Notes

1. The terms “signed language” and “sign language” are used interchangeably in the remainder of this book as they are synonymous.

2. LBG = Lautsprachbegleitende Gebärden. While DGS manual signs are used, the rules of spoken German grammar are applied.

3. RTÉ is the first television channel in Ireland comparable to the BBC channel group in the UK.

4. Further information on deaf communities is provided in chapter 5.3.

5. An example from Bambara is the lexeme ‘thank you’. A man, irrespective of the interlocutor’s sex, has to use the lexeme nbà, while a woman, also irrespective of the interlocutor’s sex, has to use nsé. This is not to be confused with grammatical gender.

6. There are different reasons for signs across sign languages to be related. Firstly, the two sign languages themselves may be related historically, as ASL and LSF, for example. However, signs from different unrelated sign languages often show striking similarities as well. These are due to a shared iconicity that is especially well expressed in the visual-gestural modality (cf. chapter 2.4). Moreover, language contact with the majority spoken language in a country might cause sign languages surrounded by the same spoken language to become increasingly similar (Johnston & Schembri 2007). Finally, the growing impact of ASL internationally is sometimes mentioned as a reason for a lexical overlap between different sign languages. They might simply have borrowed signs from ASL.

7. The ASL sign RESTAURANT, e.g., is formed with the R-handshape from the American manual alphabet.

8. If not indicated differently, the information in this section is taken from Matthews’ book, esp. from pp. 58–114.

9. Figures 2.26 and 2.27 are reprinted with kind permission from the author.

10. The Milan Congress was an international conference of educators of the deaf at which the introduction of the oral method to deaf schools around the world was decided. The only opposing members, thus favouring sign language as medium of instruction in deaf schools, were from the United States and Britain.

11. All pictures from Ó Baoill and Matthews (2000) are reprinted with kind permission from the authors.


13. The parameters determining signs in sign phonology are location, handshape and movement. More recent accounts of sign phonology add two more
parameters, namely orientation and non-manuals. This issue is elaborated on in section 2.5. For a detailed account of sign phonology the reader is referred to, e.g., Stokoe (1960), Sandler (2003), Sandler & Lillo-Martin (2006) and Brentari (2012).

14. It should be mentioned though that this claim refers to morphology only. Keller acknowledges a tripartite distinction of sign language verbs on functional semantic grounds.

15. For a detailed description of classifier constructions in sign languages the reader is referred to Emmorey (ed.) (2003). The topic will also be commented on briefly in the following.

16. It should be emphasized however, that sign phonology is not exclusively simultaneous. References to the sequentiality of sign phonology can be found e.g. in Liddell & Johnson (1989). Sandler (1989) proposes a rather balanced phonological model with respect to simultaneity and sequentiality.

17. The role of non-manual features in phonology is briefly touched upon in chapter 2.6 as well.

18. This has usually been called "aspect" in sign linguistics. However, I argue that these inflections are actually aktionsart inflections. The matter is discussed in further detail in chapter 6.

19. For a detailed analysis cf. chapter 3.

20. In this case, "subject" is used as a neutral term not referring to the syntactic function of subject.

21. Again, the term "predicate" does not refer to the syntactic function of predicates but is used neutrally.

22. The usual abbreviation for Israeli Sign Language is ISL. However, the in this book often used abbreviation for Irish Sign Language is also ISL. Thus, in order not to confuse the reader, I have chosen to use the abbreviation IsSL for Israeli Sign Language. The reader should be aware that this abbreviation is not used in other publications.


24. The expression "toward the subject" refers to the location of the subject in the signing space. The dynamics of verb agreement realized in spatial syntax were outlined in chapter 2.1.

25. The topic of pronouns in sign languages is also further elaborated on in chapter 6.1.4.

27. The transcription "[" for indicating the sucking in of cheeks was used in the original.
29. ‘le’ was used by the authors to indicate lowered eyebrows.
32. Additionally, Pfau and Quer (2007) claim that DGS relative clauses may be accompanied by a body lean towards the locus of the antecedent of the relative.
33. ‘re’ was chosen to mean ‘raised eyebrows’.
34. They observed that if an antecedent is mentioned in the preceding linguistic context, it is not marked by a squint later on.
36. For further information on the other four cases, cf. Hohenberger & Happ (2001:167 ff.).
37. Although the following discussion is exclusively concerned with mouth actions, spreading has been observed for other non-manuals such as negative headshakes or question markers.
38. This theory is based on a Prosodic Phonology model as used, e.g., by Sandler (1999) and Nespor and Sandler (1999).
40. All information on the SOI is taken from Leeson (2008).
41. Children at St. Mary’s and St. Joseph’s usually start primary school at the age of four and finish at the age of 14. Post-primary education spans a period of approximately four years.
42. The second step was calculating the correlation between word classes and mouth actions.
43. No interlinear morpheme translation is provided for these examples because of the gestural component that could not easily be represented.
44. This relation of semantic congruence has been described by other researchers, such as Baker and Van den Bogaerde (2008) or Emmorey et al. (2005), e.g., for bilingual communication situations.
45. Formal criteria do not necessarily refer to complete formal identity of sign and spoken language items but rather to categorical similarities and differences concerning word classes or morphologically overlapping forms, for instance.

46. “Manual” here refers to the conventional gloss associated with a manual, which in turn is often determined by the associated mouthing. Moreover, transcription conventions often play an important role for the relation between a manual sign and its gloss. However, I have chosen to use “manual” instead of “gloss” in the following description of mouthing types.

47. In direct opposition to TYPE 3a are English prepositional verbs that are only accompanied by the mouthed preposition as LIFT-OFF and “off”. These examples are much rarer than TYPE 3a and considered an exception from the general rule that the most salient part of a construction is mouthed.

48. For more information cf. chapter 5.3 and M ohr (2012).

49. In fact, even some of the cited examples were not transcribed like this in the ELAN files. I cited them from my own notes.


51. It should be kept in mind however, that mostly lexical signs were considered for the sociolinguistic as well as for the linguistic analysis. Hence, the figures might be slightly biased with respect to this point. A few cases of spread prepositions to adjacent verbs or numerals to adjacent nouns hint at the fact that in few cases, function words might spread to content words. These findings are in line with findings for other sign languages that have been investigated regarding this issue.


53. Brown Thomas is an Irish retail store which is now part of the Wittington Investment Group including Selfridges in the UK and Holt Renfrew in Canada.

54. The picture only shows the beginning of the fingerspelling, or rather the transition from c. to h. This is simply to give an impression of what the fingerspelling looks like as the whole word could not be shown in pictures.

55. Crasborn et al. (2008) mention four different types of mouth gestures in their study. Reasons for differentiating only three distinct types are given at the end of this section.

56. This also relates to the overall storyline as the signer described the trouble he had with his car and the engine not working.
This is the fourth type of mouth gesture as mentioned by Crasborn et al. (2008) which was excluded from the mouth gesture typology introduced here.

I want to thank my reviewer who indicated an error in transcription of the sign to me.

Another issue that should be mentioned in this context is the exaggerated size of the mouthings used in order to impersonate the hearing child's mouth movements. This, however, is probably a story-telling technique that is not relevant for the current investigation.

Thank you for my reviewer for this comment.

These figures exclude more marginal cases in which the spreading was not clearly visible.

This should be kept in mind when looking at figure 5.8.

For further reading on this matter cf. for example Emmorey et al. (2005), Baker & Van den Bogaerde (2008).

In this category, three signers (Michelle, Sarah Jane and Sean) were counted double as they had given two different modes of communication at home. These can be seen in Table 1.

The other cornerstone is deaf residential schools (Woll & Ladd 2003).

Woll & Ladd (2003:152, f.) establish four different kinds of Deaf communities in their paper: “suppressing communities” in which Deaf community life is organized separately from hearing community life, “assimilating communities” which arise in most non-industrialized communities with a high incidence of deafness, “single communities” in which the socioeconomic status and educational achievements of Deaf people are largely equivalent to those of hearing people and where hearing people have a considerable knowledge of sign language, and “integrated communities” in which the Deaf community is integrated to a greater or lesser extent within the hearing community.

Endocentric compounds usually consist of a head that determines the basic meaning of the construction. Most English compounds are right-headed such as greenhouse in which house functions as the head and green as the modifier of this head. Moreover, the head also determines the word class of the compound. Exocentric compounds however, do not possess a (expressed) head and their meaning is totally unrelated to its constituent parts, as in skinhead, for example.

Terminology is rather vague in this respect and varies between different approaches put forth by different researchers. In line with Sasse (1993b) and Haspelmath (2001) I consider the terms “word class” and “part-of-speech” to be synonymous.

Other categories closely related to personal pronouns are number and strong-weak distinctions. For further reference, the reader is referred to Sasse (1993b) and Helmbrecht (2004).
70. The cognitive classification of the extra-linguistic world varies in different cultures and hence causes a different categorization of words in different languages.

71. Semantically, there are a number of entity types that while treated as nouns in the familiar Indo-European languages, are realized as verbs or deverbal nominalizations in the languages of Australia and North America. Evans (2000:711) cites mostly kin terms, body parts and other part terms and ephemeral entities as examples of this phenomenon. Especially with respect to lexemes denoting ephemeral or dynamic features of the landscape, there are various languages in which many of these words are expressed as verbs. Thus, lexemes like *billabong*, *thunder*, *lightning* and so on are perceived to be of processual rather than stative nature in these languages and are consequently realized as verbs (one example is *kaboy* = ‘it-water-lies’ = ‘billabong’ in Mayali (an Australian language from the Gunwingguan language family)).

72. The seven types are: **MOTION** e.g. verbs of motion like go, **AFFECT** e.g. verbs like hit, **GIVING** e.g. verbs like donate, **CORPOREAL** e.g. verbs like laugh, **OBJECTS** e.g. nouns like tree, **KIN** e.g. kinship terms like son, **DIMENSION** e.g. items like deep, **COLOUR** e.g. colour terms like white, **VALUE** e.g. items like good. For more detailed information, the reader is referred to Dixon (1982:12 ff.).

73. Taylor (1989) subsumes word classes, parts-of-speech and syntactic categories under the label “grammatical categories”. For problematic issues with respect to the use of terminology cf. Rauh (2010).

74. This view however is doubted by several linguists, one of which is Croft (2000) who considers this to be an exaggerated claim.

75. Morphological markers providing information on the relation between two nouns in an NP may also occur as in Russian (possessor of another noun) or Hebrew (being possessed by another noun) (Evans 2000) also exist, but cannot be commented on here for spatial restrictions.

76. The fact that all linguistic levels have to be considered for a clear word class distinction is of course also supported by other researchers, such as Knobloch & Schaeder (2000), for example.

77. It can however be stated that the degree of compound friendliness varies between individual sign languages. Thus, Zeshan (2002) mentions ASL to be relatively compound friendly, while IPSL, e.g., is not. For further information the reader is also referred to Meir (2012).

78. Person distinctions in sign languages are discussed in more detail in the paragraph below on pronominal systems.

79. As is apparent from this statement, Erlenkamp suggests that syntactic categories and lexical classes are not equal in DGS. In her analysis, the members of the syntactic category of multifunctional signs can be divided into different lexical classes.
It should be mentioned that the term “pointer” is a generic term in this context as it refers to both pointers and zone indeces. The first indicate singular number while the latter mark the plural.

For a more detailed discussion of the issue of iconicity in sign languages cf. chapter 2.

As these parameters are very general, it is obvious that not all of them are applicable to the same extent to all languages. Isolating languages like Chinese, e.g. can only resort to distribution as formal parameter since they lack category identifying morphology (cf. chapter 6.1.3).

There is no interlinear morpheme translation in these examples as the language change within the sentences could not be adequately expressed.

While it has often been stated that sign language verbs inflect for aspect, I think the appropriate term here is aktionsart as the category expressed rather refers to the manner in which an action is carried out, rather than to its temporal structure.

At this point it should also be mentioned that a zero-subject as in (10) usually entails a 1sg/1pl subject (Leeson, p.c.) in ISL.

The idea of interpreting transfer as movement has also been tackled in section 6.2.1 already.

For a detailed account of backwards verbs cf. Müller de Quadros & Quer (2008).

The multifunctionality of aktionsart verbs is not denied. However, the degree of syntactic indeterminacy seems to be greater in multifunctional signs.

In that respect, their findings are opposed to Fowler and Heaton’s (2006) results indicating that there are onomatopoeia in BSL.

This would be an alternative explanation for the high frequency of mouth gestures with verbs.

However, this analysis does not assume as high a degree of multifunctionality as Erlenkamp (2000), as there are four more lexical categories besides multifunctional signs.

The syntactic categories then correlate with the lexical classes of ISL as shown in figure 6.2.

For further reference the reader is referred to Dik (1997:61).

Bank et al. (2011:265) make this claim with reference to frequent signs.

The class of ideophones is extremely structurally marked so that it is singled out by this criterion. Moreover, correlations with mouth actions could not be calculated here as it is constituted by mouth gestures only.

For the interested reader, fingerspellings were included in the following list.

Words in single quotes indicate a gesture.
98. This is the last sign of the narrative, thus the 10 seconds preceding the sign are provided here.

99. This is example 7b.

100. For continuation cf. example 5a.