

REPRESENTATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE GESTURES A SILENT VOICE TO THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION PATTERN

Widya Kanti Puspita ^{1,*}, Tri Yatno ², Sujiono ³

^{1,2,3} Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Raden Wijaya Wonogiri

¹ widyaaakantiipuspita@gmail.com*; ² triyatno2410@gmail.com; ³ sujiono@radenwijaya.ac.id

* corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received 18 June 2025
Revised 30 August 2025
Accepted 30 September 2025

Keywords

A Silent Voice Movie
sign language gestures
Interpersonal
communication patterns

A Silent Voice is one of the films that addresses the issue of deafness, focusing on interpersonal communication patterns. The purpose of this study is to identify the types of hand gestures and describe the meanings of sign language hand gestures in the film A Silent Voice. Through semiotic analysis, this study seeks to uncover how the meanings conveyed through hand gestures in the film can influence interpersonal communication and shape society's perspective on the deaf community. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method through symbolic analysis. The research was conducted from January 2025 to June 2025. The data and data source are the film A Silent Voice. Data validity testing techniques in this study use triangulation. The triangulation used in this study is source triangulation and technique triangulation. The data analysis technique used in this study is data analysis referring to Miles & Habermint. The analysis process consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings of this study identified five types of sign language hand gestures: friendship hand gestures, question hand gestures, thank you hand gestures, farewell hand gestures, and apology hand gestures. These hand gestures impact interpersonal communication patterns, as demonstrated through the sign language hand gestures in the film A Silent Voice, which are capable of building social interaction and more effective communication processes.

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1. Introduction

Film is an effective medium for conveying messages so that they are easy to understand and their meaning is clearly conveyed. Supported by reception theory, the audience plays an important role as active actors in the process of interpreting media messages (Humaira et al., 2025). Issues occurring in the surrounding environment indirectly influence patterns of thinking, communication styles, and responses to the problems depicted in the film's narrative. Additionally, as supported by the perspective of representation theory proposed by Stuart Hall (1997), as discussed by (Fitriyaningsih et al., 2025), this process is understood as the construction of meaning through language, symbols, and cultural practices. This is further reinforced by film theory through semiotic analysis related to signs, visuals, and auditory elements, which carry deeper meanings that underpin the film's message (Syalsabila Ghina Puji Rahayu et al., 2025).

As a mass communication medium, film not only serves as entertainment but also as an educational tool and a means of social reflection (Imanuel & Winduwati, 2023). The representation of sign language in films like *A Silent Voice* offers a new perspective on the importance of non-verbal communication for the deaf community. With the increasing use of sign language in various aspects of life, it is important to study how sign language is represented in films and how the symbolic meaning of hand gestures in interpersonal communication is conveyed.

Sign language is a non-verbal visual communication system, and its uniqueness lies in its distinctive combination of hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements to form clear and specific meanings. (Sri Nugraheni et al., 2023) highlight that sign language is not only the primary means of communication for deaf individuals but also plays a role in shaping their social identity.

The uniqueness of sign language lies in its method of conveying information or messages, which differs from others, as sign language relies more on gestures or movements that have their own distinct meanings. According to (Pfau et al., 2012), sign language uses spatial grammar and relies on visual-spatial modality, combining hand movements, facial expressions, and body language to convey meaning. It is a complete language with its own unique grammar and syntax, distinct from spoken and written languages, making it a distinctive feature of sign language.

This study will examine the representation of sign language in the film *A Silent Voice* using Stuart Hall's semiotic approach to understand how the meaning contained in hand gestures is constructed and received by the audience. Through semiotic analysis, this study aims to reveal how the meaning conveyed through hand gestures in the film can influence interpersonal communication and shape society's perspective on the deaf community. Thus, this study will not only contribute academically to communication studies but also provide practical insights into the role of media in building a more inclusive understanding of sign language and the deaf community in broader social life.

The discussion on the analysis of sign language gestures refers to the understanding of hand gestures in managing nonverbal communication patterns in the film *A Silent Voice*. Interpersonal communication involves the process of managing communication patterns between two or more people who use nonverbal language to convey messages or information.

Interpersonal communication is one form of communication that plays an important role in building social relationships. (AL Fazri et al., 2021), revealed that interpersonal communication involves the exchange of ideas between individuals in various situations. According to (Purnomo, 2021), communication is not only manifested in verbal form but also in non-verbal form, such as body language, facial expressions, and sign language. (Marjianto, 2018)

emphasizes that communication is the process by which individuals modify the behavior of others through various stimuli, both verbal and nonverbal.

Interpersonal communication is a form of communication that plays an important role in building social relationships. (AL Fazri et al. (2021) reveal that interpersonal communication involves the exchange of ideas between individuals in various situations. Although communication can occur anytime and anywhere, deaf individuals often face challenges in interacting with the wider community, especially when the conversation partner does not understand sign language (Syaifudin et al., 2024). Therefore, increasing awareness of the importance of sign language is crucial in building more inclusive communication.

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of hand gestures and meanings that appear in the film *A Silent Voice*. The representation of sign language in films such as *A Silent Voice* provides a new perspective on the importance of nonverbal communication for the deaf. This research is important to understand how sign language is represented in films and how the symbolic meaning of hand gestures in interpersonal communication.

2. Method

Explain the systematic steps carried out in research activities. The methods discussed include research methodology, research subjects, instrument development, data analysis techniques / statistical tests carried out. The research method describes the research stages in detail and clearly so that it can be referred to by other researchers (repeatable and reproducible).

The research used a descriptive qualitative method through symbolic analysis. This research was conducted from January 2025 to June 2025. The data and data source were from the film *A Silent Voice*. The sampling technique used in this research was purposive sampling, which is a technique for determining samples by considering the objectives of the research (Sugiyono, 2017). This method was chosen because the research will focus on the interpretation of sign language gestures in the film *A Silent Voice* to determine whether the messages or information conveyed can be more easily understood by the audience.

The data validity testing technique used in this study is triangulation. Triangulation is defined as a data collection technique that combines various existing data collection techniques and data sources (Sugiyono, 2019), which can be simply understood as a data network with shared methods to serve as a reference for the information obtained so that the data obtained is more complete and efficient.

The triangulation used in this study is source triangulation and technique triangulation. The data analysis technique used in this study is data analysis referring to Miles & Habermint. According to Miles Matthew & Huberman Michael A (1984), data analysis is a technical process whereby the author can analyze the answers obtained from interviews so that data analysis can be carried out thoroughly. The analysis consists of three simultaneous activities, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3. Results and Discussion

The animated film *A Silent Voice* is an adaptation of a comic book of the same title, written by Yoshiko Oima, a Japanese manga artist and writer, and then adapted into an animated movie directed by Naoko Yamada. This Japanese animated film tells the story of a deaf girl named Shoko Nishimiya, a new student with difficulty communicating with others. Shoko Nishimiya is treated poorly by her classmates, who bully her, yet she strives to adapt to her new environment.

A Silent Voice is a 2016 Japanese animated film produced by the renowned and highly popular Japanese animation studio Kyoto Animation. The film ranked second at the Japanese box office upon its release, grossing 283 million yen from 200,000 tickets sold within two days of its theatrical release. The film ranked 16th in the East Division of the Nikkei Hits 2016 rankings. It was the 19th highest-grossing Japanese film of 2016 and the 10th highest-grossing Japanese film of the same year in Japan (Hidayatul Hasanah & Fauzan Aulia, 2023).

According to (Kaminishi, 2023), A Silent Voice not only won various awards such as Best Animated Film at the Japanese Movie Critics Award but also collaborated with public sector actors such as schools, local governments, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (MEXT), to enhance inclusive education in Japan. As a result, global sales performed well, and both forms of media continue to hold their place among the top/best emotional manga and anime films (Weber, 2021).

The film A Silent Voice effectively demonstrates that communication is not limited to spoken words, but also highlights the importance of nonverbal communication by utilizing body language and gestures, which play a crucial role in conveying meaning and building good communication relationships through interpersonal interaction. By relying on sign language hand gestures, A Silent Voice not only overcomes literal communication barriers but also enriches the emotional dimension of every interaction. Viewers are encouraged to be more attuned to body language and gestures as an integral part of human communication, which often conveys more than just words.

A Silent Voice illustrates how nonverbal interpersonal communication can be effectively conveyed by showcasing complex scenes and creating space to process the meaning of the hand gestures displayed in the film's scenes through an understanding of the messages or information conveyed, highlighting each hand gesture shown in every scene or those that dominate the film. The film A Silent Voice effectively demonstrates that communication is not limited to spoken words, but also highlights the importance of nonverbal communication by utilizing body language and gestures that play a crucial role in conveying meaning and building good communication relationships through interpersonal interaction.

Hand gestures, often combined with facial expressions and body language, can convey complex emotions such as sadness, joy, guilt, and love in a powerful and touching way, enabling the expressive release of emotions to support the process of conveying messages through nonverbal communication by relying on personal sign language hand gestures. The interpretation of each hand gesture displayed in the film offers a different perspective for both viewers and those learning sign language. Some scenes featuring hand movements, facial expressions, and mouth movements provide new insights into understanding messages conveyed indirectly. The following are the dominant hand gestures in sign language that appear in the film A Silent Voice.

Hand gestures that show friendship

1.



Figure 1 Scene A Silent Voice Minute 25.40

The hand gesture for “friendship” or “friend” in Japanese Sign Language appears several times and has a strong emotional meaning in the context of the movie *A Silent Voice*, showing both hands forming loose fists or half-fists. The thumb may lightly touch the side of the index finger, then the two fists face each other in front of the chest and gently touch each other, usually twice. The movement is small and occurs in the center of the chest.

The meaning of inviting someone to be friends is evident in the first gesture, which can be shown by pointing at oneself and then pointing at the other person while holding both hands together to signify “friend.” This gesture implies a connection between the two parties, such as a communicator and a recipient, and represents the process of interaction for personal communication.

Given the central theme of the film about rebuilding relationships and finding the meaning of friendship, this gesture is likely to appear in scenes where the characters begin to connect, support each other, or recognize each other's value as friends. This allows both parties to realize the delivery of messages with equality through a more complex approach.

Hand gestures for questions

2.



Figure 2 Scene A Silent Voice Minute 35.52

The hand gesture to "ask" in Japanese Sign Language appears in a variety of contexts, reflecting curiosity, need for information, One hand (usually the dominant hand) forms an open palm, facing upwards then the fingers are relaxed and slightly curled. In the Context of the Movie this hand gesture must have appeared frequently in the interactions between Shoya and Shoko, especially in their early days of trying to communicate. It may also be used by Shoko when interacting with her friends to ask for clarification or information, with this hand gesture making it easier for Shoko to interact in a social environment.

Representations of the meaning of gestures for "questioning" often involve one hand (usually the index finger) being raised and slightly shaken, or both palms facing upwards with a slight shrug of the shoulders (a more common gesture for uncertainty or requesting information). Through the use of these hand gestures each individual is given the opportunity to initiate the communication process, so that the potential for building a relationship and inter-personal interaction in the communication process can occur more openly.

Hand gesture of thanks

3.



Figure 3 Scene A Silent Voice Minute 42.54

The hand gesture for "thank you" in Japanese Sign Language involves an open palm slightly bowed downward often combined with a sincere facial expression, eye contact, and gentle body language to convey deep gratitude One hand (usually the dominant hand) forms a flat, open palm, facing upwards.

		In the Movie Context the hand gesture is most likely often used by Shoko to show gratitude for the kindness or help she receives, especially from Shoya and his friends as they try to repair the relationship. The meaning of this hand gesture becomes an intermediary in the process of expressing care to the interlocutor.
Hand gesture of farewell		
4.	 Figure 4 Scene A Silent Voice Minute 44.23	The most common "goodbye" gesture in Japanese Sign Language is waving, the gesture is also commonly used so that the movie audience will immediately know about the meaning of the waving hand performed by the interlocutor. The hand gesture to say goodbye is one of the most common greetings in everyday life, as for the expression of this hand gesture has also been recognized by many people so that to interpret and about the meaning of this hand gesture is not too difficult. In the context of movies this gesture may appear in various scenes when characters part after interacting, either temporarily or permanently, There are several ways to say "goodbye" waving hands: This is a universal gesture for farewell. Raising the hand with the palm facing outwards and bending the fingers a few times: This is another variation of waving.
Hand gesture of apology		

5.



Figure 5 Scene A Silent Voice Minute 57.08

The standard gesture for an apology involves a hand gesture intended to convey regret for something that has been done and humility, through delivery utilizing a sign language hand gesture that is reassured by the display of hand gestures or lip movements. The representation of the meaning of an apology is often represented with one hand clenched into a fist and rubbing it across the chest, or bowing the head with a regretful expression.

In the context of the film this hand gesture would given the strong themes of penance and apology in the film, this gesture is very likely to appear repeatedly, especially from Shoya to Shoko for his past deeds. Facial expressions and body language will be very important in conveying the sincerity of the apology. This hand gesture is important as an intermediary in the process of interpersonal communication to self-reflect and build good relationships after mistakes have been made.

According to (Berger et al., 2024), sign language is important for practical reasons, such as guiding parents and professionals on best practices in supporting language acquisition, and theoretical reasons. The representation of communication using sign language, the movie subtly encourages the audience to be more understanding and accepting of individuals with hearing disabilities. This is one of the reasons why the movie is so resonant and able to touch the hearts of many people, as it manages to express the universality of emotions through language that transcends hearing and speech.

As for a more specific understanding of communication according to (Larasati et al., 2023), it can be interpreted in English which comes from Latin *communis* with the meaning 'the same', *communico*, communication or *communicare* which means making common. According to (Dyatmika, 2021), communication is very important in building an individual's self-concept in continuing life and gaining happiness, and avoiding various pressures or tensions.

Communication techniques can be divided into verbal (direct) and non-verbal (indirect) communication techniques, referring to (Selyna et al., 2022). These communication techniques are used so that communication between humans is established effectively and has

an interesting communication pattern. One of the problems that becomes the main point in this discussion is the relationship with communication using sign language involving gestures in the analysis of the film *A Silent Voice*. The difficulty of communication between people with speech and hearing disabilities and normal people creates a problem, (Riza Zakaria et al., 2019).

The challenge that must be done to be able to carry out this communication pattern by achieving its purpose to convey the intended message or information well is about how the implementation of communication carried out by two or more people can be mutually understood and understood, so that there is no misunderstanding in receiving messages and interpreting the wishes of the delivery of messages that the communicator wants to convey to the communicant. According to (Stellarosa et al., 2024), with clear and open communication, information can be delivered in a timely manner and decisions can be made more efficiently.

The impact of interpersonal communication patterns displayed through sign language hand gestures in the film *A Silent Voice* is able to build good communication relationships, this can be concluded from the use of sign language which is the main tool by deaf characters who strive to communicate with others and learn to interact despite having deficiencies and obstacles in the process of understanding the sign language hand gestures displayed. A movie can influence perceptions about certain things and even ideologies (Fitria & Rio Febriannur Rachman, 2024) The animation approach enhances the story by combining visual symbolism and evocative imagery to evoke emotions and illustrate the complexity of human relationships, complementing the theme of the movie (Edozie, 2025).

Based on direct observation with the deaf community in the Pati area, the non-verbal communication process allows users to understand each other's messages by showing hand gestures supported by lip movements and facial expressions, then through the results of field interviews that have been conducted with three sign language users and three viewers of the movie *A Silent Voice* conducted on April 14-May 04, 2025, it can be seen that the representation of the use of sign language in the movie *A Silent Voice* is able to provide a new perspective on knowledge related to sign language gestures, especially in the use of Japanese sign language, so that it can add variety to the learning process regarding sign language gestures, but the use of sign language in the movie *A Silent Vice* cannot be implemented in everyday life because not many people know Japanese sign language hand gestures.

Relevant research conducted by (Amin Wasetyo et al., n.d.). Has similarities in the use of theory to analyze visual meaning in films in the form of images, symbols, colors, movements, or shapes that have certain messages or information. However, the difference lies in the object of analysis conducted. The results of the study show an expression of anger and resentment from a good person who is explained in depth through artistic depictions, besides that based on the statement submitted, it states that the theory of encoding and decoding shows that meaning is not fixed or standardized, but can vary depending on how the communicator produces the message and how the communicant understands the message.

Based on the research of (Tri Ramadhani et al., 2024), has differences in its data analysis methods including semiotic analysis using the Roland Barthes framework, focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth aspects. While the similarity is in the object of the movie under study. The results and discussion show scenes from the film, analyzing the representation of bullying verbally, physically, and mentally, it is also stated that Stuart Hall's representation with relevance to the analysis of the film *A Silent Voice* illustrates discrimination against deaf people because of the negative stigma created by society.

4. Conclusion

A Silent Voice identifies types of hand gestures and describes the meaning of sign language hand gestures, while there are 5 kinds of sign language hand gestures contained in the film A Silent Voice, namely friendship hand gestures, question hand gestures, hand gestures to say thank you, farewell hand gestures, and apology hand gestures. The representation of the meaning of sign language gestures signifies acceptance, support, and the desire to build good relationships in supporting human welfare and equality as social beings. So that the impact of sign language hand gestures on interpersonal communication patterns paves the way for more effective and empathetic communication. It shows that the message has been received and digested, reducing the potential for misunderstanding.

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