Language contact situation between Israeli Sign Language & Kufr Qassem Sign Language:
A case of code-switching or borrowing?

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Introduction

- Code-switching - the use of more than one language within the same communicative episode - is common among bilingual signers [1-4]

- One particular kind of code-switching, known as reiteration, is common in sign language contact situations [6], and it constitutes 30% of our dataset

- Reiterative code-switching is when semantically equivalent signs are produced in both languages sequentially, e.g., WOMAN WOMAN (see Fig. 1)

- Some researchers claim that code-switching can lead to borrowing [8,10,11] - the adoption of individual words or even large sets of vocabulary items from another language or dialect [9]

Fig. 1: example of reiteration

ISL / KQSL / WOMAN / WOMAN
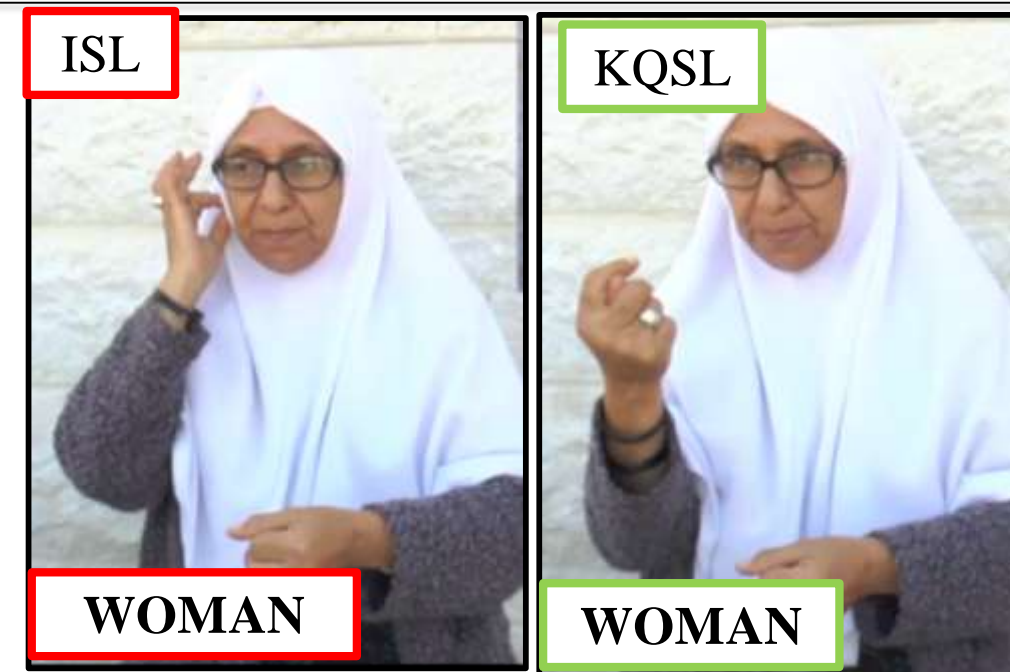
- **Difficulty?** Deciding whether a single-sign switch is an example of a code-switch or a borrowed sign is difficult in any language [13,19]
- Some criteria have been suggested in the spoken language literature, including:
  - Integration: changes to make borrowed words fit in recipient language [19]
  - Diffusion: recurrent use across signers [11,17]
  - Recurrence: recurrent use within individuals [11,17]

Methodology & Community Under Investigation

- In Kufr Qassem (see Fig. 2), younger deaf people are exposed to two sign languages, Kufr Qassem Sign Language (KQSL) and Israeli Sign Language (ISL)
- Participants were filmed in pairs with a matched signer and asked to retell a Charlie Chaplin clip
- Lexical signs from each sign language were decided based on dictionary entries & consultation with native signers within each community
- Switches were counted when the signer switched to their non-dominant language.
- Monolingual ISL signers serve as a baseline

Fig. 2: Map of Israel

Table 1: Languages in contact

Israeli Sign Language (ISL)	Kufr Qassem Sign Language (KQSL)
Larger heterogeneous population (15)	Smaller homogeneous population (14)
Used by ~10,000 people (12)	Used by ~100 deaf & hearing people (12)
Dominant sign language used within media, education & interpreting	Isolated until relatively recently (12)
Population: Roughly 8 Million (16)	Population: Roughly 23,000 (16)

Table 2: Participants
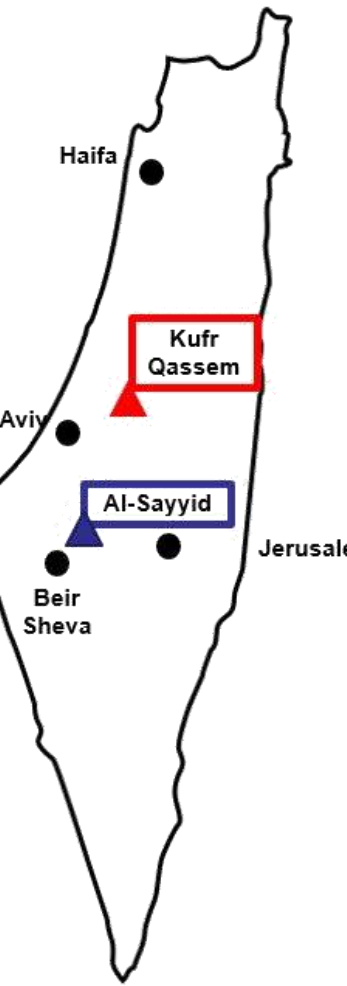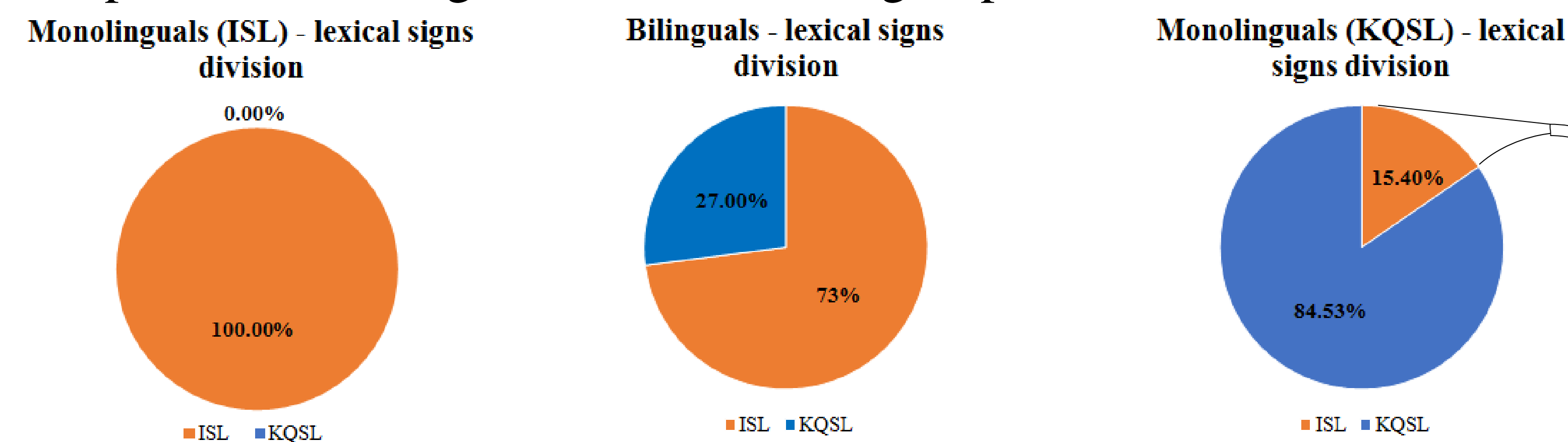
Groups	N	Age range
Monolingual ISL (baseline)	6	22-54
Monolingual KQSL	6	39-67
Bilingual (KQSL/ISL)	6	21-42

Research Question

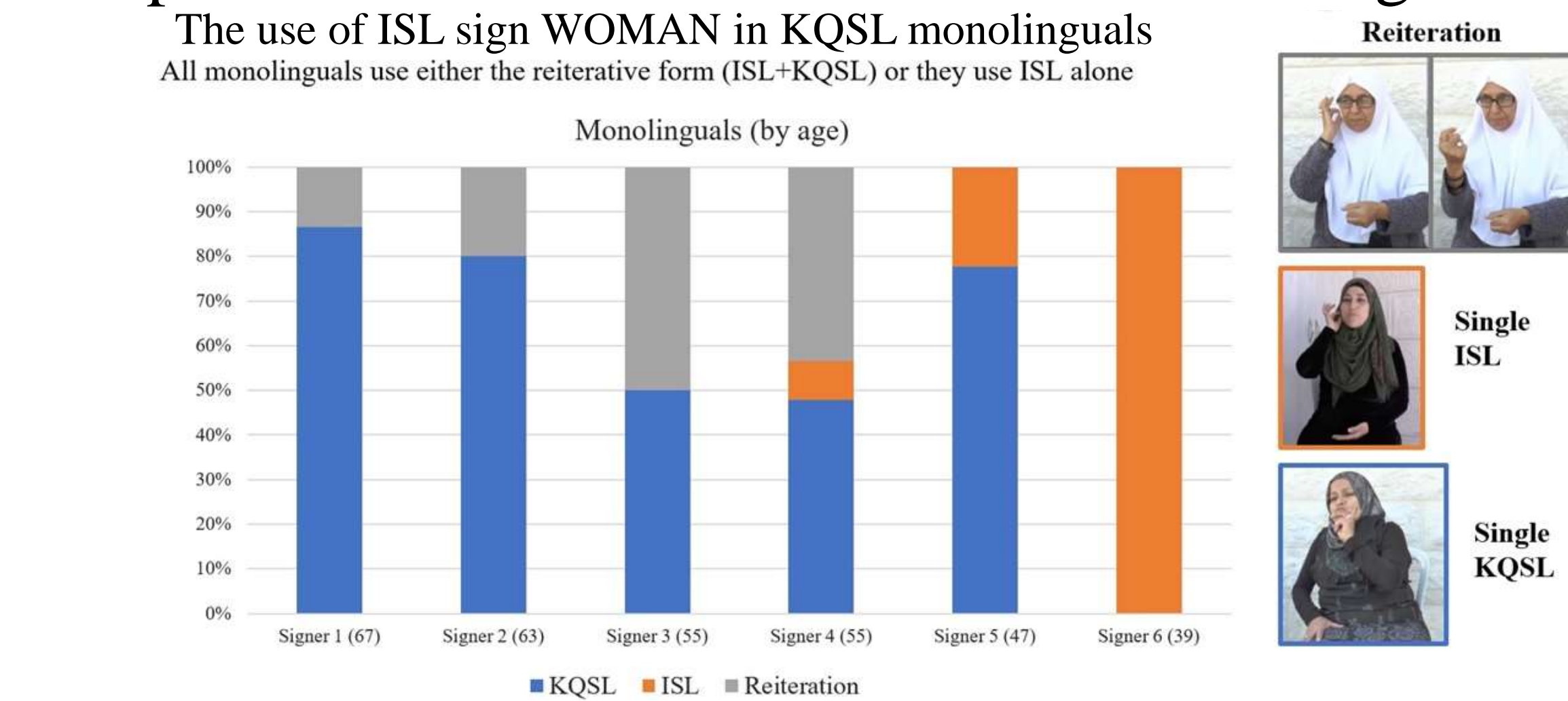- **Is the use of reiteration an example of code-switching or borrowing in Kufr Qassem?**

Results

Graph 1: Lexical Signs Division across groups

Monolinguals (ISL) - lexical signs division
0.00% / 100.00%
■ ISL ■ KQSL

Bilinguals - lexical signs division
27.00% / 73%
■ ISL ■ KQSL

Monolinguals (KQSL) - lexical signs division
15.40% / 84.53%
■ ISL ■ KQSL

- Drastic change in language use within Kufr Qassem deaf community appears in bilinguals dominant use of ISL
- Surprisingly, KQSL monolinguals switch to ISL 15% of their sign production

Graph 2: Recurrence and Diffusion: Borrowing

The use of ISL sign WOMAN in KQSL monolinguals
All monolinguals use either the reiterative form (ISL+KQSL) or they use ISL alone

Monolinguals (by age)

Signer 1 (67) Signer 2 (63) Signer 3 (55) Signer 4 (55) Signer 5 (47) Signer 6 (39)
■ KQSL ■ ISL ■ Reiteration

Reiteration

Single ISL

Single KQSL

- The use of the ISL sign "WOMAN" is diffused across all 6 KQSL monolinguals, whether in reiteration (ISL+KQSL) or the ISL sign on its own
- The ISL sign "WOMAN" recurs within individuals' discourse

Discussion: The Case of the Married One

Table 3: defining feature of code-switching and borrowing

Code-switching vs Borrowing	Our Results
Borrowed words become integrated	✓
Borrowed words recur within individuals	✓
Borrowed words recur across individuals	✓
Borrowed words are used by monolinguals	✓

- When we look at the example below, we see that KQSL has a compound sign 'MAN+WOMAN' translated as 'the married one'
- Over time, the compound components have changed, 'WOMAN+WOMAN', 'MAN+MAN'
- Signers retain the compound template and, through increased contact with ISL, borrow in the ISL form to fill each compound slot

- Reiteration appears to be an example of borrowing of ISL into KQSL's existing compound, rather than code-switching, unlike in other studies (6)

  Evidence?
- Integration of the ISL form into the KQSL compound template serves as a good indicator of borrowing

- Recurrence and diffusion of ISL sign for "WOMAN" across all KQSL monolinguals are another two pieces of evidence of borrowing

Conclusions

- Sign languages offer us a different perspective on code-switching
- What appears to be an obvious code-switching instance, may in fact be something else because sign languages behave differently to spoken languages
- In this study, the behaviours of monolinguals and the presence of integration are important indicators of whether a single-sign switch is code-switching or borrowing

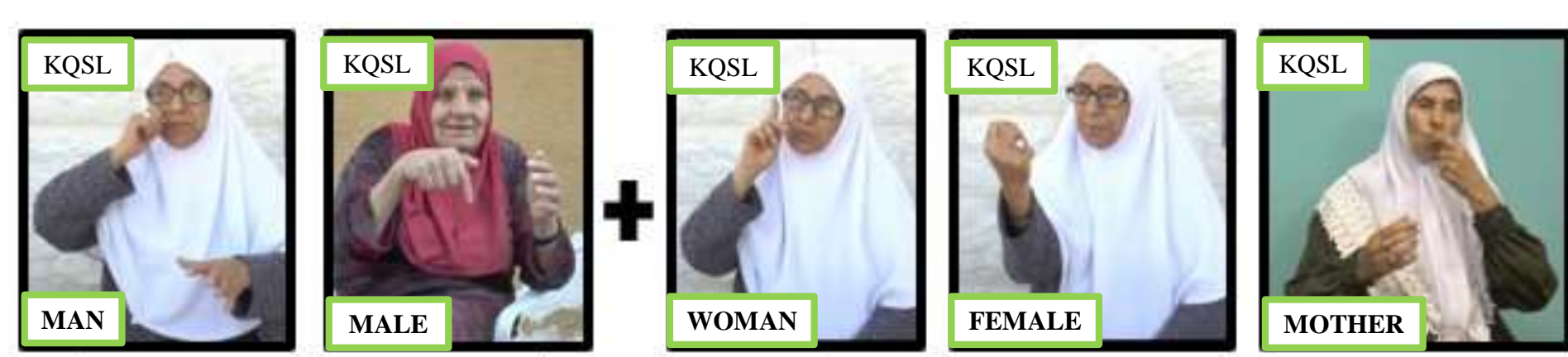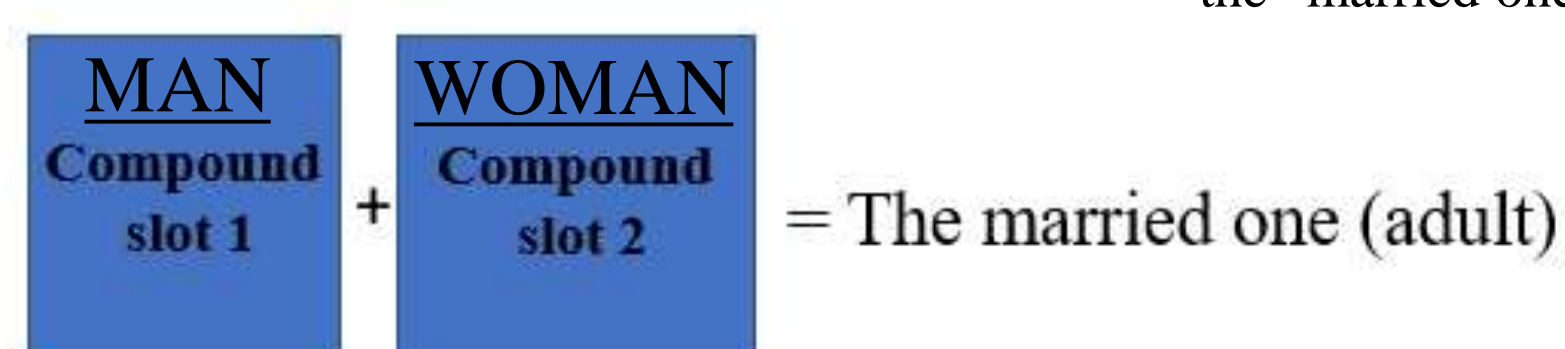## The Case of "The Married One" Sign** as an Example of ISL Borrowing into KQSL

KQSL (MAN) + KQSL (MALE) | KQSL (WOMAN) + KQSL (FEMALE) | KQSL (MOTHER)

Fig. 3 – original form of the "married one" sign

| MAN Compound slot 1 | + | WOMAN Compound slot 2 | = The married one (adult) |

- Women of a certain age are referred to as 'the married one' in KQSL

- This concept is represented by the compound sign: MAN+WOMAN

- KQSL has several coexisting variants for WOMAN and MAN, and signers select a variant to fill compound slot

- Over time, this changed to become more explicit

- Wives were referred to with the signs WOMAN+WOMAN and husbands with the signs MAN +MAN

KQSL (WOMAN) KQSL (FEMALE) KQSL (MOTHER)

| WOMAN Compound slot 1 | + | WOMAN Compound slot 2 | = Wife |

Fig. 4 – 2nd generation change of the "married one" sign

ISL (WOMAN) + KQSL (WOMAN) KQSL (FEMALE) KQSL (MOTHER)
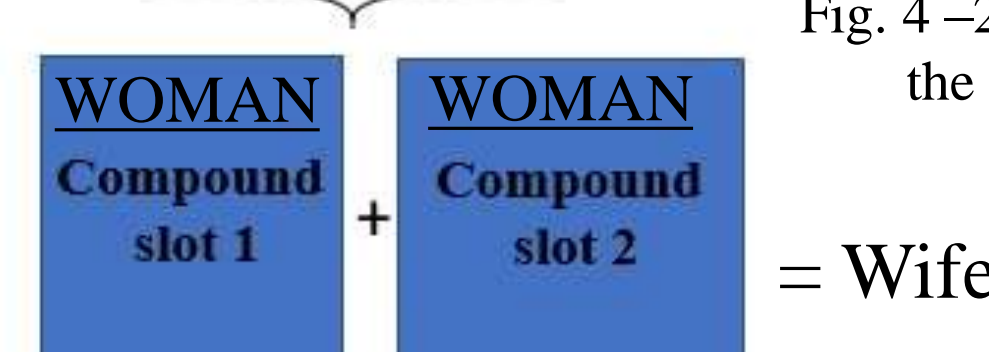
Fig. 5 – ISL sign "WOMAN" borrowing into "the married one" compound

| WOMAN Compound slot 1 | + | WOMAN Compound slot 2 | = Wife |
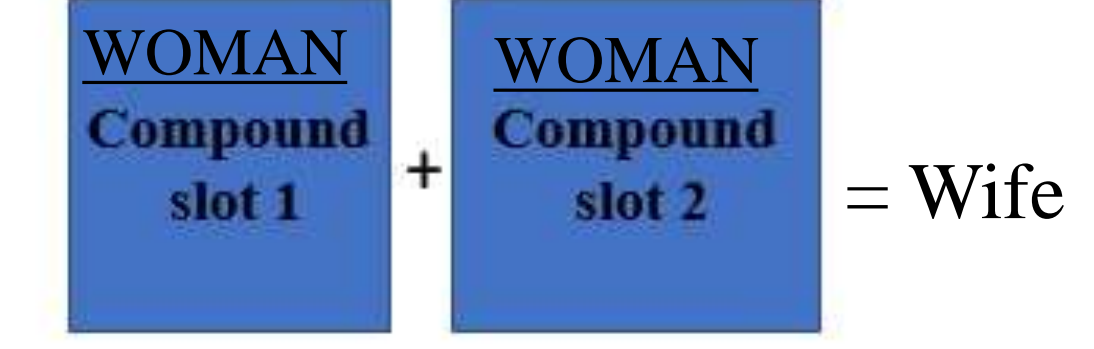
- Increased contact with ISL leads to borrowing
- The ISL sign for WOMAN fills one of the compound slots

**Used by 50% of KQSL monolinguals

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Take-Home Message

- Reiterative "code-switching" is not always code-switching!