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Iconicity in reciprocals

Evidence from Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT)

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GOAL: investigate the potential role of iconicity in reciprocal reduplication and lexical reciprocals in NGT.

Background

- **Phonological and morphosyntactic restrictions** on reciprocal reduplication in several sign languages (SLs) (e.g., Pfau & Steinbach 2016)
→ Sequential/simultaneous backward reduplication
- Recent work: **Order of reciprocal sub-events** also influences reciprocal strategy (Ergin et al. 2020)
→ simultaneous vs. sequential sub-events
- Iconicity plays a role in SL **lexical reciprocals**: “articulatory plurality” (Börstell et al. 2016)

Method

- (i) *Searches in the Corpus NGT (Crasborn et al. 2008)*
 - ‘each other’ + ‘mutually’ on translation tier; EACH-OTHER on gloss tier
 - 423 hits in total → **42 dual + 25 lexical reciprocals**
- (ii) *Data elicitation: Video description task*
 - Videos: reciprocal situations (sequential/simultaneous)
 - 6 participants each described 18 videos using a given verb
 - In total **62 dual reciprocals** elicited

Reciprocal reduplication (elicited and corpus data)

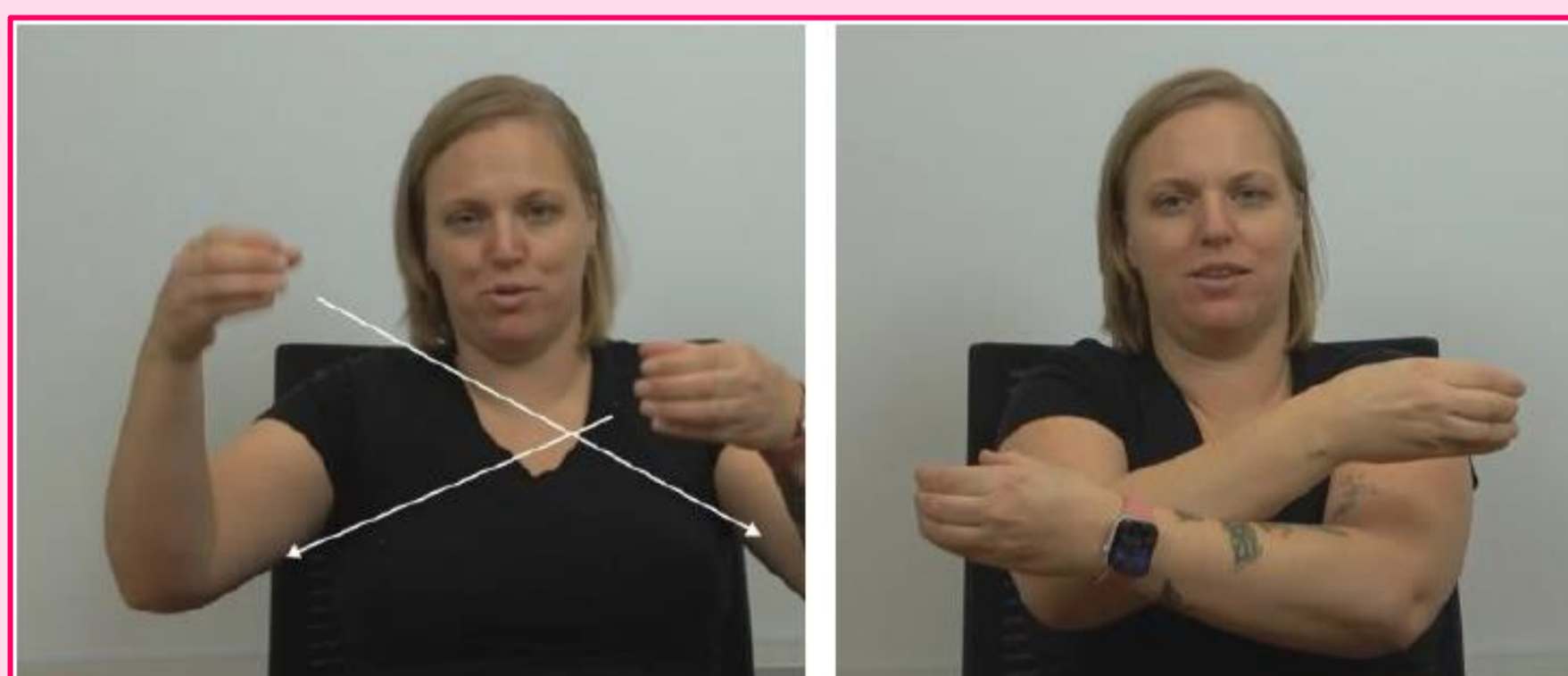
- **Two-handed verbs (N=26)**
 - No reduplication → Potential phonological restriction?
- **One-handed verbs: relation reduplication type & order of sub-events**
 - Simultaneous reciprocal meaning → simultaneous reduplication (N=33) [agreeing and plain] – **(1a)**
 - Sequential reciprocal meaning → sequential reduplication (N=7) [only agreeing] – **(1b)**
 - Reduplication is generally optional → zero marking (N=23)

Lexical reciprocals (corpus data)

- **N=25**; No reduplication
- Each hand represents one side of the event – **(2a)**
 - “Articulatory plurality” (see Börstell et al. 2016)
 - Exception: one-handed MARRY
- **Order of sub-events seems no longer relevant when a form lexicalizes**
→ e.g. simultaneous TALK-TO-EACH-OTHER: ‘talking’ sub-events are sequential – **(2b)**

Iconicity influences the reciprocal strategy, i.e. sequential or simultaneous reduplication.

When a form lexicalizes, this iconicity is (partially) bleached.



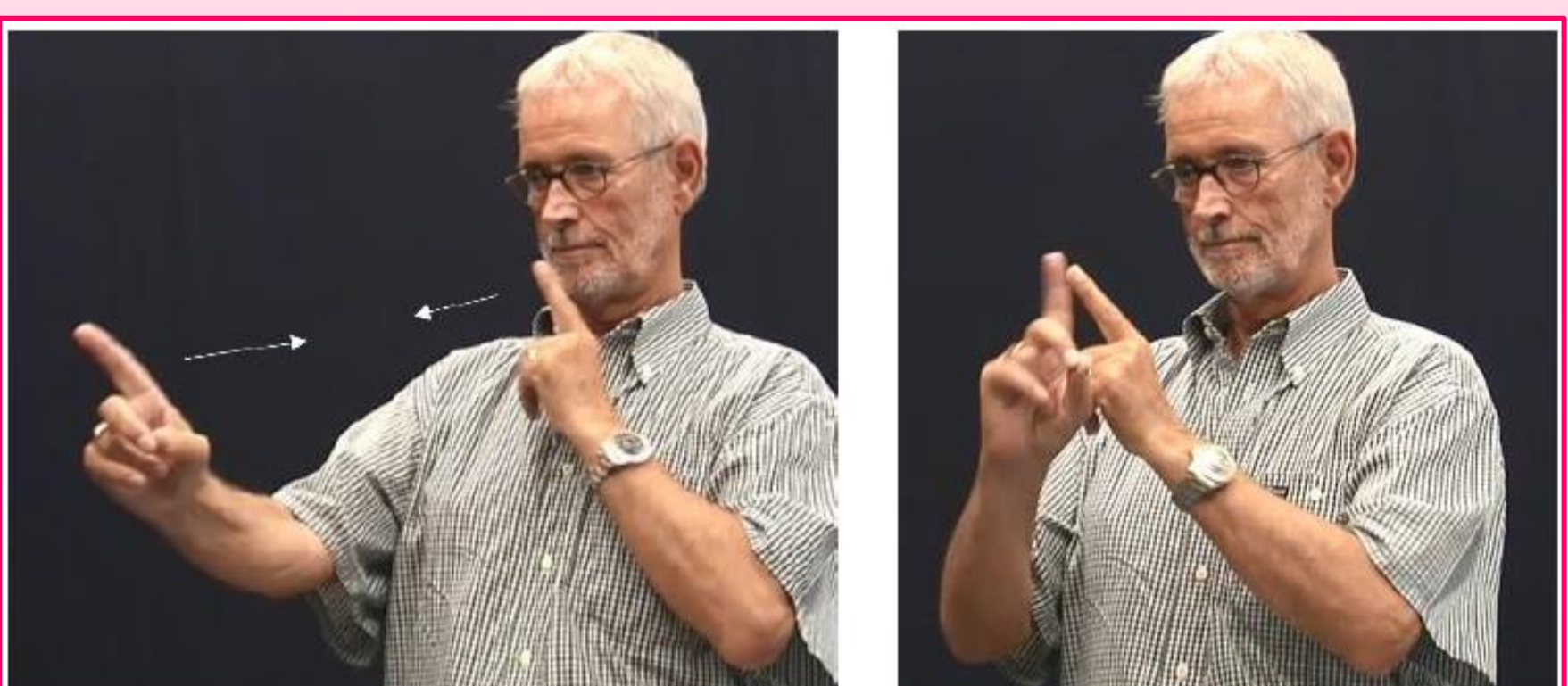
(1a)

GIVE.RECIPROCAL(simultaneous)



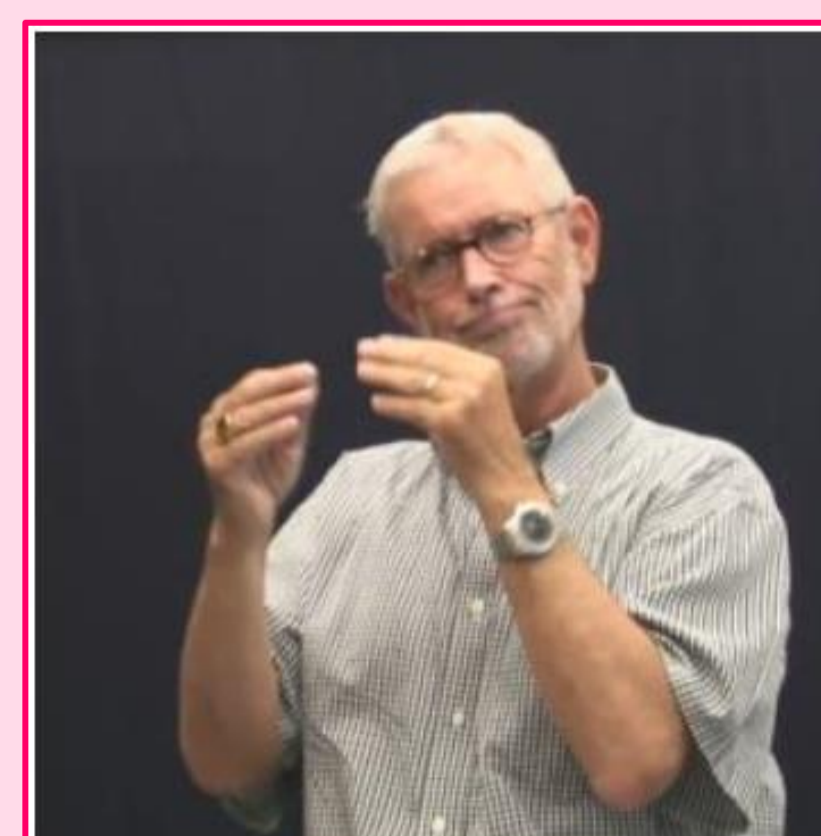
(1b)

GIVE.RECIPROCAL(sequential)



(2a)

MEET[CNGT0095:01:09]



(2b)

TALK-TO-EACH-OTHER[CNGT0094:02:15]

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