

## **The role of the non-dominant hand in Kenyan Sign Language**

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*The study of African sign languages is critical to enhancing the descriptive analyses of the world's sign languages. Such studies enable researchers to draw firmer conclusions about language structures that are typical across all signed languages. I contribute to this enterprise by describing some of the basic phonological forms of Kenyan Sign Language.*

*A corpus of 985 Kenyan Sign Language tokens in citation form, each in QuickTime movie format, was analyzed. Results show that Kenyan Sign Language follows the same articulatory constraints that have been argued to be universals in signed language, following Battison's Symmetry Condition and Dominance Condition (1978). The Symmetry Condition states that if both hands move independently in a two-handed sign, they will share the same handshape, movement (simultaneous or alternating), and orientation (identical or symmetrical). Under the Dominance Condition, if the handshapes in a two-handed sign differ, then the non-dominant hand must be passive and restricted to a set of only six handshapes. However, I posit that the passive hand in KSL is restricted to a smaller set of only three underlying handshapes: B, S, and 1. I discuss outlier cases and further hypothesize that the non-dominant hand shows three distinct roles in KSL: redundant articulator, location, and (very rarely) classifier construction. KSL therefore shares key properties with other sign languages, such as ASL and SLN, but differs from them in some respects. Future research will refine and expand the key phonological properties of KSL.*