

Encoding different types of topics and foci in German Sign Language (*Deutsche Gebärdensprache*). A Cartographic approach to sign language syntax

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Guided by two main hypotheses, (i) the existence of a strict, Cartographic ordering of topic and focus projections in the tradition of Rizzi (1997) and (ii) the Bodily Mapping Hypothesis (Bross & Hole 2017; Bross 2018), this talk gives an overview of the expression and syntactic behavior of different types of topics and foci in German Sign Language (*Deutsche Gebärdensprache*, DGS). I will show that topic and focus phrases are, in line with previous proposals for spoken languages in the Cartographic tradition, strictly ordered in DGS and that topic and focus is expressed non-manually with upper-face articulators as predicted by the Bodily Mapping Hypothesis, i.e., the hypothesis that high scoping categories, to be more precise, categories which are structurally higher than tense, are expressed non-manually in sign languages in an iconic way: the higher an operator is located in the syntactic tree the higher the articulator expressing it will be. Based on data from eleven native signers of DGS from Southern Germany it will be argued that the linear order of signs strictly obeys the following hierarchy (based on Benincà & Poletto 2004; Pittner 2004: 276)

- (1) Hanging topic > epistemic frame > temporal frame > locative frame > force > aboutness topic > focus

While moved and base-generated topics generally appear in the left periphery of the clause, contrastive foci appear clause-initially only optionally. The expression of contrastive focus is, somewhat surprisingly, subject to dialectal variation: While signers from the area of Baden-Württemberg raise their brows and move their chin up, signers in Bavaria produce a squint and lower their chin. I will also show that not all combinations of the two topic types are allowed.

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