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Deaf cosmopolitanism: calibrating as a moral process

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ABSTRACT
Cosmopolitanism theory was mostly developed separately from the study of multilingualism: while language is central to cosmopolitanism as a practice, only a few scholars focusing on cosmopolitanism have taken a language-centred approach. We further theorise the relationship between cosmopolitanism and translingual practice with our focus on morality in relation to the use of the semiotic repertoire. The use of resources of the semiotic repertoire in translingual practice is infused with morality in that resources (such as languages, individual signs, mouthing, fingerspelling alphabets) are value laden and have particular associations or meanings in a given context. We explore and define deaf cosmopolitanism by offering examples from three international settings: deaf tourism in Bali, a sign language conference in Brazil, and a Bible translation centre in Kenya. Deaf people engaging in international mobilities align in communication by what they call ‘calibrating’. In this process, mobile deaf people quickly adopt new semiotic resources by engaging in rapid, immersive and informal (sign) language learning, acquiring (bits of) new sign languages, mouthing, written words, and fingerspelling alphabets, and including them in their practice of calibrating. Our analysis centres language ideologies about these practices, demonstrating moral ideas about what strategies and semiotic resources are most appropriate in specific contexts and/or with/by whom.

Introduction
When deaf people talk about their language practices as they engage in multilingual encounters with other deaf people, they often use metaphors. One of these metaphors is that of calibrating, denoted in a sign that looks like spinning a dial on the torso (see Figure 1) or stomach. Sometimes, this is a two-handed sign that looks like spinning two dials one above the other (see Figure 2). This metaphor brings to mind the act of aligning, which is essential to how cosmopolitan orientations and practices have been theorised (Canagarajah, 2013). Cosmopolitanism, often used to theorise international and intercultural encounters, refers to an ideal of openness and adaptation to difference;
in the form of other people, their practices and ways of life (Acharya, 2016; Amit, 2015; Skrbis et al., 2004). However, while communication is central to cosmopolitanism as a practice, most scholars focusing on cosmopolitanism have not taken a language-centred approach.

Cosmopolitanism theory was mostly developed separately from the study of multilingualism, with a few notable exceptions such as Canagarajah’s (2013) study of translingual practice in which he used cosmopolitanism as an overarching framework. ‘Translingual practice’ means that ‘communication transcends individual languages [and] communication transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances’ (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 6). Canagarajah approaches translingual practice in global contact zones as a cosmopolitanism that is dialogical, interactive and negotiated. To theorise on translingual practice, we use the term ‘semiotic repertoire’ (rather than the
more often used ‘linguistic repertoire’) because it encompasses communication that is multilingual and multimodal; including the use of communicative resources that are not necessarily seen as part of bounded languages, such as gestures, pictures and drawings (Kusters et al., 2017). In other words, translilingual practice means the use of diverse semiotic resources, which are joined in semiotic repertoires.

We aim to further theorise this relationship between cosmopolitanism and translilingual practice with our focus on morality in relation to the use of the semiotic repertoire in translilingual practice. The use of resources of the semiotic repertoire in translilingual practice is infused with morality, in that resources (such as certain sign languages and finger-spelling alphabets) are value laden and have particular associations or meanings in a given context. Translingual practice is predicated upon willingness or eagerness to communicate (Canagarajah, 2013), which is another indication of the centrality of morality. Morality is also central to cosmopolitanism, such as in the ways cosmopolitanism has been described as an ethical commitment translating into a value system of openness and impartiality (Acharya, 2016; Skrbis et al., 2004).

We thus connect the study of cosmopolitanism with the study of language practices by anchoring morality in our approach of the semiotic repertoire. We do this by focusing on language ideologies in relation to what we call deaf cosmopolitanism. We explore and define deaf cosmopolitanism by offering examples from three international settings: deaf tourism in Bali, a sign language research conference in Brazil, and a Bible translation centre in Kenya. Deaf people who can access resources which enable them to travel and to participate in transnational encounters often view themselves as citizens of the world, taking pride in their ability to cross national and sign language boundaries, attributing this to their shared, deeply felt experience of deaf embodiment. It is a common refrain among deaf people that their deafness is the basis of an innate connection with other deaf people and this connection allows them to communicate across linguistic boundaries (Breivik et al., 2002; Green, 2014; Kusters & Friedner, 2015; Murray, 2007). We coin ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’ to denote this combination of communicative practice in transnational encounters with moral ideals based in deaf universalism; however, we must explicitly note that these moral ideals and the ability to draw on diverse semiotic repertoires are not equally available to all deaf people because of differential access to socio-economic capital, and to language(s). This article mostly focuses on deaf people who engage in privileged/elite forms of professional and leisurely mobility, in contexts where moral ideals on deaf cosmopolitanism and communication are expressed.

A theorisation of deaf cosmopolitanism links cosmopolitanism with translilingual practice by focusing on the practices of calibrating, as well as incorporating new features into the individual’s semiotic repertoire and the flexible use of these new features in language practices. For our participants, calibrating involves the use of diverse semiotic resources that can include International Sign; signing, mouthing, writing and fingerspelling in different languages and scripts; speech; and drawing. In the process of calibrating, participants quickly adopt new semiotic resources by engaging in rapid, immersive and informal language learning, acquiring (bits of) new sign languages, new mouthings and fingerspelling alphabets, and including them in their language practices. In this article we focus on ideologies on the process rather than the process itself.

We begin with a brief review of different perspectives of cosmopolitanism to situate our approach, then focus on the work of authors who have engaged with the study of
language in relation to cosmopolitanism. We next expand on the term ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’, building on a body of research on deaf transnational encounters that includes language practices in these encounters. We situate our field sites and methodology in a brief methodology section, and then discuss interview quotes and situation descriptions from the three different field sites, studying language ideologies on ‘calibrating’.

**Cosmopolitanism as a practice and an ideal**

In a genealogy of cosmopolitanism as it relates to mobility, Acharya (2016, p. 33) begins with its origins in the Greek word, kosmopolitês, a ‘citizen of the world’ or ‘world citizen (ship)’. Cosmopolitanism has been theorised as an idea, moral practice, or form of action (Irving & Schiller, 2014). The various definitions of cosmopolitanism tend to follow disciplinary boundaries and political perspectives (Glick Schiller et al., 2011). Some approaches to cosmopolitanism describe people (groups or individuals), identities, products, or societies as ‘cosmopolitan’; however, some scholars find this problematic, arguing that to do so renders cosmopolitanism as static, essentialist and product-oriented, rather than emphasising the dynamic nature of cosmopolitanism as practice and process (e.g. Canagarajah, 2013; Nowicka & Rovisco, 2009; Skrbis et al., 2004).

Cosmopolitanism is often also defined as *individual* quality, attitude, and as a set of competencies, a willingness to engage with the Other; specifically, it has been theorised as a quality that people either have or do not have (Hannerz, 1990; Vertovec, 2010). For example, Vertovec (2010) approaches cosmopolitanism as attitude/orientation (with openness and willingness as key terms), as practices/skills (such as code-switching), and abilities/competences (such as empathy, understanding beliefs, proficiency in intercultural communication), some of which can be taught and learned, such as in intercultural/multicultural courses. Skrbis et al. (2004, p. 127) call this attitudinal aspect of cosmopolitanism the ‘cosmopolitan disposition’. They, and Vertovec (2010), make an explicit link between this aspect or approach and Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’. As discussed further below, the approach of cosmopolitanism as habitus overlaps with Canagarajah’s (2013) application of cosmopolitanism to translingual practice.

Aligning with this approach, Glick Schiller et al. (2011, p. 401) direct attention to sociability, ‘in which a shared sense of common sensibilities does not override but coexists with ongoing diversity of perspective and practice’. Cosmopolitan sociability then, for them, consists of forms of competence and communication skills that are based on the human capacity to create social relations of inclusiveness and openness to the world. As such cosmopolitan sociability is an ability to find aspects of the shared human experience including aspirations for a better world within or despite what would seem to be divides of culture and belief (p. 402-403).

In this view, reflexivity and openness are key to a cosmopolitanism that is oriented towards ‘a better world’, a cosmopolitanism that is inherently moral and involves an ethical commitment to universal values: ‘In positing the moral equality of all human beings and all cultures, it sets the ground for the view of cosmopolitanism as a competence based on tolerance and openness towards “other” cultures and value-systems’ (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2009, p. 3).
Scholars have taken efforts to broaden cosmopolitanism beyond its Eurocentric values and applications and its claims to universalism (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002), moving away from its association with mobility and privilege (Amit, 2015; Hannerz, 2004). For example, people who do not travel outside the country where they were born can engage in cosmopolitan relationships, such as shop owners working in a superdiverse neighbourhood in London (Wessendorf, 2014). Also, authors have criticised claims that cosmopolitanism can be gender neutral, racially neutral or ethnically neutral (Glick Schiller et al., 2011, p. 404).

**Cosmopolitanism and the semiotic repertoire**

While cosmopolitanism is a widely discussed and researched theory or analytic, relatively few authors have explicitly linked the concept to language practices; specifically, ‘linguistics has not actively engaged with cosmopolitan models’ (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 194). Language scholars who engaged with cosmopolitanism argued that it is impossible to theorise cosmopolitanism without discussing language practices. For example, Archibugi (2005) places language at the core of cosmopolitanism. After all, languages are crucial in accessing other worldviews and engaging with ‘the Other’. Linguistic cosmopolitanism has been described in ways that Janssens and Steyaert (2014) summarised as using monological lingua franca, monological multilingualism, and multilingual franca.

The approach of a *monological lingua franca* gives precedence to universality – using a common language for instrumental aims. Esperanto for example was developed for cosmopolitan purposes (Archibugi, 2005), but pragmatically, English is more often regarded and used as cosmopolitan language. Sonntag (2015) points out that there is the potential for violence underlying cosmopolitan orientations that favour the use of a single language; there is a tendency to prioritise the communicative (universal) function of language over language as an identity marker (the particular). Hence, in its attempts to expunge the primordial violence of affective linguistic identity, linguistic cosmopolitanism engages in the ‘violence of assimilation’ (p. 203).

The approach of *monological multilingualism* gives precedence to particularity: languages and cultures are treated as bounded systems, and people learn and use each other’s languages and/or work with interpreters. Essentially, this is a form of plural monolingualism (Makoni & Pennycook, 2012), characterised by appreciation and celebration of linguistic diversity and multilingualism, and by an awareness about or concern about the dangers of linguistic imperialism. This is the approach favoured by supporters of multiculturalism, but for Archibugi (2005) it is not cosmopolitan. Her definition of cosmopolitanism includes direct communication, preferring ‘impoverished but directly understandable language to a myriad of more colourful yet non-accessible languages’ (p. 552). In contrast, others (e.g. Janssens & Steyaert, 2014) see monological multilingualism as a form of linguistic cosmopolitanism.

*Multilingua franca*, the third approach, is a term essentially pointing towards translingual practice (which often does involve English) and also emphasising that such practices can become sedimented in particular contexts such as international businesses or markets. ‘Multilingua franca’ is an emergent mix in which different semiotic resources are deeply intertwined, which originates in a particular context and can be somewhat...
standardised but is also always in flux (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Global and local, same-
ness and difference cannot be separated in a multilingua franca. In his investigation of
multilingua franca, Canagarajah (2013) argued that translingual practice reveals ‘strat-
egies informing everyday forms of cosmopolitanism that are practiced as a verb and not a noun’ (2013, p. 194). His approach ‘challenges the assumption of other models of
global Englishes that sharedness and uniformity of norms at different levels of generality
are required for communicative success’ (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 75).

Canagarajah’s (2013) ‘cooperative disposition’ adds a moral dimension to the use of
the semiotic repertoire; they are dispositions, and also strategies, values, skills that
people may bring to contact zone interactions, making them potentially ‘open to negoti-
tiating diversity and the co-construction of meaning’. In other words, people orient
towards each other with a strong ethic of collaboration, drawing on an assemblage of
shared semiotic resources that they mix and mesh to arrive at shared understanding.
This ‘performative competence and cooperative disposition of translinguals’ indexes
what Canagarajah calls ‘a practice-based dialogical cosmopolitanism’ (p. 196). Central in
this practice is alignment: ‘it is not uniformity of values that achieves community, but
the ability to align disparate values and features for common goals’ (p. 196). Dialogical
cosmopolitanism, Canagarajah argues, is interactive and negotiated and therefore
different from ‘imperial cosmopolitanism’ in which values are imposed on others: cosmo-
politanism is ‘a process, achieved and co-constructed through mutually responsive prac-
tices’ (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 194).

Similarly connecting ‘cosmopolitanism’ with translingual practice, Hawkins (2018)
emphasises the importance of attending to how different semiotic resources are associ-
ated with power differences. Who can use these resources and how they are used are
impacted by

the social and cultural capital that interactants and their associated resources hold within a
given encounter shape what modes are used and hold sway, how modes and meanings are
represented and interpreted, and how people (and groups of people) are positioned vis-à-vis
one another (p. 64).

This focus on (power-laden) values connected to the use of various semiotic resources is
central in our analysis of language ideologies in relation to deaf cosmopolitanism.

**Deaf cosmopolitanism: theoretical foundations**

In coining the term ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’, it is not our aim to further differentiate cos-
mopolitanism theory by adding yet another modification to ‘cosmopolitanism’ (such as in
vernacular cosmopolitanism, diasporic cosmopolitanism, banal cosmopolitanism, and so
on) (Acharya, 2016; Nowicka & Rovisco, 2009; Wessendorf, 2014). Rather, we add ‘deaf’ to
‘deaf cosmopolitanism’ to delineate a case study, comprising of a group of people whose
cosmopolitan practices have been long commented upon (see Gulliver, 2015; Murray,
2007).

Our contribution to theorising cosmopolitanism is that we use ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’
as a way in to further explore the relationship between the semiotic repertoire and cos-
mopolitanism, as Canagarajah (2013) has done. We do this by examining language ideol-
ogies in relation to deaf cosmopolitanism. We do not intend to *promote* deaf
cosmopolitanism as ‘good and right’ (Green, 2014, p. 455). Similarly, we are not arguing that deaf cosmopolitanism is inherent in, or the drive of, all deaf people who communicate across national borders. Rather we are focusing on ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’ as attitude, disposition, orientation, and process that we have encountered in the literature, in research practice, and as an ideology.

Deaf cosmopolitanism is not new. In 1900, deaf people from Japan, Ecuador, the United States, Russia and Mexico attended the Paris World Fair (Gulliver, 2015), promoting a French deaf leader to say, ‘United as a community … we know no borders’, (Congress 1900, 258; as cited in Gulliver, 2015). Deaf people in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Paris convened at annual banquets on an international scope (Gulliver, 2015; Murray, 2007), at which ‘Deaf mute foreigners, in their toasts, never missed a chance to emphasise the universal nature of signs, claiming that ‘it easily wins out over all the separate limiting languages of speaking humanity … Our language encompasses all nations, the entire globe’ (Mottez, 1993, p. 36). This quote includes ideologies about deaf cosmopolitanism in itself as well as language ideologies in relation to deaf cosmopolitanism. Deaf signers are presented as having a unique potential to cosmopolitanism, grounded in their linguistic skills and visuo-tactile-centred dispositions in what was (at the time) seen as one sign language with multiple variants, rather than as multiple sign languages.

Contemporary deaf mobilities in which deaf people engage with deaf people from other linguistic, national and ethnic backgrounds, involve different types of migration, international and local professional travel, and tourism. The contexts include temporary and circular forms of mobility, short-term stays, and settlement for longer periods of time. Deaf people who engage in mobility often use and learn multiple languages, including local or national sign languages and spoken/written languages, and may make use of International Sign.

International Sign (IS) takes place when signers of different linguistic backgrounds come together. IS probably emerged during the abovementioned international encounters since the nineteenth century or before. IS showcases a higher rate of iconicity, flexibility and transparency than is generally the case in standardised national sign languages such as American Sign Language (ASL) (Rosenstock, 2008). An important ideology underlying IS use is that it is (or should be) more transparent and therefore easier to learn and understand than national sign languages. IS typically incorporates signs from national sign languages (including ASL) and often includes mouthings from English and other spoken languages. Its use is variable and dependent on the geographical, political, social, cultural and linguistic context in which it occurs and the backgrounds of the people who use it. There are conventionalised and less conventionalised uses of IS (Zeshan, 2015), and they are typically used together in the same communicative contexts (such as deaf international events). However, being able to use and understand the more conventional versions of IS is correlated to mobility, privilege and the ability to make use of certain semiotic resources, including a range of literacies (Green, 2014, 2015). IS is therefore seen as either enabling understanding (because of direct communication), or limiting understanding, depending on the signer and the receiver. IS could be seen as a multilingua franca (cf. above) (Kusters, 2021).

In a preliminary investigation into the affective aspects of IS, Green (2014, p. 461) suggested that many deaf signers value direct communication in IS because it emerges from, affirms, and produces a sense of sameness of deaf people. However, she argues,
communication in IS is ‘neither effortless nor pre-given; signers must engage in linguistic but also, and more fundamentally, moral labour’. According to Green, people value the labour involved in mutual meaning-making. She describes how IS is experienced as good (in the sense of enjoyable, even if it may also be hard), and is valued not ‘DESPITE the work involved, but rather BECAUSE of it’ (Green, 2014, p. 455, her emphasis). Communicating in IS is also experienced as right: communicating directly with people from different language backgrounds entails a moral obligation, a ‘should’. Our use of the term ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’ is motivated by the need to explicitly engage with this moral orientation.

When theorising deaf mobilities and connections across national borders, authors have used the concepts ‘transnationalism’ (e.g. Breivik et al., 2002; Murray, 2007), ‘Deaf internationalism’ (Gulliver, 2015), and ‘global Deafhood’ (Ladd, 2015). The idea of a sense of sameness across difference constitutes the framework of the edited volume It’s a Small World: International Deaf Spaces and Encounters (Friedner & Kusters, 2015). The authors of chapters in this book engaged with the concept of ‘deaf-same’, or deaf universalism / deaf similitude, meaning a (belief in a) ‘deep connection that is felt between deaf people around the globe, grounded in experiential ways of being in the world’ (Kusters & Friedner, 2015, p. x), and in deaf international communication. Deaf universalism ‘can create claims of likeness and affiliation between people with very different cultural, racial, class, religious, economic, and geographic backgrounds’ (Kusters & Friedner, 2015, p. x). Deaf being-in-the-world also includes shared experiences of oppression, such as barriers and discrimination experienced by deaf people in everyday life (Kusters & Friedner, 2015). For many deaf travellers, cosmopolitan aspirations are entwined with the desire to meet deaf people, contribute to local deaf businesses, help deaf local people; by moving through a ‘global deaf circuit’ consisting of places such as deaf schools, deaf organisations and so on (Moriarty Harrelson, 2015).

International deaf encounters are not only manifestations of (the discourse of) deaf universalism, but are also experienced as fraught, uneven and ambivalent. Authors in It’s a Small World challenged the idea of deaf universalism, reflecting on power, (im)mobility and access to resources, often related to race, class and geographical location. These factors impact on having social connections, being able to use and understand the more conventional versions of IS, and participation in deaf discourses on the Internet and social media. Authors also explored (often combined and/or competing) aspirations and expectations of deaf people when reaching out to deaf people in other countries, including making new friends, wanting to have an ‘authentic’ tourist experience, guiding tourists, attending a course, practicing religion together, gaining financial profit, and engaging in research, development, or charitable works.

Many of these works on deaf international encounters have taken ‘transnationalism’ as a lens (Haualand et al., 2016), which is a different approach than implied in the term ‘cosmopolitanism’. Transnationalism ‘does not refer to qualitative feelings or attitudes of individuals, and it is not affected by what people think of it’ (Roudometof, 2005, p. 118). Cosmopolitanism explicitly involves affect, feelings, attitudes, and dispositions. We argue that in effect, by both adopting and challenging the ‘deaf-same’ trope, the authors in the It’s a Small World book (Friedner & Kusters, 2015) and other Deaf Studies works where ‘transnationalism’ was used as a framework (e.g. Breivik, 2005; Murray, 2007), were implicitly discussing cosmopolitan practices. They adopted a view on
cosmopolitanism supporting that it ‘rests between universalisms and diversity constructed in mobile encounters between people’ (Acharya, 2016, p. 43). This is the approach to cosmopolitanism advocated by Glick Schiller et al. (2011, p. 403); cosmopolitanism arises from ‘social relationships that do not negate cultural, religious or gendered differences but see people as capable of relationships of experiential commonalities despite differences ... [moving] beyond the binaries of inclusion vs. exclusion, sameness vs. difference’. Building on Green’s (2014) work, using ‘deaf cosmopolitanism’ as a concept emphasises moral orientations in ways that many scholars discussing deaf transnational connections, deaf universalism or deaf internationalism have done but not centralised in their analysis.

Research sites and methods

The data for this paper was collected during a five-year, European Research Council – funded project, Deaf mobilities across international borders: Visualising intersectionality and translanguaging, shortened to MobileDeaf (mobiledeaf.org.uk). The data analysed in this paper is from ethnography with deaf people who engage in short-term forms of international mobilities such as conference attendance, working in international work sites, tourism and tourist guiding; thus zooming in on the more privileged forms of mobility (in contrast to the focus of other MobileDeaf project components). The data we include in this article is based on participant observation, ethnographic filmmaking and interviews. Ethical approval for the study was given by the funder (European Research Council) and the host institution (Heriot-Watt University).

The MobileDeaf team is an international team of five deaf signers with diverse semiotic repertoires that are used within the team, including British Sign Language (BSL), American Sign Language (ASL), International Sign (IS), Vlaamse Gebarentaal (VGT) and French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB). Our translingual practice consisted of interaction mostly in these languages, but also involved the use of aspects or signs of other sign languages we had learned by doing research and/or living in other countries (e.g. Ghanaian, Indian, Cambodian, Colombian, Kenyan, Indonesian, Irish and Filipino Sign Language), and in English, French and Dutch. We usually make use of mouthings and fingerspelling in our communication. All of us have lived in other countries as well as travelled to international deaf events. Our previous experience and the translingual practices in our team were extended to our field work on international deaf encounters.

Erin is a white deaf woman from the United States with a PhD in Anthropology who is fluent in ASL, with a professional proficiency in BSL and Cambodian Sign Language, acquired during 15+ months of fieldwork in Cambodia over four years. For this project, Erin conducted 7 months of fieldwork in Bali, Indonesia where she engaged with deaf tourists of diverse nationalities travelling by themselves, in pairs, or in groups. Many of them toured parts of the island with one of the two deaf tour guides working in Bali. Erin also joined a multilingual 10-day tour group of multi-ethnic deaf people in their 20s and 30s from Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. Deaf tourist encounters in Bali involved translingual practice, especially as many deaf tourists engaged in the learning and use of new signs, as well as the strategic deployment of a variety of sign languages, such as Auslan (Australian Sign Language), IS and ASL, as well local sign
languages such as BISINDO (Indonesian Sign Language) and Kata Kolok (a Balinese village sign language), and spoken languages, specifically, Dutch, Indonesian and English. Erin herself engaged in language learning and ‘calibrating’, as she conducted interviews in BSL, IS, ASL, Kata Kolok, and English, or various combinations thereof.

Annelies is a white deaf woman from Belgium with a PhD in Deaf Studies, who previously to the project had gained 13 years of research experience in Surinam, Ghana and India. Her study within the MobileDeaf project included field work in eight settings, two of which feature in the examples below: (1.) The SIGN8 conference in Florianopolis, Brazil, which was the eighth iteration of an international sign language conference series which was attended by mostly deaf participants: around 250 Brazilians and 25–30 people from other countries. The conference languages were IS and Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). (2.) The DOOR campus in Nairobi, Kenya, which is a Bible translation centre where teams from different countries work and reside to translate the Bible into their national sign language and use a translingual mix including Kenyan Sign Language for international communication. When Annelies was there, teams from Mozambique, South Sudan, Kenya and Russia were working on Bible translations, and a group of deaf people from India, Burundi and the US followed a course taught by an Indian and an American. Within contexts of research, Annelies has used multiple sign languages including British Sign Language, International Sign, Indian Sign Language, American Sign Language and Adamorobe Sign Language – and it is this language ‘toolkit’ she brought with her on her multisited study, in her process of ‘calibrating’ with people when doing interviews in International Sign.

Both of us are working on ethnographic films based on our subprojects, for which natural interactions between people were recorded (Moriarty, 2020a) as well as focus groups and interviews. Videotaped interviews and focus groups were transcribed into written English for analysis and dissemination, such as in this article. We share links to original video quotes (for which participants gave their consent) in a blog post based on this article: https://mobiledeaf.org.uk/cosmopolitanism/.

Language practices and ideals in deaf cosmopolitanism

In the process of calibrating, deaf people make an effort to adapt their signing to be understood, such as by signing slowly, using pantomime, paraphrasing concepts, switching languages, or using signs, words and fingerspelled alphabets associated with different languages (Byun et al., 2018). They also engage in informal interpreting for each other (Green, 2015) and different kinds of chaining. ‘Local chaining’ means different modalities are sequentially connected to highlight equivalencies; such as fingerspelling a concept and then signing it; or pointing at a written word and then signing/saying it (Bagga-Gupta, 2000). An example of ‘simultaneous chaining’ (Bagga-Gupta, 2004) is when a sign and an equivalent word in any language arepronounced synchronously. Below, we discuss examples from our data that illustrate how deaf people talk about the use of certain semiotic resources to index cosmopolitanism, i.e. we analyse language ideologies in relation to translingual practice in global contexts. Language ideologies regarding sign languages can be about how people understand sign languages and their relationships to other languages (signed or spoken) and modalities (including speech and writing) (Kusters et al., 2020); in other words, the semiotic repertoire.
In international deaf spaces, deaf people frequently discuss the idea of having a good versus bad ‘attitude’ in the communication process, which seems to point toward moral orientation with regard to the process of adaptation: if you work towards understanding each other and thus show mutual orientation, you show you have a good attitude:

*Kang-Suk (Korea, SIGN8 presenter):* If you take a selfish approach, it won’t work and it won’t be successful. Both signers need to take a curious view of the other’s language, and be exploratory in a co-operative spirit - to feel that synergy. (…) If you are both trying to discover what the other person is saying, you’ll grasp each other as you go along. (…) Motivation is so important in trying to understand each other. (…) Also, the first time people communicate together, it’s not going to be about wide-ranging, random topics. It’s going to be about a particular topic, ‘Where are you from’? It’s going to have a narrow focus and people will have a shared perspective. That narrow focus will grow wider, and people will be able to converse more broadly. That keeps deaf people together whereas hearing conversations can be about any topic and so they go their separate ways.

Kang-Suk has also done research into deaf international communication, which he presented at the conference in Brazil where Annelies did field work (Byun et al., 2018). Here, he points towards the importance of willingness and motivation; in combination with having shared experiences and concerns which helps deaf people connect. Friedner (2016) analyses how the emphasis on effort and understanding in communication is key to deaf epistemologies and ontologies (although it is also key to hearing translinguistic practice as Canagarajah, 2013 pointed out).

While IS is often used as ‘multilingual franca’, a monological lingua franca (cf. Janssens & Steyaert, 2014) is also present in practices and discourses related to deaf cosmopolitanism. ASL or ASL-influenced sign languages are the primary sign language in many countries, and ASL is learned and used as an additional sign language by many people (Parks, 2014). However, the use of ASL is often commented upon in a pejorative way because it is associated with linguistic imperialism and the US (Kusters, 2020; Moriarty, 2020b).

Deaf people from the United States have a reputation in European deaf spaces; the stereotypical deaf American is perceived as ‘bigheaded’ because of their language practices such as ‘fast’ signing and the general predominance of fingerspelling in ASL, thus showing a ‘bad attitude’. The use of IS is often considered to be more acceptable than the use of ASL because of the investment it requires in terms of time and adjustment to the other interactants:

*Calvin (USA, deaf travel influencer and tourist in Bali):* IS works when conversing with a person whose process might not match with my own. By signing slower and more visually, they can understand me, copy me, and I influence their signing as well as them influencing mine to find a common communication approach. It becomes an exchange. With ASL, its more “My way or nothing” and the person I’m talking to might copy that, but I’m not learning from them in that situation. It’s not an exchange, it’s one-sided and that’s limiting.

IS is ideologically connected to specific rules and expectations though. These communicative encounters are not free-for-alls where signs are indiscriminately used; especially when signs from certain sign languages, especially American Sign Language (ASL), are actively resisted or discouraged (Kusters, 2020; Moriarty, 2020b). For example:
Kate (USA, tourist in Bali): For example, when I was in New Zealand, my brother and I would use ASL to talk with each other. Others did not approve … they would tell us to leave ASL for when we are in America. There we were to learn New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). “Leave ASL while you are here”. I took it as advice and decided not to use ASL. It forced me to connect and get the real experience of New Zealand. The same happened in Europe. They don’t understand ASL, so I tried my best to sign more IS mixing it with BSL.

Here, IS mixed with BSL (BSL and NZSL are part of the same language family and therefore can be experienced as similar) is seen as more appropriate than the use of ASL. At the same time, ASL could be said to be as much a lingua franca as IS especially in the global South where many national sign languages are influenced by ASL (cf. Kusters, 2021; Parks, 2014):

Eric (Kenya, Kenyan Sign Language translator at DOOR in Kenya): I know ASL. I learned ASL at school when I was a child growing up. I was always exposed to ASL, no KSL [Kenyan Sign Language] at all. KSL I picked up later. I started with ASL in school growing up. That is where I started learning it. (…) Learning ASL when I was young in school helped me later in life to be able to understand people from other countries that would come here. They might use an ASL sign and I could make that connection from my youth and communicate. That is positive, being able to accommodate each other. People from different countries use some ASL so it helps us to connect.

There may also be clashes in expectations for international deaf communication:

Rahul (India, student at DOOR in Kenya): On one side there are Europeans and on the other there are Americans. Europeans hate ASL and try to keep it out. The other thing is that Americans do not want IS. Some accept it and try to learn it a bit - slowly - however Europeans are fully ready to embrace IS. I forgot that fact so I signed ASL to a European and I felt their response was a bit negative - they had an attitude about that. They saw me signing ASL and asked if I learned it in America. I sensed the disapproval and tried to stop using so much ASL.

In international deaf spaces, the use of specific semiotic resources (especially IS and ASL) is entwined with moral ideas about what is ‘good’ practice and what is right in a particular space. In international contexts, ASL use by Americans such as Kate is often frowned upon. Yet, the use of ASL may be as cosmopolitan as using IS, depending on the perspective. Rahul and Eric take a pragmatic attitude towards ASL since it allows them to connect with deaf people from other linguistic backgrounds. Rahul does not necessarily see the use of IS as right or just, thus more moral to use; however, Rahul understands that to be accepted and welcomed may require the use of particular languages or semiotic resources, even if it is performative, such as in the use of IS rather than ASL. ‘European’ deaf expectations may dominate in international contexts: for them, adapting is calibrating by mixing/meshing and using iconic signs; while for others, using ASL may be the most effortless and sensible way to adapt.

In contexts of international travel, the host country might have two or more sign languages (or varieties) and alphabets in use, such as in Indonesia, but deaf travellers are typically more focused on engaging with the national sign language, most likely because that sign language is an emblem of that country’s deaf community. The emphasis on the national sign language, even if the parties involved in the communicative encounter are more skilled in and have another sign language in common (e.g. ASL), is a sign of respect for the host nation. Adopting and using signs from the host country’s national
sign language is seen as polite and respectful, and is thus indexing morality. It is also an example of how cosmopolitanism and nationalism are connected.

Deaf cosmopolitanism relies on this ideal of exchange consisting of learning and using ‘bits’ (features) of other languages. Those bits not only include signs, but also fingerspelling alphabets, mouthings and written words, which are all features of semiotic repertoires. When they travel, deaf signers are often eager to engage in social interactions with signers using these ‘bits’ and this is often talked about in terms of an ‘exchange’. Deaf cosmopolitanism thus involves performative acts of giving and receiving; e.g. the exchange of languages.

People can also learn new ‘bits’ of languages from interlocuters who are not native to their particular geographical location. In this example, Wahyu, a deaf Indonesian who works as a guide in Bali, discusses how he adjusts to tourists of different nationalities by using their signs and mouthings (see Figure 3):

When I work as a deaf guide, I use International Sign and Australian Sign Language mainly. When I meet deaf people from Bali, I switch to BISINDO, but during work I generally use IS because the majority of people come from America, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, etc. When Australians come, I need to switch the way I sign and that is a bit more difficult because of their two-handed alphabet. (…) When they slow down it is fine. (…) When a Chinese person comes, I sign differently compared to when a German or a Dutch person comes - I use a different IS. (…) I have to adjust, yes. When deaf people come here and don’t understand my IS, I have to adjust and use some German signs if a German person comes, but only a bit. For example, I will mouth WILLKOMMEN whilst signing WELCOME, it is only a bit and we understand each other better after that, but I use mostly IS. (…) I learn while communicating. When I meet a deaf person I use the signs I learned before which helps us to further communication.

Wahyu learns and adopts bits including fingerspelling alphabets (with which he struggles sometimes), signs and mouthings. He also indicates that IS looks different, depending on whom he is interacting with. Calibrating to his interlocutor, he may use Auslan instead of

Figure 3. This is the sign that Wahyu uses when he talks about calibrating his signing to fit deaf tourists of different nationalities.
IS. His language learning is connected with tourist mobility, and he uses ‘bits’ from his semiotic repertoire accumulated from previous encounters with tourists.

At SIGN8 in Brazil, there were pre-conference workshops for both conference languages (IS and Libras). People could present in either of the two conference languages and there were no interpreters provided. This means many Brazilians were aspiring to and pressured to learn and use IS in a short time, and it also means that the handful of non-Brazilians were motivated to learn bits of Libras and associated mouthings in Portuguese. Non-Brazilian participants attempted to incorporate in their signing the few Libras signs they had learned at the pre-conference workshop and/or from informal interactions with Brazilians:

*Julie (USA, SIGN8 presenter):* When the talk started with the audience of people, I began with remembering the experience of the [IS and Libras] workshops, establishing eye contact with people I’d met at the workshops, and remembering some Libras signs such as OBRIGADO, and the signs for MOTHER and FATHER. I felt that it was important to connect with the audience. (...) I signed to those people directly to create that connection. (...) To be honest I’m sure I jumbled it up, but I didn’t feel embarrassed - I felt that I was being open. I know many Brazilians are really strongly rooted in Libras and don’t know any IS, so I didn’t want them to feel that I was just another person who didn’t know anything.

In this example, Julie made a conscious choice at the interactional level to use eye contact to connect with the Brazilians in the audience and calibrate through the use of signs from the geographical location’s national sign language. This was also to signal her awareness of the power differentials in this situation in terms of access to resources, individual mobility, as well as the mobility of ASL itself.

As in the example of Kate visiting New Zealand, deaf people signing IS in local places will use the few marked ‘foreign’ signs that they know (BSL in Kate’s case), both to facilitate understanding and also to show awareness of and respect for national sign language boundaries, especially in areas of the world with a history of sign language imperialism (Moriarty, 2020b). These marked signs include phatic communication such as greeting and thanking; frequently used signs such as ‘WOMAN/MAN’, ‘MOTHER/FATHER’; and sign names of places in the host country. For some signs (such as ‘THANK YOU’), it may include adopting the mouthings of a foreign spoken language such as ‘obrigado’ (Portuguese). In everyday discourses of deaf universalism, there is not often an explicit acknowledgement of the ways in which various forms of (im)mobilities shape language practices and individual accumulation of semiotic resources. However, morality does manifest in the pragmatic choices made at the interactional level, or in other words, calibrating as a social practice.

Adopting of “bits” occurs in a continuum, from adopting foreign signs in IS to learning foreign sign languages. At the DOOR campus in Kenya, there was a multilingua franca in use, consisting of mostly KSL mixed with signs from ASL and Indian Sign Language (the latter because of a long-standing collaboration with a campus of DOOR located in India), which some participants called ‘DOOR signs’. Also, a number of consultants worked on the campus in order to support and assist translation teams; they were expected to learn to understand this team’s sign language, such as a consultant from Costa Rica learning Mozambiquan Sign Language to work with a team of translators from Mozambique, and a consultant from Ethiopia learning South Sudanese Sign Language to do the same. The director expressed his view on the language policy at the DOOR campus as follows:
Paul (Kenya, director and senior consultant, DOOR): I think the best way is for me to sign KSL, for them to express themselves in their own sign language, and we meet in the middle and connect. (...) Most of the time it is a 50/50 split between their signing and my own. I would not know their sign language in its entirety, and the same would go for them. (...) It is my signing and their signing integrated together and we would be able understand each other clearly that way.

While people on the DOOR campus are constantly engaging in translilingual practice in their multilingua franca, there also is emphasis on separating and learning other sign languages, thus simultaneously propagating a multilingual environment in the form of monological multilingualism (in the translation products).

**Conclusion**

Deaf cosmopolitanism is grounded in the use of the semiotic repertoire; and in language ideologies about this process. Moral orientations (Green, 2014) shape and infuse the learning and using of languages and of ‘bits’ of languages (semiotic resources such as signs, written words, fingerspelling alphabets, mouthings) in international deaf encounters. Moral beliefs about these languages and semiotic resources are entwined with what authors such as Canagarajah (2013) and Vertovec (2010) have called ‘dispositions’. Focusing on language ideologies on the process of calibrating and exchanging, we took up Canagarajah’s (2013) call to attend to cosmopolitanism as a process, rather than a state. We demonstrated how the practices of calibrating and exchanging are shaped by language ideologies that include moral ideas about what semiotic resources are most appropriate in specific contexts and/or with/by whom. For example, in deaf cosmopolitan encounters, the use of either national sign languages or IS are expected as a form of ‘good and right’ behaviour that index good or bad attitudes, but opinions differ on what is more suitable or more moral, be it IS or ‘DOOR signs’ as multilingua francas; ASL as monological lingua franca; or the monological multilingualism at the DOOR campus and the conference in Brazil.

Deaf translilingual practice thus involves a moral component in terms of attending to host countries’ sign languages, sign language boundaries, and concurrently, claiming shared values related to access, sign languages, and understanding (cf Friedner 2016). Examples include language ideologies about the power and dominance of certain sign languages, especially American Sign Language (ASL) and IS, and concerns about hegemonic languages/modalities, sometimes resulting in situations where the most effective communicative resources are not used, in the interests of performing morality. Expectations and ideas shape the use of the semiotic repertoire in that people regulate and constrain communicative encounters. By situating morality as emergent from lived experiences and in practices, we avoided a discussion of morality as if it is an objective, easily defined set of rules. As noted by other scholars, there is a dynamic relationship between moral values and practices, in which ‘values that are continuously changing and adapting through actual choices and practices, while, at the same time, they continue to inform and shape choices and practices’ (Howell, 1997, p. 4).

With our focus on language ideologies about the practice of calibrating and exchanging ‘bits’ in international deaf interactions, we showed that the use of the semiotic repertoire is a contingent, contextual practice that is infused with morality. People’s
communicative repertoires as well as the idealised openness of cosmopolitanism are regulated and constrained by expectations for language practices that are deemed to be morally right and just, as well as the scales and forms of mobilities they are engaged in.

**Note**

1. Our use of ‘calibrating’ in this article is derived from the way that this concept is signed; we chose the English word based on the visuality of spinning dials, which differs from Michael Silverstein’s (1993) use of calibration.

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