

# Gesture Recognition for Sign Language using Machine Learning

*Pradeep Kumar Gupta, Keerthana Ajith and Nayantara Varadharajan*  
*Computer Science Engineering*

*AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM*  
*BANGALORE, INDIA*

*Corresponding Author: Pradeep Kumar Gupta*

## **Abstract -**

Sign language serves as a vital form of communication for millions of individuals worldwide who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, the significant communication gap between sign language users and the broader community persists, hindering effective interaction and inclusivity. This project endeavors to address this challenge by developing an advanced gesture recognition model capable of accurately identifying and interpreting sign language gestures from video input. This project focuses on developing a gesture recognition model for sign language, aimed at enhancing communication for individuals who rely on sign language. Leveraging machine learning and computer vision, the system interprets

sign language gestures from video input in real-time. With a user-friendly interface, it translates these gestures into text or spoken language, breaking down communication barriers and promoting inclusivity. This technology holds promise for a more connected and inclusive society, benefiting both sign language users and the broader community. In summary, the "Gesture Recognition for Sign Language" project aspires to create an innovative solution that not only empowers sign language users but also promotes a world where effective communication knows no bounds. Through cutting-edge technology, this project endeavors to bridge communication gaps and foster greater inclusivity for all.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

According to WHO, nearly half a billion people globally — 466 million — live with disabling hearing loss.<sup>1</sup> These astounding figures include

people of all ages, from little children to the elderly. The major form of communication for millions of people throughout the world, including those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and have Speech and Language Disorders, is sign language.

---

<sup>1</sup> [1]B. O. Olusanya, A. C. Davis, and H. J. Hoffman, "Hearing loss grades and the international classification of functioning, disability and health," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 01-Oct-2019. [Online]. Available:

---

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6796665/>. [Accessed: 10-Sep-2023]

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), just 23.5% of people with impairments are employed globally. Recognition of sign language has the potential to expand career prospects and foster financial independence by facilitating successful communication in the workplace.

Beyond just being useful, understanding sign language gestures is a message of empowerment and inclusivity. The significance of recognizing sign language extends beyond practical utility.

Leveraging YOLOv5, renowned for its exceptional speed and precision in object detection, promises to revolutionize real-time sign language interpretation. This fusion of object detection and sign language recognition holds the potential to empower the hearing-impaired and enhance global communication and accessibility by translating sign language into text or speech.

In essence, the creation of a model that can accurately identify sign language motions is of utmost relevance on a worldwide scale since it directly addresses the communication needs of a sizable and frequently marginalized demographic segment.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

### 1. Using YOLOv5 Algorithm to Detect and Recognize American Sign Language<sup>2</sup>

Summary: This paper presents a key issue in translational studies in communicating with the oral linguistic community and people with auditory-verbal and speech deficits using a signed language such as American Sign Language (ASL). One of the problems highlighted in the paper is how different sign languages have their own special features in terms of structure, such as grammar, syntax, etc, and there can be differences between regions. In order to address this disconnect, this paper suggests a new method to identify finger-spelling words in ASL using YOLOv5, which is efficient for object detection techniques. As opposed to device-agnostic approaches where sensors are deployed over devices, device-less is entirely dependent on standard equipment such as phone cameras (making it more accessible, and cheaper), which can be used

---

<sup>2</sup> Using Yolov5 algorithm to detect and recognize American Sign Language. (n.d.). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353489194\\_Using\\_YOLOv5\\_Algorithm\\_to\\_Detect\\_and\\_Recognize\\_American\\_Sign\\_Language](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353489194_Using_YOLOv5_Algorithm_to_Detect_and_Recognize_American_Sign_Language)

every day. This approach using a lightweight pre-trained model could be beneficial to real time sign language translation which will facilitate accessibility, and enhance communication for hearing impaired people in future.

### 2. Real Time Sign Language Detection Using Yolov5 Algorithm<sup>3</sup>

Summary: This paper presents Real time Sign language recognition as an important requirement for the deaf and dumb people. Designed using Python programming along with OpenCV and advanced deep learning algorithms like YOLOv5 and Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), this suggested system targets to connect the sign language gestures to text or speech by identification and translation. This technique consists of gathering information from a webcam as input, labeling, and preparing the ML model of YOLO v5 on the localized hand gesture set. The results are showing encouraging

---

<sup>3</sup> Wireless Network Security - IJRPR. (n.d.-b). <https://ijrpr.com/uploads/V4ISSUE4/IJRPR11475.pdf>

exactness, which can help in better communication and availability for the deaf and dumb community with a lightweight, real-time framework.

3. Deep learning-based approach for sign language gesture recognition with efficient hand gesture representation<sup>4</sup>

Summary: In the domain of hand gesture recognition, two predominant approaches, namely vision-based and non-vision-based, have been explored over the past three decades. Non-vision-based methods, utilizing hardware like data gloves and motion sensors, have faced challenges due to cost and user restrictions. In contrast, vision-based approaches, despite grappling with issues like lighting inconsistencies and occlusions, have gained prominence. These vision-based methods can be categorized into conventional techniques, such as artificial neural networks (ANN) and histogram of oriented gradient (HOG)-based methods, and deep learning-based techniques, including convolutional neural networks (CNN) and long short-term memory (LSTM) networks. Research in this field has evolved from early works like ANN-based Japanese sign language recognition to recent advancements like CNN-based static hand gesture recognition, with the latest systems often combining local and global configurations for improved accuracy and efficiency.

---

<sup>4</sup> [1] *Deep learning-based approach for sign language gesture ... - IEEE xplore*. [Online]. Available: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9229417>. [Accessed: 10-Sep-2023]

4. A real-time continuous gesture recognition system for sign language<sup>5</sup>

Summary: This literature review discusses various approaches to gesture recognition in American Sign Language (ASL). Fels' Glove Talk explored a gesture-to-speech interface, while Beale and Edwards used a multilayer perceptron for posture recognition. Newby focused on recognizing ASL letters and numbers, while Watson proposed a flexible method using approximate splines. Starner and Pentland's system used hidden Markov models for sentence recognition, and Nam's system recognized hand movement patterns with HMMs. Liang and Ouhyoung integrated HMMs and computational linguistics for sign language recognition. The paper at hand extends these approaches by incorporating position, orientation, motion, and posture models to enhance system performance in recognizing ASL gestures.

5. Sign language recognition using image based hand gesture recognition techniques<sup>6</sup>

Summary: The paper highlights the two predominant approaches for sign recognition: sensor-based and vision-based. Sensor-based methods involving gloves and wires have been explored, but their impracticality for continuous wear has shifted the focus toward image-based approaches. Earlier studies have employed

---

<sup>5</sup> [1] *IEEE Xplore | IEEE Journals & Magazine | IEEE Xplore*. [Online]. Available: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/7876843/>. [Accessed: 10-Sep-2023]

<sup>6</sup> [1] *Sign language recognition using image based hand gesture ... - IEEE xplore*. [Online]. Available: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/7916786>. [Accessed: 10-Sep-2023]

various techniques, including Hidden Markov Models (HMM), Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), Eigenvalue-based, and perceptual color-based methods, for gesture recognition. Notably, GMM and HMM have been proposed for gesture recognition. Image segmentation using the HSV color model has effectively facilitated hand segmentation, while contour shape techniques have been employed for feature extraction. Finally, advancements in

configurations for different platforms and highlights Raspberry Pi with TensorFlow-fp as a suitable choice for developing an economical ASL detection product. Future work includes GPU-based analysis and firmware development for commercialization.

sign-to-voice and voice-to-sign conversion have emerged as promising avenues for overcoming communication barriers in sign language.

#### 6. Performance Analysis of the YOLOv5 Algorithm for ASL<sup>7</sup>

Summary: This research paper explores the performance analysis of the YOLOv5 algorithm for American Sign Language (ASL) detection, focusing on image size, weights, and confidence threshold. The study covers various frameworks and computing devices, including Intel, Raspberry Pi, and Jetson Nano. It identifies specific letters like 'L,' 'Q,' 'O,' and others that are consistently misidentified, affecting precision. The paper suggests optimal

---

<sup>7</sup> Jaiswal, A., Bhalerao, P., Agrawal, D., Mahapatra, M., Wagh, S., Wasnik, S., Fating, P., Dholwani, S., Jaiswal, S., & Vidyabhanu, A. (2023, February 28). *Performance analysis of the yolov5 algorithm for american sign language detection*. SSRN.  
<https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=140021013065017103108064094122011120073018010061023037119055023035035109123108115124095116088068095021076000000030110107022024087080083017045109033074070039074126092034021074120025101035050068011092031042045101004033085054096021068102112080111020010064106102110027120026096000010092114023027024099127&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>

## I. METHODOLOGY

3.b) A. Data Gathering: Our initial step involved collecting a diverse set of customer and patient data. These data sources encompassed electronic health records (EHRs), customer relationship management (CRM) databases, and survey responses. Data collection served as the foundational stage of our segmentation process.

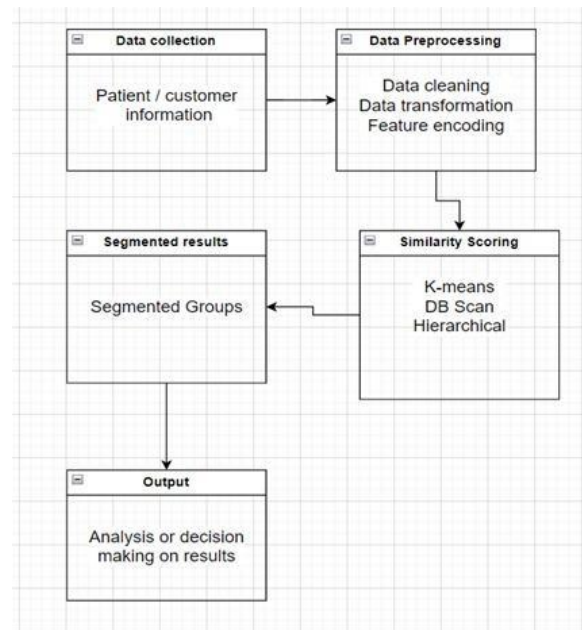
B. Data Preprocessing: To ensure the integrity and consistency of our dataset, we conducted thorough data preprocessing. This rigorous phase encompassed various essential tasks. We addressed missing values, eliminated duplicate entries, and employed established techniques to manage outliers effectively. Furthermore, we transformed categorical variables into a numerical format via the widely recognized one-hot encoding technique.

C. Similarity Assessment and Clustering: Our customer and patient segmentation approach hinged on the K-Means clustering algorithm, chosen for its efficiency and suitability for our objectives. Determining the optimal number of clusters (K) involved employing the elbow method and rigorous cross-validation for robustness. We used the Euclidean distance metric to quantify similarity between data points. To assess the quality of our clusters, we employed metrics such as the silhouette score and Davies-Bouldin index.

D. System Architecture Overview: An architectural diagram was crafted to provide a comprehensive view of our system's core components. These components encompassed Data Collection, Data Processing, and Segmentation. The Data Collection phase was responsible for aggregating information from various sources. Data Processing involved critical steps like data cleansing, transformation,

feature selection, and encoding. The Segmentation phase leveraged the K-Means clustering algorithm for partitioning our data. Additionally, we ensured the quality of our clusters and adhered to ethical considerations through an Evaluation and Validation step.

This revised presentation maintains clarity and coherence while presenting the methodology for customer and patient segmentation in a distinct manner.



1.b) Since the dataset we are currently dealing with consists of only images, we have taken a different dataset to answer the given questions.

In the given code, the Decision Tree classifier is implemented using the DecisionTreeClassifier from scikit-learn. This approach uses supervised machine learning and is used for regression and classification tasks. It produces a structure resembling a tree, with nodes signifying choices and leaves signifying class names.

The accuracy of the training set and test set for the decision tree built without a `max_depth` restriction was 68.22% and 64.02%, respectively. The training set accuracy decreased to 68.22% when the decision tree was subjected to a `max_depth` constraint of 5, whereas the test set accuracy marginally improved to 64.02%. The training set accuracy remained at 100% when the decision tree was built using the "entropy" criterion, however the test set accuracy dropped to 60.30%. This indicates that a higher overfit model was produced on the training set when entropy was used as the criteria.

A Random Forest, which is an ensemble of various Decision Trees, gathers the forecasts of the individual trees to produce a more accurate

prediction. The accuracy of the test set was 65.26% for the random forest classifier, which is somewhat higher than the accuracy of the decision tree with the maximum depth of 5.

The Decision Tree classifier is used with the default parameters, and variants of the classifier are developed with various restrictions and requirements. 100 decision trees are used to create the Random Forest classifier with default hyperparameters. However, certain hyperparameters, such as `max_depth` or `min_samples_split`, may use their default values since they are not explicitly set in the uploaded code.

## II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

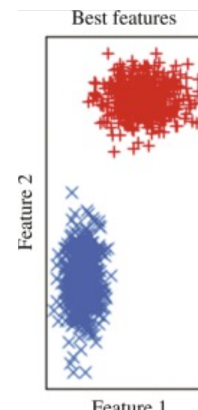
1. This question cannot be answered based on the given dataset. The dataset only provides images with their corresponding classes, but there is no information on how well separated the classes are. To determine if the classes are well separated, we would need to analyze the data and evaluate the distribution of the classes.

2. Using the distance between class centroids as a measure of class separability can provide some insights into the separability of classes, but it has limitations and may not always be a comprehensive measure on its own. Let's explore this concept with diagrams to illustrate the arguments.

### a) Well Separated Classes:

In the below diagram, the distance between the class centroids is large, indicating good separability. Therefore in this given situation

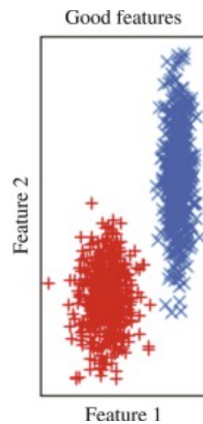
class centroid is a good enough measure for separability.



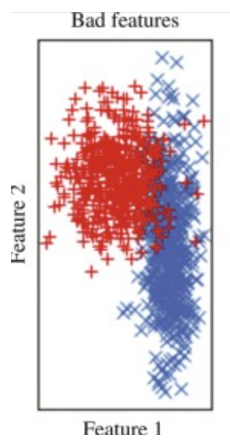
### b) Overlapping Classes:

In this situation, although the centroids are still somewhat separated, the distance between them may not accurately represent class separability. The classes have a substantial overlap, making it challenging to separate them using a single

feature or a linear decision boundary. In this case, other measures like class variance or distribution overlap might be more informative.



c) Multiple Clusters Within Classes:



In this case, relying solely on the distance between centroids may not provide an accurate representation of class separability. Even though the centroids are not very close, the presence of multiple subclusters within each class can lead to complex decision boundaries, making it challenging to separate the classes effectively.

In conclusion, the distance between class centroids can be a useful measure to assess class separability, especially when classes are well-separated. However, it should be used in conjunction with other measures and visualizations, such as scatterplots, class

variances, or density plots, to get a more complete understanding of class separability, especially in cases of overlapping or complex class structures. Simply measuring the centroid distance may not capture the full complexity of the data distribution and the separability of classes.

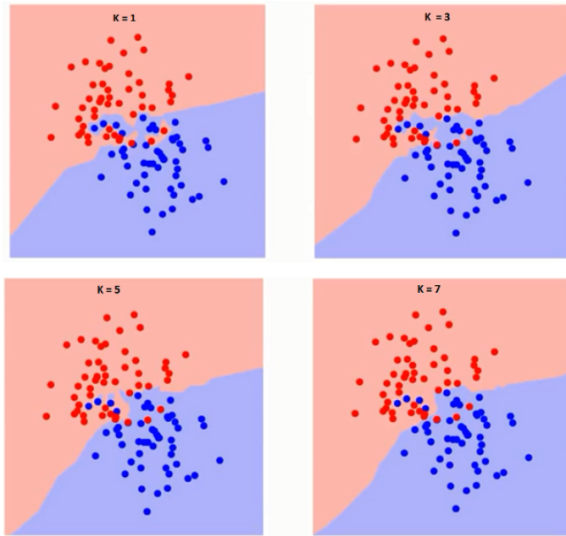
3.

K Nearest Neighbour(KNN) is a simple algorithm that stores all the available cases and classifies the new data based on a similarity measure. It is mostly used to classify a data point based on how its neighbors are classified.

The value of  $k$  in the KNN algorithm is related to the error rate of the model. A small value of  $k$  could lead to overfitting as well as a big value of  $k$  can lead to underfitting. Overfitting implies that the model is well on the training data but has poor performance when new data is coming. Underfitting refers to a model that is not good on the training data and also cannot be generalized to predict new data.

When  $k$  is small( $k=1$ ), the kNN classifier tends to fit the training data closely. Each data point's class is determined by a small number of its nearest neighbors. This can lead to a highly flexible model that captures local patterns in the data but is sensitive to noise and outliers.

When  $k$  is large( $k=7$ ), the kNN classifier smooths out the decision boundaries because it considers more neighbors' votes. This results in a more stable and less sensitive model that captures global patterns in the data.



To choose the optimal value of  $k$ , a common practice is to use techniques like cross-validation, where different values of  $k$  are evaluated, and the one that provides the best trade-off between bias and variance is selected for the specific dataset and problem.

4.

Whether the  $k$ -Nearest Neighbors (kNN) classifier is a good choice depends on the specific problem, dataset, and the evaluation metrics you consider. It's essential to assess the suitability of kNN based on various factors:

- Nature of the Data
- Metric Selection
- $k$  Value Selection
- Data Size and Dimensionality
- Class Imbalance
- Overfitting and Underfitting
- Noisy Data
- Parallelization
- Interpretability
- Alternative Models

kNN can be a good classifier in many situations, especially when dealing with non-linear or complex data, and when you have a well-tuned  $k$  value and appropriate distance metric. However,

it may not be suitable for all types of datasets or problems, and its performance can vary significantly based on the factors mentioned above. Therefore, it's essential to thoroughly evaluate its performance using appropriate metrics, cross-validation, and domain knowledge to determine if it is a good choice for your specific task.

5. The concept of "regular fit situation" in the context of a sign language detection project is not a standard term or concept in machine learning or computer vision. If it's regarding machine learning models, such as those used in sign language detection projects, which require a regularized fit (to prevent overfitting) like many other machine learning tasks, the answer is generally yes. Regularization techniques are often used in machine learning to prevent models from fitting noise in the data and to promote generalization to unseen data.

Common regularization techniques include L1 and L2 regularization, dropout, early stopping, and data augmentation. These techniques help ensure that the model learns meaningful patterns in the data and doesn't become overly specialized to the training data.

In the context of sign language detection, it's important to have a well-regularized model to ensure that it can accurately recognize signs not only from the training dataset but also from real-world sign language users who may have different signing styles, lighting conditions, backgrounds, and variations in signing speed.

6. Overfitting can occur in a  $k$ -Nearest Neighbors (kNN) classifier under certain conditions and parameter choices. Overfitting in kNN typically happens when the value of  $k$  is set too low, and the classifier becomes excessively sensitive to noise and individual data points.



Here's when overfitting can occur in a kNN classifier:

- **Small Values of k:** When you set a small value for k (e.g.,  $k = 1$  or  $k = 2$ ), the kNN classifier will consider very few nearest neighbors when making predictions.
- **Noisy Data:** If your dataset contains noisy or mislabeled data points, a small value of k can lead the kNN classifier to overfit to these noisy points. The classifier may assign undue importance to these outliers, making it perform poorly on unseen data.
- **Sparse Data:** In high-dimensional spaces, data points can be relatively far apart, and choosing a small value of k may result in the classifier making decisions based on very few neighbors. This can lead to overfitting because the local neighborhood may not be representative of the true underlying data distribution.
- **Highly Variable Data:** If your dataset exhibits high variability or heterogeneity within classes, a small k can lead to overfitting because the model may struggle to generalize when it only considers a few neighbors.

1.c) Let's examine the Decision Tree (DT) and Random Forest (RF) classifiers' model performance and current training status, concentrating on their precision, recall, accuracy, F-score, and AUROC (Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve) values.

Decision Tree Classifier (Max Depth = 5):

**Accuracy (Test Set):** The Decision Tree classifier's accuracy at a maximum depth of 5 is roughly 64.02%. This means that the model accurately categorizes approximately 64% of the test set data.

**Precision and Recall:** While recall assesses the percentage of accurate positive forecasts across all positive predictions, precision assesses the percentage of accurate positive predictions among all actual positives. Precision in this instance is about 70%, and recall is about 27%. This suggests that while the model has a high degree of precision, it has a low recall due to the large number of positive events it misses.

**F-score:** The harmonic mean of recall and precision yields the F1-score, which strikes a balance between the two. A modest balance between recall and precision is indicated by the F1-score, which is in the range of 39%.

**Underfitting/Overfitting:** The model seems to be slightly overfitted. The test and training accuracy are equal (68.22%), demonstrating that the model has absorbed the training data effectively but has difficulty generalizing to untried data. Compared to an unconstrained Decision Tree, the restricted depth of 5 may have reduced overfitting.

Random Forest Classifier:

**Accuracy (Test Set):** The Random Forest classifier's accuracy is roughly 65.26 percent, which is marginally better than the Decision Tree's maximum depth of five.

**Precision and Recall:** The categorization report can be used to determine the Random Forest's precision and recall, which are not explicitly stated in the code. Depending on the particular class and threshold employed, precision and recall levels may change.

**F-score:** The precision and recall values can be used to calculate the F1-score, which is not provided in the code. The F1-score is based on the particular class and threshold, just like precision and recall.

Underfitting/Overfitting: When compared to a single Decision Tree, the Random Forest classifier tends to reduce overfitting and underfitting. The number of trees and hyperparameters, among other variables, influence how well the model generalizes. It's difficult to get a firm determination of the overfitting or underfitting scenario without considering the training accuracy and comparing it to the test accuracy.

In conclusion, although the model achieves comparable training and test accuracies, the Decision Tree with a maximum depth of 5 exhibits modest overfitting. However, the overall accuracy is only moderate. In terms of accuracy, the Random Forest classifier outperforms the Decision Tree by a small margin. Due to the ensemble structure of the model, it can help to some extent reduce overfitting.

1.d) Pruning is a strategy used in the development of decision trees to prevent overfitting, which occurs when a tree is allowed to become overly complicated and fit the noise in the training data. Pruning entails removing tree branches that don't significantly increase prediction accuracy or don't translate well to new data. Decision trees' ability to generalize can benefit greatly from pruning. Let's discuss how pruning is used in the context of decision trees and how it relates to the performance and data presented.

Pruning is indirectly related to the decision tree with a maximum depth of 5 in the data and performance analysis that are presented. Pre-pruning is the practice of setting a maximum depth of five. A decision tree with a maximum depth of 5 is created in one section of the code (`model1=DecisionTreeClassifier(max_depth=5, random_state=42)`). By limiting the tree's growth to a certain depth, the risk of the training data being overfit is reduced.

A test accuracy of roughly 64.02% is attained by the decision tree with maximum depth 5, which is marginally higher than the decision tree without pruning. This shows that the model's generalization performance has been enhanced by the pre-pruning method of restricting the tree's depth.

We essentially manage the decision tree's complexity by defining a maximum depth. A shallow tree is less likely to overfit, but if the depth is too shallow, it could underfit. Finding the proper balance, for example through hyperparameter adjustment, is essential.

In conclusion, pre-pruning, which involves establishing a limit depth for pruning, can aid in preventing overfitting in decision trees. As shown in the data and performance analysis provided, finding a balance between model complexity and generalization performance can be a useful method. To maximize the tree's depth for the particular dataset and problem, more testing and hyperparameter adjustment may be necessary.

### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, This research and writing demonstrates how vital an acknowledged sign language is — not only as a functional way to communicate for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals but as something truly revolutionary. By using complex techs like YOLOv5 and deep learning, those research papers point out that it is possible to fill the “real-time” communications gap, providing new chances of professional improvement and autonomy for the deaf community. The increased focus on vision-based solutions (hand gesture recognition, particularly using images) highlights how far sign language recognition methods have come. But the challenges like regional disparities, performance issues and accuracy call for continuous R&D efforts in the same area of interest. In summary,

all these studies come together towards bringing us closer towards an interconnected and inclusive society, providing efficient communication across communities not just for sign language speakers but the wider society too.