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## Minimal Pairs in Ethiopian Sign Language

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### ABSTRACT

This study attempts to describe the nature of minimal pairs in Ethiopian Sign Language (EthSL). It aims to show the nature of minimal pairs in Ethiopian Sign Language by considering only the manual parameters of signs.

A minimal pair is the first step in the analysis of the phonology of a language to establish which sounds are in contrast with each other. The concept of minimality is a phonological phenomenon of classifying words according to the similarities between them (Edward 2014).

In Signed Languages, as in all natural languages, it is necessary to determine the basic phonemic inventory. The phonemic inventory can be determined only by looking at minimal differences in manual and non-manual components of almost similar signs. The signs that can be distinguished by only one component of their phonetic structures are called minimal pairs (Dikyuva et. al. 2017).

In this study, the researcher examined the nature of minimal pairs in EthSL following the Signed Language phonological structures proposed by Brentari (2005).

**Keywords:** Minimal pairs, Ethiopian Sign Language, Sign Language Phonology, Manual components of signs

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