Linguistic ethnography has expanded and enriched our understandings of communication between people with divergent semiotic repertoires, and how experiences of these situations are qualified in everyday and academic language ideologies. I focus on the use of linguistic ethnography for studying visual and tactile interactions of deaf and deaf-blind people with their deaf, deaf-blind, and hearing interlocutors. First, I discuss what constitutes linguistic ethnography in the context of signed languages, and more specifically the context of multimodal translingual interactions such as gesture-based interactions and International Sign. I will give examples taken from my work in urban and rural, institutional and non-institutional settings in India and Denmark. Second, I will discuss language ideologies related to these forms of languaging and juxtapose academic and everyday perspectives. More specifically, I focus on the distinction between gesture and sign. “Everyday” ideologies of deaf people in Mumbai showed either an analytical collapse of gesture and sign or a distinction between them, and were more focused on hearing status and on contextual factors in deciding whether something counted as gesture or sign –as compared to academic ideologies which were more focused on form. With this example I illustrate how in the context of language classes and research projects, academic language ideologies bleed into, are resisted, adopted or transformed in everyday contexts. By doing linguistic ethnography we are able to identify the mutual shaping and blending of translingual practices and language ideologies.

Free and open to the public. ASL-English interpreting will be provided. Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this event should contact Zena Levan at zena@uchicago.edu.
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