1. American Sign Language (ASL)

Overview:

ASL is a natural, visual language with its own grammar and structure, separate from English.

Origin:

- Developed from French Sign Language (LSF), Martha's Vineyard Sign Language, and home signs in the early 1800s.

- Has been used by Deaf people in the U.S. and parts of Canada for over 200 years.

Grammar:

- ASL has its own word order (often Topic–Comment or Object–Subject–Verb).

- Uses non-manual markers (like eyebrow movement and facial expression) as essential grammar.

- Has its own rules for questions, negation, tense, and classifiers.

Example:

English   **I am going to the store.**

 ASL   **STORE I GO** (with proper facial expression and directionality)

Key Traits:

- Used by Deaf adults and children as a primary language

- Culturally Deaf people identify with ASL

- Rich in visual storytelling and facial grammar

2. Pidgin Signed English (PSE)

Overview:

PSE (sometimes called Contact Sign) is a mix of ASL and English. It's often used by hearing people or late learners who aren't fluent in full ASL.

Where It's Common:

- In interpreting

- In mixed hearing-Deaf environments

- Among people who are learning ASL or grew up oral but sign occasionally

Grammar:

- Follows English word order, but often drops little words like "is," "am," "the," and "a."

- Uses ASL signs but may not use ASL grammar fully.

- Facial expressions and classifiers may be used, but not consistently.

Example:

English   **She is going to school.**

PSE   **SHE GO SCHOOL** (English order, ASL signs)

Key Traits:

- A bridge between English and ASL

- No strict rules, it varies depending on the user

- Useful for communication, but not a full language

3. Signing Exact English (SEE)

Overview:

SEE is a manually coded form of English, not a natural language, but a visual way to represent English exactly using signs.

Purpose:

- Created to help Deaf children learn English grammar, reading, and writing

- Common in educational settings, especially in past decades

Features:

- Every English word, suffix, and prefix is signed (including "-ing," "-ed," "a," "the," etc.)

- English word order is strictly followed

- Includes invented signs to match English words that don't exist in ASL (e.g., signs for "are," "the," "it")

Example:

English   **I am going to the store.**

SEE   **I + AM + GO + -ING + TO + THE + STORE** (each word signed individually)

Key Traits:

- Not used in casual Deaf community conversation

- Considered helpful by some teachers, but criticized for being confusing or unnatural for native signers

- Often used in speech therapy or oral education programs

Side-by-Side Comparison

Feature	ASL	PSE	SEE
Type	Natural Language	Contact Language	Manually Coded English
Word Order	Topic–Comment or OSV	English-like	English exact
Grammar	Unique to ASL	Mixed	Mirrors English
Use of English words	No	Some	All
Use of invented signs	No	No	Yes

In Summary:

- **ASL** is a full, complex visual language used by the Deaf community.

- **PSE** is a simplified mix that uses ASL signs in English word order.

- **SEE** is a system that signs every English word, often used to teach English.