.3.1. Eye gaze

As briefly discussed above (see 2.4.1) eye gaze seems to be a key element in VV. According to Kaneko and Mesch (2013: 327) "eye gaze plays a crucial role in the presentational aspect of sign language poetry, while manual signing builds the basic storyline of poem". They claim that the story is created between hands (which develop the story) and the gaze (which give full details of the narrative). The eye gaze provides or conveys meaning and information about the specific context. Eye gaze can also support manual signs by giving different information about what the hands are doing.

I looked at four types of gaze. Three gaze types were identified by Kaneko and Mesch (2013) who suggested different types of eye gaze in creative sign language. I have added another gaze pattern, identified by Sutton-Spence and Woll (1990), which is a referential use of eye gaze, which seems to occur frequently in VV.

1. Gaze to the audience (to camera)
2. Character gaze
3. Spotlight gaze (gaze on hands)
4. Referential use of eye gaze

I have identified instances of each type of eye gaze in each of the nine poems I am analysing. Figure 4-12 shows the overall distribution of the different types of eye gaze.

Eye Gaze:						
Name of Preformer	Title of poem/story	to the audience (A)	Character gaze (C)	on hand (H)	Referential (R)	Other
Atiyah Asmal	For My Aunt	14,3	0,0	83,8	0,0	1,9
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Days of the Week	22,2	53,5	3,1	21,2	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Soweto	0,0	72,1	27,9	0,0	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	The Book	0,0	100,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Trucking	48,2	26,2	5,2	20,4	0,0
Troy Painino	A Moment	2,2	79,6	14,3	0,0	3,9
Troy Painino	Blast Off	18,5	75,4	6,1	0,0	0,0
Troy Painino	Canned	54,2	0,0	45,8	0,0	0,0
Troy Painino	World Cup Rugby	42,9	51,6	3,2	0,0	2,3

Table 4-1: Eye gaze distribution across nine poems

4.3.1.1 Gaze to the audience

Eye gaze to audience can be directed to the audience (camera) which means that the performer looks straight to the audience. The purpose of this gaze pattern is to build a relationship between the performer and the audience to explain the emotions within the story. The performer acknowledges the presence of the audience and talks to them directly. This happens when the performer feels the need to explain something to the audience (Kaneko & Mesch 2013).

My hypothesis was that poems containing VV use less gaze to the audience because the signers are more involved in presenting their visual performance, like a movie where we do not expect actors to acknowledge the viewers and talk to them. In contrast, poems containing no VV may use more of gaze to the audience, as it is important to engage with the audience.
However, my hypothesis was only partially correct. Both poems that contain no VV exhibit substantial use of gaze to the audience, while three of the seven poems that use VV use hardly any gaze to the audience, confirming my expectations. However, four poems with VV (*Trucking, Blast off, World Cup Rugby, Canned*) use a substantial amount of gaze to the audience. See Figure 4-13.

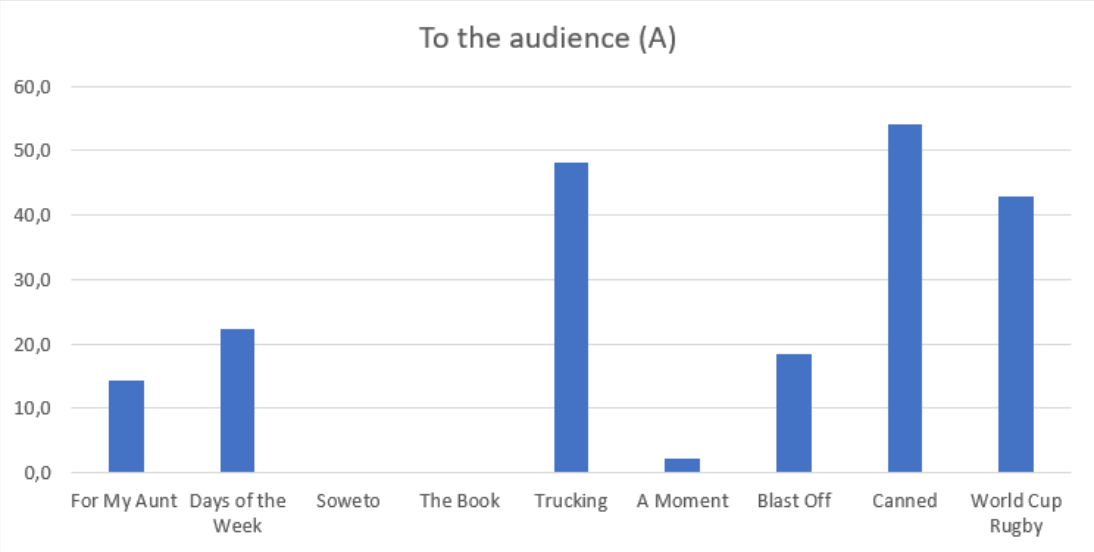


Figure 4-12: Gaze to the audience

Soweto and *The Book* does not use gaze to the audience at all, and *A Moment* uses very little gaze to the audience. They do not acknowledge the presence of the audience. Modiegi Njejiyena does not connect with the audience in *Soweto* and *The Book*. She breaks eye contact with the audience and focuses on her own story world. For example, in *The Book*, she first establishes the bookshelf using a classifier then she becomes a book. She then switches between the two roles where she becomes the book and the reader. She is immersed in her story and does not look at the audience throughout this poem. The same applies to *Soweto* in which she does not maintain eye contact with the audience as if she is in a world of her own. It seems as if the poet wants audiences to be immersed in the emotions of their stories more directly, rather than through the poet as a narrator.

The opposite of this are poems/stories without VV. For example, Atiyah's poem *For My Aunt*, during the first half of this poem, the poet constantly looks at the audience (to the camera) while she establishes what the poem is about. She comes out of the story and explains to the audience about the rose (her aunt is wise, lovely, caring, and deaf - like the poet herself). These are established signs (See Figure 4-13). Then she breaks eye contact with the audience and she focuses on her own poem.

In Modiegi's poem *Days of Week* she uses eye gaze to the audience when she describes each day of the week using classifiers (CL –person) to explain to the audience which day of the week she is talking about. For example, Figure 4-14 a) below describes a classifier (1 handshape) to represent one person walking. Figure 4-14 b) she describes Day Six using the number SIX to represent six people walking. During these sequences when she explains each day, she looks at the audience.



a) WISE b) LOVE

Figure 4-13: Signs from Atiyah's *For My Aunt*



a) CL: DAY ONE WALKING b) CL: DAY SIX WALKING

Figure 4-14: Signs from Modiegi's *Days of the Week*

As I mentioned above, there are four poems that contain VV but exhibit substantial use of gaze to the audience, contrary to my expectation. Out of these four, three poems (*Trucking, Blast Off* and *World Cup Rugby*) shows a similar style of establishing the visual details of the story world where the poets look at the audience. This is a slightly different function of the gaze to the audience explained in Kaneko & Mesch (2013) but both seem to aim at making an impact upon

the audience. In Troy Painino's *World Cup Rugby,* he uses eye gaze towards the audience when describing the visual setup of the rugby field, the people in the audience, and the shape of the field from a bird eyes view, plane, rugby goal post, and rugby players staring at the audience (Figure 4-15). Troy looks at the audience while he shows these signs in an expressive manner. His expressions give the idea of what the field looks like and the poles that are set up. He seems to want to give the audience the feeling of being at the rugby field where a match is about to happen. He acknowledges and engages with the audience as if they are also part of the game. The audience, when watching, will feel as though they are watching a great movie.

The same applies to Modiegi's *Trucking,* in the poem she uses eye gaze to the audience when she describes what the truck looks like, the shape of the bonnet, the wheel, speed of the tree passing, and the movement of the road (Figure 4-16). While Atiyah's gaze in *For My Aunt* is used to 'explain', the aim of Modiegi's gaze to the audience seems to show the audience a visual setup using the movie-like descriptions.



a) RUGBY FIELD b) PLANE c) RUGBY PLAYER

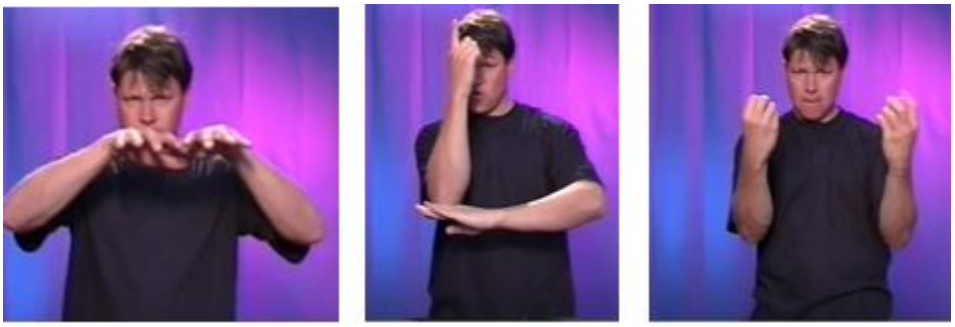
Figure 4-15: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*



a) TRUCK BONNET b) TRUCK WHEEL c) TREE MOVEMENT

Figure 4-16: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

In Troy's *Blast Off*, the poet looks at the audience when he *explains* what the rocket looks like (Figure 4-17). The function of gaze to the audience here is to ensure they see the visual details of the background. Once the description is finished, the poet stops looking at the audience and immerses himself in his story world.



a) OPENING SCENE b) ROCKET c) ROCKET FLASH LIGHT

Figure 4-17: Signs from Troy's *Blast Off*

In all of these three poems, the poets' eye gaze is focused on the audience (camera) to give the audience a certain feel/vibe through visual descriptions as if they are present at the scene. Troy's other poem, *Canned*, also uses gaze to the audience but it behaves very differently from the other three. As mentioned before, there is no clear plot or characters in this poem. He maintain the eye gaze to the audience almost throughout the entire performance, which is unusual for VV.

He builds a stronger relationship with the audience to explain the manufacturing process of making tins at a factory, almost as if to say "Hey, watch me. I'm going to explain how this is

done". His signs consist of a string of strong visual and three-dimensional images, which makes this poem strong VV, but at the same time he looks at the audience intensely to capture their attention.

As a summary, there is some tendency for poems with VV to use less gaze to the audience than those without VV. However, there are many exceptions. When the poet wants to explain visual background of the poem, they still look at the audience. Or, as in "Canned", the poet may look at the audience when they want to capture their attention.

4.3.1.2. Character's Gaze

Character gaze is when the performer becomes the character and tells the story through the character's eyes. It was expected that VV makes full use of character's gaze as it is important for VV to show the full range of emotions and interactions of characters involved. Figure 4-18 below shows the use of character's gaze across nine poems.

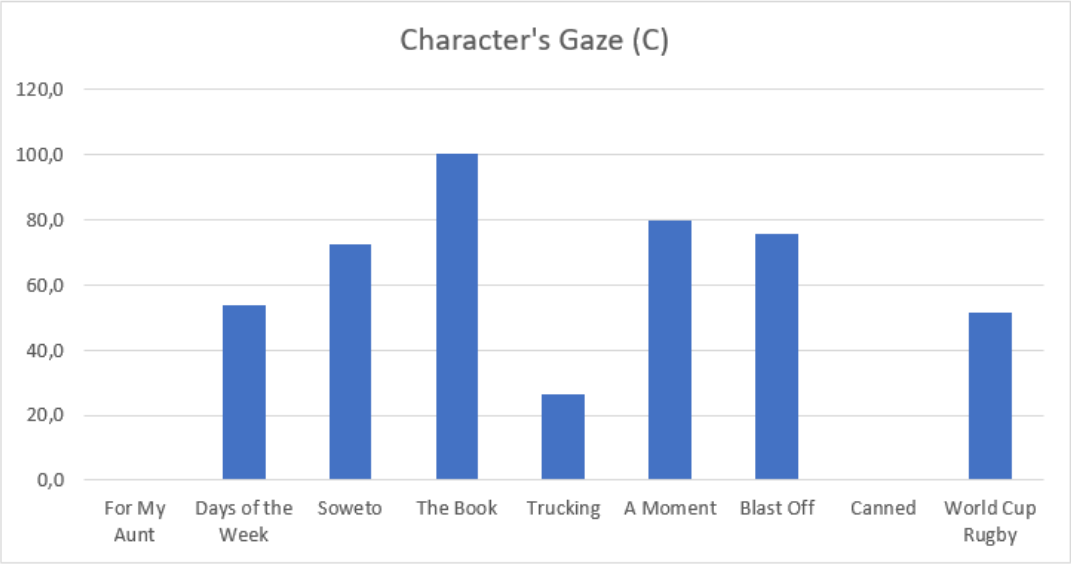


Figure 4-18: Character's gaze

I observed that poets frequently use character's gaze to 'become' a referent and express different emotions when using VV. For example, in *Soweto* Modiegi Njeyiyena uses her eye gaze to anthropomorphise the township of Soweto. The poet becomes the character of Soweto with the sign HOUSE. It shows how the house feels lonely when the families have left for work and then she gets excited when the families return from work. As seen in Figure 4-19, the poet does not look at the audience, but her eyes are believed to be those of Soweto (as a character).



a) HOUSE SAD

Figure 4-19: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

Another example of character's gaze is Troy's *Blast Off* in which he uses a variety of characters - for example, the crowd, reporters, the TV crew, and the space crew. He uses his eye gaze to show different types of characters in the story. See Figure 4-20 below:



a) CROWD



b) T.V CREW

Figure 4-20: Signs from Troy's *Blast Off*

Figure 4-20 a) shows how he uses his eye gaze and aperture to represent the crowd feeling scared and worried. Figure 4-20b) shows how he changes his eye gaze to show a different character, the film crew.

A Moment by Troy Painino has only one character, but he still uses many instances of character's gaze to portray this character. He becomes the character through mime as a theatrical technique (as Troy, unusual for a sign performance, moves his entire body). He shows his actions or emotions without using established signs in SASL as he only uses gestures to create visual images. He used gestural actions using the entire body, such as opening the door, walking, or putting on a tie. Troy uses his eye gaze to emphasise this theatrical/mime elements. See the images in Figure 4-21 below:



a) PUT-ON-TIE b) MAN-WALKING c) DOORKNOB-OPEN

Figure 4-21: Signs from Troy *A Moment*

Three other poems *Trucking*, *World Cup Rugby* and the *The Book* also contain character gaze. The only exception is Troy's *Canned*, which uses very little character's gaze. As we have seen, in this poem, Troy mostly fixes his gaze to the audience in order to 'explain'. There is no plot or characters involved, so naturally there is no instance of character's gaze.

In general, Modiegi Njeyiyana and Troy Painino carefully use character's gaze during the sequences of VV. They become a character (human or non-human) to show their emotions directly. The performers are telling the stories through their eyes.

This is in sharp contract with Atiyah Asmal's *For my Aunt*, a poem without VV. She does not use character's gaze. This is a very poetic and metaphorical piece, and the focus is more on poetic devices such as handshape or repetition, rather than on characters. The poet's gaze is on hands throughout the second half of this poem (after she introduced her aunt to the audience) and does not switch to show different characters.

However, the other poem without VV (Modiegi's *Days of Weeks*) does use character's gaze to indicate role shifts between a child and an adult. This is a narrative poem (story) in which the performer shows obvious switches between characters, which seems slightly different from character's gaze in VV. In narratives, the shifts between characters are clearly marked with changes in body posture and eye gaze, while in VV they are more subtly done and mostly by eye gaze only. This is similar to the way a movie switches shots to show different characters. Eye gaze seems to play a larger role in VV in that it is often the only clue to indicate different perspectives.

In summary, character's gaze often takes place with VV, but it is not a defining feature of VV, as it is also used frequently in storytelling which may not contain VV.

4.3.1.3. Gaze on Hands

The gaze on hand refers to eyes following the movement of the hands. It highlights the manual signs by focusing on their movement and is used often when describing something. This gaze makes the stories more creative by highlighting the signer's hands. The audience is drawn into the story not by someone's perspective but directly watching the sign following the poet's own gaze.

Poetry often uses gaze on hands as it contains more description than actions by characters. Kaneko and Mesch (2013) mention that gaze on the hands seems to be a useful tool to highlight the effect of poetry.

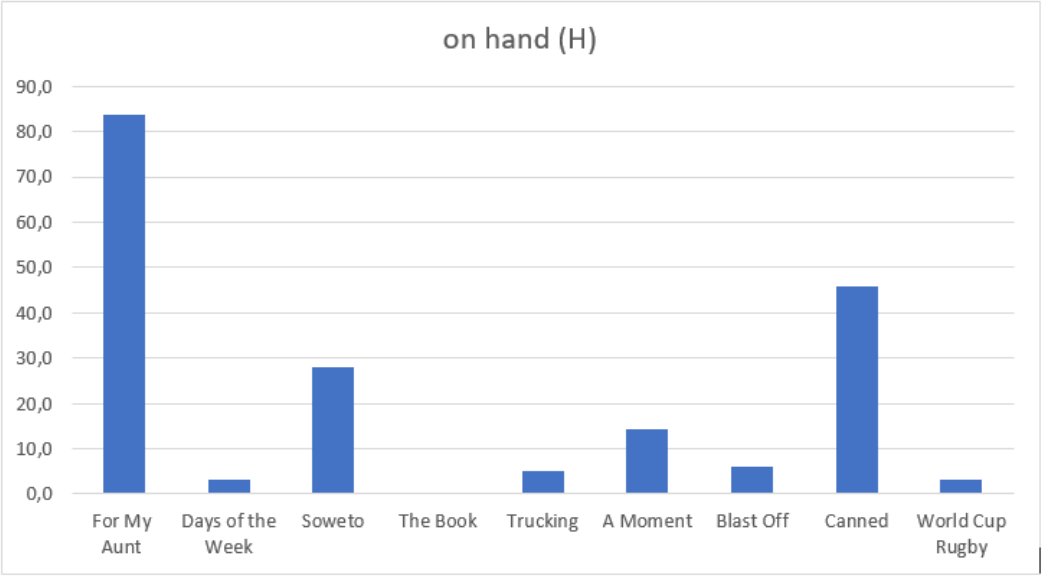
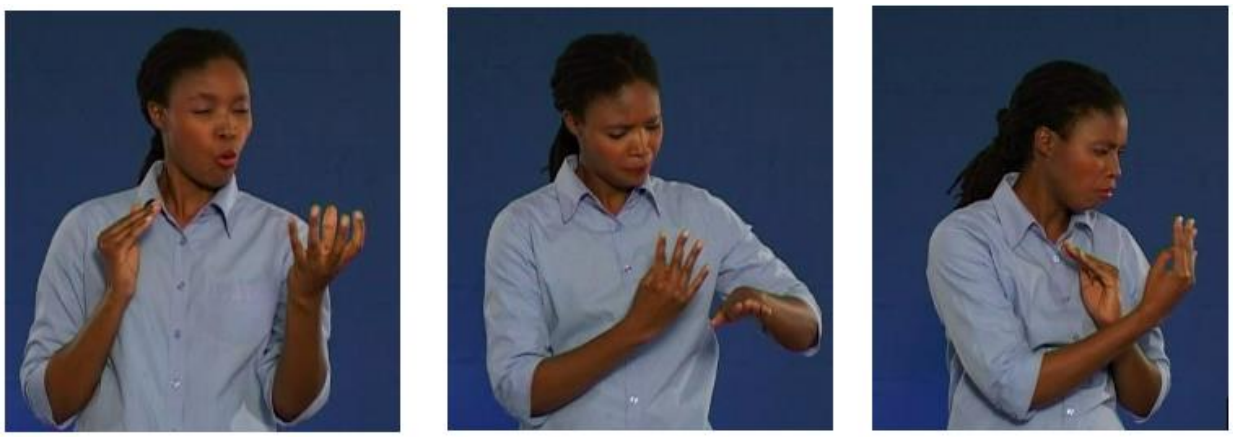


Figure 4-22: Gaze on hands

Since VV focuses more on action or characters, it was expected that it uses fewer instances of gaze on hands compared to poetry. Figure 4-22 shows the frequency of gaze on hands across the nine poems. As you can see, the use of gaze on hands varies across poems with VV. *The Book* does not use gaze on hand as at all while *Soweto* and *Canned* do show more frequent use of it.

In *Soweto* by Modiegi, eye gaze often follows the manual signs, such as the classifiers showing rows of houses, smoke coming out of each house, people going to work, taxi parked, people hopping into taxi, people coming home, and so on. Modiegi remains as a character of Soweto (In Figure 4-23, you see she keeps her dominant hand for HOUSE which represents her personified SOWETO) but her eyes are used to highlight different scenes and events in the story described by her non-dominant hand. Kaneko and Mesch (2013) mention that the performers look at the hands to develop the story.



a) HOUSE -SMOKE b) PEOPLE –HOP-IN TAXI c) PEOPLE WALK HOME

Figure 4-23: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

Figure 4-23 a) shows her eye gaze on her hand representing smoke, b) on her classifier representing a taxi (CL TAXI PARK) and in c) her gaze follows the classifier representing people walking home (CL PEOPLE-WALKING).

Troy uses eye gaze on his hands in *Canned* as he focuses on explaining how the cans are made in the factory. For example, he uses his eye gaze following the manual sign illustrating the boiling, tin melt, tin label and the making of the cans (Figure 4-24). The performer tries to show the audience the process of making cans and he urges the audience to 'watch' this process by looking at his own hands. The gaze highlights the details shown by the hands. The story is clearly containing VV because it shows movie-like description of a manufacturing process at factory, it is visual, 3D (three dimensional) and dramatic, and gaze on hands in this poem seems to contribute to such visual description.



Figure 4-24: Troy describing the making of cans in *Canned*

The other poem of Troy*, A Moment*, uses gaze on hand in signs such as opening the door, carry a bag and wiping his glasses (DOOR-OPEN, CARRY-BAG and WIPES-HIS-GLASSES - Figure 4-25). While this is also part of his character's gaze (described above) gaze on the hand is more focused on objects that the poet wants to describe. He wants the audience to see the details as if in a movie by highlighting his actions with his gaze on hands. He makes it more artistic by highlighting his actions by following them with his gaze. The poet decided to have his character look at his hands to show the audience where to look.



a) DOOR OPEN b) CARRY BAG C) WIPE HIS GLASSES

Figure 4-25: Signs from Troy's *A Moment*

Let us now look at two poems that contain no VV. As we have already seen, Atiyah Asmal's *For My Aunt*, starts with gaze to the audience (to the camera) explaining to the audience what the

poem is about. Then the rest of her poem her eye gaze is on her hand creating the poetic effects of highlighting handshape and repetition. For example, her gaze follows the F-handshape representing the bee that is flying, and she looks at her bent 5-handshape representing the rose that the bee comes to nest in. See Figure 4-26 below.



a) BEE (gaze on hand) b) AUNT-ROSE (gaze on hand)

Figure 4-26: Signs from Atiyah's *For My Aunt*

Days of Weeks, on the other hand, contains very little gaze on hands. The only two instances of gaze on hands are when the poet spreads a picnic mat on the ground (her gaze follows her hand) and washes the car (again, she watches her own hands to do so). The rest of the time, the poet uses gaze to the audience or character's gaze, due to the fact that this is close to storytelling, unlike *For My Aunt* which is more poetic.

It was found that gaze on hands occurred when the poet tries to highlight visual descriptions. Some VV poems has a few instances of this gaze as they mostly evolve around actions and characters. But when there are elements of description, gaze on hands takes place regardless of whether the poem contains VV or no VV.

4.3.1.4. Referential eye gaze

Referential eye gaze focuses on an invisible referent in space. It is not directed towards audience or on the hands, and the performer does not show any character's perspective. Figure

4-27 shows the use of referential gaze across nine poems. It is evident that there is no established correlation between VV and this gaze behaviour.

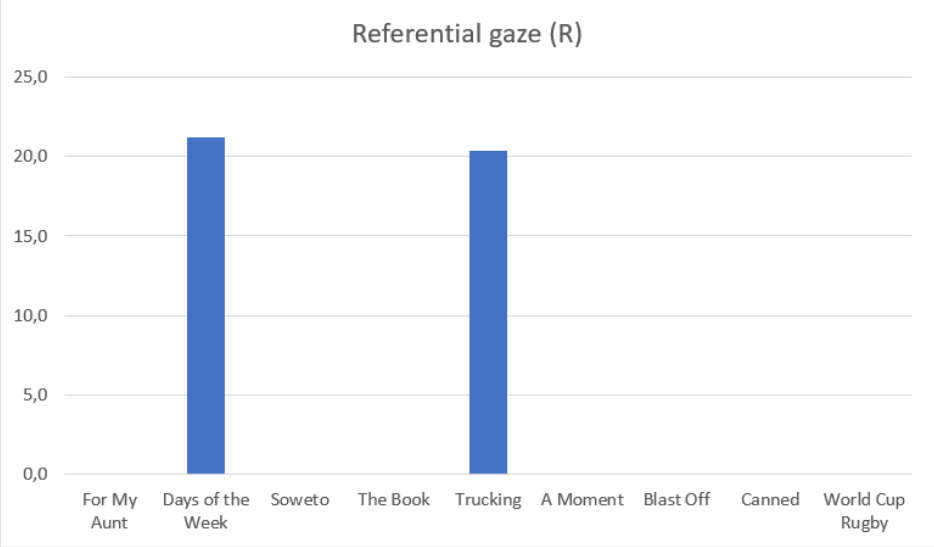


Figure 4-27: Referential gaze

As seen above, there are only two poems which use referential gaze: Modiegi's *Days of Weeks* and *Trucking.* In Modiegi's *Trucking* she uses referential eye gaze swaying from right to left while her hands show classifiers of eyes looking in the same directions (but her gaze is not on hands). See Figure 4-28a). Another example is when she overtakes another car – she looks in the direction where the imagined car she is overtaking is located (Figure 4-28b). This clarifies the overall visual description of the scene.



a) LOOK –AT-CARS –ON- RIGHT b) OVERTAKING CAR

Figure 4-28: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

Apart from *Trucking* the use of referential gaze is very infrequent in poems containing VV.

However, the same applies to poems containing no VV. Modiegi's *Days of Weeks* uses some instances of referential gaze but not many. For example, when the door is opened, the person standing outside is only imagined through Modiegi's eyes acknowledging them (Figure 4-29). Atiyah's *For My Aunt* does not use referential gaze at all. This suggests that referential gaze is not common across the nine poems, regardless of whether they contain VV or not.



Figure 4-29 Signs from Modiegi's *Days of the Week*

4.3.1.5. Summary of eye gaze

As a summary of this section, eye gaze seems to be linked with the degree of action or description, whether the poem has characters or not, and so on, rather than whether it contains VV. There is a strong connection between action-based VV and character's gaze. Gaze to the audience (narrator's gaze) is hardly used in action-based VV. However, when VV is used for description, such as *Canned*, their gaze behaviour is very different.

However, this does not mean eye gaze is not important in VV. Kaneko and Mesch (2013) mention that eye gaze plays an important role in creative signing. VV uses clear character's gaze

to bring emotions into VV, uses gaze on hands to highlight visual details, or even uses gaze to the audience to invite them to their story world.

4.4.2 Eye aperture

Eye aperture involves the degree of opening of the eyes. It shows the size of the eyes which can provide additional information. I chose to investigate eye aperture as I noticed that poets widen or narrow their eyes frequently during sequences of VV. I wanted to find out if VV uses a particular eye aperture, or uses a wider range of eye apertures, compared to non-VV.
Eye aperture is linked to facial expressions which are frequently used in VV.

Eye aperture is annotated as 'normal' when this is no notable change from regular open eyes. When changes are observed, there are four types of eye aperture which are annotated:

1. squint
2. wide eyes
3. closed eyes
4. blinking
5. normal eye

Table: 4-2 below shows the overall distribution of eye aperture across poems.

Eye Aperture:						
Name of Preformer	Title of poem/story	Squint (S)	Closed Eyes (C)	Vide Eyes (W	Blink (B)	Normal (N)
Atiyah Asmal	For My Aunt	41,2	3,8	1,4	19,9	33,6
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Days of the Week	20,1	2,0	12,4	0,0	65,5
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Soweto	51,1	15,4	0,0	0,0	33,6
Modiegi Njeyiyena	The Book	15,4	7,5	24,3	0,0	52,7
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Trucking	6,8	0,4	6,8	0,0	86,0
Troy Painino	A Moment	0,9	0,2	0,0	0,3	98,5
Troy Painino	Blast Off	7,6	5,3	3,2	3,4	80,5
Troy Painino	Canned	36,2	1,9	0,0	11,8	50,0
Troy Painino	World Cup Rugby	19,9	8,4	0,0	0,0	71,8

Table 4-2: Overall distribution of eye aperture across nine poems

4.4.2.1. Squint

Poets often squint their eyes to symbolise a small object or indicate the sharpness or intensity of the referent. In day –to-day signing, squinting may be used but not for a prolonged duration. However, I found that is can be used substantially in the poems that contain VV, as is evident in Figure 4-30 below.

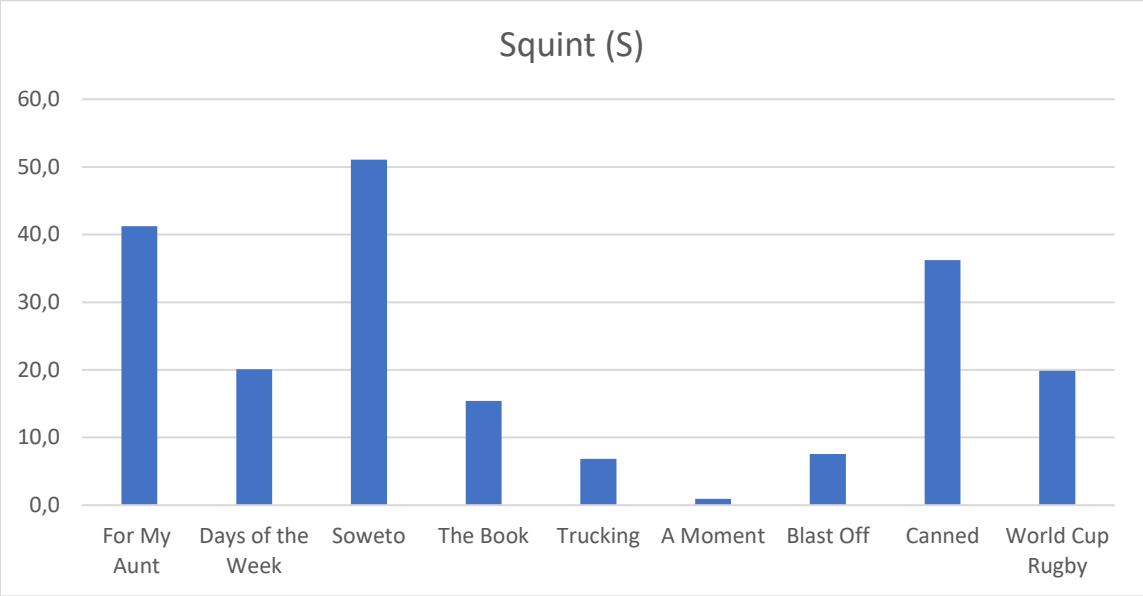


Figure 4-30: Use of squint eyes

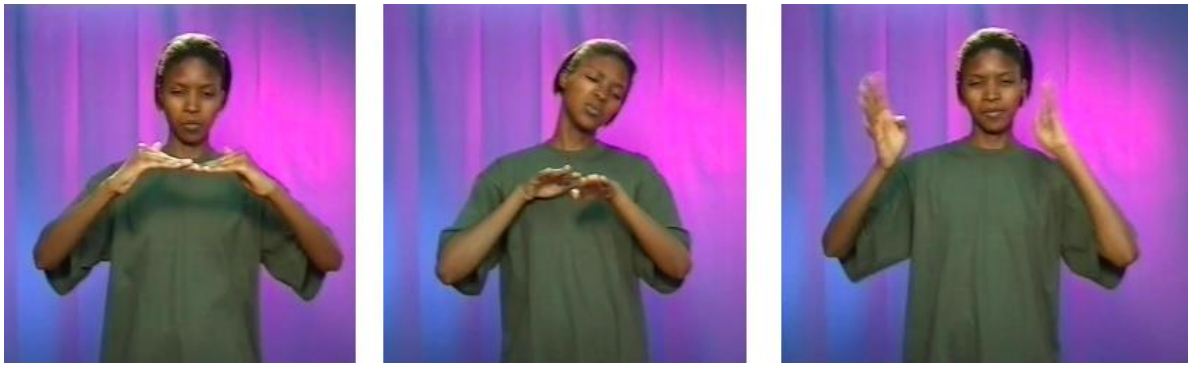
In Modiegi Njeyiyena's *Soweto*, throughout the poem, she mostly has a squinted gaze as she anthropomorphises the house in a township of Soweto. The poet's eyes are squinted to represent darkness before the sunrise, coldness, heavy smoke, coughing, and a sense of comfort at home as family members are back from work (Figure 4-31). She squints to show different emotions in her poem. This unusual frequency of squint eyes in this poem seems to represent the character of anthropomorphised Soweto, who is portrayed to show the intimacy of the community of Soweto.



a) SMOKE B) DARK/ COLD c) COMFORTABLE

Figure 4-31: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

Another example is Modiegi Nijeyiyena's poem *Trucking*. At the beginning she starts with squint eyes accompanied by the gentle release of air from the mouth in order to describe different scenes: for example, driving past the trees, smooth bumps in the road, slow, ongoing, calm and boring driving scenes. Figure 4-32a) illustrates how she squints her eyes to show the shape of the truck bonnet, b) describes the boring driving on the road (CA) and c) describes how the truck driver drives pass the trees all along (CA). This is in contrast with the later sequence when action takes place (where she uses wide eyes).



a) SHAPE OF TRUCK b) BORING DRIVING c) DRIVING PAST THE TREE

Figure 4-32: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

In Modiegi's *The Book*, she uses squinting when she represents characters as a book and as the reader to show the different emotions of each character. In Figure 4-33 a) she squints her eyes to show the emotion of the book, and in b) she also again squints to become a reader.



a) ‘Become’ BOOK b) ‘become’ READER

Figure 4-33: Signs from Modiegi’s *The Book*

In Troy Painino’s, *Canned,* he starts with a squint to describe the can and the process of making the cans (Figure 4-34a). He also describes how the liquid is boiled and poured with squint to add ‘visual sounds’ to the process, together with mouth gestures which I will discuss later (Figure 4-34b). It shows intensity of the process, in which small eye aperture correlates with small hand movements. In Figure 4-34c) he points to his ear and squints his gaze to show the audience the sound of pouring as well as the careful exactness of the pouring. Squinting here adds extra sensory information about the process of making cans at the factory.



a) START OF MAKING CANS b) BOILING c)CAN POURING

Figure 4-34: Signs from Troy’s *Canned*

Another poem by Troy Painino, *World Cup Rugby* also contains instance of squinting. He squints throughout the opening scenes. Troy squints when he describes a stadium where a crowd of people are waiting for the game to start. The squint eyes are linked to a sense of smoothly 'zooming in' to a particular scene. Another example is seen when he describes sounds such as a trumpet, referee blowing a whistle, and rugby players singing and dancing (Figure 4-35). It is clear that Troy uses squint eyes to represent perceived cinematic movement (zooming in and out) as well as perceived sounds. Similar use of squinting is observed in *Blast Off*.



a) START OF THE GAME B) REFEREE C) RUGBY PLAYER

Figure 4-35: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*

Modiegi Njeyiyena's *Days of Weeks* only uses squinting when she signs ALL-DAY as in "all day we g*o to work or school" to indicate the long duration of 'all day' (Figure 4-36). Atiyah's* For My Aunt only exhibits instances of squinting with a couple of established signs such as BEAUTIFUL and WISE.



Figure 4-36: Signs ALL-DAY from Modiegi's *Days of the Week*

Therefore, it can be said that poets do make use of squinting in VV much more often than when there is no element of VV. Squinting is important for VV. However, there are different ways of using squinting in VV. *Canned* shows squinting to convey sense-related images throughout the poem, whereas *Soweto* mostly uses squinting to develop the character of Soweto along the storyline. Some poems such as *World Cup Rugby and Blast Off* use squinting to represent cinematic images such as zooming-in or different sounds. There are other VV poems that do not use much squinting (*A Moment* or *Trucking*). This means that squinting is used often in VV but it is not a defining feature of VV.

4.4.2.2. Closed eyes

In day-to-day signing, signers hardly close their eyes for a prolonged duration, but it is possible in creative sign language. Poets may close their eyes to emphasise a sign or to show that they are processing their emotions or iconically show what character's eyes are doing (closed for sleeping). Since VV involves a portrait of characters and emotions, we may expect VV performers to close their eyes frequently. Figure 4-37 shows the occurrences of closed eyes in the nine poems.

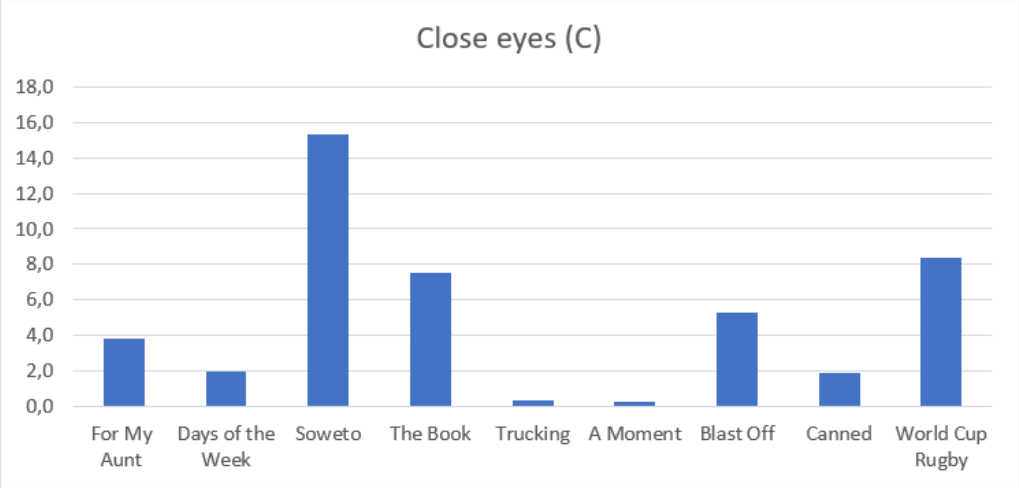


Figure 4-37: Closed eyes

Closed eyes are used frequently in some poems with VV. Their use is often very iconic. For example, in Modiegi Njeyiyena's, *Soweto*, she closes her eyes to show that the house is sleeping. She also closes her eyes to show how comfortable the family is at home.



a)SLEEPING b) COMFORTABLE SLEEPING

Figure 4-38: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

Another example is Troy Painino's *World Cup Rugby*, in which he uses closed eyes when the characters (the players together with the crowd) are singing the National Anthem (Figure 4-39). His closed eyes represent people immersed in their emotion associated with the National Anthem and the beginning of a match. The audience may feel goosebumps just like when they watch something emotional on TV.



a) SINGER b) CROWDS c) RUGBY PLAYERS

Figure 4-39: Signs from Troy's "World Rugby Cup"

In his other poem, *Blast off*, Troy uses closed eyes in a very different way. He closes his eyes when he describes the smoke under a spaceship and the vibration of the spaceship when it takes off to show its intensity. This use of closed eyes adds extra sensational information to the scene described.



a) VIBRATION OF SPACE b) SMOKE

Figure 4-40: Signs from Troy's *Blast Off*

In *The Book*, Modiegi closes her eyes to iconically describe the book sleeping or someone sneezing. It is also used to indicate the sense of fulfilment of the reader when he or she finished reading a book (Figure 4-41).



a) SNEEZE b) FEELING GOOD

Figure 4-41: Signs from Modiegi's *The Book*

In contrast, poems without VV do not make use of closed eyes. In *For My Aunt,* the poet only uses one instance of closed eyes when the bee nests in the rose with comfort. In *Days of Weeks* the poet also does not use closed eyes often – only when the poet opens the door and sighs.

Whereas poets often close their eyes during VV there are some poems which do not make use of closed eyes (*Trucking*, *A Moment* or *Canned*), so once again, it cannot be seen as a defining feature of VV.

4.4.2.3. Wide eyes

Wide eyes represent brightness, vastness, and roughness, and also show emotions. Figure 4-42 shows the frequency of wide eyes across nine poems.

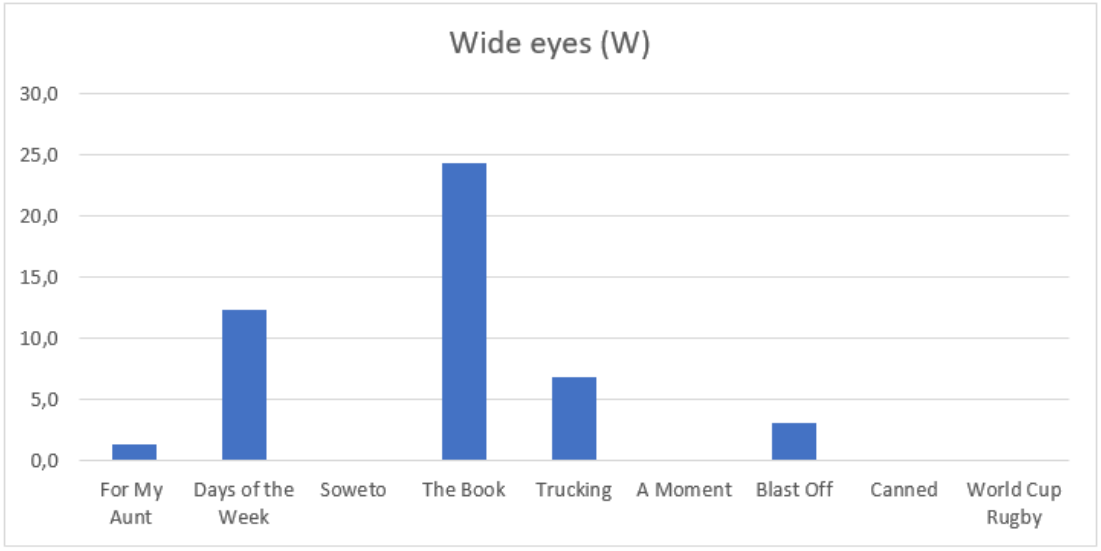


Figure 4-42: Wide eyes

The wide eyes are iconically and metaphorically used in VV. For example, Modiegi's *The Book* uses wide eyes to show a range of emotions such as fear, excitement, nervousness, and surprise (Figure 4-43). *For Trucking*, she uses wide eyes to show a character who is angry (emotion), as well as describing the shape of the truck mirror (size and shape): Figure 4-44




a) EXCITED b) NERVOUS

Figure 4-43: Signs from Modiegi's *The Book*




a) ANGRY DRIVER b) SHAPE-OF-MIRROR-POINT

Figure 4-44: Signs from Modiegi's "Trucking"

Atiyah Asmal's *For My Aunt* only contains one instance of wide eyes when the bee is shocked to learn that the rose is dead. However, in Modiegi's poem, *Days of Weeks,* she uses a lot of wide eyes to indicate repeated sequences of each day of the week when an adult meets and greets a child representing each day (Figure 4-45).



Figure 4-45: Signs from Modiegi's *Days of Weeks*

Wide eyes are frequently used in VV to show a range of emotions visually, which is important in VV. However, once again, there are some poems which do not make use of wide eye aperture, so it is not mandatory for VV to use wide eyes.

4.4.2.4 Repeated blinks

I have captured blinks when it was repeated more than once (i.e., excludes 'normal' blinking). Such repetitive use of blinking can add extra effect to the performance. Figure 4-46 shows the use of repeated blinks in my data (only four out of nine poems exhibit this feature). I did not find any systematic correlation between blinking and VV, although blinking is sometimes used in VV with abnormal frequency to add extra effect.

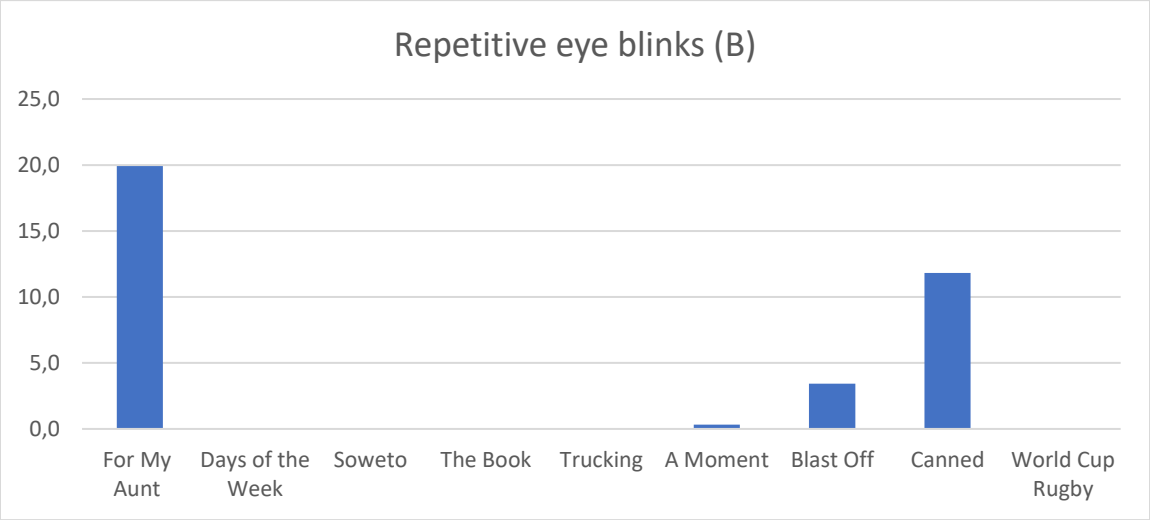


Figure 4-46: Use of repetitive eye blinks

Troy's *Canned* shows an extremely interesting use of repetitive blinking. When he describes how the metals are pressed into a sheet and carried on a belt conveyer, Troy blinks about fourteen times within four seconds, following the movement of the hands (Figure 4-47). This incessant blinking produces a clattering sound image, which is a very unique way of using eye blinks in VV.



Figure 4-47: Signs from Troy's *Canned*

A similar example can be seen in another poem of Troy Painino, *Blast off*. He uses blinking alongside the spaceship moving up with a loud sound. Incessant blinking here allows the Deaf audience to understand the sound of the launch of a spaceship (Figure 4-48). This is also seen in A Moment. This time he only blinks once when he presses the button for the bag to open (Figure 4-49).

In all of these poems, blinking offers a sensory image to enrich the description offered by manual signs.



Figure 4-48: Signs from Troy's *Blast Off*



Figure 4-49: Signs from Troy's *A Moment*

Atiyah Asmal's, *For My Aunt* only uses blinking once during the last sequence in which the poet/bee decides to move on with her life after the death of her beloved aunt. Her blinking is combined with her facial expression to show her emotions (Figure 4-50). *Days of Weeks* exhibits no instance of repetitive blinking.



a) LIFE-GOES-ON

Figure: 4-50: Signs from Atiyah's *For my Aunt*

From all these examples, blinking is effectively used in VV to carry different layers of information, especially conveying information about sounds, which was not observed in non-VV poems.

4.4.2.5. Summary

As we have seen, eye aperture can be used dramatically in VV. It can be used iconically (e.g., closed eyes when sleeping), but it often adds *emotions* (e.g., wide eyes represent anger and surprise), depth to *description* (e.g., a squint represents darkness, narrowness, zooming-in; wide eyes represent brightness, vastness, roughness, and so on), or sometimes even a *sound image* (blinking linked to clattering sounds). Compared to poems that contain no VV, VV seems to utilise a wider range of eye aperture. However, not all poems with VV make use of them. Eye aperture is annotated as 'normal' when there is no notable change from regular open eyes, and

in *Troy's A Moment* most of his eye aperture is marked as normal. Therefore, eye aperture is not a defining feature of VV, although it is used widely in the sequences containing VV.

4.4.3 Mouth actions

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 200) state that "like the eyes, the mouth can add several types of information to manual signs." Mouth actions are used frequently in sign language to provide additional meaning. There are two basic types of mouth action: mouthing and mouth gestures (Boyes Braem & Sutton-Spence, 2001). Crasborn et al. (2008) proposed a finer classification of mouth actions into five separate types:

1. Echo mouth action (E-type)
2. Adverbial mouth action (A-type)
3. Whole face mouth action (W-type)
4. Enacting action, Mouth-for-mouth (4-type)
5. Mouthing action (M-type)

Additionally, I added another type of mouth gesture identified by Kaneko (2020) which is onomatopoetic mouth gesture in creative sign language. The onomatopoeic mouth gesture is involved with vivid sensory image that is associated with the sound, vision and touch, through modifying the shape of the mouth:

6. Onomatopoeic mouth action (O- type)

Figure 4-53 shows the distribution of different types of mouth actions in nine poems.

Mouth Action							
Name of Preformer	Title of peom/story	Echo (E)	Abverbial (A)	Whole Face (W	Enacting (4)	Mouthing (M)	Onomatopeia (O)
Atiyah Asmal	For My Aunt	51,4	7,9	17,3	0,8	22,6	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Days of the Week	29,3	4,8	17,9	4,1	43,9	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Soweto	27,3	0,0	55,8	16,9	0,0	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	The Book	0,7	2,5	74,3	2,4	20,1	0,0
Modiegi Njeyiyena	Trucking	53,5	10,7	21,3	0,0	7,9	6,6
Troy Painino	A Moment	8,1	4,0	84,3	2,0	0,0	1,5
Troy Painino	Blast Off	18,1	12,9	15,9	20,4	4,6	28,0
Troy Painino	Canned	33,5	12,8	2,0	2,7	3,8	45,1
Troy Painino	World Cup Rugby	35,3	4,9	35,7	11,8	4,0	8,3

Table 4-3: Overall distribution of mouth actions across nine poems

4.4.3.1 Echo Mouth Actions (E-Type)

Echo mouth actions accompany the movement of a sign. Figure 4-51 shows the occurrence of this mouth type across the nine poems.

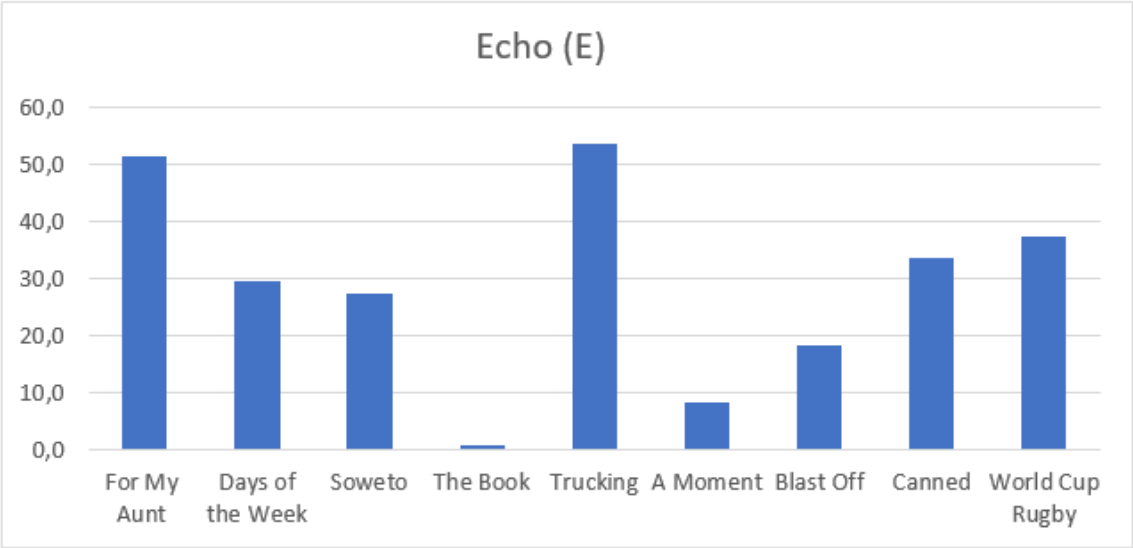


Figure 4-51: Echo mouth actions across nine poems

I noticed that the poet tends to use echo mouth gesture when setting up a scene by describing people, the field, the truck and objects in space. This is important in VV as it allows the detailed illustration of actions and descriptions. In Modiegi's poem *Soweto,* echo mouth actions appear when she sets up the scene of Soweto. Then she continues to use different echo mouth gestures to describe different entities while her hands mostly remain in the shape of a house. Figure 4-52 (a) shows how she starts the poem by describing dark and cold morning. This sign is accompanied by a mouth action that echoes the movement of the hand. As the hands move in small repeated movements, the mouth echoes by releasing the air repeatedly. Figure 4-52 (b) shows the main sign of *SOWETO* accompanied by a particular mouth gesture with a smooth release of air from the mouth. Figure 4-52 (c) shows how a fire is made and smokes come out of the chimneys. Her hand quickly opens and closes to show the smoke, and the mouth echoes the opening and closing movement.



a) DARK-COLD-MORNING b) SOWETO c) SMOKE

Figure 4-52: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

Another example is from *World Cup Rugby*, when the camera zooms into the stadium and describes the crowd of people waiting for the match. The poet's hands move slowly and smoothly to establish different entities (field, stadium, audience) and the mouth follows these movements by releasing the air smoothly (Figure 4-53 a). A similar mouth action can be observed in *Blast Off* when Troy describes the massive land and an enormous white rocket

(Figure 4-54 b). Another example is from the poem *Canned* when he starts the poem with the description of what the factory looks like (Figure 4-55c).



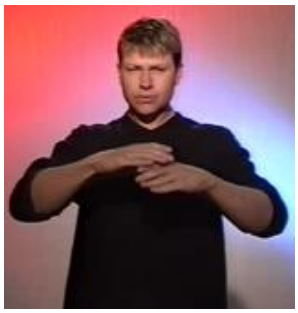
a) FIELD

Figure 4-53 a: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*



b) WHITE ENORMOUS ROCKET

Figure 4-54 b: Signs from Troy's *Blast Off*



c) FACTORY

Figure 4-55 c: Signs from Troy's *Canned*

Modiegi also uses echo mouth gestures at the beginning of her poem *Trucking.* However, she uses them to describe the specific shapes of the truck, rather than a bigger space around it (Figure 4-56). So, echo mouth actions are used when the poet sets up a scene or a particular object in it.



Figure 4-56: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

Echo mouth actions also occur in the middle of the VV poem. In Troy's poem *Moment*, he uses an echo mouth action with a classifier PEOPLE-MARCHING. His mouth releases the air following the movement of the hands (Figure 4-57 a). When he shows SUITCASE-OPENS, he flicks open his index fingers, which is accompanied by an abrupt mouth gesture (Figure 4-57 b).





a) MARCHING b) SUITCASE-OPENS

Figure 4-57: Signs from Troy's *A Moment*

Blast off also uses many examples of echo mouth actions to add extra sensational information. For example, the sign BIG-SMOKE (hands move up with internal movement) is accompanied by puffed cheeks. When the rocket moves away and gets smaller and smaller, the mouth accompanies a manual sign as if blowing a candle to add extra feeling to the description (Figure 4-58).



Figure 4-58: Echo mouth gesture from Troy's *Blast Off*

Canned uses many echo mouth gestures along with the detailed explanations of how cans are made in the factory. Once again, echo mouth actions accompany manual signs, but contribute to extra sensational information. In Figure 4-59a), Troy describes how cans are moving on the belt conveyer rather clumsily and the mouth echoes such clumsiness. Figure 4-59 b) shows how a piece of metal moves along, once again not smoothly, and the mouth accompanies and emphasises such motion.



a) CANNED MOVED b) CANNED BELT

Figure 4-59 a & b: Signs from Troy's *Canned*

Modiegi's *Trucking* also makes use of echo mouth actions when she describes the scene of driving. The truck is followed by other trucks, which is described by classifiers (CAR-FOLLOW-ANOTHER-CAR), accompanied by a smooth mouth gesture (Figure 4-60).



a) CAR-FOLLOW –ANOTHER -CAR

Figure 4-60: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

Lastly, I looked at the poems which do not contain VV. In Atiyah Asmal's *For My Aunt* uses echo mouth gestures when she describes a bee flying to and away from the rose with an F-handshape (classifier). The mouth ('whoo') follows the movement of the hand (Figure 4-61). The other poem without VV, *Days of Weeks*, does not use many echo mouth actions, probably because there is little description of scenes or objects but mostly interactions between characters.



Figure 4-61: Signs from Atiyah's *For My Aunt*

While E-type mouth actions occur across all poems (VV or no VV), it is interesting to observe that they appear very frequently at the beginning of the poems that contain VV, in order to establish a scene or an object. This creates a very cinematic impression at the beginning of VV.

4.3.3.2 Adverbial Mouth Actions (A-type)

Adverbial mouth actions add adverbial or adjectival information to a manual sign (Crasborn et.al. 2008). They modify the meaning of the manual sign or give more details just like adverbs

or adjectives spoken language. Figure 4-62 below shows the occurrences of A-type mouth actions:

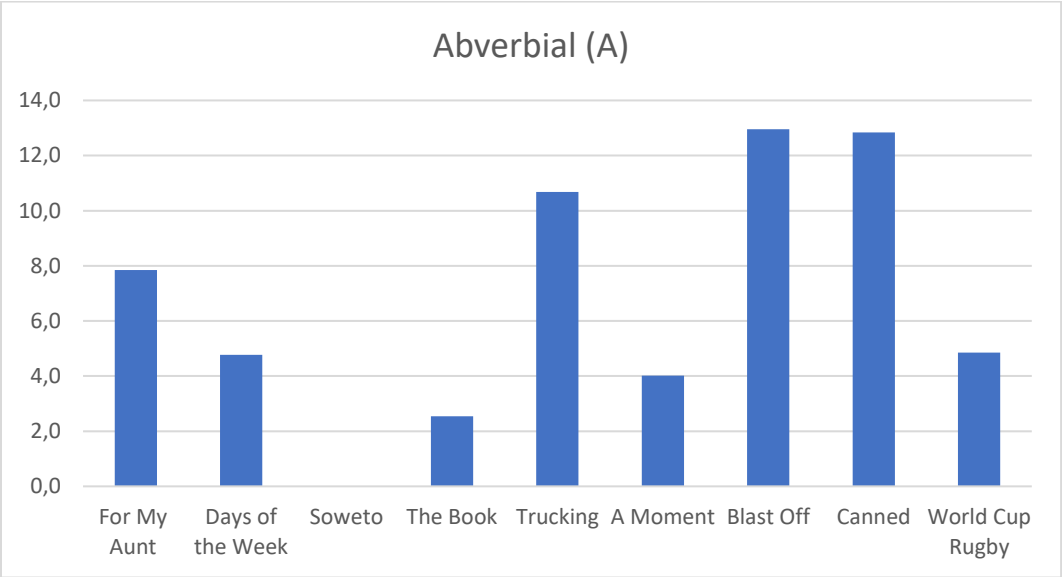
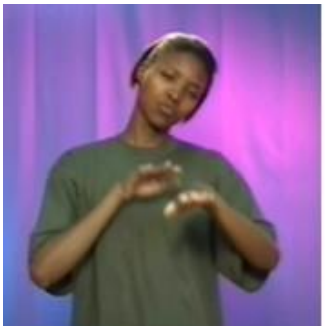


Figure 4-62: Adverbial mouth actions across nine poems

As can be seen in Figure 4-62, adverbial use of mouth gesture is very common across some of the poems. For example, in Modiegi's *Trucking* she uses adverbial mouth actions to show something is done slowly and comfortably (Figure 4-63 a) or tensely (Figure 4-63 b).



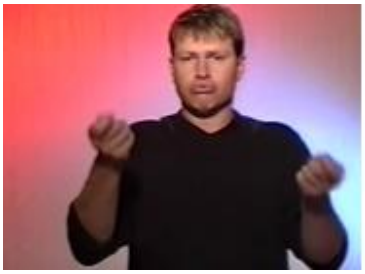
a) SLOW- COMFORTABLE



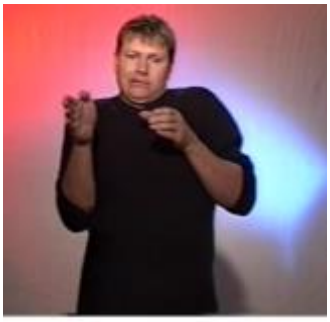
b) TENSELY

Figure 4-63: Signs from Modieigi's *Trucking*

Similarly, in *Canned*, an adverbial mouth action is added when Troy drives a truck "carefully" (Figure 4-64 a). When he describes how a label is attached around a can, he uses a particular mouth action to show how tight it is (Figure 4-65b)



a) DRIVING – his lips are pressed as if blowing to show he is driving a truck carefully



b) LABEL-AROUND-CAN – his lips are pursed to show the tightness

Figure 4-64: Signs from Troy's *Canned*

A Moment does not contain many instances of adverbial mouth actions, but an example can be found when Troy opens the door. The mouth action shows that he did it very carefully and slowly (Figure 4-65).



a) DOOR-OPEN

Figure 4-65: Signs from Troy's A Moment

In *World Cup Rugby*, Troy uses an adverbial mouth action to show the degree or intensity of an action. When the crowd was excited, he crunches his teeth to show that they are 'very' excited (Figure 4-66).



a) CROWD-EXCITED

Figure 4-66: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*

Not all poems with VV exhibit adverbial mouth actions. Modiegi's *Soweto* does not use them at all. Instead, she uses mostly echo mouth gestures throughout her poem.

In contrast, Atiyah's *For My Aunt* and Modiegi's *Days of Weeks* both use a reasonable amount of adverbial/adjectival mouth gestures. It seems like signers use adverbial mouth actions to add meaning and more details to the stories, regardless of whether they contain VV or not.

4.3.3.3 Whole face mouth actions (W-type)

Whole face mouth actions are when the mouth moves as part of face expressions which often contributes to the overall emotion expressed by the sign in a story or poem. This is more common than 4-type mouth actions. Figure 4-67 shows the occurrences of this type of mouth actions across the nine poems:

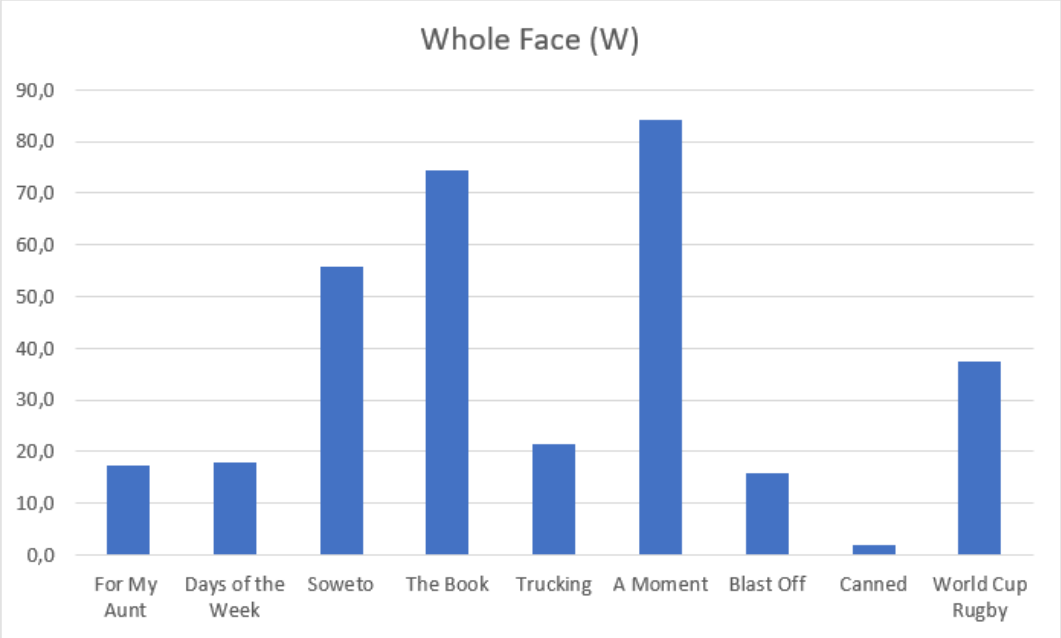


Figure 4-67: W-type mouth actions across nine poems.

W-type is often used in VV stories or poems as it helps showing the emotions of characters. So, it is not surprising that Modiegi's *Soweto* or *The Book*, which contain clear characters, use W-type mouth actions. Troy's *A Moment* does not have a strong character but describes the actions of one person through mime, and thus facial expressions are important. In contrast, a poem like *Canned* contains very few instances of W-type because there is no character involved.

Figure 4-68 shows some examples of W-type mouth actions from the poems with VV. Figure 4-68 (a) is from *World Cup Rugby* in which Troy shows the whole face of the crowd being shocked and amazed. Similarly, in his other poem *Blast off*, he shows the emotion of the crowd shocked and amazed (b). In *A Moment*, he uses his whole face mouth gestures to represent a person through mime-like gestures (c).



a) CROWD b) SHOCKED & AMAZED c) DOOR-OPEN

Figure 4-68: Troy's whole-face mouth gestures

In Soweto, Modiegi becomes (anthropomorphises) a house and shows emotions such as happiness or sadness (Figure 4-69 a). Modiegi's *The Book* is full of emotions and she uses whole face mouth gestures to show different characters (b). In *Trucking*, she enacts different drivers (c).



a) HOUSE HAPPY b) BOOK c)DRIVER

Figure 4-69: Modiegi's whole-face mouth gestures

It is interesting to see that poems with no VV do not use much whole-face mouth actions although they have characters. *For My Aunt* shows characters through different handshapes rather than enacting. *Days of the Weeks* uses more of clear role shifts (changing body postures) rather than through facial expressions.

Whole face mouth actions are important in VV because the performers would become characters of the stories. It helps the elements of 'becoming' that are linked to VV.

4.3.3.4 Enacting mouth actions (4-type)

Enacting mouth actions are known as 'mouth-for-mouth' gestures: the mouth performs what the mouth usually does (Crasborn et al., 2008). It is more gestural, such as screaming, biting or eating (accompanied by a mouth gesture of 'ba ba ba'). Figure 4-70 shows the frequency of this type of mouth across the nine poems.

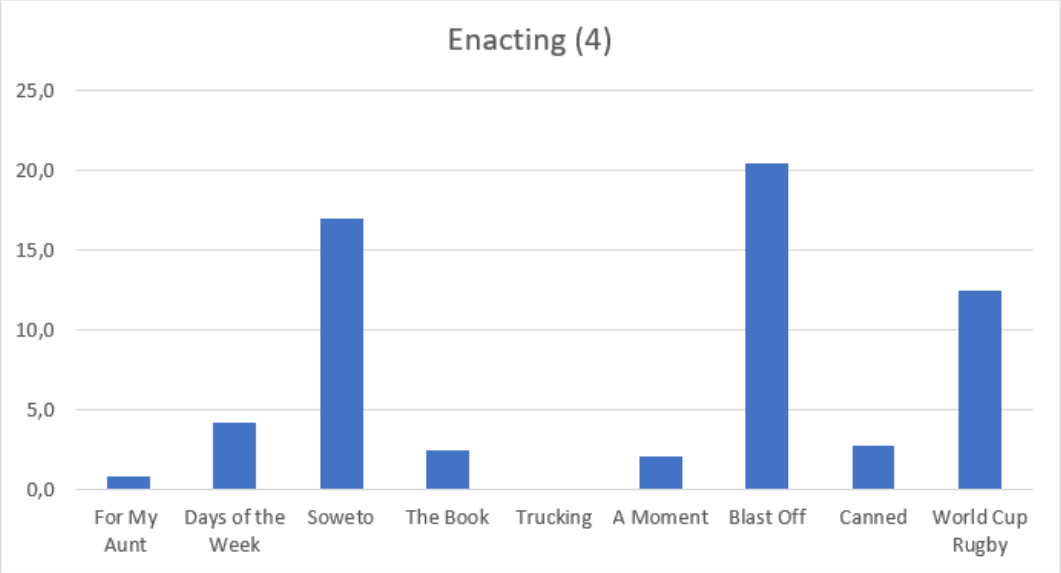


Figure 4-70: Frequency of enacting mouth gestures across nine poems

Four poems, *The Book*, *Soweto*, *Blast off* and *World Cup Rugby* use a significant number of enacting mouth gestures as they involve characters.

In *The Book,* Modiegi uses enacting mouth gestures with the character of an anthropomorphised book. For example, Figure 4-71 shows how the book sneezes. Later the human character also sneezes.



Figure 4-71: Signs from Modiegi's *The Book*

Modiegi's *Soweto* uses enacting mouth gestures with an anthropomorphised Soweto. When there was smoke, she uses her mouth to show that she cannot breathe or she is coughing (Figure 4-72).



Figure 4-72: Signs from Modiegi's *Soweto*

In *Blast off*, Troy uses E-type mouth actions when he shows how people sing or react to the launching of the rocket (Figure 4-73).



Figure 4-73: Signs from Troy's *Blast Off*

World Cup Rugby has many good examples of enacting mouth actions, such as playing a trumpet (Figure 4-74 a), singing (b), shouting 'yay!' (c) or blowing a whistle (d).



a) TRUMPET b) SINGING c) SHOUTING 'YAY!' d) BLOWING A WHISTLE

Figure 4-74: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*

Atiyah's *For My Aunt* uses very few instances of enacting mouth actions as characters are described but do not act. *Days of Week* uses them when the human character moves her mouth 'mmm..' (possibly A-type) while waiting for the visit by each day (repeated) but that is the only instance.

Enacting mouth gestures are relatively rare in general, as the mouth does not often perform independent tasks but it is used more as part of the whole face gesture (thus becoming W-type). But it is still interesting to find out that VV seems to use more enacting mouth gestures than those without VV.

4.3.3.5 Mouthing (M-type)

Mouthing derives from spoken language. For example, a signer mouths the English word 'time' with the sign TIME. It is expected that VV uses less mouthings than other registers as it does not rely on established signs which are often accompanied by mouthings. Figure 4-75 shows the frequency of mouthings appearing in each of the nine poems.

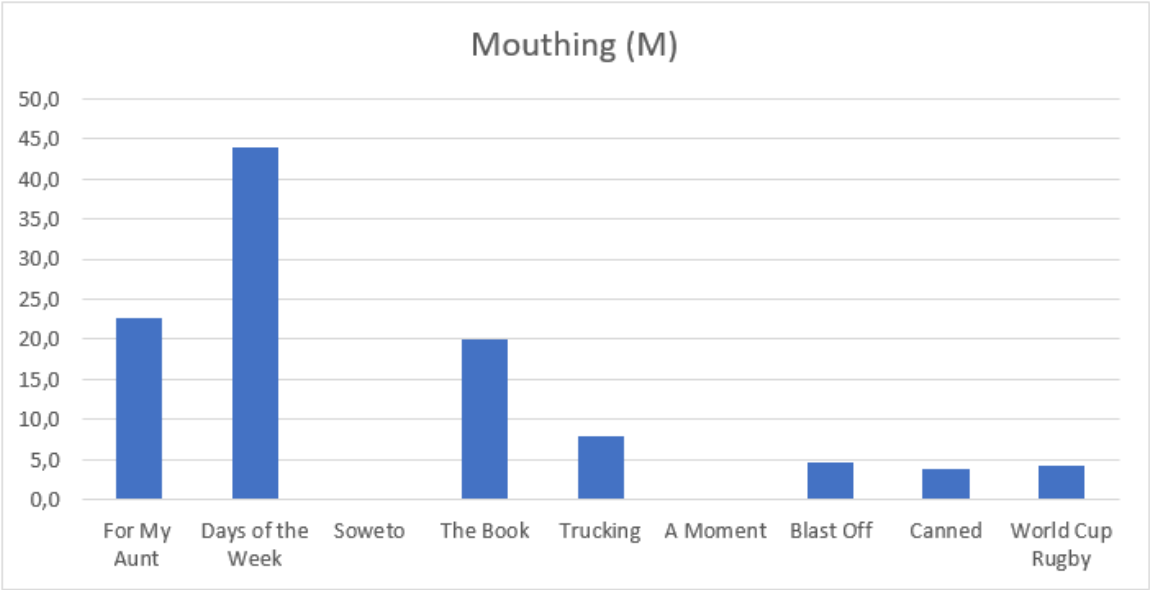


Figure 4-75: Mouthings in nine poems

It is not surprising to see that VV hardly uses mouthing in their poems compared to non-VV. VV does not rely on everyday vocabulary (established signs) and is more creative and artistic. It has a unique cinematic way of telling stories that cannot be accompanied by mouthings derived from English. Most of the VV poems have little influence from a spoken language in their construction. In contrast, poems which do not contain VV use mouthings much more frequently. In *For My Aunt*, the first sequence is characterised by frequent mouthing of English words such as 'wise' 'love' 'care' and 'deaf'. Modiegi's *Days of Week* also uses many mouthings to explain to the audience what the day's activities look like: for example, go to school, work all day, etc. It is because *Days of Week* is not a VV poem and uses more narrative structure where the poet uses many established signs with mouthing.

VV may include mouthings when the poet enacts a character who uses mouthing. For example, the anthropomorphised book in the *The Book* mouths 'ready' with the sign READY, also she mouths 'read, read, come, enjoy' (Figure 4-76). Another example is Modiegi's *Trucking* in which she uses mouthing when the deaf truck driver is fighting with other (hearing) drivers such as

saying ‘go away’, ‘watch’ and at the end she signs ME DEAF with the mouthing of ‘me deaf’ (Figure 4-77).



a) READY b) READ

Figure 4-76: Signs from Modeigi’s *The Book*



a) GO AWAY b) ME-DEAF

Figure 4-77: Signs from Modiegi’s *Trucking*

Modiegi’s *Soweto* and Troy’s *A Moment* contain no mouthing. *Soweto* is a poetic piece where there is no need to use mouthing or borrow English words. She uses her mouth gestures to create extra poetic effect (which I will discuss later). Troy’s *A Moment* also creates visual images in sign language through different visual or sensory images associated with action or object, and thus there is no room for established signs with English mouthing’s.

It is relatively clear that VV does not utilise mouthings (except when it portrays a character using day-to-day signing) while non-VV performances make use of them. VV is a visual and

cinematic storytelling technique in sign language in which signers do not borrow English words into their visual performances.

4.3.3.6. Onomatopoeic mouth actions (O-type)

Onomatopoeia mouth gestures evoke a vivid sensory image related to sound, vision and touch which is shown through the shape of the mouth as well as how the air is released (Kaneko, 2020). They are widely observed in artistic signing created and performed by Deaf artists. They help the Deaf audience to understand sounds and other sensory representations in cinematographic ways.

Figure 4-78 shows the occurrences of this type of mouth gestures.

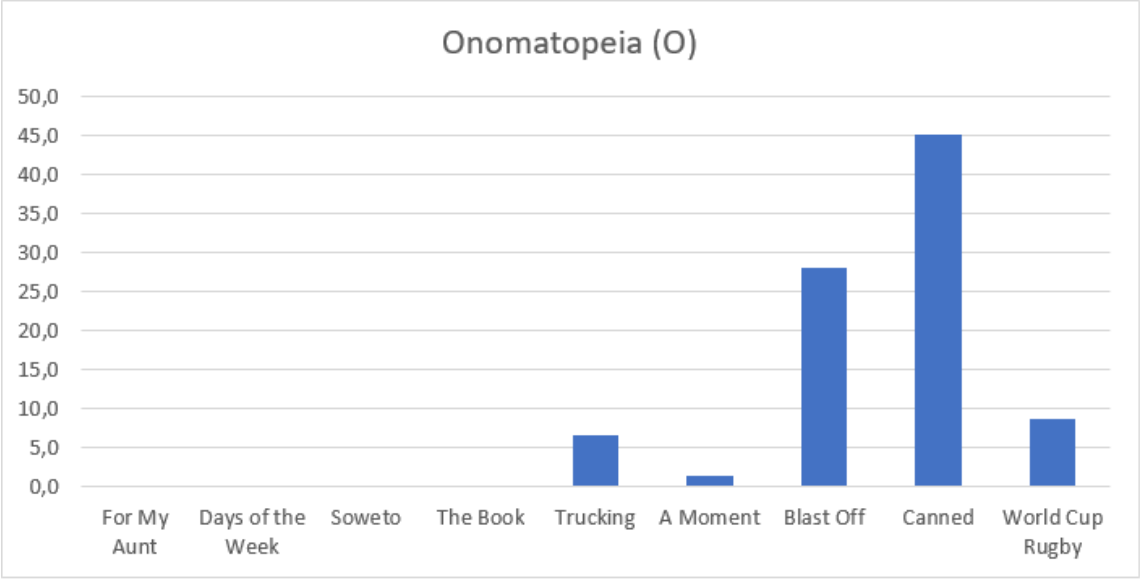


Figure 4-78 O –Onomatopoeia actions across nine poems.

It is interesting to see that some poems contain no instance of O-type mouth gestures but some (such as *Blast off* and *Canned*) contain a high number. Both poems include a lot of descriptions of sensory images.

In Troy's *Blast Off*, he describes the launching of a rocket, which involves many sensational descriptions – sound, vision, vibration, and so on. He makes good use of his mouth actions to convey the feeling of watching the rocket being launched. He uses an onomatopoeic mouth gesture with clock ticking (Figure 4-79a), or flickering of the light (b) and how the land vibrates when the rocket is launched (c).



a) CLOCK -TICKING b) FLICKERING- LIGHT c) LAND-VIBRATE

Figure 4-79: Signs from Troy's *Blast off*

Troy's *Canned* contains many instances of O-type mouth gestures associated with the production of cans at the factory, such as how a can bounces on the conveyer ('bom bom' Figure 4-80 a). He even points to his ear to indicate he is describing the actual sound when the contents of a can is poured over ('shee…' Figure 4-80 b).



a) CAN BOM BOOM b) CAN POUR SHEE

Figure 4-80: Signs from Troy's *Canned*

Troy's other poem, *World Cup Rugby*, also contains examples of O-type. When a plane passes, his mouth moves in 'whoo….' (Figure 4-81 a) to show the loud sound it makes. He also uses his

mouth to represent the sound and vibration of the drum ('bang bang' Figure 4-81b). When players dance, he uses O-type mouth gesture ('boo boo') to show the vibrations on the ground (Figure 4-81c).



a) PLANE-PASS WHOO b) DRUM-BANG –BANG c) DANCER-BOO-BOO

Figure 4-81: Signs from Troy's *World Cup Rugby*

It is very interesting to see the difference according to each poet. As can be seen above, Troy likes to give detailed descriptions of sounds or sensations through frequent use of O-type. However, Modiegi does not do the same. She does not use any O-type mouth gestures in T*he Boo*k and *Soweto*. In *Trucking*, she uses two examples - first when she mouthed 'beep beep' when the driver hooted (Figure 4-82 a) and second to show the sound when the car flipped over (b).



a) DRIVER-HOOTED BEEP b) CAR-FLIP OVER

Figure 4-82: Signs from Modiegi's *Trucking*

The poems without VV, *For My Aunt* and *Days of Weeks* do not contain any instances of O-type mouth actions. It is clear from the above explanation that the onomatopoeic mouth gesture is

important in description-based VV (such as *Canned* or *Blast Off*) as they describe the sensory images. That will help the audiences to clearly understand visual, audio or tactile images.

4.3.3.7. Summary of mouth actions

As described so far, while there is no clear pattern between VV and mouth actions. It is also important to note that these mouth actions often overlap, or can be interpreted in different ways – for example, A-type and E-type are often very difficult to distinguish, and O-type and E-type can overlap. Having said that, some mouth actions can be helpful in distinguishing VV and non-VV.

Mouthings (M) are not often used in VV (except when characters interact) while they are very common in non-VV poems. Adverbial mouth gestures (A) seem to appear across all types of poems as they are essential in adding extra information to any sign. Echo mouth gestures (E) are useful in establishing a scene and describing objects in a cinematographic way. Enacting mouth gestures (4) and whole-face mouth gestures (W) both 'enact' characters and occur frequently in VV, but W-type is much more common as it is linked to facial expressions which is linked to becoming the characters. Lastly, onomatopoeic mouth gestures (O) are important in VV as they contribute to the very visual way of showing VV.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to look more closely to the three linguistic features that I explored in Chapter 4 (in order to answer my second research question), as well as the insight I gained from the workshops (in order to answer my third research question).

In the previous chapter I focused on the lingustic features of each eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions. This chapter focuses further on these three nonmanual features and how they characterise VV or not. As seen in Chapter 4, the differences between poems that contain VV and those that do not were not clear – there are much more individual differences among the poems, rather than features distinct to VV in general. This may be due to the fact I only chose to focus on nine poems – seven poems with VV and two without VV. The number is ovbiously too small to make any generalisation.

Having acknowledged such limitation of this research, it is still useful to look at these features in more depth. Chapter 4 focused on each type within a linguistic feature (gaze to the audience, squinting, mouthing, etc.) and compared the distribution of that feature across nine poems. Here, I will look at an overall distribution of each feature (eye gaze, eye aperture or mouth action) in two groups: poems with VV and those without. Then I will also look at each poem to see its distribution of features – to support my point that each poem or poet chooses different features, rather than clearly indicating if they have VV or not.

5.2. Comparison of VV and non-VV according to three features

5.2.1. Eye gaze

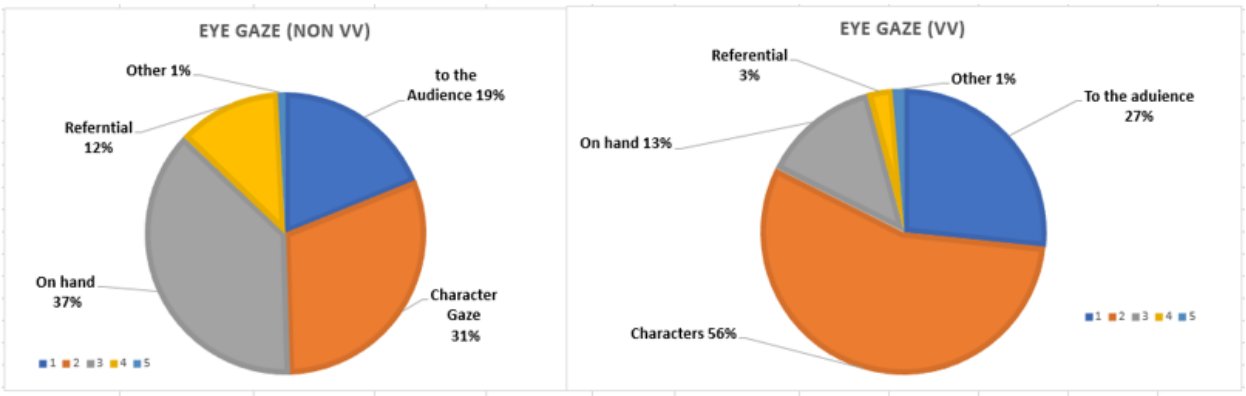


Figure 5-1: Eye Gaze Non-VV and VV

Eye gaze distribution for VV and non-VV poems showed some predictable results, but also some surprising results. In terms of gaze to the audience, I expected VV to have much less than non-VV poems, as I assumed that the poet would be immersed in the performance during VV without acknowledging the audience. When there is no VV, I expected the poet to look at the audience more. However, the findings show that poems with VV contain more examples of gaze to the audience than those without VV (27% and 19%, respectively). This once again can be due to the fact the size of samples was small. It can also be due to that fact that VV can be used to establish or describe a poetic scene during which it is not unusual for the performer to look at the audience and try to invite them to their performance. Once they finished establishing the scenes, the performers tend to break off eye contact and immerse themselves into their story through VV.

For example, Modiegi's *The Book* starts off with the gaze to the audience when she describes the bookshelf. Once she starts to anthropomorphise the book and starts telling the story, her gaze is no longer fixed on the audience. However, in another poem with VV, Troy's *Canned*, the gaze of the poet is fixed on the audience most of the time. It looks as if the poet wants to document the process of making cans and wants the audience to see it.

Atiyah's *For My Aunt*, the poem without VV, starts off with gaze to the audience, when she explains about her aunt. Once she starts to become the bee who visits the rose, she breaks off

eye contact with the audience, and her gaze mostly follows her hands or can be understood as the bee's gaze.

As you can see, gaze to the audience may not be a feature that can distinguish VV or non-VV – it seems to correlate more with the structure and style of individual poems.

In contrast, a much higher percentage of character's gaze in VV compared to non-VV (56% as opposed to 31%) is what I expected. As explained in Chapter 2, the essence of VV is 'becoming', so characters, interactions, mime, anthropomorphism (all of them tend to involve character's gaze) are important. The performer becomes the character by using swift shifts in eye gaze, representing different characters.

This does not mean that non-VV poems do not have character's gaze. Both *For My Aunt* and *Days of Weeks* exhibit some instances of character's gaze. Interestingly, it is used mostly with clear body posture to indicate role shift – such as the conversation between an adult and a child in *Days of Weeks* (the poet moves her body and looks up/down to clearly indicate this interaction). In VV, such shifts are very subtly and swiftly done (i.e., without much change in body posture or gaze direction).

In terms of gaze on hands, poems without VV contain much more instances than those with VV (37% as opposed to 13%). *For My Aunt* shows intense use of gaze on hands when the poet shows the bee and the rose (her gaze follows how the bee flies to the rose). Poems with VV in general do not employ gaze on hands, except Troy's "Canned" which contains many instances of gaze following his hands that describe the manufacturing process. Also, Modiegi's *Soweto* looks at the rows of houses in order to emphasise the importance of houses in township where the story is set.

Referential gaze is the least common gaze pattern in both categories, but it is used more in the poems without VV than those with (12% as opposed to 3%). This is mostly attributed to Modiegi's *Days of Weeks*, which uses referential gaze during the sequence of introducing the day of the week, which turns into a classifier of children, who approach a house and knock on the door. This sequence is repeated for all days of the week, therefore increasing the instances

of referential gaze. In poems with VV, Modiegi's *Trucking* shows some instances of referential gaze when she drives.

In summary, while eye gaze is not a defining feature of VV, it is useful to see how VV makes use of different gaze patterns. The performer has choices in using different types of eye gaze. VV, as explained in Chapter 2, is primarily the process of 'becoming' (although can be used with the description of scenes as well) and the gaze plays a crucial role in that process.

The importance of eye gaze has been reported in sign language poetry (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016; Kaneko & Mesch, 2013; and Sutton-Spence & Woll, 1999), but my findings show that it is also important in a more vernacular form of signed performance.

5.2.2. Eye aperture

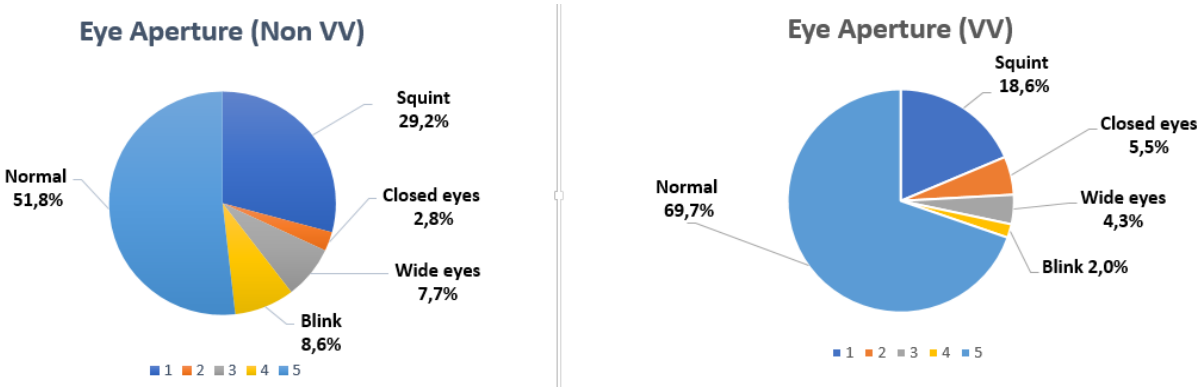


Figure: 5-2 Eye Aperture Non VV and VV

Eye aperture is the degree of opening of the eyes which can add various kinds of information. The findings were surprising in that most of aperture in poems with VV is 'normal'. 'Normal' is when there is no notable change from open eyes. I expected VV to have less 'normal' and more differences in aperture to show various emotions or interactions among characters. I expected poems without VV to have more normal and less varieties. However, the results were the opposite. Poems without VV show more varieties and less 'normal' aperture.
This means that VV does not make use of varying eye aperture, perhaps because the performer takes on a character's perspective and behaves 'normally' in the respective character roles.

Poems without VV employ a wider range of aperture to tell, explain or describe different elements in the story.

Eye aperture is often related to emotions (wide eyes show wonder or surprise, squinting shows sadness or comfort). Such emotions are important both in general creative signing and in VV. However, just like role shift was conveyed more subtly in VV than in non-VV storytelling, it seems that emotions are shown more subtly in VV – compared to a non-VV poem such as *Days of Weeks* in which emotions are exaggerated with wide eyes or squinting.
Closed eyes are used frequently in VV as they seem to show deep overwhelming emotion (as in "World Cup Rugby" in which both the players and the audience become very emotional). Performers seem to want the audience to feel the emotions of the characters more directly by closing their eyes.

Squinting seems to be useful in establishing a visual image of stories and thus is used both in poems with VV and those without. *Canned* shows images of can-making throughout the poem. The poet's eyes are squint as they follow how cans are made and carried on the belt conveyer. Another poem *Soweto* also uses squint throughout the poem. This time, squint is closely linked to the anthropomorphised character of Soweto – maybe to show the closeness and gentleness of a township (as opposed to other 'posh' areas, which can be characterised with very different facial expressions including eye aperture).

In terms of blinking, even though VV uses less instances than poems without VV, Troy's *Canned* shows a very interesting use of blinking. It is used to describe the can-making process by adding sound images (see Chapter 4). The similar use of blinking as sound image is observed in *Blast off* as clicking sound is accompanied by quick blinks.

As seen above, eye aperture does not define VV but it does play an important role in creative sign language in general as suggested by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016).

5.2.3. Mouth actions

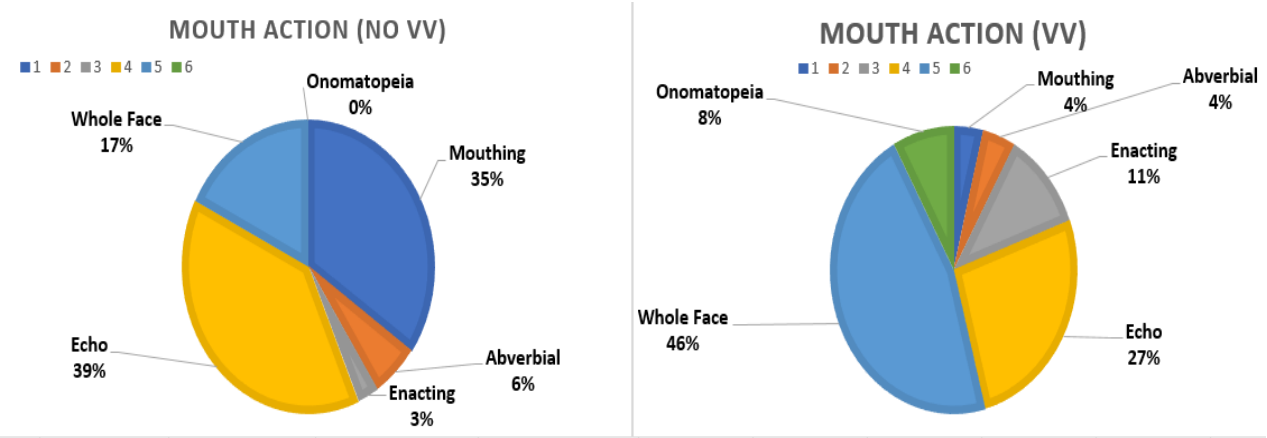


Figure 5-3: Mouth Action Non VV and VV

There are clear differences in terms of mouth actions between VV and non-VV such as mouthing (M) appears much more frequently in non-VV than in VV, or VV makes use of whole-face (W) very often. Such findings completely matched my original expectation.

First of all, mouthings occur in non-VV poems much more often than in VV (35% as opposed to 4%). As I explained in Chapter 2, mouthing is borrowed from a spoken language, and it usually accompanies established signs. General storytelling often makes use of established signs, therefore it is not surprising that it contains more instances of mouthing. For example, Modiegi's *Days of Weeks* uses lexical signs such as MONDAY, TUESDAY…, WORK, SCHOOL, GO, and so on, which are all accompanied by mouthings. *For My Aunt* also contains established signs such as AUNT, BEAUTIFUL, WISE, WARM and DEAF with mouthings.

VV, on the other hand, hardly uses established signs – only when a character 'speaks' to another, such as an anthropomorphised book invites a reader by saying COME, COME, YOU READY? Which are the very few instances of mouthing observed in my data. When VV enacts characters, the performer uses more CA (becoming) than established signs (telling). There is little influence of a spoken language in the construction of VV.

Another distinctive feature of VV is that it employs W-type mouth actions, in which the mouth is seen as part of the entire facial expression. This is expected as VV shows characters and their emotions through the face, so the mouth also contributes to the overall expressions.

Enacting (4-type) mouth actions are also more common in VV than poems without VV (11% as opposed to 3%). This is also not surprising as VV contains a lot of actions, some of which involve the action of the mouth itself. As we saw in Chapter 4, Troy's *Blast Off* describes many actions by the mouth (singing; playing the trumpet).

Adverbial mouth actions (A-type) appear more or less in the same manner in poems with VV and those without. This seems to be the feature of general signing, not specific to any particular form of storytelling. Similarly, echo mouth actions (E-type) were observed both in VV and non-VV, although the latter showed more instances than the former (39% as opposed to 27%). The general storytelling seems to use slightly more E-type, such as in Atiyah's *For My Aunt*, in which the poet's mouth moves with her hands. But the difference is not huge.

Onomatopoeic use of the mouth is only found in VV, not in non-VV poems. VV favours onomatopoeia because it tries to give very detailed description, especially sensory images, for which onomatopoeia is useful. This is relevant to description-based VV. For example, *Trucking* has examples of car sounds ("beep beep" for hooting); *Canned* expresses various sounds during the manufacturing of cans using the mouth (see Chapter 4).

My findings support my original analysis (Asmal & Kaneko, 2020) that mouth gestures are more important in VV than mouthing, and that the use of 4-type (mouth for mouth) and W-type (mouth as part of the whole face) are common in VV. In addition, the importance of O-type mouth actions is evident. The differences are much more clearly shown than eye gaze or eye aperture. In this sense, mouth actions seem to be a feature that can potentially be characteristic of VV.

5.3. Individual poems

In Chapter 4, I analysed the three features across nine poems. In this section, I would like to focus on each poem and see its distribution of features. I will also link it to the co-occurring

elements (e.g. particular theme or style) of each work. The aim of this section is to highlight the fact that distribution of features is determined by the unique context of each poem, rather than having VV or not.

5.3.1 For My Aunt by Atiyah Asmal

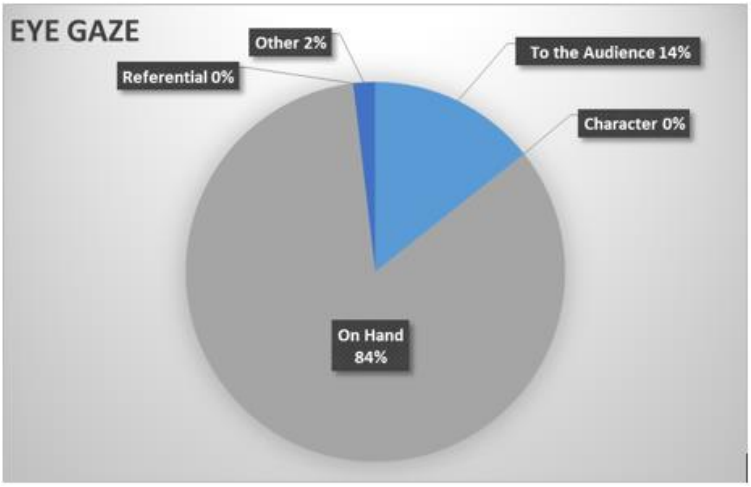


Figure 5-4a: Eye gaze

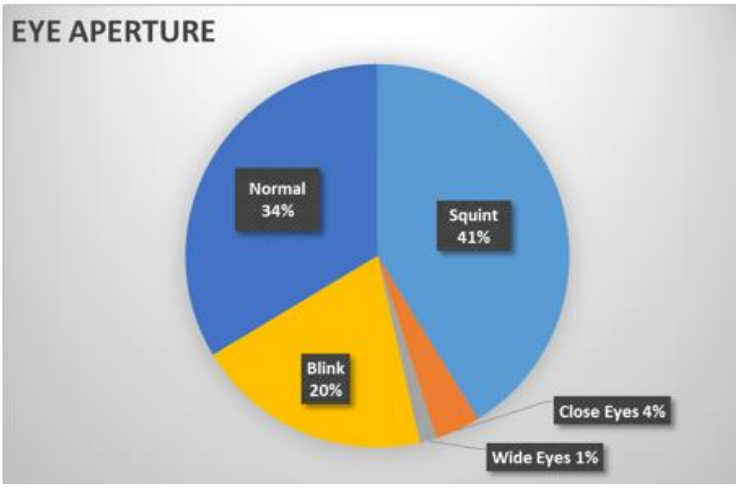


Figure 5-4b: Eye aperture

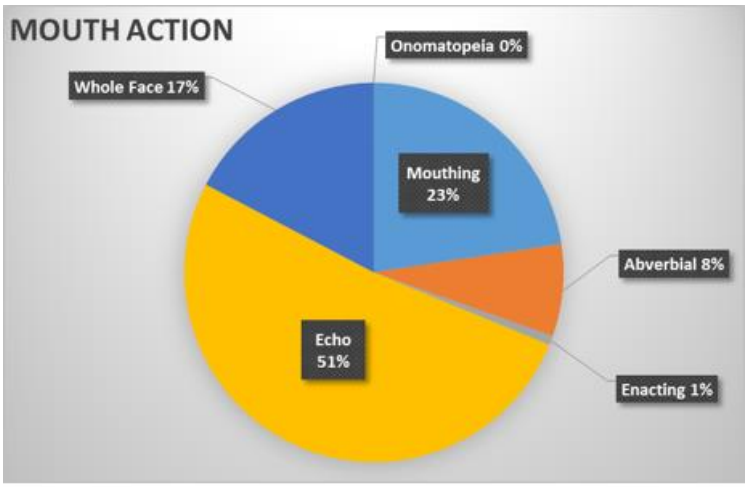


Figure 5-4c: Mouth Action

This poem has a theme of Deafhood and Deaf identity, represented through a bond between the poet (myself) and her Deaf aunt which is expressed through the use of metaphor (the aunt is seen as a rose, and the poet is seen as a bee nesting in the rose). In the first half of the poem, the poet introduces the aunt as the rose, describing her personal qualities (such as she is Deaf, wise, warm, beautiful, etc.). In the second half, the poem's style changes where the poet uses classifier handshapes to represent the bee and the rose.

This piece contains no VV but rather follows poetic rules (handshape, repetition, symmetry, etc.). It is an example of a 'genteel' form of Signart, rather than a 'vernacular', in Pollitt (2014)'s terms. It also makes use of classifiers (showing) more than CA (becoming). Instead of taking a character perspective (becoming a bee), the poet chooses to step back and describes the story from an observer perspective.

During the first half of the poem, the poet uses established signs and indexing. Her left hand stays the same (representing the aunt) and her right hand explains different aspects of her aunt. This sequence is characterised with gaze to the audience and mouthing. Eye aperture is mostly 'normal' but sometimes contains squinting when she uses indexing to emphasise the attributes of the aunt.

During the second half, the poet switches to the use of classifiers. The gaze is mostly on her hands, tracing the movement of the bee. E-type mouth gestures (echo) are the most popular,

but it also contains instances of W-type mouth actions representing the subtle emotions of the bee. There is one instance of repeated blinking at the very end, when the bee, after the death of the rose, decides to move on with her life, symbolising a new life.

This poem follows the features that are expected of a typical non-VV, genteel art form, which is more based on linguistic rules.

5.3.2 Days of the Week by Modiegi Moime-Njeyiyana

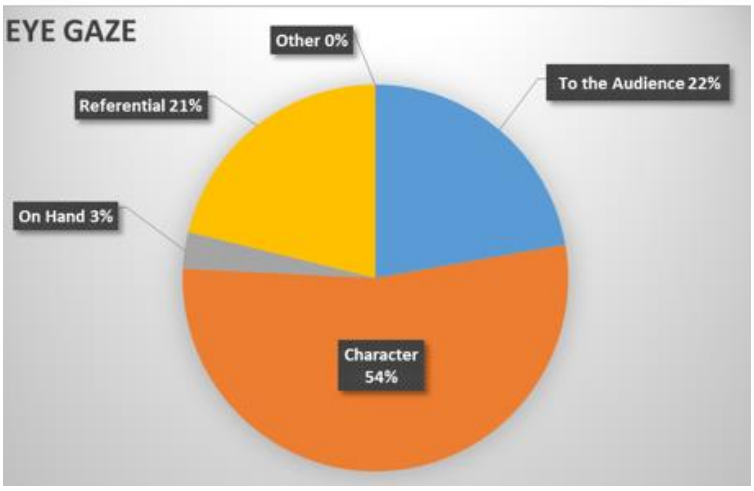


Figure 5-5a: Eye gaze

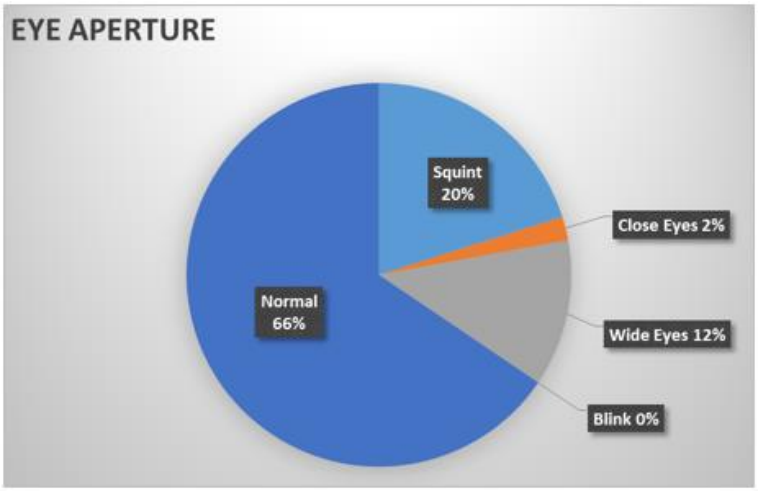


Figure 5-5b: Eye aperture

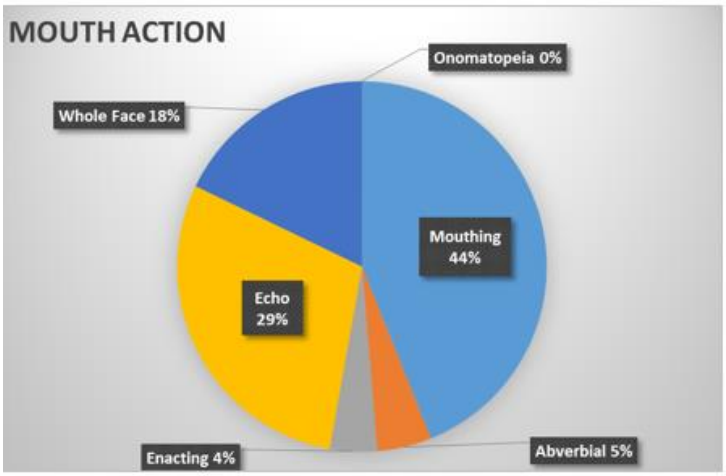


Figure 5-5c: Mouth Actions

This is a story that was developed for educational purposes – teaching young Deaf children about each day of the week. It contains no VV. While it does contain instances of CA, it is based largely on established signs and classifiers – telling and showing, rather than becoming. The viewer needs to have the linguistic knowledge of SASL in order to understand this story. It contains the character perspective (when the adult and children have a conversation) but also contains observer perspective (classifiers). When the personified day of the week explains what each day is like, it becomes more of a description than showing or becoming.

In terms of eye gaze, it contains a reasonable amount of gaze to the audience, as Modiegi tries to engage them. The majority of her gaze patterns are character's gaze. This is not surprising as each day becomes an anthropomorphised character and interacts with the narrator. This sequence is repeated, and thus the same gaze behaviours are observed.

Eye aperture is mostly normal with some instances of squint (with classifiers).

In terms of mouth actions, similar to *For My Aunt,* mouthings are very frequently used due to the fact that this story contains many established signs. Echo mouth actions are also common as they tend to support classifiers. When the poet represents different characters (different days of the week), some instances of the mouth as part of the whole face (W-type) is observed. Very few instances of adverbial and enacting mouth actions are observed.

Both *For My Aunt* and *Days of Weeks* rely on the linguistic knowledge of SASL, and thus can be categorised towards the 'genteel' form of Signart (Pollitt 2014) rather than containing visual vernacular. They clearly stand on the classifier end of the continuum explained by Peter Cook (2019).

5.3.3 *Soweto* by Modiegi Moime-Njeyiyana

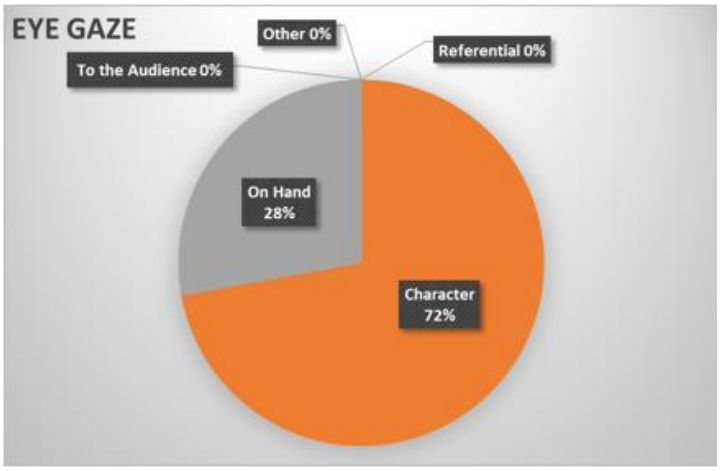


Figure 5-6a: Eye gaze

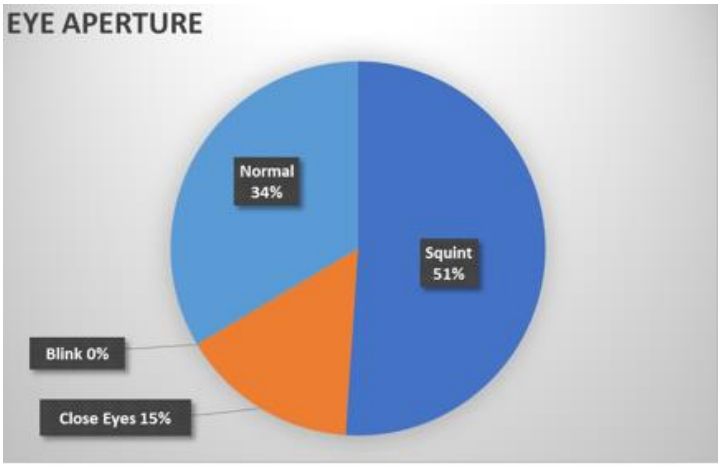


Figure 5-6b: Eye aperture

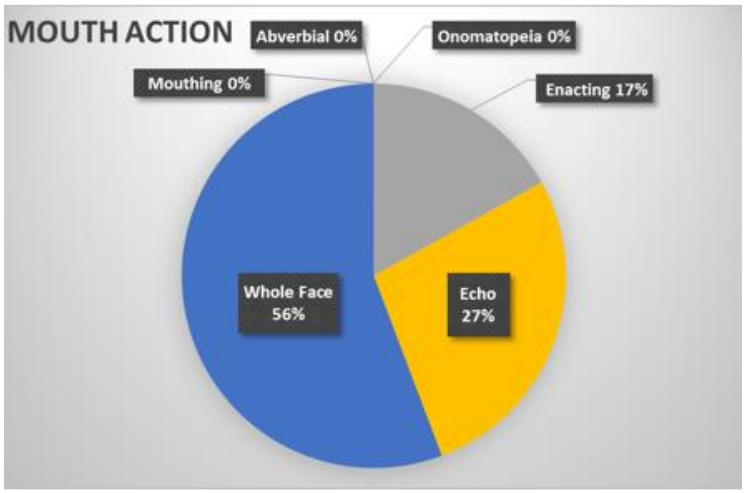


Figure 5-6c: Mouth Action

As explained before, this is a story told from the perspective of an anthropomorphised township, Soweto. Soweto is a township developed during apartheid for black people to live. This poem illustrates the daily life of black residents.

Soweto does follow poetic style but contains (partial) VV. It has both action-based elements (anthropomorphised Soweto reacts to people) and description-based elements (the poet describes the township of Soweto through its eyes). The poet anthropomorphised Soweto by holding her hands in the shape of a roof. This can be seen as a classifier but it is not used to show specific shapes or size of the referent. It is used to indicate that the poet is enacting the character of Soweto.

It is interesting to see that Modiegi never looks at the audience in this poem. Most of the gaze is that of the character's, as if she is immersed in her own story world. She sometimes looks at her hands (representing Soweto) to highlight its importance.

This poem exhibits an unusual amount of squint aperture and closed eyes. It may represent the comfort, intimacy, and closeness that is felt by the residents of this particular township.

There is no mouthing observed. Most mouth actions are part of the whole face activities, as the poet remains in the role of a character (Soweto) and shows different emotions. It also contains some instances of echo mouth gesture, when she describes some settings in Soweto (such as rows of houses).

5.3.4 The Book by Modiegi Moime-Njeyiyana

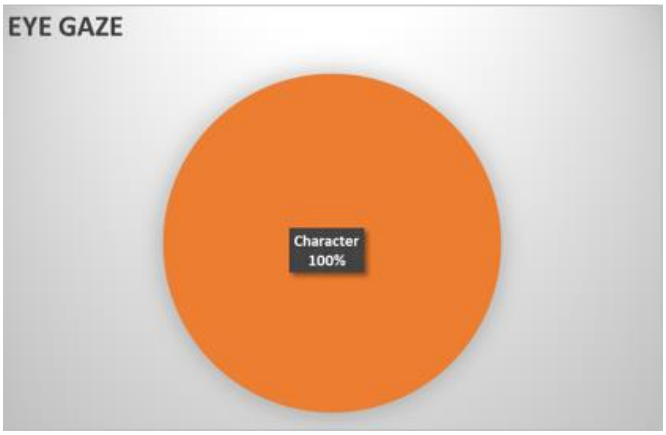


Figure 5-7a: Eye gaze

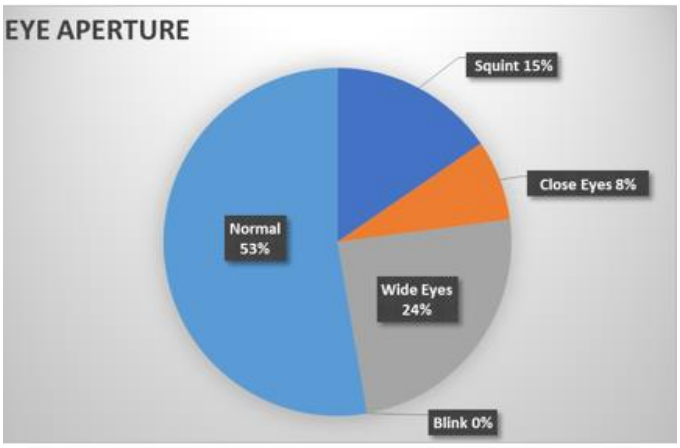


Figure 5-7b: Eye aperture

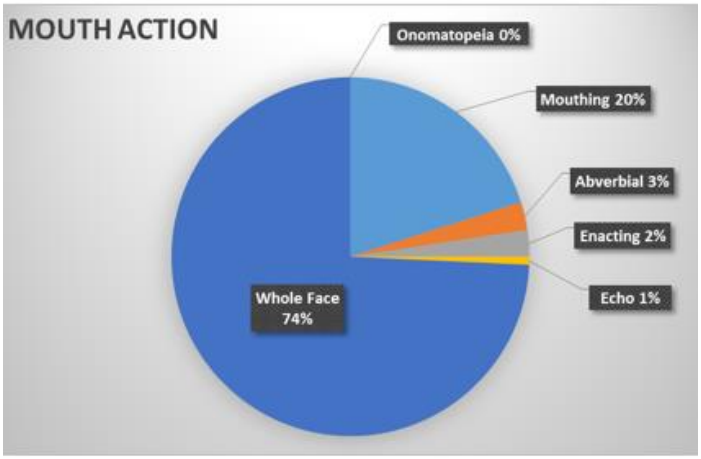


Figure 5-7c: Mouth Actions

The Book is a story of an anthropomorphised book who invites different readers to read it. It contains VV almost fully because the poet becomes the book (as well as human readers) throughout the story. This is an entirely action-based VV.

In terms of eye gaze, it contains only character's gaze (either that of the book or of a reader). This is not surprising as this story is told through interactions between the book and the reader.

Eye aperture is normal for 51% but also contains squint, closed eyes and wide eyes. These different eye apertures are used to express emotions of the characters – fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, and so on.

In terms of mouth actions, 74% is spent on W-type (the mouth is seen as part of the whole face). This is not surprising because this story is mostly about becoming the characters and showing their emotions through the face. Interestingly, some instances of mouthing are also observed because characters interact with each other through established signs that are accompanied by mouthings (COME, READ; ENJOY).

5.3.5. *Trucking* by Modiegi Moime-Njeyiyana

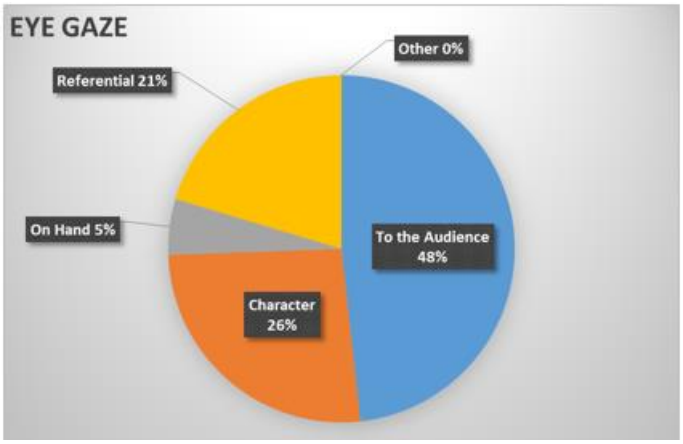


Figure 5-8a: Eye Gaze

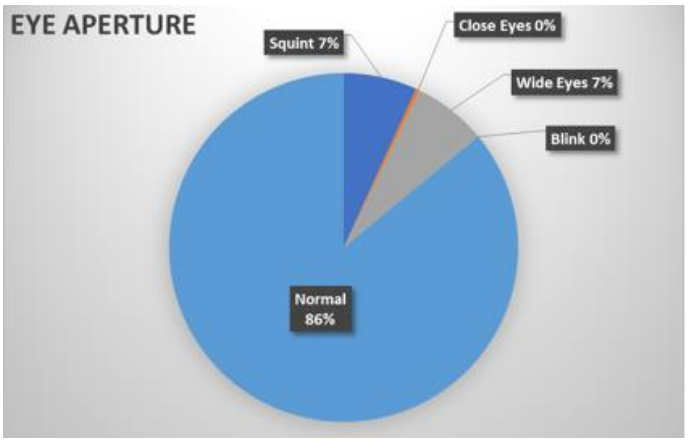


Figure 5-8b: Eye aperture

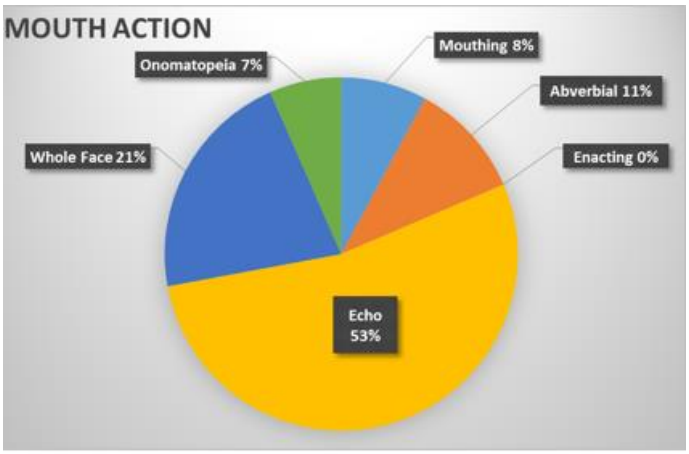


Figure 5-8c: Mouth Actions

This is a story about a big truck on the road and its driver getting annoyed and angry with other drivers. It contains full VV as the performer becomes the driver as well as the anthropomorphised truck. It contains both action-based (driving the truck) and description-based VV (describing what the truck looks like). This is in a more cinematic or theatrical performance – thus more towards the 'vernacular' form than 'genteel' form in Pollitt's terms.

Interestingly, the most common gaze pattern is gaze to the audience. This is mainly because the driver is looking to her front in order to drive (where the audience happens to be located) but it seems intentional as the performer wants to feel the audience as if the truck is moving towards them – as if seeing a movie. It also uses some character's gaze when it becomes the driver or

the truck. Referential use of gaze is also observed as the poet looks at different locations in the signing space to indicate the presence of different cars.

Eye aperture is mostly normal. There are some instances of squint and wide eyes, to express the emotions of the driver during the car chase. There is no instance of closed eyes and repeated blinking.

In terms of mouth actions. E-type is most common as it is used with signs that represent the manner of driving as well as the description of what is passing by outside (rows of trees on both sides of the road). Onomatopoeic mouth actions can be seen, too, as this story contains many sensory images (hooting or beeping of the cars). Even though the poet becomes the driver or the truck, there is very little use of 4-type (enacting) or W-type (who face expressions).

5.3.6. *Moment* by Troy Painino

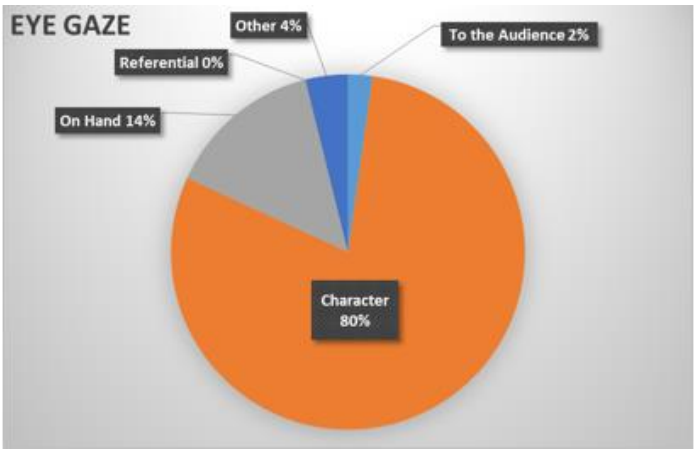


Figure 5-9a: Eye gaze

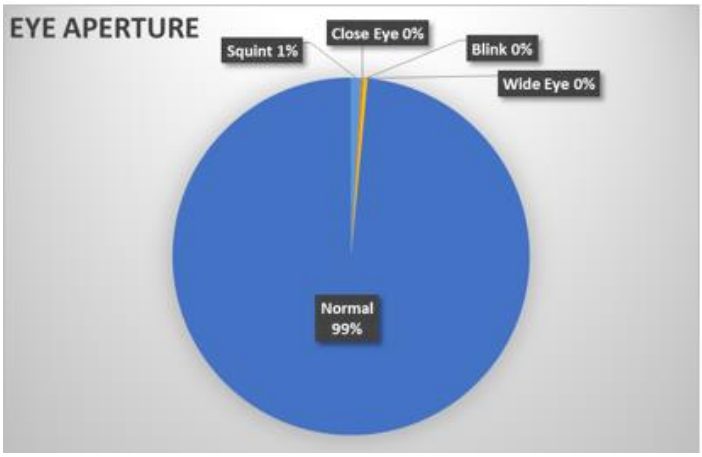


Figure 5-9b: Eye aperture

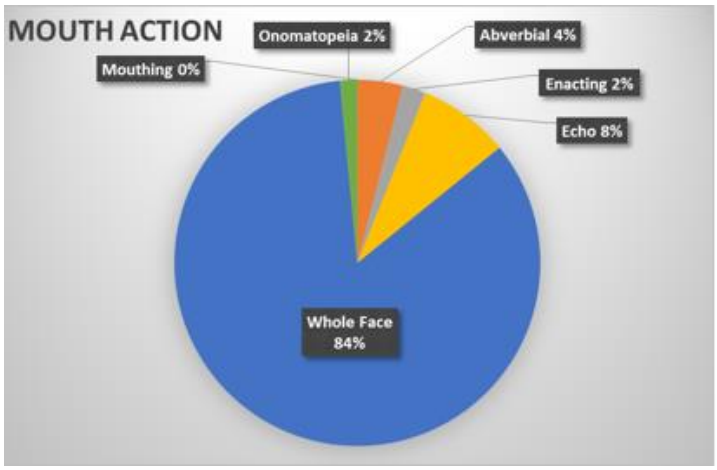


Figure 5-9c: Mouth actions

Moment is a story about a person who is getting ready for some event – we only find out towards the end that he was going to a music concert. This story is told in a very solemn atmosphere to the extent that the audience is led to believe that he is an assassin preparing to shoot someone.

This story contains full VV. It looks like a piece of mime or a theatrical performance. There is no theme or message. It simply describes how a man prepares himself for an event (it would be very boring to translate this story into English). A string of actions is shown but they are more descriptive than containing active scenes.

The majority of gaze patterns are that of character's (80%). The poet does not acknowledge the presence of the audience but stays inside the story world from the beginning to the end. There are some instances of gaze on hands to emphasise what he is doing.

Since the 'character' in this story does not reveal any emotion, eye aperture is almost entirely normal, which makes it noticeably abnormal.

Mouth actions are mostly W-type. The man in the story is mostly expressionless, but his face still moves, following each action he is performing, e.g., walking, opening a bag, opening a door, and so on.

5.3.7. *Blast Off* by Troy Painino

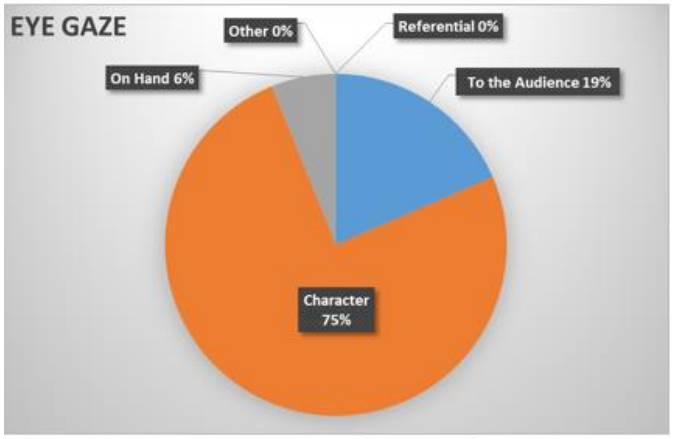


Figure 5-10a: Eye gaze

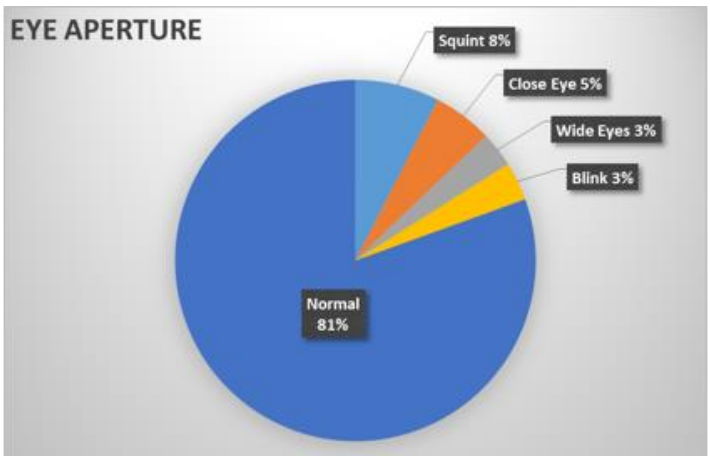


Figure 5-10b: Eye aperture

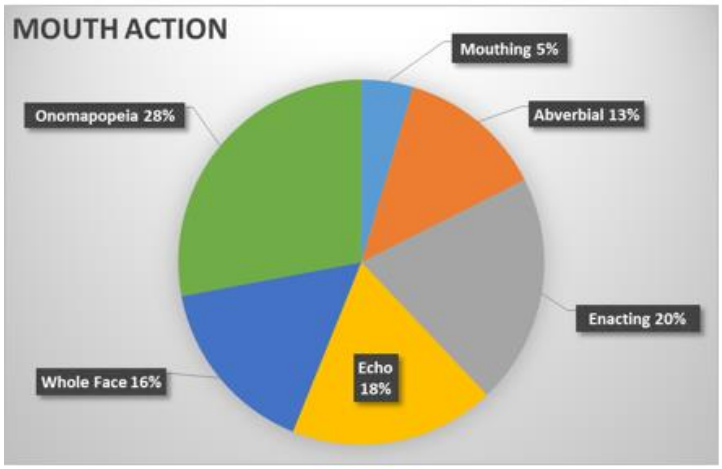


Figure 5-10c: Mouth Actions

This is a story that captures the moment of the launch of a rocket into space. It is told from the perspectives of different characters – the pilots, space crew, TV crew and spectators. This contains full VV - mostly description-based VV - as it focuses on showing how the rocket gets ready for its launch and finally how it is launched.

This is also a very theatrical piece – dramatically describing the movements and emotions of people involved, using very few established signs and more CA.

In terms of eye gaze, the poet uses mostly character's gaze. As mentioned above, this story is told from the perspective of different characters. It also uses gaze to the audience when the poet describes the rocket.

Eye aperture is mostly normal, but it does have some instances of squinting, wide eyes, closed eyes and a few repeated blinks, to briefly show different emotions expressed by each character.

It contains a balanced distribution of mouth actions except mouthing which is very few. What is most noticeable is the very frequent use of onomatopoeic mouth actions. As this story describes the rocket being launched, there are many sensory images that are accompanied by O-type mouth gestures.

5.3.8. *Canned* by Troy Painino

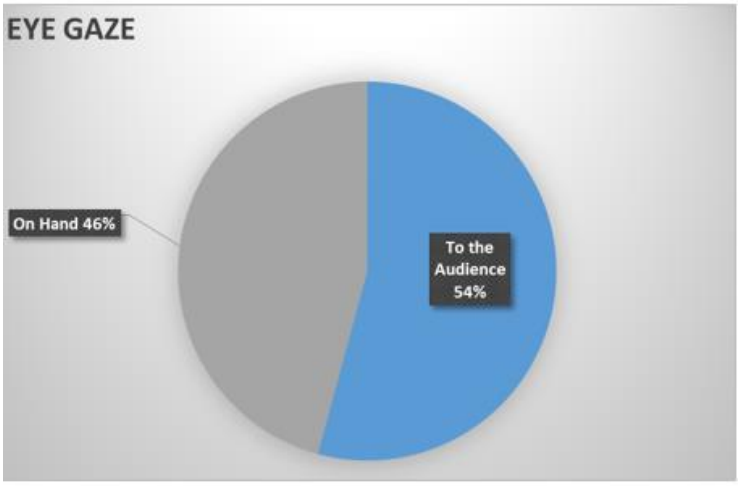


Figure: 5-11a: Eye gaze

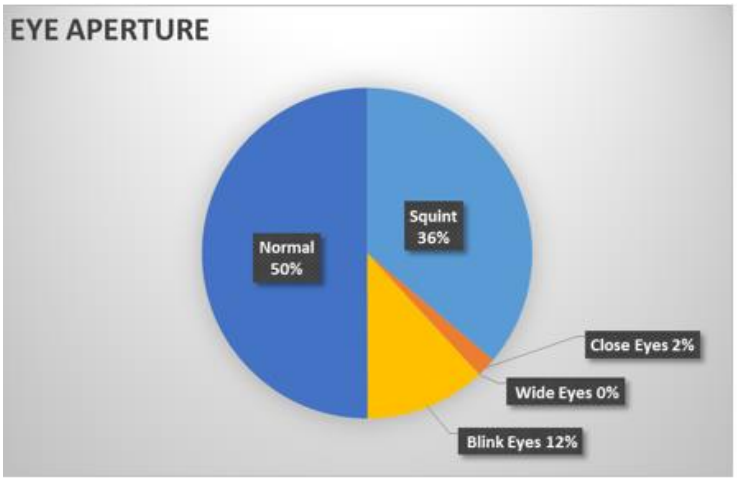


Figure 5-11b: Eye aperture

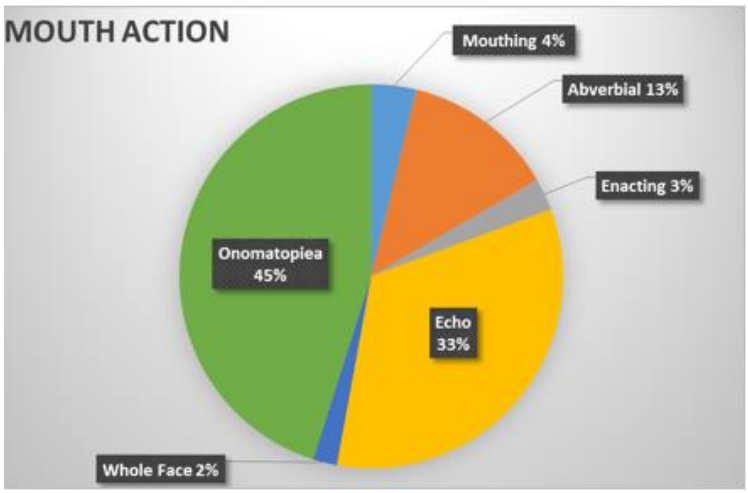


Figure 5-11c: Mouth Actions

Canned is an extremely unusual poem which entirely focuses on documenting the manufacturing process of can-making. I do not know any other poem that describes a monotonous and mechanical process in such great depth. This poem contains full VV as it does not use established signs but develops the scenes in a cinematic way. It is an entirely description-based VV. There is no character involved in this poem.

Eye gaze is very interesting in this poem. More than half of the time, the poet fixes his gaze on the audience. The poet seems to want to build the relationship with the audience. He also looks at his hands to highlight the process of making cans.

Eye aperture is mostly normal, but it contains some varieties of squinting, closed eyes, wide eyes to show different aspects of the process. What is most unique is the use of repeated blinking. As explained earlier, this is associated with the clattering sounds that are produced when making cans on the belt conveyer.

In relation to that, it is not surprising that O-type mouth actions are very prevalent in this poem. Again, they are used to convey sound/sensory images. Echo mouth actions are also common as it accompanies various movement of the hands associated with can-making. Mouthing is not observed as there is no established sign and enacting and whole-face mouth actions are also rare as there is no character to enact or show emotions.

5.3.9. *World Cup Rugby* by Troy Painino

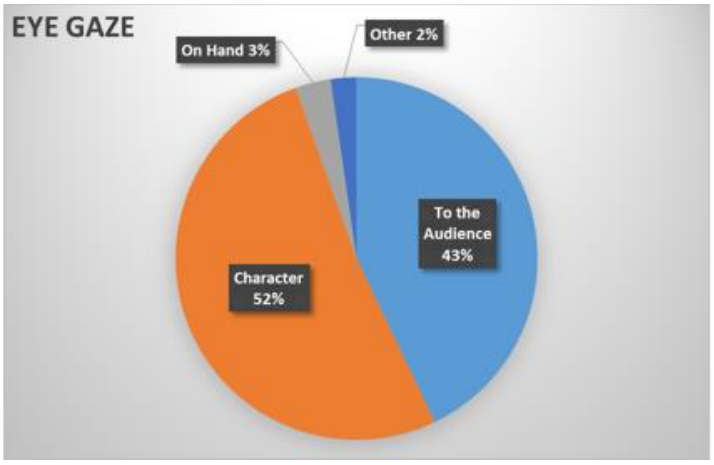


Figure 5-12a: Eye gaze

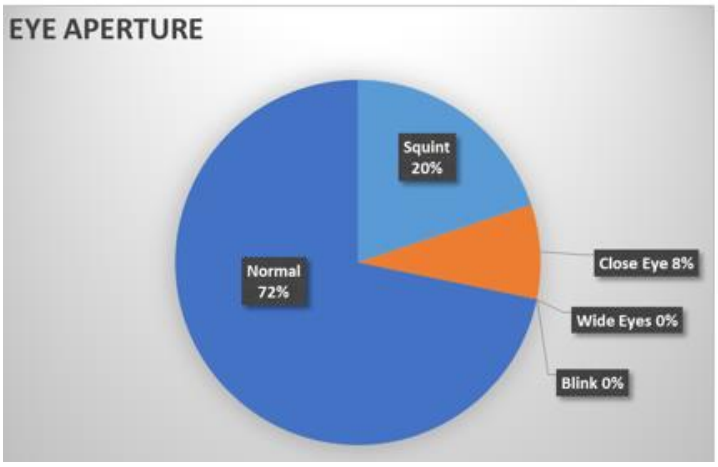


Figure 5-12b: Eye aperture

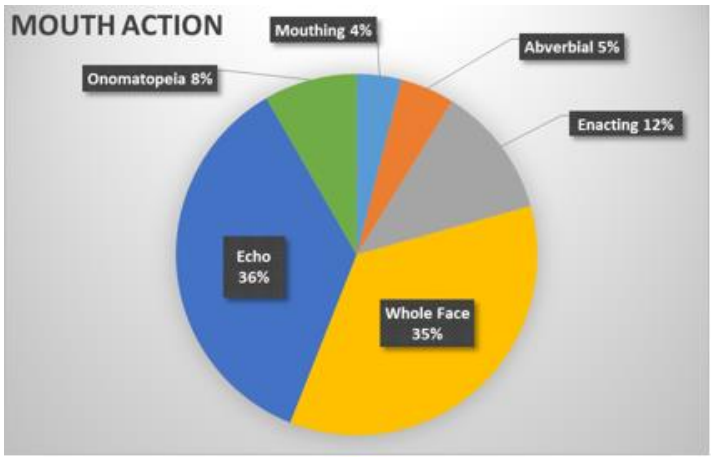


Figure 5-12c: Mouth Actions

Troy's poem, *World Cup Rugby*, explains the World Cup Rugby that took place in South Africa in 1995, which was a very memorable event for South Africans. Similar to *Blast Off*, it also describes the event from the perspectives of different people – players, audience, judges, and so on. This is a highly cinematic and theatrical piece (using cinematic techniques of zooming in and out). It has elements of description (especially at the beginning when the poet sets up the scene) but also action-based (once players enter the stadium).

The gaze pattern reflects this shift from description to action. At the beginning, the poet looks at the audience while setting up elements and characters – the stadium, a plane flying, the audience, and players entering the field. Then the focus shifts to characters, and the poet uses more intense gaze. A very few examples of other gaze patterns are observed.

Eye aperture mostly remains normal, with some use of squint and closed eyes.

Mouth actions are mostly E-type (echo) or W-type (whole face). This may also link to the above-mentioned two parts of this story. The first half is more descriptive, accompanied by E-type mouth gestures, and the second half evolves more around characters, thus more W-type mouth gestures are to be expected since the mouth as part of the whole face expressions. Onomatopoeia is also present in this story as there are musicians in the stadium, players dancing or singing. Interestingly, in this poem (unlike *Canned* above) onomatopoeia is not the direct representation of sounds but presented more in the form of vibration – such as the drum is represented with the vibration of the skin, rather than the actual sound it makes. The sounds are reinterpreted into sensory images so that the Deaf audience can feel it more directly.

5.3.10. Stylistic differences among poets

As seen above, differences among individual poems are greater than the distinction that can be made between VV and non-VV sequences. I also noticed that three poets who provided the seven poems for close reading also exhibit their own unique style. All three of them – myself (Atiyah Asmal), Modiegi Moime-Njeyiyana and Troy Painino are known as skilled and experienced performers in the SA Deaf community, but they have different creative styles and

skills when presenting their poems. It is especially interesting to see each performer's approach to Signart (Pollitt 2014) that lies in the continuum between "genteel" form and "visual vernacular".

Atiyah Asmal

I consider myself as a poet and tend to make use of more poetic features, as is evident in the poem discussed in my research, *For My Aunt*, which contains no VV but other poetic features such as repetition, symmetry, handshape symbolism, spatial metaphor and classifiers. The whole poem builds on a metaphor (analogy) where my relationship to my late aunt is symbolised as the close relationship between a bee and a flower, each represented with a different classifier. This suggests that my work is situated more towards the 'genteel' form of Signart, rather than 'vernacular' in Pollitt (2014)'s terms (please note that when I created this poem, I did not have any knowledge about these two different types of Signart. The poem *For My Aunt* was spontaneously created without much meta-knowledge about sign language poetry). Also, my poem is more focused on strong, proud Deaf identity and Deafhood and my Deaf aunt as my role model. In summary, my style is very poetic, and my work usually contains a clear theme, message or metaphor.

Troy Painino

Troy has natural storytelling skills. His stories are visually entertaining with a lot of details comically described. Unlike Atiyah, Troy's works do not usually convey a clear message (theme). He employs elements of VV in most of his poems, including both types of VV proposed by Asmal and Kaneko (2020): namely, description-based VV and action-based VV. *Blast Off* and *World Cup Rugby*, for example, employ many action-based VV describing a number of characters and what they do. *Canned*, in contrast, does not have any characters but provides thorough cinematographic description of objects and places. In either case, the audience feels like they are watching a movie. He uses rich facial expressions, showing emotion of characters or visual description of the scene. He hardly uses established signs in SASL. Thus, his work is characterised more towards the 'vernacular' form than 'genteel' form in Pollitt's terms (2014).

Modiegi Moime-Njeyiyana

Modiegi Njeyiyana is an expert in sign language poetry and storytelling. Many of her poems employ established poetic rules (repetition, handshape, symmetry, etc.) and produce impact by breaking them, but she also exploits more cinematic techniques containing VV. In this sense, I locate her artwork somewhere in the middle of the 'genteel' and 'vernacular' forms. She also includes anthropomorphised non-human characters in her poems. Modiegi's poems are both action-based VV involving a series of actions, characters and many anthropomorphised non-human characters), and are description-based involving cinematographic descriptions of people, object and places. The difference between Troy and Modiegi is that Modiegi's poems often contain a clear plot or structure, whereas Troy simply presents a series of visual images.

It is clear that these three poets have a very distinct style of poetic storytelling. Such idiosyncratic differences make it even more difficult to clearly distinguish features of VV from those of non-VV poems. However, it adds to the originality and creativity of SASL literature.

5.3.11. Summary so far

It is interesting to observe individual poems. While separating poems into VV or non-VV did not provide convincing results, we can see that certain features are used more commonly than others in individual poems.

Two poems without VV share similarities in that both use established signs, mouthing and gaze to the audience. They follow the 'genteel', linguistic form of Signart. In contrast, seven poems with VV are very different from each other. Some are more cinematic/theatrical, others have more characters or a storyline, and others focus more on anthropomorphism. So, while it was interesting to look at different features for VV, there is no single feature that can define VV, as within VV there are different aspects – cinematic aspects, character perspective, interaction, mime, anthropomorphism. It is also noted that while VV is primarily said to be 'becoming',

some VV poems utilize elements of ‘showing’ (classifiers), which adds another layer of difference.

5.4 Insight from the Deaf community

In what remains, this chapter will report findings from the two workshops I organized with Deaf people and experts in order to answer my third research question*: How do Deaf poets view VV in the South African context??*

In the introduction, I mentioned that VV has been introduced to the Deaf communities in America, Brazil, England, and France. However, the term VV is not widely known in the South African Deaf community. Most Deaf people in South Africa are not even aware of the term ‘visual vernacular’. During my research project I engaged with experts in SASL poetry, storytellers, researchers, and the general Deaf community to discuss the concept of visual vernacular.

For these group discussions I decided to have two separate workshops. As explained in Chapter 3, the first workshop was open to Deaf signers of the Deaf community who are not experts in this field. The other workshop focused on experts in SASL poetry, including storytellers, interpreters, lecturers, and researchers. The aim was to explore their existing knowledge about the concept VV (if any) as well as identifying if they practise this cinematic way of storytelling (even if they may not call it VV). I also wanted to investigate if VV is a useful concept in SASL literature and if so, how to promote its use among the Deaf community, especially for young learners at school.

Workshop Group One:



Figure: 5-13 Particpcants from Workshop 1

The first workshop was conducted at Wits on 29 September 2018. There were ten Deaf people who came to the workshop. They were interested to join the VV workshop and curious to know what the workshop was about. I first explained the aim of the workshop as well as the aim of the research. Then I explained the ethics forms needed for my research. I made sure they understood the process of the research and that they accepted to be part of the research. The participants agreed to be part of the research and signed consent and video consent forms. I also explained why I chose VV as my topic and I shared my experience in Brazil and why I am so passionate about researching this topic in South Africa.

I started the workshop by asking the participants the question - *Have you heard or seen the term "VV before"?*

Below are the participants' responses:

- *"I've never seen the word before"*
- *"Oh I have seen the word, but only vernacular that is used in the language of Chinese people but the word VV in sign language I don't know what that means."*
- *"I have seen that word but was not bothered to know what it means."*
- *"The problem is that the school had not trained us on these linguistic terms, and we don't know what the term means. If only they explained what it means."*

This suggests that the participants were not familiar with the term VV. However, after I gave the presentation and showed examples of videos which contain VV that are used in USA, Brazil, and South Africa such as Bragg's *"The Pilot and the Eagle*", they all immediately understood what it referred to and could explain it using different (more familiar) terms such as constructed action, cinematic features, visual images and anthropomorphism. They said they had seen this on social media or some Deaf signed stories that had VV and did not realise that the story had VV.

In terms of the question who can do VV, participants seem to agree that it requires natural talent. One of the participants said VV was very difficult to express and not everybody could do so. They seem to think that only certain people, for example, Giueppe Giuranna from Berlin, Germany, or Troy Painino in South Africa, can perform VV in their signing.

Other comments were that many Deaf children in Deaf schools often (unknowingly) use VV-like storytelling methods which they copy from TV or movies. While participants seem to agree that some signers are naturally better at VV than others, they also felt strongly that VV should be trained and taught to the Deaf community through schools so that all Deaf people would understand the term visual vernacular and could use it to enhance their signing skills.

At the end of the workshop, I explained how VV could be performed including the linguistic features that VV use. Then the participants tried to create VV to see if they could. It was fun for them to create and some participants said that they had learnt a lot. While I will not be using these performances in my MA research, it became clear that Deaf participants could understand and adapt the concept of VV into their signing relatively easily (although some did it better than others). We kept the footage of their performances of VV at the Wits SASL department for archiving and future use.

Workshop group two:

The second workshop was held at Wits on 18 October 2018 with a group of Deaf and hearing experts on SASL literature. I did the same workshop as the previous group, but I did not do a group activity involving practical performance of VV. I focused on a group discussion with these experts.



Figure:5-14 Participants from Workshop 2

In the second group, there were seven participants. When I asked if they had seen or heard the word "Visual Vernacular", they responded as follows:

- *"I have seen the word before but don't know what it means and didn't have chance to figure it out."*
- Troy Painino (the poet): *"I haven't seen the word before but one of my friends showed me the video and I was surprised that it was VV. I didn't realise it was VV but it was funny to think I am one who uses VV a lot. Thank you to Atiyah for explaining this to me*."
- *"Well, my sister Atiyah is doing research on VV, I wasn't bothered but she explained to me and I quickly learnt about that topic. SociGO* [a non-profit company in South Africa that focuses on uplifting and empowering the Deaf community through events to share Deaf culture and sign language] *will host a festival and there will be VV performances by international poets so I will know and see a lot more VV."*
- *"When I was at Gallaudet University, I have seen the word and learnt about it, so I know what VV is."*

As we can see from these responses, the participants in this workshop have a better understanding of VV, due to their background of being poets themselves or researchers in the field of SASL poetry.

In their discussion, participants mentioned that many Deaf South Africans may not be aware of the term VV but they were using it. This seems to be supported by the findings from the first workshop, too (that participants did not know the term VV but once explained, they understood quickly and could immediately use the features).

Like in the first workshop, they mentioned that VV required a special talent and not everyone could do it. Many Deaf people who have a natural talent for using visual images can provide them through VV. In their views, the reason that VV may not be familiar n South Africa is that there are not enough skilled artists that can perform VV. In other words, the South African Deaf community has had a very limited exposure to VV, as fewer artists perform VV in plays or in social media in comparison to other countries. It is research like this that can change Deaf people's view of, and exposure to, VV.

The workshop participants also mentioned that the Deaf community in South Africa did not sufficiently acknowledge Deaf artists and had no respect for their skills. For example, Troy Painino has an amazing talent of VV but very few people have acknowledged his skills. The participants were aware of his stories on social media or his own videos using VV, but they were not known to the wider public. According to the participants, Deaf communities do not realise that we do have many talented people in the community. We do not have enough festivals here in South Africa. Events like poetry or storytelling festivals or performances often take place in the schools for Deaf learners, but the rest of the Deaf community is not invited. The participants said that many Deaf people have fun by telling their stories using VV and never think they have talent or use them as an artist. Most of the time those who have natural talent or skills in VV do not think of sharing it with the Deaf community. We can use poems and storytelling that contain VV in schools as part of their curriculum or use them at universities to teach students how to analyse them. The participants felt that there is need to host more

events and festivals so the Deaf community can see and learn and be made aware of their hidden talent and the creative potential of SASL.

One of the participants mentioned that in Wits Language School they often collect stories or poems for research. SociGO also hosts festivals (for example, it hosted a festival in December 2019 and invited famous artists from USA, Brazil, Germany, Spain and some of our local artists in South Africa). Participants agree that if we can invite as many South African Deaf community members as possible to watch such archives of poems or festivals to see their talents, they would be encouraged to use their skills and it will allow them to develop their skills including VV.

Participants, similar to those from the first workshop, noted that it is also important to teach VV in Deaf schools so that children can learn and know how to sign clearly and visually. VV can also be taught at universities to possibly help hearing students to sign smoother and clearer because it makes use of more visual images. At the end of the discussion, they also agreed that VV might help the learners to improve their literacy skills at Deaf schools – both to improve their signing and English skills.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I explored my findings further, as well as provided findings from the two workshops I organised. I focused on seven poems by three poets and explored three features (eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions) that accompany the sequences of VV. While none of the features can define VV, they are important in VV. They show different roles in conveying different aspects of VV. For example, character's eye gaze shows strong connection between action-based VV. There are fewer instances of gaze to audience in action-based VV where poets often break eye contact with the audience. However, in description-based VV such as Troy's *Canned*, gaze to the audience can be used to maintain the audience's interest. Different degrees of eye aperture such as wide eyes, closed eyes and blinking, can also show different emotions of characters in VV, as well as contributing to the description-based VV by offering

some sensory images. Mouth gestures also show some patterns in VV (less mouthing; more W-type and O-type).

Having said that, this chapter showed that there were more idiosyncratic features unique to each poem (depending on its co-occurring elements and style) rather than clear features associated with VV. Each poem that contains elements of VV shows them in different ways.

Lastly, the outcomes of the two workshops I organised suggest that South African Deaf communities can produce VV even though they may not know the term, showing that VV does exist in SASL storytelling in South Africa. The participants of both workshops emphasised the importance of introducing the concept to the community, especially to Deaf children at school, in order to increase their creative skills, knowledge and exposure.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary

There is no doubt that visual vernacular (VV) is an essential part of sign language literature. The question has been what exactly VV encompasses and how it is used in SASL poetry. This led to the following three research questions for my research project:

1. What is the essence of VV?
2. How is VV expressed in poetic SASL?
3. How do Deaf poets view VV in the South African context??

With regard to the first question, VV seems to include various elements of linguistic and narrative features but the scope of VV is often unclear. According to my finding there is no precise definition of VV, but VV seems to be the "umbrella" term for incorporating many elements of sign language. However, it is important to understand two different approaches to storytelling: *becoming* - using constructed action (CA = role shift) and *showing* - using classifiers. My literature review suggests that VV is mostly part of *becoming* as it uses a theatrical gestural vernacular form. Visual vernacular forms part of Signart performed naturally by Deaf artists. It is a combination of many different elements like mime, gesture, and cinematographic techniques, together with strong body movement, iconic signs and facial expressions. This renders VV to be the most expressive storytelling style. Bragg (2003) emphasises the 'visual' in visual vernacular because the perception is not for the ear, but uniquely for the eye (visual). VV seems to exhibit different methods and styles and rhythm of signing depending on each performer (Valentini, 2017).

VV is especially strongly associated with cinematographic elements. It makes use of many techniques used in filmmaking, which include long shot, close up and panorama when a performer presents the perspective of each character and setting. I also support the idea that Pollit (2014) proposes in terms of Signart, i.e., the distinction between 'genteel' form (an art

form that is based on more linguistic and poetic devices such as repetition, handshape symbolism, symmetry, spatial metaphor, etc.) and 'vernacular' form (which is more theatrical, movie-like, and not based on linguistic rules). Bragg (1995) states that VV can break the rules of the language and the performers can move signs and describe and show different characters' emotions.

In order to answer my second question, I looked at nine specific poems – seven of which contain elements of VV and the other two not. *For my Aunt* is a genteel style is considered to have no instances of VV as it follows more poetic rules. It includes linguistic features of poetry such as two handshape symbolism, repetition, symmetry and spatial metaphor in accordance with the theme of Deafhood. *Days of the week* (another poem that contains no VV) is a narrative poem using a lot of classifiers. As Cook (2019) mentions, VV is clearly distinguished from classifiers (although they can appear simultaneously), and this poem is more on the whole entity classifier end. It does contain clear role shift showing two different characters (a conversation between a child and an adult) but they are considered to be grammatical constructions that are common in day-to-day signing, rather than the creative/theatrical performance of characters. The seven poems in which VV was identified are all characterised as 'becoming' poems, which is more theatrical, gestural and 'vernacular'.

I also explored three non-manual features (eye gaze, eye aperture and mouth actions) that accompany these nine poems. There are some patterns that can contrast these features according to VV or non-VV. For example, *For My Aunt,* a non-VV poem, tends to use more mouthings and more gaze to the audience, than poems that contain VV. Onomatopoeic mouth gestures tend to appear much more frequently with VV than with non-VV. However, in general, each poem is very distinct, and it was not possible to identify any established correlation between VV and any of these features.

Asmal and Kaneko (2020) mention a potential classification of VV into two types: action-based VV and description-based VV. Action based VV involves actions and characters (either human or non-human) with rich facial expressions through character's gaze and enacting mouthing gesture. For example, Troy Painino's *World Cup Rugby* portrays movie-like scenes just before a

rugby match starts and illustrates various characters involved (players, judges, audiences). Description-based VV does not involve active characters but aims at presenting a detailed description of people, objects and places. For example, Troy's other poem, *Canned,* reveals the manufacturing process of making cans at the factory, by meticulously representing each step using highly visual, descriptive signs (as if you are watching a documentary of can-making).

In order to answer the third research question, I organised two workshops with the South African Deaf community. It is clear that South African Deaf communities can produce VV even though they may not know the term, showing that VV does exist in Deaf storytelling in South Africa. Also, many Deaf people are using VV through Deaf school activities, social media, or social events. However, once again, they were not aware of the term, VV. The workshop participants emphasised the importance of introducing the concept to the community, especially to Deaf children at school, in order to increase their creative skills, knowledge and exposure to SASL artform.

6.2 Limitations of my research

There has been very little research on defining VV or exploring its essence. I believe my research has made significant contribution to the existing literature on VV. However, at the same time, my research was limited in many ways. Due do this research being a small-scale Masters project, the number of the poems I analysed is small. I only focused on seven poems in the end that contained VV. For comparison, I only analysed two poems that do not contain VV. I believe that my findings would have been very different if I analysed a larger number of poems. My research seems to support the claim made by Politt (2014) that VV is linked to Signart's 'vernacular' form (as opposed to 'genteel' form). It also seems to concur with Cook (2019) who claims that it is on the opposite end of using classifiers. However, more research is needed in order to draw a valid conclusion.

Another limitation is that the research has been conducted by one researcher – myself. The identification of elements of VV, as well as analysis in terms of their features are inevitably

subjective. Another researcher may come up with very different results even if he or she looks at the same data. In order to eliminate such subjectivity, ideally a research project containing more than one researcher should look at VV and discuss their analysis to reach more objective conclusions.

There are also some concepts that I could have discussed in more depth but I could not do so due to time constraints. For example, my explanation of W-type (whole face) mouth gestures could have elaborated considerably, using Johnston et al. (2016) who identify five sub-types of W-type mouth gestures. However, I could not include this information as this is a Masters dissertation and my time and scope was limited.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

It is important to conduct more analysis involving various poets in South Africa performing VV. This points to the need of generating more VV poems in SASL. Poetry workshops and festivals would be helpful in order to encourage Deaf people in South Africa to experiment with the notion of VV. This will allow researchers, including myself, to get a glimpse of the creativity that could exist within the Deaf community.

A longitudinal study, i.e., conducting research over a longer time period, will allow us to observe the development of a poet in terms of his/her skills to effectively perform VV. As seen in Chapter 2, VV is harder to teach than more refined poetic rules (repetition, symmetry, handshape, etc.) so it would be interesting to observe how poets develop their skills in VV, including a question if explicit teaching (through workshops) would assist, or whether VV is something that develops naturally. Such longitudinal studies will also allow for a larger set of data to be collected for analysis.

I believe the future research in SASL VV will reveal a new world and will expose us to a wealth of hidden talent in the South African Deaf community, and most importantly, it will give us (Deaf) researchers a greater insight into our Deaf culture, as poetry gives access to our thought, culture, values, emotions, and so on. It is an art form we should be, and we are, proud of.

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Appendix: A

If any reader finds the following table too small, please contact the researcher (email address on the cover page), so that I can provide the original document.

	Poem Title	Performers	VV	Linguist feature	
1	Soccer	Phumie Jemane	full VV	slow movemnt -full	CA / Classifiers
2	Phenomenal Pap	Abram Moyaha	late VV -poem	Contract action / Face expression	
3	As a Flower	Abram Moyaha	no VV - poem	classifier / Anthropomorphism /constract action	
4	Mud to Magic: A poem for Gerard Sekot	Abram Moyaha	no VV - narrative		
5	Our dying World	Abram Moyaha	half VV	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
6	Mine to Sign	Abram Moyaha	no VV-poem	repeat handshape	
7	Deaf miner	Abram Moyaha	no VV- Narrative		
8	Stages of Man	Abram Moyaha	no VV- poem		
9	The tree	Andile Vellum, Brian Meyer, Xoliswa M	half VV	classifier / Anthropomorphism /constract action	
10	For my aunt	Atiyah Asmal	no VV - poem		
11	Tree Life	Atiyah Asmal	Half VV and classifiers	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
12	My Language	Atiyah Asmal	No VV poem		
13	Ugly, Beautiful (SHUSH The beauty and the beast)	Atiyah Asmal, Modiegi Njeyiyana	no VV - Poem		
14	Flag of colours (SLED Our South African Flag)	Ayanda Ntukwana	no VV		
15	District 6	Brian Meyer	no VV	Contract action / Face expression	
16	Belonging	Carmen Fredericks	no VV		
17	World	Colleen Bradley	no VV - poem		
18	Mainstream	Helen Morgans	no VV - poem		
19	Deaf School	Helen Morgans	no VV - poem		
20	Soweto1976 - different poem inspireds	Ismael Mansoor	no VV powm		
21	Rainbow	John Meletse	No VV poem		
22	HIV (a renga)	John Meletse, Anthony Gama, Petro a	no VV		
23	Lipstick	Kim Fisher	no VV - poem		
24	A Deaf Life	Lorato Rasebopye	half VV	Contract action / Face expression	
25	Soweto	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
26	Tata Madiba	Modiegi Njeyiyana	no vv		
27	The Timid Snail	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV		
28	The Book	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV	anthropomorphism/ Becoming	
29	Dung Beetle	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV		
30	Condom	Modiegi Njeyiyana	no vv		
31	Life's Road	Modiegi Njeyiyana	No VV poem		
32	Avocado	Modiegi Njeyiyana	No VV poem		
33	Apartheid	Modiegi Njeyiyana	no VV poem		

Appendix A cont.

34	The life of a flower	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV half	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
35	Deaf ? (Questionmark)	Modiegi Njeyiyana	No VV		
36	Escape	Modiegi Njeyiyana	half VV/CA		
37	Growth Cycle	Modiegi Njeyiyana	NO VV poem		
38	Inner Language	Modiegi Njeyiyana	No VV poem		
39	Moths to the light	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV check		
40	Strike a woman, strike a rock	Modiegi Njeyiyana	No VV		
41	Tree Birth	Modiegi Njeyiyana	No VV		
42	Bedtime Dreams	Modiegi Njeyiyana	no vv- poem		
43	Days of the week	Modiegi Njeyiyana	no VV -poem		
44	Trucking	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
45	Teddy Bear Wash Day	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV/poem	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
46	Soweto June 16	Modiegi Njeyiyana	no VV		
47	Solitary	Modiegi Njeyiyana	VV		
48	A-Z	Colleen Bradley	no VV		
49	Father like water	Nodumo Same	No VV story		
50	Viva Access Viva	Nodumo Same			
51	The Powerful River	Nombuyekaza Mathidala	No VV poem		
52	South Africa (a renga)	Olga Blose, Atiyah Asmal, Alison ???????, Ismael Mansoor, Lorato Rasebopye, Modiegi Njeyiyana, Simphiwe Mkhize,Abram Moyaha	No VV		
53	Morning, night, tree and mirror	Pearl Munyai	no VV		
54	Lost	Petro ?	short VV		
55	2 Worlds	Phumie Jemane	No VV poem		
56	A mother's story	Tessa Chowles	No VV story		
57	The cowboy and the horse	Troy Painino	Full VV	theather style /mime	
58	War	Troy Painino	Full VV	theather style /mime	
59	A Moment	Troy Painino	Full VV	theather style /mime	
60	World Cup Rugby	Troy Painino	Full VV	theather style /mime	CA / Body shift to right
61	Canned	Troy Painino	Full VV	theather style /mime	
62	Blast off	Troy Painino	Full VV	theather style /mime	
63	The different tree	Zoliswa Flekisi	vv	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	
64	Elephant	Zoliswa Flekisi			
65	Rain,rain,rain (same as SHAW 2 STORM)	Zoliswa Flekisi			
66	the Life of Sara Baartman	Zoliswa Flekisi	No VV story		
67	Why did you go	Zoliswa Flekisi	no VV		
68	Catching the moon	Zoliswa Flekisi	No VV poem		
69	Dentist dilemma	Zoliswa Flekisi	no vv stort		
70	Butterfly	Zoliswa Flekisi	vv	Anthropomorphism/ classifiers	

Appendix B
For my Aunt (Atiyah Asmal)

Sign Language gloss translate by Eugidia Jose	English translate by Eugidia Jose
ROSE(XI) BEAUTIFUL. COLOUR PINK ORANGE THERE BEAUTIFUL, WISE, OLD, LOVE, CARE. THIS DEAF SAME. FLY AWAY, FLY INSIDE FLOWER, FLY AWAY, FLY INSIDE FLOWER, FLY AWAY, FLY INSIDE FLOWER STAY HOLD, FLY AWAY, FLY RETURN FLOWER OLD. LIFT UP FLOWER, FLOWER FALL, LEAVE SCATTER. FLY, FLY,FLY	There was a beautiful rose, pleasant and easy on the eyes. It was a wild rose draped in pink, with a touch of orange. With beauty that is accompanied by endearing qualities such as wisdom, maturity, love and care, and like me she is Deaf. A butterfly frequently goes to the flower, it pollinates- takes pleasure from the comfort it receives from frequent visits to this lovely rose. The beautiful rose withers and dies out, leaving the butterfly destitute. Picking itself up from the pain of having lost someone, the butterfly tries to fly away the pain and loneliness. Until it realises that the only thing left to do is to survive

Appendix B cont.

Days of Weeks (Modiegi Njeyiyena)

Sign Language gloss translate by Londeka Msimang	English translate by Londeka Msimang
PERSON (P1):(WALK WALK) KNOCK KNOCK WAIT (LOOK AROUND LEFT RIGHT) KNOCK KNOCK (HARD ANGRY FACE) PERSON (P2): OPEN DOOR (PEEK OUT) P1: HELLO I MONDAY PERSON: (NOD) COME COME SCHOOL GO STAND ROW SIGN. WORK GO WALK MEETING SIT CIRCLE DAY FULL P2: WALK WALK KNOCK KNOCK WAIT (LOOK AROUND LEFT RIGHT) PERSON: (DOOR OPEN SURPRISE) HELLO P2: HELLO WE TUESDAY PERSON: (NOD) COME COME SCHOOL GO BOOK READ READ READ, WORK GO PEOPLE HELP HELP FULL P3: WALK WALK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK WAIT PERSON: (OPEN SURPRISE) HELLO P3: HELLO WE WEDNESDAY PERSON: YES (NOD) COME COME COME SCHOOL GO MUSEUM SEE, WORK GO SELL SELL FULL DAY P4: WALK WALK KNOCK KNOCK WAIT PERSON: (OPEN DOOR SURPRISE) HELLO P4: WE THURSADY	Beep! Beep! Beep! The alarm clock shouted Monday has arrived! A new day School assembly, board meetings all day. Beep! Beep! Bee… the alarm clock shouted Tuesday has arrived! A new day Reading books, assisting clients all day. Beep! Bee… the alarm clocked shouted Wednesday has arrived! A new day Museum trip, trading all day. Beep! Bee… the alarm clock shouted Thursday has arrived! A new day Sports games, marketing designing all day. Silently and impatiently waiting for the clock to strike Friday has arrived! A new day Learn and study, negotiations all day. Silently and impatiently waiting for the clock to strike Saturday has arrived! A new day

PERSON: COME COME COME SCHOOL GO SPORT GAME(MATCH) WORK GO FIX FIX DESIGN FULL DAY P5: WALK WALK PERSON: OPEN DOOR FAST SURPRISE P5: HELLO FRIDAY PERSON: COME COME (HAPPY FACE) SCHOOL GO STUDY STUDY WORK GO NEGOTIATE FULL DAY P6: WALK WALK PERSON: OPEN DOOR P6: (SHOCKED) WAIT WHOLE WE SATURDAY PERSON: COME COME COME SHOP PEOPLE MANY BRAAI WHOLE DAY P7: WALK WALK PERSON: OPEN DOOR P7: SHOCK (WAIT) WE SUNDAY PERSON: NOD (EXCITED) COME COME COME FAMILY CLEAN CAR WASH WHOLE DAY P1: WALK WALK WALK WAIT (LOOK AROUND LEFT RIGHT) ANGRY KNOCK HARD PERSON: (SIGH) (OPEN DOOR) HELLO P1: HI ME MONDAY	Grocery shopping, braai all day. Silently and impatiently waiting for the clock to strike Sunday has arrived! A new day Home chores all day. Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! The alarm clock shouted Monday has arrived! A new day School assembly, board meetings all day

Appendix B cont.

Soweto (Modiegi Njeyiyena)

Sign Language gloss translate by Sajida Cassim	English translate by Sajida Cassim
NIGHT HOUSE HOUSE ROW ROW ROW LIGHT OFF LIGHT ON BRIGHT SLEEPY WAKE UP PEOPLE WALK/QUE UP TRANSPORTATION PEOPLE IN /BOARD AFTERNOON/ DARK EXCITEMENT LOOK AROUND TRANSPORTATION PEOPLE GET OFF /COME HOME DARK LIGHTS COME ON LIGHTS GO OFF YAWN SLEEP	Darkness looms over me, and rows and rows of others like me As dawn approaches in the form of awakening streetlights I struggle to adapt to morning lightI watch sadly as the humans line up for their daily monotonous departure Excitement bubbles inside of me, as darkness once again, begins to engulf everyone and everything, Signalling the humans to return back to me and my kind And true to its nature the dark night comes Signalling the streetlights to come to life as I succumb to my unconscious state

Appendix B cont.

Trucking (Modiegi Njeyiyena)

Sign Language gloss translate by Sajida Cassim	**English translate by Sajida Cassim**
WINDSCRREN BODY BUMPER SIDES LIGHTS WHEELS BREAKS GEAR MOVING FORWARD SIDE CARS PASS APPROACH TRAFFIC LIGHTS BREAK LOOK LEFT CARS THREE ROWS LOOK RIGHT CARS THREE ROWS CARS FRONT GO LOOK LEFT LOOK RIGHT LOOK DOWN ROBOT GREEN CARS LEFT GO CARS RIGHT GO I GO CAR BACK HOOT , ANGRY OVERTAKE SPEED AWAY I LOOK/WATCH , I CONTINUE TYRES MOVING , CARS PASS ME I SLOW DOWN , CAR BEHIND ME HOOT,FLASHLIGHT ,SHOUT ME LEAVE TYRES MOVING CARS PASS ME LOOK REVIEW MIRROR CAR BEHIND ME ANGRY HOOT,OVERTAKES TO SIDE AND BANGS INTO ME	Sleek body ,bumper, lights ,wheels, accelerator, breaks and , An endless supply of two lanes of asphalt In my peripheral I see vehicles blur past me As I stall at the traffic lights I look to my left – three rows of traffic I look to my right- three rows of traffic I look forward and see cars dash across The robot signals green and I watch as the cars on my left scurry along I watch as the vehicle behind me gestures angrily , most likely hooting at me as well I watch as the driver overtakes me whilst eyeballing me, disappearing into the distance As I continue my journey , cars blur past me I pull over to the slow lane to relax a bit I watch as the vehicle behind me gestures angrily ,also most likely hooting at me I watch as the driver overtakes me whilst eyeballing me, disappearing into the distance As I continue my journey , cars blur past me

AGAIN AND AGAIN SWERVE OFF ROAD ANGRY DRIVER COME TOWARD ME NO NO DEAF ME	I look into my review mirror as the driver behind me gestures angrily, also most likely hooting at me I watch as he pulls up to my left and proceeds to ram into my side repeatedly I panic as my truck swerves to the right, overturns and capsizes My perpetrator watches as I struggle to convey NO!!!! I AM DEAF

Appendix B cont.

The Book (Modiegi Njeyiyena)

Sign Language gloss translate by Sajida Cassim	**English translate by Sajida Cassim**
SHELF BOOK (SHELF TWO), PERSON LOOK LEFT RIGHT (SHELF BOOK TAKE), BOOK OPEN BOOK: YOU READ READ COME COME ENJOY PERSON: (SURPRISE SHOCK LOOK AROUND LEFT RIGHT) LOOK BOOK, YES BOOK: (WINK) READY COME COME (PULL PERSON INSIDE) PERSON: (DRAWN IN LOOK AROUND IN BOOK) BACK AGAIN PERSON: WOW! (CLOSE BOOK) CLOSE EYE (BOOK BACK SHELF) PERSON: AROUND LOOK SEE UNPLEASANT SITE LEFT RIGHT (BOOK TAKE) BOOK OPEN BOOK: YOU READ READ ENJOY COME PERSON: LOOK BOOK CONFUSED TURN BOOK ANOTHER PAGE BOOK: UNHAPPY TURN BOOK PERSON: TURN BOOK PERSON: TURN TURN TURN BOOK BOOK: UNHAPPY PERSON: TEAR BOOK	A series of books staked horizontal As we all await to be chosen “here comes someone” I whispered She picked me up, excited as I was “ready for an adventure?” I lured my victim in. A series of books staked horizontal As we all await to be chosen Screams yells, what is happening! Oh no! fearing nothing “ready for an adventure?” flip, flip, flip. I cried in aguish as she violated me Scraping a part of my soul Sighed in relief as she tossed me into the wilderness. Lying there, alone, afraid Waiting patiently to be rescued He picked me up, he cared

BOOK: (CRY TEAR) NO NO NO PERSON: STOP STRAIGHT BOOK BOOK RELIEF STOP SHAKE HEAD (LEFT RIGHT) BOOK: (FLAP LEFT RIGHT CLOSED HARD THROWN ON SHELD) CRY SOBS SNEEZE (LOOK AROUND) PERSON: TAKE SHELF BOOK (DUST BOOK) BOOK: LOOK PERSON: OPEN BOOK SNEEZE BOOK: SHOCK PERSON: SORRY NOSE MINE BOOK: YOU READ READ ENJOY MUST TEAR PAGE NO! PERSON: (EYE OPEN NOD HEAD NO YES ENJOY YES) BOOK: READY COME (PULL PULL) PERSON: DRAWN IN BOOK	Started to defend myself! Glancing at me, “ready for an adventure?” I lured my victim in.

Appendix B cont.

Moment (Troy Painino)

Sign Language gloss translate by Bulelwa Madikane	English translate by Bulelwa Madikane
TIE SHIRT FIX, HAIR STYLE FIX. JACKET WEAR, BRIEFCASE BAG TAKE I LEAVE. ESCALATOR I CLIMB, I WATCH TIME CHECK. I COME COME, DOOR OPEN LIGHT COME BRIGHT SPECTACLE I PUT. I GO CLOSE, I LOOK DOWN UP, MARCH I JOIN. PEOPLE TRUMPETS DRUM PLAY, SOUND LOUD PLAY, BOOM BOOM. BRIEFCASE BAG I OPEN, SPETACLE FOLD SHIRT PUT INSIDE, SPECTACLE OTHER SHIRT WIPE CLEAN, I SPECTACLE WEAR. TWO GLOVE HAND WEAR, VIOLIN I TAKE. VIOLIN I PLAY BEAUTIFUL, WELL.	Fixing my shirt, tie and styling my hair. Putting on my jacket and taking my briefcase bag and making my way out. I got into the escalator and checked whether am I on time. I approached the door and opened it. A light struck my eyes, I put on my glasses. I looked down then up and joined the march. There were trumpets and drums playing, the sound was echoing all around. I opened my briefcase bag. I took off the glasses I was wearing, neatly folded them and put them inside the blazer pocket. I took out a second pair of glasses, misted and wiped them against my shirt and put them on. I wore gloves, took out my violin from the case, and started playing beautifully.

Appendix B cont.

Blast Off (Troy Painino)

Sign Language gloss translate by Thabile Mhlongo	English translate by Thabile Mhlongo
ROOF TOP OPEN SIDE OPEN	As the roof and side exits open
ROCKET OUT SLOWLY GO GO GO TURN THICK STAND THICK	The rocket is prepared to exit
ROCKET ENGINE SIDE PUMP PUMP PUMP	The side engines warm up
PEOPLE STAND WAIT LOOK SIDE SIDE	Spectators anxiously wait
ROCKET STAND TIME 20 MINUTES	Time is minus 20 minutes
PEOPLE WAIT, SPEAKER, CAMERA CLICK CLICK, VIDEO	The speaker and camera rolling
ROCKET STAND, PERSON CAMERA LOOK	The rocket is up, photographer anxiously waits
HEAR MUSIC, MELODY, MELODY	Music from a distance sounds a sweet melody
LISTEN BINOCULAR LOOK, SEARCH SEARCH, BINOCULAR LOOK	Looking through the binoculars
BEAUTIFUL, CRY CRY CRY LOOKING	A beautiful, eye watering sight
ROCKET, TIME 10 MINUTES, 5 MINUTES, ROCKET READY	Time is minus 10 minutes, 5 minutes, warming up
ENGINE RIGHT PUMP PUMP, ENGINE LEFT PUMP PUMP	The right and left-side booster pump up
PEOPLE LOOK, HEAR, WOW PUMP PUMP SHAKE, TIME 0 SECOND	Spectators anxiously wait
ROCKET UP, BLOW OUT, ENGINE HOT SMOKE PUMP PUMP	Time is minus 0 seconds
SMOKE A LOT PUMP PUMP	Side boosters pumping
PEOPLE BINOCULRA LOOK WIND BLOW WOW SMOKE PUMP PUMP	Blast off!
	Smoke is fogging the area
	Binoculars looking on
	The rocket is shaking the surface
	Lever is pulled off on second try

ROCKET SHAKE, ENGINE SHAKE LEVER PULL OUT, PULL OUT SKAKING, SMOKE, ROCKET OUT GO, SMOKE OUT UP UP UP, SMOKE EVERYWHERE, ROCKET GO UP, UP, SMOKE OUT ROCKET OUT, NOISE LOUD, SMOKE SMOKE PEOPLE LOOK UP, BINOCULAR REMOVE ROCKET SMALL UP GO, FLY, UP UP PEOPLE LOOK, TEARS WIPE, OVERWHELM.	Intense vibrations shaking the surface Lift off! Smoke is fogging the area The rocket is out with a loud echo Binoculars looking on A bit hard to believe Shooting into open space Flying up high Spectators looking on Wiping their tears, overwhelmed.

Appendix B cont.

Canned (Troy Painino)

Sign Language gloss translate by Euidia Jose	English translate by Euidia Jose
SMOKE, FOG, HOT BOIL, BOIL, BOIL (+3) TUNK POUR, NOISE POUR OUT (+4) FLAT, BOIL (+3) OVERFLOW UP & DOWN FLAT, HOT, SMOKE CHANGE HARD, STEEL PRESS FLAT BELT MOVE/SLIDE CAN PLACED (+6) CANS MANY, CANS MOVE LABEL STICK CAN MOVE, LID CLOSE, LID CLOSE (+) ROLL OVER, CAN AFTER CAN PACKED.	In the blistering heat, journeys a group of canned coke Screeching sounds echo as the cans filter down, Speedily, one by one are loaded onto the table The heat fills the room Machines operating mechanically A can is popped out, carried on a conveyer The lid dispenser covers the can Finally, the can travels rhythmically to get packaged and dispatched

Appendix B cont.

World Cup Rugby (Troy Painino)

Sign Language gloss translate by Zanele Themba	English translate by Zanele Themba
FIELD STADIUM BIG SPECTATORS HAPPY FLAG FLAG. PEOPLE EXCITED HAPPY. STADUIM PEOPLE LOOK UP AIRPLANE COME DOWN PEOPLE AIR FEEL HAPPY. AIRPLANE FLY UP PEOPLE LOOK UP EXCITED. FIELD TWO POLES CROSSBARS. PEOPLE HAPPY SAXOPHONE PLAY, SINGING. PEOPLE HAPPY, DRUM PLAY, CYMBALS PLAY PEOPLE HAPPY. GATE OPEN. COMMENTATOR SAID GO! HOOKER WALK PRAY WALK GOOD. PLAYERS LINE STAND HOOKER RUN PEOPLE PASS PEOPLE PASS. RUN FAST FANS LOOK. PEOPLE LINE STAND, DANCE DANCE DANCE. PEOPLE KNOCK DOWN. HOOKER PENALTY HAVE. FANS HAPPY. REFEREE WHISTLE HAVE. RUGBY BALL REFEREE WHISTLE BLOW. HOOKER RUN BALL KICK.	A huge rugby stadium packed with spectators, cheerful, flying their flags and filled with excitement. Airplane flying over the stadium. The spectators were filled with joy when they felt the breeze of the hot air that comes out from the airplane engine. The stadium has two parallel poles. The bend was playing the National Anthem. You could hear them singing 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' the saxophone 'beeee' the drum 'boom' and the cymbals 'crash! Clang!'. The match was about to begin. "Let the game begin" said the commentator. The hooker had the ruby ball. While walking towards other players he said the holy Mary prayer. He dodged most of the defenders. He could hear the spectators saying "GO, GO, GO…" He felt alive and he gained strength. In the midst of the excitement, he lost focus. Then they knocked him down. He got a penalty try; the spectators were excited with their fingers crossed for a goal. The referee blew his whistle 'fweet!'. The hooker kicked the ball. It's a GOAL!!!

Appendix C

Participant's information sheet

University of the Witwatersrand

Good Day

My name is Atiyah Asmal. I am an MA student in the South African Sign Language department at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting a study titled ***Defining Visual Vernacular in South African Sign Language (SASL): Exploration of how VV form is represented in creative SASL.***

I would like to request your participation in my study. Before you consent, I would like to briefly explain what my research is about and how it will involve you. I will sign the information to you first to make sure you clearly understand everything. Then please take your time to read the information below.

Purpose of the study:

The aim of this study is to identify a particular art form called visual vernacular (VV) in the creative works of South African Sign Language (SASL). VV is a term coined by an American Deaf performer, Bernard Bragg, and it refers to a visual, gestural, and cinematic form of expressions commonly employed in sign language storytelling and poetry.

The first aim of this research is to clarify the terminologies of VV and related concepts in attempt to define VV and understand its essence. This is because I see that there is no consensus among the researchers and poets about what consists of VV and how it differs (or not) from other existing terms.

I would then like to look at the poems and stories that have been developed and published by Deaf people in South Africa to identify instances of VV.

After that, I would like to have a group discussion with poets and scholars in South Africa to discuss how the notion of VV can be applied to SASL. I would like to invite you to take part in this part of my research. Your involvement in this study:

You are selected as the participants to my group discussion because you are an active member of the Deaf community, as well as being an expert in SASL poetry, an experienced storyteller, interpreter and/or researcher. I will arrange an interactive workshop which lasts for one to two hours. This is to ensure my analysis of VV can be validated by other experts in the field, as well as to answer one of my research questions: "What are the views of Deaf poets toward VV in the South Africa context?".

The workshop/discussion will be conducted in a secure and appropriate venue in Johannesburg. The exact address and time will be communicated to you once you have consented to participate. The workshop will require a maximum of 1 to 2 hour of your time. It will be video-recorded for the purpose of analysis later.

All the video-recorded materials will be kept safe in my laptop protected by a password. The only people who will have access to the data is my supervisor Michiko Kaneko and myself. You will be asked to give consent separately for your video or still images to be used for research purposes.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide that you no longer want to participate in my research project after having signed the consent form, I will respect your decision and request that you terminate your participation in writing. Please note that I will retain the data that has been analysed up to the point you have left this study.

The data and findings of the research will solely be used for academic research purposes. The copy of my MA Research Essay will also be made available to you.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated as it will help me gain insight into how the notion of VV can be applied to SASL.

If you agree to take part in my research, please complete the consent from and the video consent form on the next page.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information:

Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Atiyah Asmal	Dr Michiko Kaneko
072 519 3153	011 717 4014
tia.asmal@gmail.com	Michiko.Kaneko@wits.ac.za

Atiyah Asmal

Department of South African Sign Language

University of the Witwatersrand

Appendix C cont.

Consent Form

Research Topic: Defining Visual Vernacular in South African Sign Language (SASL): Exploration of how VV form is represented in creative SASL.

Researcher's name: Atiyah Asmal

I …….. agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I understand that:

- I will not be remunerated.
- I am free to withdraw from the project at any time prior to the analysis.
- While the information gained in this study will be published and my face is identifiable through video images, my names and personal details will remain confidential

Participant's signature _____

Date: _____

Appendix C cont.

Video Consent Form:

Research Topic: Defining Visual Vernacular in South African Sign Language (SASL): Exploration of how VV form is represented in creative SASL.

Researcher's name: Atiyah Asmal

I _____(full name) hereby agree for my participation to the interactive workshop as part of the above research project to be video-recorded. I acknowledge that the video or still images from these recordings may be used in the completed research and for future academic purposes such as seminars, conferences and publications relating to the study, in which my face is identifiable.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____