



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Unit code: FT5P 35

Superclass: FJ

Publication date: August 2011

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 01

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop detailed knowledge and understanding of the features of British Sign Language (BSL) including principles, sociolinguistics, pragmatics and how ideas and concepts are conveyed in BSL.

The Unit is aimed at, for example, teachers or advanced learners of British Sign Language, BSL/English translators and interpreters and those working in the public, private or voluntary sectors who need or have an interest in using BSL at an advanced level.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Analyse the principles of British Sign Language.
- 2 Analyse how concepts are conveyed in British Sign Language.
- 3 Analyse the sociolinguistic characteristics of British Sign Language.
- 4 Analyse British Sign Language in terms of aspects of pragmatics.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Whilst prior knowledge of the linguistics of BSL is not a prerequisite for this Unit, competence in BSL is essential. Candidates should hold a qualification in BSL at SCQF level 7 or equivalent.

In addition, it would be beneficial if candidates had *Communication Skills* at SCQF level 5.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

This Unit is a mandatory Unit within the PDA in British Sign Language Studies at SCQF level 8.

The Unit may, however, be taught as a stand-alone Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Analyse the principles of British Sign Language.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Phonology
- ◆ Morphology
- ◆ Grammar and Syntax

Evidence Requirements

The candidate will provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by critically analysing a clip of BSL that is of sufficient complexity and length to cover all of the items listed under Knowledge and/or Skills. The clip should be clear and be delivered by a native signer of BSL. The clip should be of 3–5 minutes duration. The overall time allocated to the assessment will be one hour. The assessment will be undertaken in closed-book, supervised conditions.

Within the hour allocated to the assessment, the candidate will be allowed to view the clip as often as required and take notes. However, the candidate must allow sufficient time within the hour to produce a final critical analysis that covers:

- ◆ three examples of phonology
- ◆ three examples of morphology
- ◆ five examples of BSL grammar/syntax

Evidence for this Outcome can be written, oral, BSL or a combination of these.

Outcome 2

Analyse how concepts are conveyed in British Sign Language.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Semantics
- ◆ Metaphors
- ◆ Timeframes

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Evidence Requirements

The candidate will provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by critically analysing how concepts are conveyed in BSL. The candidate will view a clip of BSL that is of sufficient complexity and length to illustrate all of the items listed under Knowledge and/or Skills. The clip should be clear and delivered by a native signer of British Sign Language. The clip should be of 3–5 minutes duration. The overall time allocated to the assessment will be one hour. The assessment will be undertaken in closed-book, supervised conditions.

Within the hour allocated to the assessment, the candidate will be allowed to view the clip as often as required and take notes. However, the candidate must allow sufficient time within the hour to produce a final critical analysis that covers:

- ◆ what is meant by semantics
- ◆ what a metaphor is, identifying at least three examples within the clip and explaining how metaphor is used
- ◆ how time is conveyed

Evidence for this Outcome can be written, oral, BSL or a combination of these.

Outcome 3

Analyse the sociolinguistic characteristics of British Sign Language.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Language variation
- ◆ Register
- ◆ Language ideology

Evidence Requirements

The candidate will provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by critically analysing the sociolinguistic characteristics of BSL. The candidate will select two distinct sociolinguistic groups and carry out research covering language variation (based on geographic, demographic, social background and historical reasons), register and ideology.

From the research carried out, the candidate will gather evidence of each of these two groups expressing themselves in BSL. The candidate is required to critically compare and contrast the evidence gathered from each of the groups, based on the Knowledge and/or Skills. Examples from the comparison should accompany the evidence gathered and be included in a critically analytical report of 1,200–1,500 words or 5–8 minutes duration in BSL. In addition, a written or signed bibliography should accompany the report.

This is an open-book assessment.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Outcome 4

Analyse British Sign Language in terms of aspects of pragmatics.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Speech acts
- ◆ Schema
- ◆ Implicature
- ◆ Turn taking
- ◆ Status and politeness

Evidence Requirements

The candidate will provide evidence to demonstrate his/her Knowledge and/or Skills by critically analysing aspects of pragmatics in BSL.

The candidate will produce a critically analytic report totalling 1,200 to 1,500 words (120 to 150 words per topic) or an oral/signed report totalling 5–8 minutes duration, covering the five Knowledge and/or Skills items listed above. The candidate should cover two aspects of each of the five Knowledge and/or Skills items within his/her evidence.

This is an open-book assessment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

Outcome 1

- ◆ **Phonology** is the study of the system of a language which underlies how it is articulated (sound patterns in spoken languages: visual/gestural patterns in sign language). It is the study of how the smallest Units of articulation (phonemes), which are meaningless in themselves are combined in a meaningful way and of the relationship between these smallest Units. In sign language(s), different parts of signs such as handshape, location, orientation, movement and non manual features may be relevant. Phonology may include consideration of prosody, eg intonation, rhythm and stress.
- ◆ **Morphology** relates to the meaning of signs and their grammatical structure and is the study of morphemes (which are the smallest meaningful Units in a language). Sometimes a sign may contain only one Unit of meaning (a single morpheme), but sometimes a sign consists of a combination of two or more morphemes. There are 'free' morphemes (which can stand alone as a sign) and 'bound' morphemes (which can only be used in combination with another morpheme).
- ◆ **Syntax** is an aspect of grammar which relates to sign order and how signs are combined into larger Units (eg phrases and sentences) according to the 'rules' of the language.
- ◆ **Grammar** is the study of the different elements of a language eg how pronouns, nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc function in BSL. There are different ways of thinking about grammar: for example, a 'descriptive grammar' approach aims to describe the way a language functions by observing how it is actually used by native users; a 'prescriptive grammar' approach aims to define the 'correct' way of using a language.

Outcome 2

- ◆ **Semantics** is the study of the meaning rather than the form of language. It is about how concepts are captured in a language and how these concepts are represented through a language's lexical items (signs). In other words, semantics focuses on the relationship between linguistic expressions (eg signs, phrases) and what they stand for. Study of semantics may also consider the relationship between different signs/linguistic Units eg synonyms (similar meaning), antonyms (opposite meaning), polysemy (different possible meanings), hyponymy (whether the semantic range of a sign is included within another sign, eg 'red' relates to 'colour'), etc.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

- ◆ **Metaphor** is the extended or 'figurative' use of language ie the meaning is not what is 'obvious' or literal in what is said, but rather there is a link to a further metaphorical meaning. In other words, an expression is used to refer to something it does not literally signify.
- ◆ **Timeframes** this relates to how 'time' is referred to (eg past and future) and how 'tense' is handled both through links with metaphor (eg spatial metaphor/time lines) and the use of lexical markers and other ways of providing information about aspect (the internal timing of events) such as BSL verbs inflecting to show aspect (making changes in movement).

Outcome 3

- ◆ **Language Variation** may be due to differences in gender, age, ethnicity, region, social class or for historical reasons. It can also occur when using language appropriate to different contexts, eg in specific professional fields.
- ◆ **Register (or style)** describes the way people vary their use of language when they communicate with people in different settings taking into account the relationship or closeness between different individuals (or groups) (eg length of the relationship, differences in status, level of formality). Register is the sum of field (subject area), mode (eg whether face-to-face, spontaneous, prepared etc) and tenor (the relationship between the people involved).
- ◆ **Language Ideology** can be described as the 'language of choice' and relates to the moral, political or social values in the language used. Topics may be: the evolution of language and signs due to social pressures and changing social attitudes (political correctness).

Outcome 4

- ◆ **Speech Acts** can be defined as 'actions carried out through language' eg greetings, farewells, compliments, apologies, agreeing/disagreeing, passing sentence, etc.
- ◆ **Schema** describes a typical pattern or knowledge structure, a type of template or outline for what may be expected in a particular setting or communicative event eg what the various stages would be in a team meeting or at a consultation with a doctor.
- ◆ **Implicature** refers to 'what is meant, even if not said' and is based on users' understanding of how communication in their language and culture works, rather than on the form of the language. For example, in English, the form of the question: Do you have the time? would expect a 'yes' or 'no' answer, but is actually understood to mean 'Can you tell me what the time is, please, if you have a watch?' and so expects an answer giving information eg 'It's 2 o'clock.'

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Therefore, implicature refers to the underlying meaning what is between the lines and may be linked to shared understanding of the use of language conventions, connotations, language choices or certain omissions in language, but also to non-verbal communication, non manual features and body placement, speed of sign, subtlety/emphasis, mouth pattern, etc. For example, the omission in the response, 'I've bought the cheese' to the question 'Have you bought the wine and the cheese?' is understood to mean: 'I've not bought the wine.'

- ◆ **Turn taking** is part of conversational etiquette. It relates to how we take turns in conversation eg how we 'invite' someone else to take a turn, how we 'ask for' a turn, and how we 'hold onto' a turn; as well as what is 'interrupting' and when are we simply 'back-channelling' to show interest or support, etc. The study of turn taking considers the conventions and how these are managed appropriately. The 'rules' or customs may vary depending on the setting and the people involved in the interaction: for example, what is 'rude' in one context, may be acceptable in another.
- ◆ **Status and Politeness** covers the differences in the language used according to the status of the people involved in communicating and any power differential between them eg stranger/friend, doctor/patient, boss/employee. The politeness strategies employed (and therefore the language used) will differ according to whether people have the same status or not, and whether they know each other well or not. This will include strategies for expressing deference (to those who have higher status or who are not well known) or solidarity (to those known well or of lower status) eg a 'boss' may address an employee as 'Bill'; but, in the same conversation, the employee may address his boss as 'Mrs Jones'. Politeness strategies may also look at the use of *hedges* as a politeness strategy.

Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

The delivery of this Unit should be candidate-centred and the approach may be varied to suit the needs of the group. The tutor should use his/her discretion regarding the most effective teaching methods.

The aim of this Unit and the PDA in BSL Studies at SCQF level 8 is ultimately to develop the candidate's language skills in BSL. Centres should be encouraged to use BSL as far as possible; however the centre must ensure the availability of appropriate resources.

Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

The evidence presented by each candidate should show that s/he has developed the skills/knowledge necessary to undertake research relating to the topics and produce critical analysis of this research. Gathering information, analysing, summarising and presenting the evidence in the required format is a key feature of the Outcomes.

The Unit has four Outcomes. Each Outcome is assessed separately. Candidates must achieve all of the minimum evidence required for each Outcome in order to pass the Unit.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Outcome 1 is a 'closed-book' assessment of one hour where the candidate will view a recorded clip of 3–5 minutes duration and present his/her analysis of the principles of BSL.

Outcome 2 is a 'closed-book' assessment of one hour where the candidate will view a recorded clip of 3–5 minutes duration and present his/her analysis of how concepts are conveyed in BSL.

Outcome 3 is an 'open-book' assessment where the candidate will produce a report based on two distinct sociolinguistic groups with an accompanying bibliography.

Outcome 4 is an 'open-book' assessment where the candidate will gather evidence (which may be taken from DVD/TV/websites) and produce an analysis on aspects of pragmatics in BSL.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 1

There is one hour allocated to this assessment. The candidate should be prepared to manage his/her time to view and/or review the clip, take notes and produce the final critical analysis required.

The clip used for analysis should be pitched at SCQF level 8. Prior verification of material used for assessment purposes is recommended. Centres should ensure that the use of recorded media complies with relevant Copyright/Data Protection legislation and that sources are acknowledged where necessary.

Outcome 2

There is one hour allocated to this assessment. The candidate should be prepared to manage his/her time to view and/or review the clip, take notes and produce the final critical analysis required.

The clip used for analysis should be pitched at SCQF level 8. Prior verification of material used for assessment purposes is recommended. Centres should ensure that the use of recorded media complies with relevant Copyright/Data Protection legislation and that sources are acknowledged where necessary.

Outcome 3

The candidate should work autonomously to develop a plan of action for research, analysing, evaluating and interpreting information, note taking, summarising, drafting and redrafting, and finalising his/her report within a negotiated timeframe.

It is recommended that the tutor meets with the candidate to review the action plan that has been devised and then meet on an interim basis as required to review drafts prior to final submission of the report.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Outcome 4

Examples of aspects of pragmatics can be gathered from DVD/TV/websites or from the candidate's own recorded examples.

Recorded examples used for analysis should be pitched at SCQF level 8. Prior Verification of material used in the assessment process is recommended. While it is possible that one substantial recording might allow candidates to gather the required evidence, it is likely that a number of recordings will be utilised.

Centres should ensure that the use of recorded media complies with relevant Copyright/Data Protection legislation and that sources are acknowledged where necessary.

Online and Distance Learning

It is possible for this Unit to be delivered by distance learning provided that good planning takes place to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would also have to be in place to ensure that the Outcomes were assessed under the conditions stated.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop components of the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Information and Communication Technology* (ICT) at level 5 and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components.

The extent of the development will depend on the learning opportunities chosen by the candidate or the delivery and assessment methods selected by the tutor.

Written Communication (Writing) — the delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the component Written Communication at SCQF level 6 if the assessment is an essay, the general skill being '*Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics*'.

Written Communication (Reading) — the reading component may be developed through the analysis of sources, the general skill being '*Read, understand and evaluate complex written communication*'.

Oral Communication — the oral component '*Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic*' can be developed through presentations, whether presented orally or in British Sign Language.

In both formative and summative assessment, the candidate should be encouraged to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order, whether written, oral, or in sign, using structures that take into account all purposes, target audiences and conventions.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Information and Communication Technology — opportunities to develop the component of *'Accessing Information'* at SCQF level 5 can easily be incorporated into the delivery of the Unit through the use of efficient and effective search strategies, which will contribute towards the general skill of *'Use ICT independently, effectively and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks'*.

Information and Communication Technology — opportunities to develop the component *'Providing/Creating Information'* at SCQF level 5 could arise through selecting and launching appropriate software, keeping data secure and presenting information in appropriate modes. Presentations could be supported by PowerPoint or other ICT presentation tools. All of this will contribute to the general skill of *'Use ICT independently, effectively and responsibly to carry out a range of processing tasks'*.

Centres should take every opportunity to use modern technologies for communication purposes.

Problem Solving — the component of Planning and Organising could be achieved through planning, organising and completing a task. This would be particularly relevant to Outcomes 3 and 4 of this Unit. The candidate would need to develop a plan, identify and obtain resources to carry out the plan and then carry out the task. Resources could include, for example, time available, sources of information, set procedures, people, equipment and physical resources. The candidate must decide on how the task will be managed, this could include the allocation of tasks in a group context.

Other skills developed

In addition to the development of components of the Core Skills of *Communication*, *ICT* and *Problem Solving*, opportunities should be taken to develop other transferable skills, including employability skills. For example:

- ◆ **Self-management skills** — this should include working autonomously and taking initiative, taking responsibility, setting goals and milestones, time management, the importance of punctuality, meeting deadlines, managing and prioritising information, flexibility, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning, peer evaluation.
- ◆ **Team working** — respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions, and awareness of interdependence with others, opportunity to manage or be managed, taking account of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions in carrying out and evaluating tasks.
- ◆ **Research Skills** — research and study skills, academic processes, critically analysing, evaluating and interpreting information.
- ◆ **Specialist Skills** — skills, techniques and practices associated with communication in BSL, an understanding of major current issues in the BSL sector, observing ethical codes of practice.

All of these skills and techniques will contribute to employability and improve professional practice.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for candidates

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop detailed knowledge and understanding of the linguistics of British Sign Language.

The Unit is aimed at, for example, teachers or advanced learners of BSL, BSL/English translators and interpreters and those working in the public, private or voluntary sectors who need or have an interest in using BSL at an advanced level.

Outcomes

On completion of the Unit you will be able to:

- 1 Analyse the principles of British Sign Language
- 2 Analyse how concepts are conveyed in British Sign Language
- 3 Analyse the sociolinguistic characteristics of British Sign Language
- 4 Analyse British Sign Language in terms of aspects of pragmatics

Entry requirements

Whilst prior knowledge of the linguistics of BSL is not a prerequisite for this Unit, competence in BSL is essential. You should hold a qualification in BSL at SCQF level 7 or equivalent.

In addition, it would be beneficial if you had *Communication Skills* at SCQF level 5.

Assessment

For Outcomes 1 and 2 which are 'closed-book assessments', you will be asked to view recorded clips of BSL and produce reports covering various topics for example, analysis of phonology, morphology, grammar and syntax and analysis of semantics, metaphors and timeframes.

For Outcomes 3 and 4 which are 'open-book assessments', you will be asked to research and report on language variation (for example based on geographic, demographic, social background and historical reasons), use of register and ideology and also to analyse and report on aspects of pragmatics in BSL including, for example, speech acts, schema, implicature, turn taking, status and politeness.

The evidence for assessment can be written, oral, signed or a combination of these.

Core Skills

While you are collecting evidence for this Unit, there may be opportunities to develop your Core Skills in *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5 and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5.

General information for candidates (cont)

Unit title: Linguistics of British Sign Language

Other skills developed

In addition to the development of components of the Core Skills of *Communication, ICT* and *Problem Solving* you should be given opportunities to develop other transferable skills, including employability skills. For example:

- ◆ **Self-management skills** — this should include working autonomously and taking initiative, taking responsibility, setting goals and milestones, time management, the importance of punctuality, meeting deadlines, managing and prioritising information, flexibility, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning, peer evaluation.
- ◆ **Team working** — respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions, and awareness of interdependence with others, opportunity to manage or be managed, taking account of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions in carrying out and evaluating tasks.
- ◆ **Research Skills** — research and study skills, academic processes, critically analysing, evaluating and interpreting information.
- ◆ **Specialist Skills** — skills, techniques and practices associated with communication in BSL, an understanding of major current issues in the BSL sector, observing ethical codes of practice.

All of these skills and techniques will contribute to your employability and improve your professional practice.