

SIGNIFICANCE OF TOUCH AND EYE CONTACT IN THE POLISH DEAF COMMUNITY DURING CONVERSATIONS IN POLISH SIGN LANGUAGE: ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONS

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Abstract: *Some people with hearing impairments belong to a special community: the Deaf Community. They use natural sign language (in Poland it is Polish Sign Language – Polski Język Migowy, PJM) to communicate and they appreciate this form of communication. Using sign language includes specific behaviours such as eye-contact and touch. Sometimes these behaviours are typical of the Deaf Community but atypical of hearing people. Thus, the aim of this research was to show the specificity of touch and eye contact among Deaf people. Ethnographic observation was used as the research method. The Deaf Community was filmed in their natural meeting places (e.g. community meetings, celebrations, family homes). More than 4 hours of recordings were transcribed and analysed. Film analysis showed certain characteristics of eye contact (frequency, making and interrupting eye contact) and characteristics of touch contact (parts of the body touched, frequency of touching, use of touch to make contact with another person). This study provides insights into the differences between Deaf and hearing people, which may help to reduce the mutual distance between the two groups.*

Key words: *sign language, Polish Sign Language, touch, eye contact*

INTRODUCTION

Disability can be analysed simultaneously in the medical and cultural context. The cultural model indicates that disability can be perceived not only as departure from the norm, but also as a source of social diversity. The social and cultural aspects of disability can raise doubt because disabled people live among members of the able-bodied majority, who exert a significant influence on people's lives and set general standards of conduct. However, the Deaf¹ community is characterised by unique features that make it distinct from the hearing majority. For this reason, the social and cultural identity of the Deaf community is rarely questioned (Barnes et al. 2008, Bartnikowska et al. 2016). The difficulties experienced by Deaf people in the hearing world or, in extreme cases, the social exclusion

that results from a different system of communication contribute to the development of new cultural standards in this community. Sign language further accentuates and strengthens the distinctive identity of the Deaf community.

The beginnings of Deaf culture date back to the 18th century when the first schools for Deaf students were opened. The schools were the main, but – as noted by Monaghan (2003) – not the only centres of activity where sign languages were developed, communication between Deaf individuals was established and a community of like-minded people was created.

These and other advances encouraged people with hearing impairments to identify with the Deaf community. The research on sign language conducted in the 1960s by William Stokoe revolution-

¹ The word "Deaf" is capitalised to denote a member of the deaf community who uses a natural sign language and identifies with this linguistic and cultural minority (Padden et al. 1988, 2006, Sacks 1998, Durity et al. 2006).

ised the understanding of sign languages and had a profound impact on Deaf culture (Stokoe 1975, 2005, Padden et. al. 1988, Lane 1996, MacDougall 1991). Stokoe's work led to the widespread recognition that sign languages are genuine languages and highly effective means of communication, and are not merely primitive systems of gesture. The 1960s also witnessed the struggle for equal rights of various minorities in the USA and, subsequently, in other countries. These movements encouraged the Deaf to fight for their rights as a linguistic and cultural minority. Their efforts significantly contributed to Deaf awareness and pride in Deaf identity and cultural heritage (Padden et. al. 1988, Lane 1996, Monaghan 2003, Holcomb 2013).

Research into Deaf culture conducted in various countries indicates that the development of the Deaf community can be stimulated or inhibited by different attitudes and values, including the preference for collectivism over individualism; appreciation for spouses with hearing impairments; acceptance of children born with a hearing impairment (30% of Deaf people would prefer to have a Deaf child – Middleton 1998); limited enthusiasm for technical innovations, in particular invasive devices such as cochlear implants; a sense of pride in Deaf identity; creative efforts that involve visual art as a manifestation of positive attitudes towards the Deaf community and sign language; specific humour; and knowledge of Deaf history (Bartnikowska 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013, Bartnikowska et al. 2016, Dolnick 1993, MacDougall 1991, Mindes et al. 2006, Holcomb 2013, Paaes 2004, Padden et al. 1988, 2006, Peters 2001, Plutecka 2008, Podgórska-Jachnik 2013, Singleton et al. 2000, Szczepankowski 1999, Senghas et. al. 2004). These factors promote the awareness that the Deaf community has a separate linguistic and cultural identity.

This point of view leads to sociolinguistic research that compares sign language to spoken language. At the beginning, it is worth mentioning Grice's Cooperative Principle in the theory of pragmatics in communication (Grice 1975). The author enunciated four conversation maxims under categories of: (1) quantity: "Make your contribution as informative as required" (p. 45); (2) quality: "Try to make your contribution one that is true" (p. 46);

(3) relevance: "Be relevant" (p. 46); and (4) directness not in what is said but in "HOW what is said is to be said": "Be perspicuous" (p. 46). The fourth concept means to avoid ambiguity or obscurity, i.e. to try to be direct and straightforward. Gricean maxims are universal (Grice 1975) so they can be used for every language, including sign language.

Sociolinguistics develops our knowledge about sign language and sign language discourse. Various research lines have provided insights into turn-taking (Baker 1977, Coates, Sutton-Spence 2001), regulators in American Sign Language (ASL) (Baker 1977), topic flow in ASL (Witbur, Petitto 1983), pauses in ASL discourse (Winston 1991, Rieger 2001), function of space in sign language discourse (Liddel 1996), facial expressions as a component of grammatical signals in sign language (Grossman, Kegl 2006, McCullough, Emmorey 2009), as well as the role of finger-spelling and non-manual signals, which are distinct from spoken language and play an equally important role in the pragmatics of discourse in sign language (Schiffirin 1994, Roush 1999, Mikulska 2003).

Some research shows similarities and differences between sign and spoken language. Coates and Sutton-Spence (2001) show similarities in conversational organisation and turn-taking between hearing and Deaf groups. The authors indicate that Deaf signers (hearing speakers alike) have access to two models of organisation: the single floor and the collaborative floor. In the first model, speech is conducted by one speaker/signer at a time. In the second model, the floor is shared by all participants and speech overlaps (Coates, Sutton-Spence 2001).

In contrast to spoken language, eye contact is crucial in sign language to regulate turns. In spoken language, signals to take turns include: (1) turn-yielding cues from the speaker, such as intonation, paralinguistic (e.g. drawl on the final syllable), body motion (e.g. hand gesticulation), sociocentric sequences (e.g. "you know"), pitch/loudness in conjunction with one of the sociocentric sequences, and syntax (e.g. completion of a grammatical clause); (2) an attempt-suppressing signal from the speaker, e.g. hands being engaged in gesticulation; and (3) back-channel communication such as "yeah", "mmm" and head nods from the receiver (Duncan 1972).

Four conversational regulator sets have been identified in sign language: initiation, continuation, shifting turns, and termination. Sender and receiver may use different devices during communication (Willbur and Pettino 1983, Tomaszewski 2006). Visual regulators can be used when the signer is in the receiver's line of sight or when the signer can move his or her hands into someone's field of vision. Tactile regulators can be used when the signer is out of the receiver's field of view. This depends on distance between signers (Baker, Cokely-Shenk 1980, Moroń 2008, Smith, Sutton-Spence 2005). Other strategies are used during remote conversation, e.g. on the Internet.

There are some conversational rules that are characteristic of sign language. Ewelina Moroń indicates some principles to show respect to the interlocutor in PJM: (1) humility, (2) signing with precision, (3) dignity, (4) impersonality (avoidance of second person), (5) moderate gesticulation, and (6) code switching if the interlocutor needs it (Moroń 2008).

AIM

The aim of the present study was to analyse the role of tactile and visual contact in the Deaf community, and to describe the unique characteristics of Deaf behaviours.

The analysed problem has been poorly investigated to date, and this study was undertaken to promote mutual understanding between Deaf and hearing persons. The study relied on a constructivist paradigm, which postulates the existence of many realities and the need to conduct research in a natural environment where the researcher and subject participate equally in the process of deriving meanings and producing results. The obtained knowledge consists of individual or collective reconstructions (Denzin et al. 2009, Gubba et al. 2009).

METHOD

Ethnographic data collection was chosen as the research method. Ethnography is the systematic study of groups of people, their behaviours, material culture and values (Angrosino 2010). Ethnographic researchers focus on the daily life of the analysed community, they participate in routine activities of the surveyed people to learn about

their unique behaviours, and attempt to identify the sources of these behaviours.

In this study, observations were recorded with a video camera in "natural settings" (Angrosino 2009). Some video recordings were made during Deaf meetings (30-40 people during the traditional Polish holidays, (e.g. Christmas Eve meeting) with the involvement of an "Informer" (Małgorzata Mickiewicz) who is a Deaf person and a member of the Deaf community. The subjects also donated private video recordings depicting family or friend gatherings (3-5 persons, meetings of friends at home) and important events.

Participants were Deaf adults who are fluent in PJM and belong to the Deaf community. A total of 4 hours of video recordings were analysed, consisting of informal materials and the materials generated by the researchers (between November 2014 and December 2015). The recordings were made by a member of the Deaf community with subjects' prior consent. This method elicited the subjects' approval for the recording and encouraged them to behave naturally.

The videotaped material was analysed with the collaboration of a Deaf informer, who was consulted about the results of the analysis. The collected video recordings were analysed as the main body of research materials (Flick 2012). Audio-visual data constitute a rich source of information, but they are also very difficult to analyse and interpret. For this reason, observations should be limited to specific situational contexts. The filming process focused on visual and tactile contact that is typical, commonly encountered, accepted and meaningful in the surveyed Deaf community. The collected data was analysed by filtering information that was most relevant for the study.

Useful data were selected based on whether tactile and/or eye contact was present and on whether all interlocutors were visible in the filming frame. The selected data were transcribed with the EasyTranscript annotation tool (using the stop and slow-motion functions) and encoded, and attempts were made to assign meaning to specific behaviours and conversations (see Kubinowski 2011). To simplify transcription, subjects were identified using symbols such as W7 (woman 7) or M3 (man 3).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Video recordings were analysed to identify several themes that contain characteristic elements relating to visual or tactile contact among the surveyed Deaf persons:

1. Establishing contact
2. Tactile contact during conversation
3. Visual contact during conversation
4. Interrupting and joining the conversation

Theme 1. Establishing contact

In order to make contact with Deaf persons, Grayson (2003) advises first making eye contact or tapping the person's shoulder or arm. Eye and touch contact are crucial at the beginning of conversation.

The following transcriptions of video material indicate that all of the analysed elements were highly correlated:

"During a group meeting: M2 and M8 stand next to each other and observe playing children. M2 taps three times M8's shoulder, and the two establish visual contact. M2 starts signing, M8 smiles and nods his head in response".

"During the group meeting: W5 waves (2 seconds) her outstretched arm with the palm down in the direction of the person with whom she probably wants to communicate. M4 responds and establishes visual contact with W5. W5 holds her fingers together with only the index finger extended, points to M11 and lifts her chin up. M4 touches M11's shoulder (4 taps) and points with his finger to W5. M11 turns around to face W5 (M4 moves away from M11), M11 and W5 establish visual contact and start signing".

An analysis of the transcriptions reveals the significance of touch in establishing contact with another person, and it indicates that tactile contact and visual contact are significantly correlated. Tactile contact precedes visual contact, and touch is synonymous with establishing visual contact with the person who initiated the contact and raises the possibility of communicating with another potential interlocutor.

Theme 2. Tactile contact during conversation

"M1 is signing (towards W1 and W2). W2 touches M1's arm and waits for him to end his

statement. When M1 stops signing, W2 begins signing, more so in the direction of M1. While signing, W2 touches W1's arm and communicates with both interlocutors."

Tactile contact was established at two points and had different meanings. In the first case, touch was used to switch from the role of receiver to the role of sender. In the second case, tactile contact was established to turn the attention of a third party and emphasise that this part of the conversation could also relate to, or be of interest to, the third party.

The cited transcriptions contain examples of typical behaviours associated with tactile contact. In the Deaf community, the definition of the parts of the body that may be touched is one of the most important elements of acceptable physical contact. According to the observations made in various situational contexts, acceptable physical contact to initiate a conversation involves touching (in particular with fingers, sometimes only fingertips) the interlocutor's arm, forearm, back (less frequently) or leg/thigh (when the interlocutors are seated next to each other). If the interlocutor is outside physical reach, the initiator may wave his/her hand, address a third party as an intermediary or point with his/her finger. Finger pointing is a characteristic gesture in the Deaf community because pointing in someone's direction is generally unacceptable in the hearing world (in Poland). The information that pointing is rude is passed on in the cultural context (see Krajski 2009). A different principle applies in the Deaf community.

Theme 3. Visual contact during conversation

The cited transcriptions contain a characteristic theme of an "intermediary" who helps two people establish visual contact across a distance and then, having performed his/her task, moves away. This moving away may serve to provide the intermediary's neighbour with the space required for signing, to avoid interfering with the flow of information across a distance, and to enable the interlocutors to establish visual contact. The intermediary thus shows respect for the visual contact established by the interlocutors.

The unique nature of visual contact in the process of initiating communication is further emphasised in the following transcription:

"During a group meeting: W3 and W7 communicate face-to-face in a sitting position. W3 starts signing while looking at W7. After a while (5 seconds), W3 breaks off visual contact and looks to the side while signing (7 seconds). W3 re-establishes visual contact when she finishes her statement. To establish communication, W7 lifts her hands and begins signing as soon as W3 finishes her statement. After a while (3 seconds), W7 breaks off visual contact, but continues to sign (5 seconds), and looks at her interlocutor towards the end of her statement (2 seconds)."

This sequence of events was also observed in other recordings; therefore, it can be regarded as typical. Visual contact is not a fixed element of communication. Communication is governed by a set of rules that dictate when visual contact should be maintained and when it can be broken off. Our observations indicate that the receiver and the sender of a message abide by different rules. The receiver is "obliged" to look at the sender, whereas the sender has the privilege of breaking off or "fragmenting" visual contact.

The following transcription demonstrates characteristic and culturally conditioned behaviours in the Deaf community:

"M2 approaches the light switch and flicks it off and on twice. The people inside the room turn towards the door where the switch is located. M2 waves his hands to signal that he has something to say. He starts signing when most of the people turn their gaze to him."

In the observed scene, a visual stimulus (light) is used to initiate visual contact with people in a larger group. The person initiating the contact uses light even though it is not necessary because the room is not dark. The group's response to this visual cue indicates that this behaviour is well-known and accepted.

Ad. 4. Interrupting and joining the conversation

"During a group meeting: W9 is sitting sideways at the table and is communicating with M3 who is sitting sideways at another table. They communicate across a distance of approximately 5 m. M8, who is carrying a tray, approaches W9 on the right side. While behind W9, M8 touches W9's

shoulder (3 taps) when she stops signing. W9 turns around, M8 walks in front of W9 and presents her with the contents of the tray while blocking M3 from view. W9 picks an item from the tray, and M8 walks away. W9 and M3 resume their conversation after M8's departure".

This recording illustrates the process of discretely walking into a conversation between two people. Before moving in between two people, the interrupting party touches one of them on the arm to attract his/her attention. Only when the interlocutors stop communicating does the interrupting party move into a position that would otherwise block or disturb the conversation.

In the analysed conversations, the interlocutors smoothly switch between the roles of receiver and sender. Their statements may slightly overlap, as illustrated by the following transcription:

"A private meeting involving three women (W1, W2, W3). W2 is the observer. W3 signs for 12 seconds. Four seconds into the conversation, W1 raises her head, opens her mouth and nods her head. After 9 seconds, W1 moves her body forward, waves her outstretched arm in the direction of W3 and begins signing before W3 finishes her statement."

This transcription illustrates a fragment of a larger whole that is rich in interactions. The material had to be watched several times to identify in detail the changes in the interlocutors' behaviour. Overlapping statements were a characteristic feature of the communication. In the cited material, the interlocutors' statements overlapped for around 3 seconds, and instances of overlapping were observed several times during the entire conversation. The interlocutors were highly emotionally involved in the communication process. Their involvement seems to justify the overlapping statements. Short overlaps (lasting around 3 seconds) did not prevent either party from understanding the communicated content. The interlocutors maintained visual contact throughout the process of switching between the roles of sender and receiver of information. This is a typical collaborative floor (created by signers) with shorter turns, much more overlapping speech, and more repetition (Bull 2003). Overlapping occurs primarily in order to

establish the collaborative floor (Koester, Lahti-Harper 2010).

"Private meeting involving three women: W1 is signing and W2 is nodding her head in approval. While W1 is still signing, W2 begins signing simultaneously by repeating one sign that marks the beginning of her statement. When W1 stops signing, W2 continues her statement – the repeated sign is followed by new content."

In the above situation, the receiver of information uses her hands and visual cues to switch to the role of sender. The receiver repeats the first sign of her statement multiple times while the sender is still signing. The message carried by the repeated sign is "I have something to say". The receiver repeats her sign and does not proceed to communicate her statement because she respects her interlocutor's need to finish what she is saying.

"Private meeting involving two women and one man. A conversation between W1, W2 and M1. W2 is signing, and M1 gently touches her thigh four times. He withdraws his hand, and W2 finishes her statement (M1 nods his head in the meantime). M1 waits for W2 to finish her statement and begins signing".

Touch can also indicate that the receiver of information has something to say. It signals the receiver's intent to switch to the role of sender. In

the described situation, the receiver gently touches his interlocutor several times. Other recordings indicate that touch can also be applied only once for a longer period of time.

Touch contact, which is often a base for establishing eye contact and plays a crucial role in turn-taking, is summarised in Table 1.

In total, 112 situations were analysed. Table 1 indicates the main categories that emerged during analysis of tactile contact among signers. In 8% of cases, tactile contact was preceded by an unsuccessful attempt to make contact through hand-waving. Attracting attention was the most frequent aim of touching the other person at the beginning of the conversation (51.5%) and again during the conversation (12.3%). This kind of tactile contact was realised in most cases by tapping another person 2-4 times with the inside part of the hand. In 31% of cases, the goal was to stress something during signing; 80% of these situations involved a single short tap, and 20% involved 2-4 single taps. Tactile contact was useful in the situation when the receiver tried to take turns, and the sender still wanted to sign; in this case, the sender touched his/her interlocutor with one hand for more than 1 second, while signing with only one hand.

Tactile and eye contact play special roles in turn-taking. In the process of switching between

Table 1. Analysis of main categories of tactile contact among Deaf subjects

Body part touched		Number of touches		Manner of touching		Spatial relationship of signers		Aim of touching	
hand	7.5%	once, tap	44.6%	with inside part of hand	90.2%	opposite	12.5%	attract someone's attention	53%
forearm	16.7%	once, long (more than 1 sec)	16.1%	with outside part of hand	2%	next to each other (in a circle or semicircle, or sitting at the table)	78.5%	attract someone's attention again	13%
arm, shoulder	50.8%	Tapped 2-4 times	36.6%	fingertips	7%	single file (one person behind another)	9%	stress something during signing	31%
knee, thigh	24.2%	5 or more times	2.7%	leg/foot	0.8%			stop somebody (receiver wants to take turns with sender)	19%
abdomen/midsection	0.8%							confirmation ("I am hearing you")	2.5%
								redirect someone's attention	4.5%
	100%		100%		100%		100%		100%

the roles of sender and receiver, interlocutors have to abide by a set of fixed rules that guarantee continuous flow of information. These rules include tactile and visual cues. An analysis of the recorded materials and transcripts reveals several methods that can be used by the receiver to switch to the role of sender:

- raising hands (smooth transition between the role of sender and receiver). This kind of signal was also described in other research (see Baker 1977; Wilbur, Petitto 1983).
- moving the body forward (in conversations that stir emotions). Baker (1977) in her research noticed that the receiver can raise his or her hands into the signing space.
- waving hand(s), which occurred in two settings: (1) in a larger group, where the beginning of the statement may not be noticed by all people, or (2) in conversation between two persons (see Waxman, Spencer 1997; Koester, Lahti-Harper, 2010).
- communicating information to the entire group by turning lights on and off (once or several times).
- touching the sender and waiting for him/her to finish his/her statement, in particular when visual contact is broken off and the receiver is standing/sitting next to the sender. This was also described in previous research (Baker 1977).
- attempting to initiate communication by repeating the first sign several times. Here, sign repetition serves as a signal to turn-taking, in contrast to previous reports of sign repetition as a technique for fulfilling hesitation pauses in ASL (Rieger 2001) or to represent continuous action or the plural form of the signed word (2003).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that tactile and visual contact in the Deaf community involves a number of characteristic elements.

The following principles of establishing tactile contact were observed:

- touch is used to initiate contact with another person

- only certain body parts can be used as a "tool" to initiate contact (usually the hand, and less frequently the leg, e.g. the foot)
- acceptable body parts may be touched (usually the arm or the forearm, the thigh and sometimes the hand or midsection)
- tactile contact often precedes visual contact and is used to establish the latter
- physical distance leads to the initiation of other types of contact, such as hand waving or using a third party who is within physical or visual range of the person whom the interlocutor wishes to contact.

The following principles of establishing visual contact were observed:

- visual contact is necessary for initiating a conversation
- receivers and senders of information are bound by different rules relating to the maintenance of visual contact
- the sender has the right to break off visual contact while making a statement
- the receiver is expected to maintain visual contact during the entire time the sender is communicating his/her message.

Different rules of eye and tactile contact often make communication between the two groups (Deaf and hearing) awkward, so it is important to learn the specificities of this contact. This is especially true for the following groups of people: sign language interpreters or learners (see: Cokely, Baker-Shenk 1999, Czajkowska-Kisil 2014) and teachers of deaf children.

In Poland, all teachers in mainstream schools are hearing, while most teachers in schools for deaf and hard-of-hearing are hearing, because the country is firmly rooted in the tradition of oralism (see Czajkowska-Kisil, Siepkowska, Sak 2014, Sak 2014). This means that hearing teachers must understand the specifics of tactile and visual contact with deaf children in order to improve their communication and educational effectiveness.

The third group are hearing parents of deaf children. Approximately 90% of deaf children have hearing parents. Those parents should be aware that deaf children need more tactile and visual stimulation during conversation. Some research indicates

that hearing parents have more problems with getting and keeping their deaf child's attention than deaf parents have (Waxman, Spencer 1997, Harris, Chasin 2005, Koester, Lahti-Harper 2010). Hearing parents are limited by their own communicative experiences and should be supported to learn how to communicate successfully with their children.

The results of this study indicate that in the Deaf community, acceptable behaviours involving visual and tactile contact differ from those in the hearing world. This observation could have important implications for communication between Deaf and hearing persons (cf. Shuler et al. 2014, Wright et al. 2015). Hearing persons should be aware of these differences to avoid misunderstandings, tension and interpersonal discomfort during communication with members of the Deaf community.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The presented study has certain limitations. It involved members of the Deaf community in north-eastern Poland. Researchers should keep in mind that Deaf communities are highly diverse and that their members are becoming increasingly aware of these internal differences (Maxwell-McCaw et al. 2000). In this study, recordings were made in conversational settings, which were selected as most representative of Deaf behaviours; nonetheless, they do not fully explore the significance of tactile and visual contact in the Deaf community.

Several recordings were made in non-conversational settings, which were regarded as irrelevant and were eliminated from analysis. The study was also fraught with technical shortcomings – a single camera was used to make the surveyed subjects feel at ease, but it restricted the range of possible observations. Some recordings lack significant information because the surveyed person was standing with his or her back to the camera or in a poorly lit place in the room (during group meetings). In some situations, technical impediments prevented a detailed analysis of the participants' facial expressions.

These limitations could be avoided by recording observations in different regions of Poland or even in different countries and cultures to identify and compare principles of communication that apply universally or only locally in Deaf communities. A larger number of cameras could be used, the recording could begin before the participants enter the room and end after they leave the room. According to the literature, members of the Deaf community abide by specific parting rituals, which also take place outside the official meeting room, on the stairs, in front of the building or in the parking lot (Mindes et al. 2006, Lane 1996). These locations could also be observed to provide additional information about the role of tactile and visual contact during parting. Further research is needed to overcome the identified limitations.

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ZNAČAJ DODIRA I KONTAKTA OČIMA U POLJSKOJ ZAJEDNICI GLUHIH TIJEKOM KONVERZACIJE POLJSKIM ZNAKOVNIM JEZIKOM: ETNOGRAFSKE OPSERVACIJE

Sažetak: Neke osobe s oštećenjem sluha pripadaju posebnoj zajednici: zajednici Gluhih. One za komunikaciju koriste prirodni znakovni jezik (u Poljskoj to je poljski znakovni jezik: PJM Polski Język Migowy) i cijene taj način komunikacije. Upotreba znakovnog jezika uključuje specifična ponašanja, poput kontakta očima i dodira. Ponekad su ta ponašanja tipična za zajednicu Gluhih, ali netipična za čujuće osobe. Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je utvrditi specifičnosti kontakta očima i dodira u komunikaciji gluhih osoba primjenom etnografske opservacije kao istraživačke metode. Video snimanja komunikacije u zajednici Gluhih provedena su na mjestima njihova okupljanja (tijekom sastanaka, proslava, u obiteljskom domu). Izvršena je transkripcija i analiza više od 4 sata konverzacija. Analiza zapisa pokazala je određene karakteristike kontakta očima (učestalost, uspostavljanje i prekidanje kontakta očima) te karakteristika kontakta dodiranjem (dijelove tijela koji se dodiruju, učestalost dodirivanja, korištenje dodira za uspostavljanje kontakta s drugom osobom). Ovo istraživanje pruža uvide u razlike između zajednice Gluhih i zajednice čujućih osoba koje mogu pomoći međusobnom približavanju dviju zajednica.

Cljučne riječi: znakovni jezik, poljski znakovni jezik, dodir, kontakt očima