PL 2.01
Curriculum Area: Auslan
Topic: Linguistics - Glossing

Context

Auslan is typically not written down; it is expressed 'through the air' (VCASFU138). However, there are times where transcription is appropriate. The transcription of Auslan signs is called *glossing*.

Defining glossing
In linguistics generally, a gloss is an explanatory note between the lines or in the margins of a text, often to explain or provide an equivalent to a foreign or difficult word in the text. I employ glossing frequently when subtitling texts which feature words or phrases with no direct English equivalent. There are other examples which are frequently encountered, such as Japanese furigana (small writing above kanji which is likely to be difficult for the target audience, depicting the word in kana).

There are conventions for glossing in Auslan. Glossing forms a significant part of my planning, however I have found that I occasionally deviate from Auslan glossing conventions and default to more generic glossing conventions used for other languages. I also frequently make an error with 'POSS' glosses, using them to note poss*ibilities* rather than poss*essive* noun concepts.

The goal is to be more consistent when using glossing in my planning, so that anyone else teaching from my planning would not need to decipher idiosyncrasies in my writing.

In the curriculum

Glossing is only introduced in the Victorian Curriculum at Levels 5 and 6, at VCASU048. That content descriptor encourages students to explore ways of annotating and transcribing texts using multimedia software and/or glossing conventions.

Within the elaborations for that descriptor, teachers are invited to have students 'read' a glossed text (I've provided an example later in this document) and/or to gloss a text with appropriate support, using a system which works for them.

Glossing becomes far more significant at Levels 7 to 10, as part of the Understanding sub-strand, but that is beyond the scope of my teaching.

Assumed purpose behind the content
At Levels 5 and 6, students are expected to plan and deliver short presentations in Auslan. Based on the elaborations, these can be *very* short (e.g. 'My name is Adrian. I like Jupiter. Jupiter is big. I don't like Mercury.') but can vary in scope/content/topic - for example, one elaboration explicitly invites learners to present on topics covered in other curriculum areas, such as recounting a procedure in a P.E. or Science lesson.

It would be unreasonable to expect learners to memorise a presentation - we would be unlikely to expect them to do this even in their L1. Glossing allows learners to effectively plan and take notes for such a presentation. While they could always write in their L1, e.g. 'My name is Adrian.', learners would still then be required to 'translate' into Auslan on the

fly - glossing would instead result in notes like 'PRO1 NAME A-D-R-I-A-N', or even just 'PRO1 A-D-R-I-A-N' or 'NAME A-D-R-I-A-N'. An almost literal 'word-for-word' script to follow.

Additionally, glossing activities can assist students to demonstrate their understanding of Auslan grammar. Glossing short, signed phrases accurately can show that learners are aware that word order and sentence structure in Auslan is flexible. Translating glossing into properly-constructed English phrases serves a similar purpose.

Conventions for glossing (sign notation) and notes regarding them

General notation	Specific example	Notes
SIGN	DOG	Written in small capital letters. The English gloss is the closest match to the sign, or the English word most commonly-associated with the sign - this association may be influenced by context.
SIGN-SIGN	LINE-UP	A sign glossed with more than one English word. In the example, the English phrase 'line up' is a single sign. This is depicted as a hyphenated phrase to indicate this - in much the same way a compound noun might be hyphenated in English to indicate it counts as a single word.
PRO-number	PRO-1 (I, me) PRO-2 (you) PRO-3 (he/him, she/her, it)	Personal pronouns, with the number indicating 'personness' - e.g. PRO-1 indicates the first-person pronoun (in English this would be 'I' or 'me'), PRO-2 indicates the second-person pronoun ('you' - singular *or* plural).
Example: PRO-2 LINE-UP would be an instruction in English for you (either an individual or group) to line up.		
POSS-number	POSS-1 POSS-2 POSS-3	Possessive pronouns, with the number indicating 'personness' - e.g. POSS-1 indicates first-person possessive (in English this would be 'my' or 'mine').
Example: POSS-1 DOG NAME K-I-N-G would mean, in English, 'My dog's name is King.'		
PT+specification	+f (forward/front) +c (centre) +lf (left) +rt (right) +dn (down)	Pointing signs, indicating a location - e.g. LINE-UP PT+lf could mean, in English, 'Line up to the left.'
SIGN+specification spec+SIGN+spec	As above, also: +rept (repeated) +exh (exhaustive) +mult (multiple) +fast +slow +hold	A manual modification to a sign. For example, signing ASK+lf would indicate that the signer signed 'ask', but signed it to their left, likely indicating an instruction to ask the person to their left. These modifications can reflect location, direction, or manner of movement.
SIGN+specification	+gen (genitive)	Indicating the possessive affix ('s).
A-B-C	A-D-R-I-A-N	Fingerspelled signs, e.g. proper nouns.

SIGN^SIGN	MOTHER^FATHER	Compounds show both signs separated by a character. For example, the English word 'parents' is represented by the Auslan sign MOTHER followed by FATHER; there is no 'parents' sign.
Example: POSS-2 MOTHER^FATHER HAPPY could mean, in English, 'Your parents are happy.' POSS-2 PARENTS HAPPY would be without meaning, as PARENTS is not an Auslan sign.		
expression SIGN	Various.	Labels written at the right-hand end of the bar, above a sign, to indicate expression or non-manual features which influence meaning. For example, 'br' would indicate a raised eyebrow, which could turn the phrase into a question.
CA:	NOD	Indicating constructed action. CA: followed by a description of the action.

These are not the only glossing conventions. There are three other main ones, but they exceed the scope of the primary level. These include glosses indicating the use of dominant and subordinate hands (or as we tend to call them at WVPS, 'pen' and 'paper' hands), classifiers and handshape references. While students approaching the Level 5 and 6 standard would likely be developing some awareness of handshape and classifiers, the expectation is not that these can be glossed or 'read' as a glossed text until Level 9 and 10.

Next step

Professional
To improve 'fluency' in glossing, I will be recording short, signed phrases and glossing them. Some of these may also be used as examples in the classroom for Level 3 and 4, pending permission to teach from the Communication sub-strand.

Students
There is no expectation that students use or understand glossing at F-4. Instead, students translate from Auslan into their L1 (the Victorian Curriculum specifies English, but the intent is clearly L1). For F-4, this would be evident only in my planning, and in assessment and notes undertaken by, for and with students.

At Level 5, there is some scope for introducing glossing as a way of developing awareness of word order and sentence structure. Many Grade 5 students (and some Grade 4 students) have been attempting direct, word-for-word translations between English and Auslan. It could be as simple as introducing glossing with idiosyncratic notation for students to 'translate' into English (and for extension students to represent in Auslan) to drill in the concept.