

# Signing thoughts!

## A methodological approach within the semantic field work used for coding nonmanuals which express modality in Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS)

Andrea Lackner (andrea.lackner@aau.at)

Nikolaus Riemer (nikolaus.riemer@ling.su.se)

### Object of study

Signing thoughts gives the possibility to express unreal situations, possibilities and so forth. Additionally, signers may express their attitude on these thoughts such as being uncertain about an imagined situation. We describe a methodological approach within the semantic fieldwork which was used for identifying nonmanuals which tend to occur in thoughts and which may code (epistemic and deontic) modality in Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS).

### Procedure of study

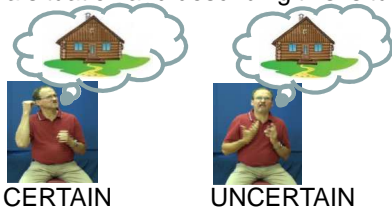
#### Phase 1: Recording thoughts

##### Instruction for signing thoughts



RH: line of thought  
LH: buoying the ongoing action

- signing a long ongoing action such as hiking
- thinking about a situation and describing this situation
- expressing different attitudes



#### Phase 2: Identifying and annotating nonmanuals

##### Procedure of annotation

- one tier for each non-manual movement & for each head and body movement/position along a body axis
- each annotator worked with a separate list of head/body tiers; the glossing tier was visible to everyone
- tiers compared afterwards → accordance of 3 were taken for analysis

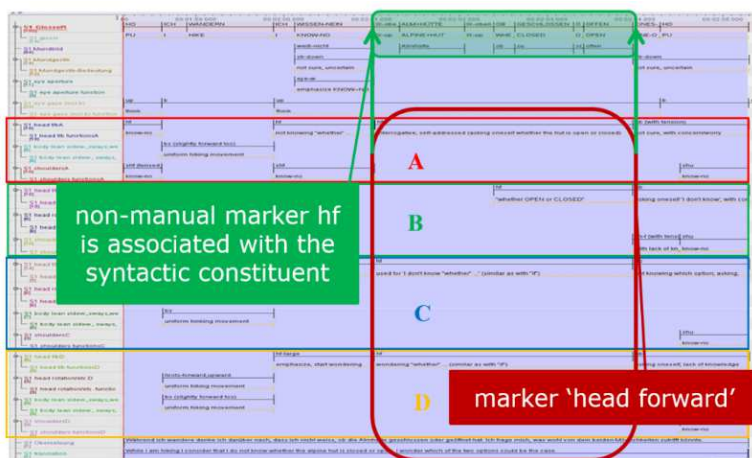
##### Abbreviations:

|                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| hf – head forward             | hfs – head forward movements    |
| hf-large – head forward large | hb – head backward              |
| hs – headshakes               | hs-fast – fast headshakes       |
| hs-slow – slow headshakes     | hs-large – hs with large radius |

#### Phase 3: Analyzing nonmanuals - primarily those coding epistemic modality

##### Different annotators

- identified the same nonmanuals
- determined same starting and ending points in association with lexical entries
- described the following characteristics:
  - movement or position ('hfs' vs. 'hf')
  - body/head movements allocated to one of the body axes ('hf' vs. 'hb')
  - speed of performance (hs-fast :: hs :: hs-slow)
  - intensified performance / size of performance (hf-large; hs-large)
  - further aspects (e.g. degree of body tension)
- described similar meaning in the particular language context



### Results of study

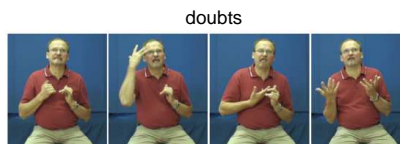
Nonmanuals coding epistemic modality expressing:



convincement/assertion



non-assertion



doubts



worry/concern