

# Language Contact

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**Rodrigo's International Mobility**



**Phoebe's International Mobility**



# Language Policy & Planning in Singapore

Hierarchical  
Multilingualism

Controlled  
Multilingualism



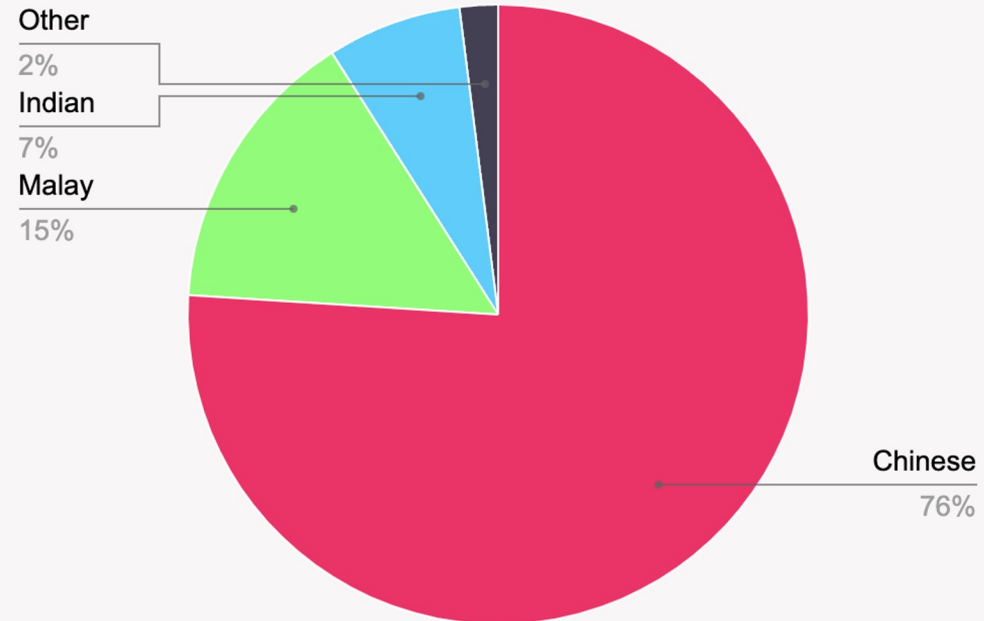
# Hierarchical Multilingualism



- **Official languages of Singapore**

- English
- Mandarin
- Malay
- Tamil

Racial demographics of Singapore's population of approx 6 million people



- Singapore Sign Language (SgSL) has no official government recognition. Based on old ASL signs.

- Approximately 500,000 people have hearing loss in Singapore.
- The Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf) has more than 5400 clients who are deaf or hard of hearing.
  - About 1/3 indicated they know sign language while others did not respond or stated they didn't know when asked.



# Controlled Multilingualism

English

Hokkien

Teochew

Javanese

Punjabi

Cantonese

Mandarin

Hainanese

Bahasa Melayu (Malay)

Hindi

Tamil

Urdu

Hakka

Bahasa Indonesia

Hindi



# ENGLISH, SINGAPORE-STYLE

An integral part of everyday conversation, Singlish is a collection of colloquial catch phrases and lingo influenced by our multicultural background.

**SINGLISH**







# 3 Key Language Campaigns after 1965

1965

- Singapore became an independent nation

1966

- English-Mother Tongue Bilingual Policy

1979

- The Speak Mandarin Campaign

2000

- The Speak Good English Movement

# 1966 – English-Mother Tongue Bilingual Policy





# 1979 - Speak Mandarin Campaign





# 2000 - Speak Good English Campaign



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## At 47, I still struggle with spoken English. Yet I'm the Speak Good English Chairman. Why ah.

Soft truths to keep Singapore from stalling.

Mothership | July 21, 2019, 12:51 PM

f

twitter

A man with glasses and a checkered shirt is smiling and holding a yellow sign. The sign has the text "#LetsConnect" at the top, followed by "Let's be understood from Marsiling to Melbourne." in large, bold letters. There is also some smaller text on the sign.



# Language Contact in the Singapore Deaf Community

# Language contact with other countries



Peng Tsu Ying moved from Shanghai, China to Singapore

The Chinese Sign school merged with the oral school for the deaf and was renamed the Singapore School for the Deaf

Singapore School for the Deaf closed down

1954

1970s and early 1980s

2018

1950s

1963

2017



Peng established the Singapore Chinese Sign School for the Deaf (Shanghainese Sign Language and Chinese was the language of instruction)

Lim Chin Heng, one of Peng's first few deaf students, studied in America

SEE and ASL were brought to Singapore by Lim Chin Heng and Frances Parsons

Peng decided to do away with SSL and Chinese for the deaf school. Led to language loss.

Deaf students could enroll at Mayflower primary school if they wanted a mainstream placement that gave access to Singapore Sign Language.





Language contact with  
neighbouring countries

- A few deaf Malaysians went to the Singapore School for the Deaf to study – language contact between BIM and SgSL



# HOME

## Signing it, Singapore-style



**Cheongsam**  
Buttoning-down the cheongsam



**Rojak**  
Frying action



**Raffles**  
Stance of Sir Stamford Raffles statue in Empress Place



**Orchard Road**  
Sign for 'tree' with the letter 'O' on top for 'Orchard'



**Durian**  
Motion of opening a durian



• **Satay**  
Using a forefinger to signify a satay stick

• **Merlion**  
The hand is used to form "an arch of water" spewing from the mouth

• **Kentucky Fried Chicken**  
The letter 'K' for Ken is formed and then changed to a 'T' for Tucky, which is nibbled as if it is a bone.

• **Sentosa**  
Fingers of one hand bunched together to

form a cablecar travelling along the 'cable', the left index finger.

• **Wisma Atria**  
The letter 'W' is formed and then moved in the wave motion that is Wisma's logo. Commviva's Chest of Singapore - the CCS logo, the letter 'Y' formed with the hand

• **Sarong**  
Hands are used in wrapping and folding of the sarong

## Singapore's deaf give sign language a local touch

By JULEEN GOH

"SINGLISH" is now being "spoken" by the deaf community in Singapore. Words like "durian", "Wisma Atria" and "merlion", which are not found in the American sign dictionary that hearing-impaired Singaporeans use, have found their way into their "conversations".

The sign for "Sentosa", for example, is made by bunching the fingers of one hand to form a

can understand. We call this "total communication" — to use gestures, facial expressions and even writing if necessary. "But if you watch the English-educated hearing-impaired sign, you'll see that they sign in proper English, including the correct tense." Said Mr Roger Jenkins, director of the hearing-impaired mime group, Hi! Theatre: "Just as the hearing people in Singapore have

Local signs in Singapore Sign Language (SgSL)



# Welcome to the Singapore Sign Language Sign Bank

Singapore Sign Language (SgSL) is the native sign language recognised and used by the Deaf community in Singapore. This signbank displays a collection of signs gathered from Deaf individuals in Singapore.



It is important to note that the signbank is not an official dictionary, and does not claim to represent 'wrong' signs; instead,

The SgSL Sign Bank aims to:

- Present signs used by the Deaf community
- Document the use of signs
- Support SgSL-related research
- Promote SgSL to the wider community

As this is an on-going project, we will continue to collect more data and ensure that the signs represent the Deaf community.

## BISHAN

### BISHAN

### BISHAN

Sign variant 1



#### Description of Sign

Palm-out B-hands alternate up and down in neutral space.

#### Visual Guide

N/A

#### Translation Equivalents

N/A

#### Parameters of Sign

# Language attitudes in Singapore

## Broader Singapore context

*"Singlish unites Singaporeans because it represents our national identity. But it also divides us because it is degraded. Isn't it similar to the situation among the Singapore deaf?"*

(Ng, personal Communication, March 29, 2023).

## Singapore Deaf Community

*"SEE is good for learning English because it includes all the grammatical aspects of English such as past tense. SgSL is broken English just like Singlish!"*

*"No! SEE is not a language but a system/code. SgSL is a true language!"*

(Phoebe's observations during the Singapore National Deaf Youth Camp that occurred from May 20 to 22, 2016)



# Current/recent influences

- December 2022 – Phoebe attended Dr Deaf in Norway. IntSL was the language.
- November 2022 – 1st ASEAN Deaf Games held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A group Singaporean travelled to KL to participate in the event.
- One deaf Singaporean and one deaf Malaysian (Singaporean PR) participated in the Duskin Leadership Program in Japan a few years ago. Language contact with Japanese Sign Language (JSL).
- 2016, 2019 – Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research Conference (TISLR) in Hamburg and Melbourne. (IntSL & ASL)
- Deaf Singaporeans and hearing interpreters attended WFD and WASLI conferences over the years.
- A few Deaf Singaporeans attended Gallaudet University from the 1970s.
- There is language contact with Deaf from the Southeast Asian region as well as ASL and IntSL.

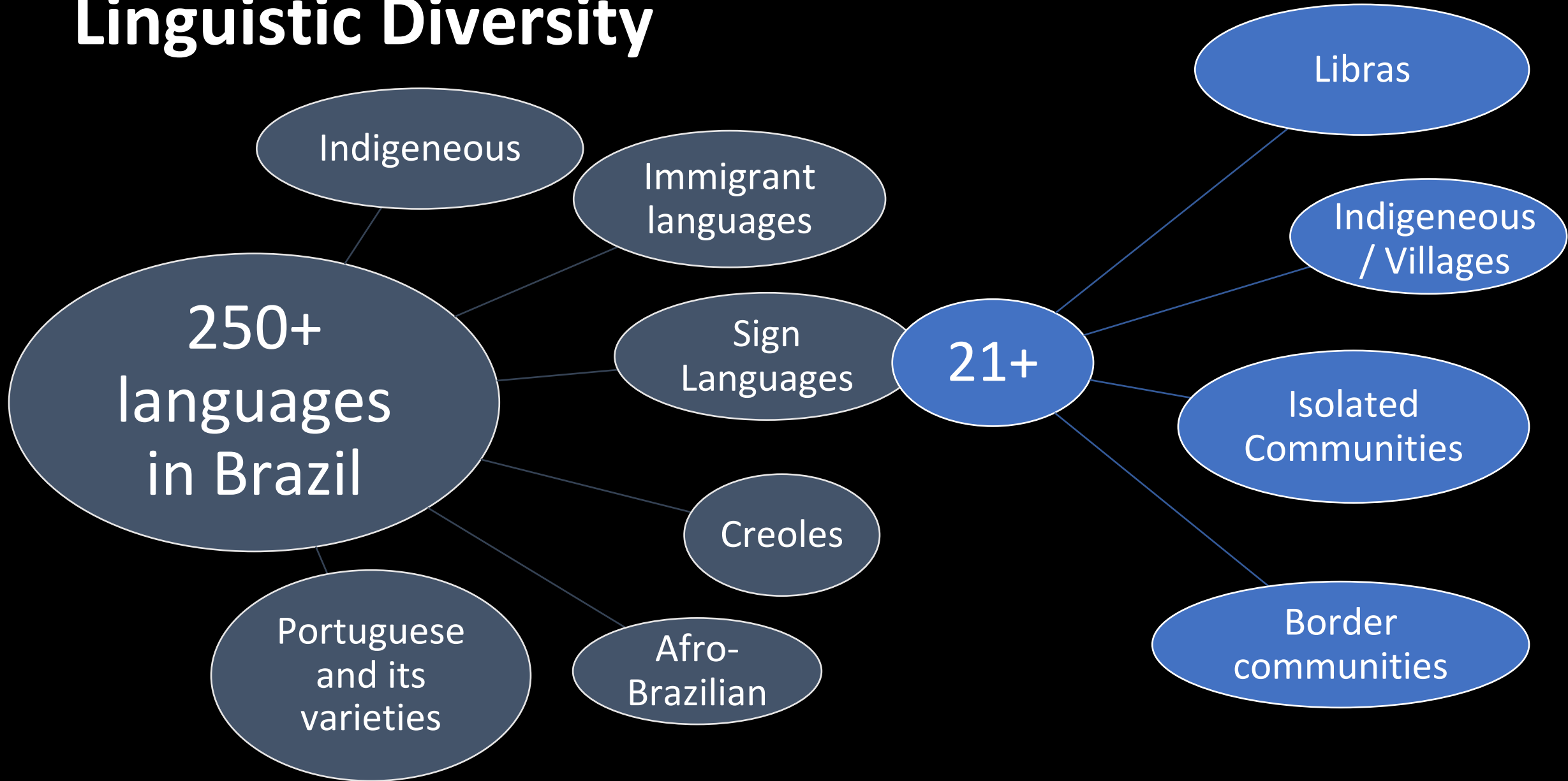
# Contextualization in Brazil

- 214.000.000 in habitants (2022)
- 8.510.417,771 km<sup>2</sup>
- 10.000.000 Deaf/HH people (2010)
- Portuguese is the official language
- Libras is the national sign language
- Linguistic Diversity?





# Linguistic Diversity





# Timeline – Libras

**First school  
for the Deaf**  
1857

**Deaf Club**  
1953

**Deaf  
Association**  
1987

**Libras Studies  
(Letras Libras)**  
2006



1875  
**First  
dictionary**

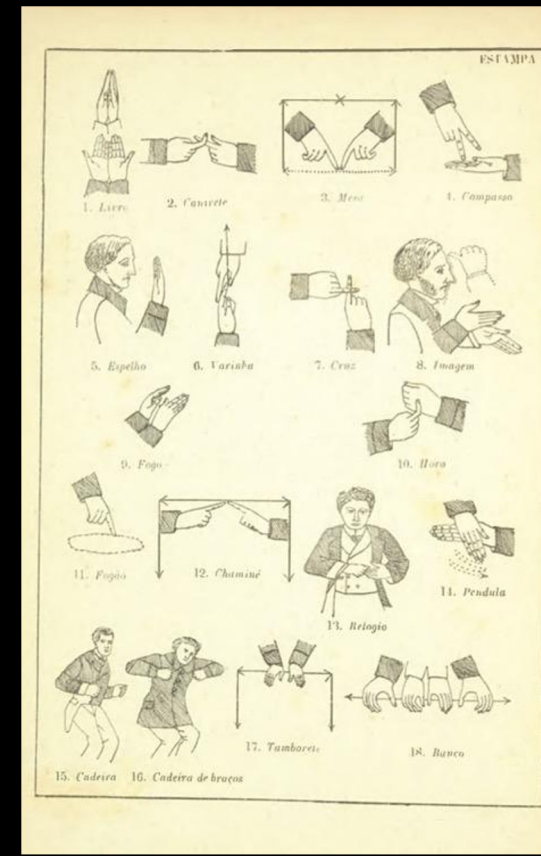
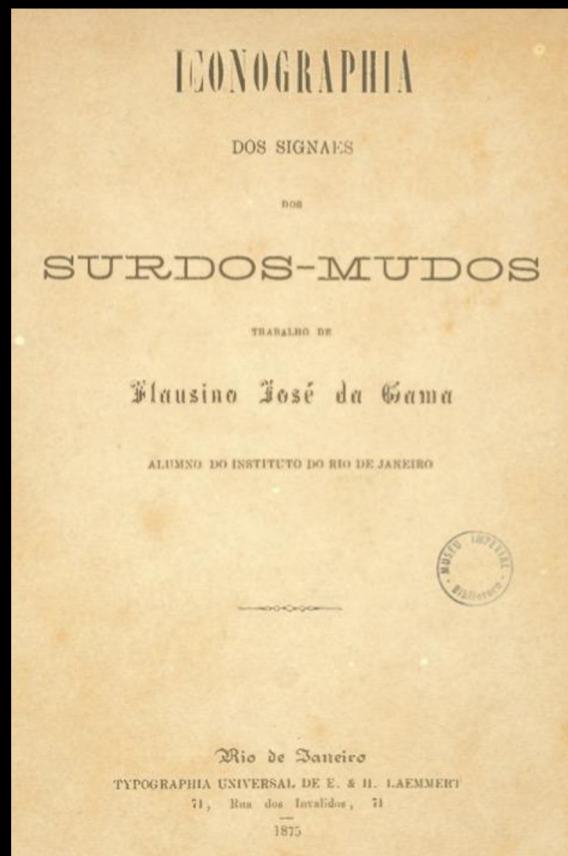
1984  
**Deaf  
Sport**

2002  
**Libras Law**



# INES LSF – Libras

E. Huet LSF  
1857



The first dictionary of Libras - 1875



# Letras Libras (*Libras studies*) - 2006

Graduation in Licenciante and Bachelor in Letras Libras (4 years)

- After Libras Studies

Increase in educational level.

Strengthening relationships between sign language professionals.

Expansion of research in the area.







# Language Contact in the Brazilian Deaf Community (with other countries)



## Language contact with neighbouring countries - Brazil

- LSV - Venezuela
- LSA – Argentina
- LSU - Uruguay



# Current/recent influences – ASL x IntSL

- 1987 - First Brazil in WFD Congress – Finland (IntSL)
- 1990s - Events on Bilingual Education / Deafness (ASL/IntSL)
- 1993 - First Brazil participates in Deaflympics (IntSL)
- 2006 - TISLR - Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (ASL)
- 2007 - Frontrunners (IntSL)
- 2008 - Meeting of Youth Deaf from Conesul (South America) (IntSL)
- 2010 - Deaf Academics (IntSL)
- 2011 - Exchange of 6 students of Letras Libras at Gallaudet University (ASL)
- 2017 - SIGN8 - International Sign Language Research Conference (IntSL/ASL)
- 2022 - Deaflympics (IntSL)
- After 2010 - Several sporting events in South America, America and the World (IntSL)
- After 2010 - Several events of Sign Language Research (study in translation, linguistics and education) (IntSL/ASL)



# Language Modalities in Contact Language

Spoken Language

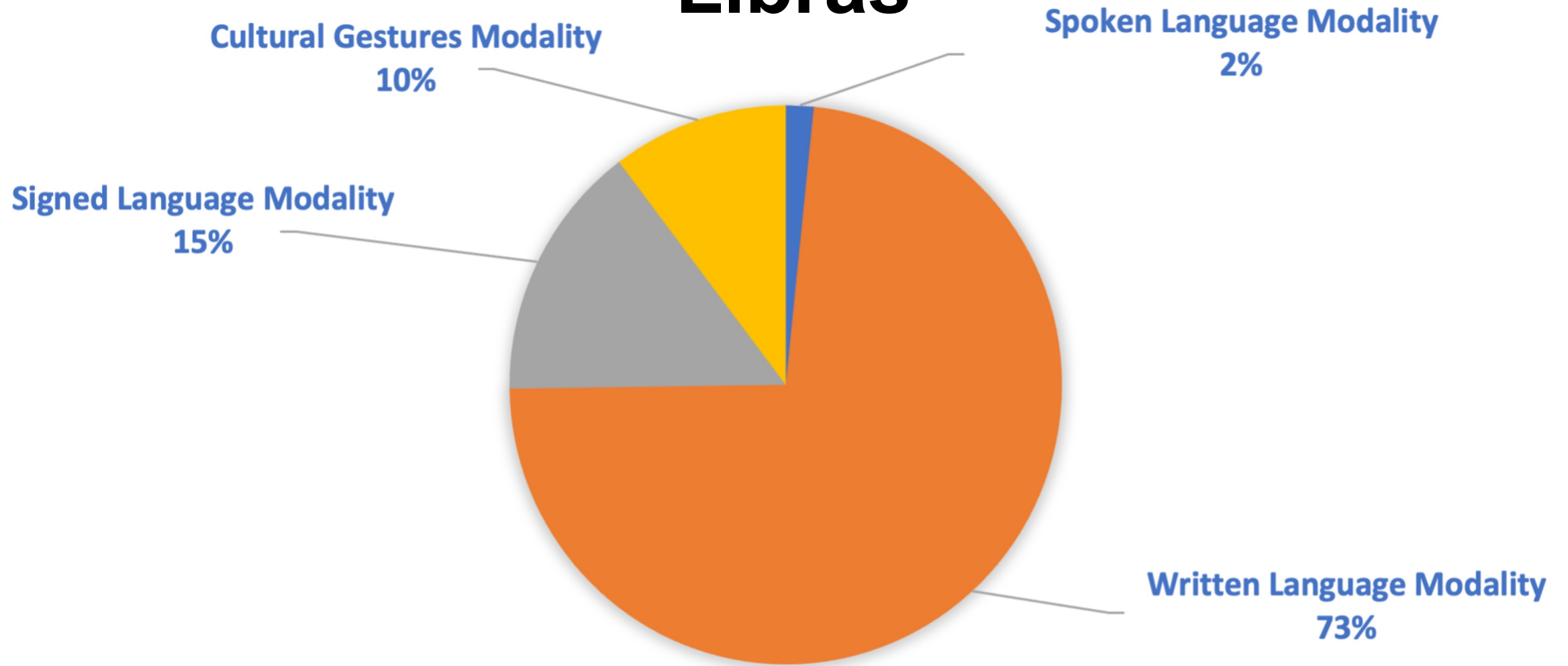
Written Language

Signed Language

Cultural Gestures

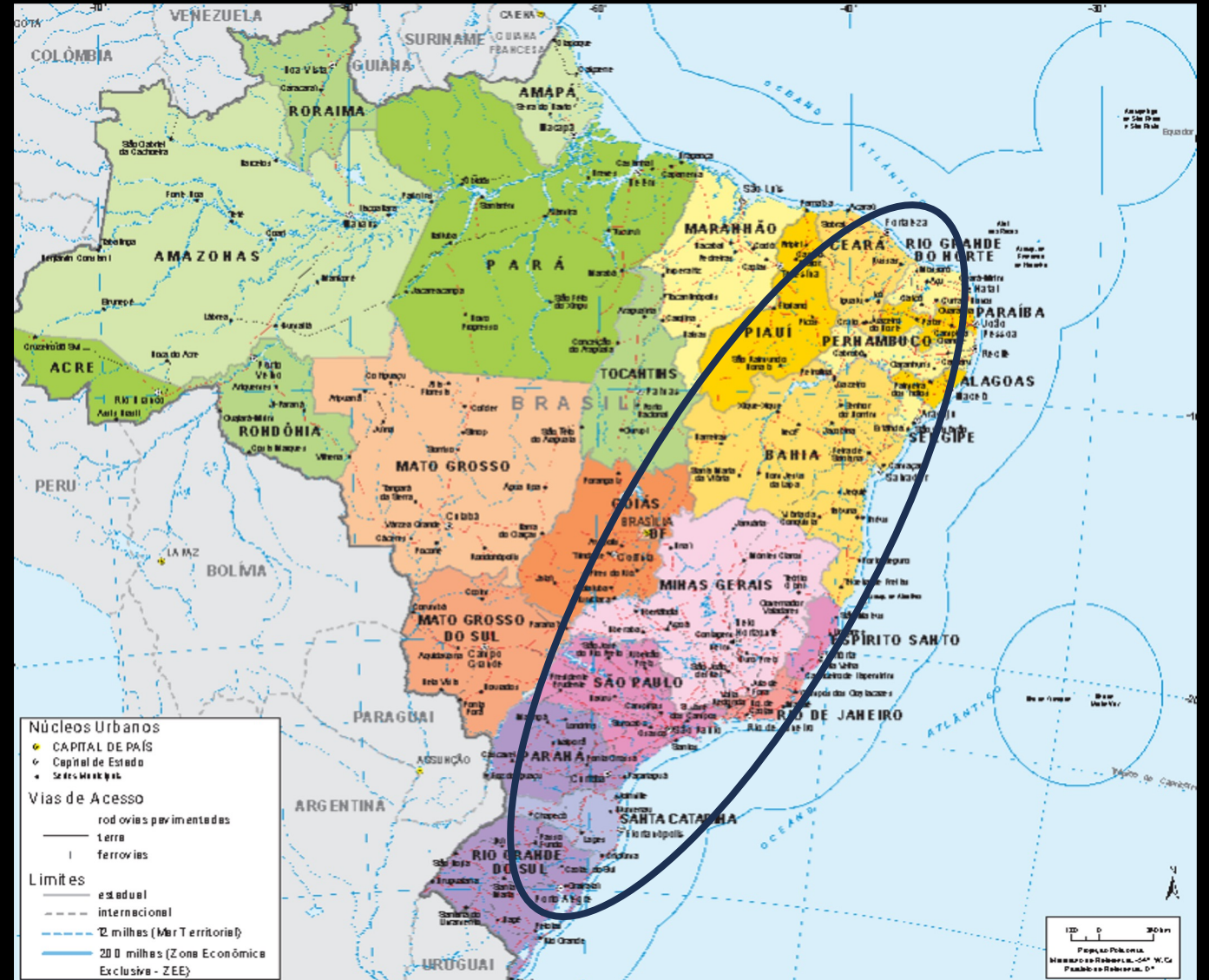
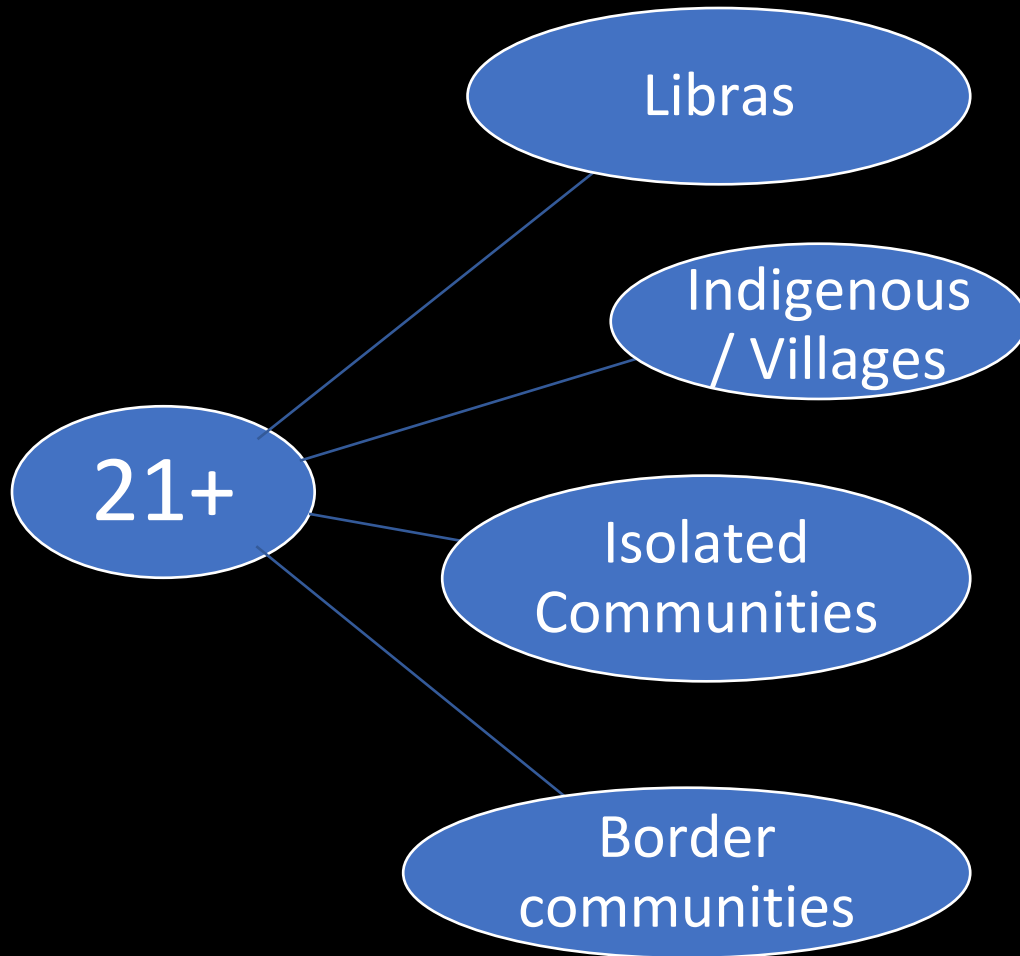


# Libras





# Language attitudes in the Brazilian Deaf Community



# A Comparison

## Singapore

- English (written/spoken) is the first official language in Singapore
  - Lack of national linguistic identity among Singaporeans. Singlish is a marker of Singaporean identity but is also degraded.
  - Mandate for SgSL is not strong enough because deaf people are divided between SgSL versus SEE.
- SgSL is not officially recognized in government language policy.
- One deaf PhD in Linguistics in progress
- Research on SgSL linguistics still in its infancy. No SgSL dictionary
- More ASL influence in SgSL. Some IntSL contact due to international conferences

## Brazil

- Portuguese (written/spoken) is the main official language in Brazil.
  - Deaf identity in Brazil is strong. There is strong advocacy for LIBRAS. Strong influence of indigenous languages.
- LIBRAS is officially recognized in government language policy. LIBRAS Act.
  - Brazil recognized LIBRAS as the first language (L1) for the deaf and Portuguese as their second language (L2).
- More than 80 deaf PhDs
- A large volume of academic research on LIBRAS. Academic literature mostly accessible in Portuguese. A little bit in LIBRAS and English.
- 1875 – LIBRAS dictionary
- IntSL is used more than ASL because of the growth of deaf interpreters and international events.

Both Singapore and Brazil have influences from American Sign Language (ASL) and International Sign Language (IntSL)



# Research work

- Machado, R. N. (2022). The process of linguistic borrowing in Libras: Modalities and Categorization. PhD Dissertation. Programa Pós-Graduação de Linguística e Literatura, Universidade Federal de Alagoas(UFAL). 2022.
- Tay, P., & Ng, B. C. (2022). Revisiting the Past to Understand the Present: The Linguistic Ecology of the Singapore Deaf Community and the Historical Evolution of Singapore Sign Language (SgSL). *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 748578.  
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