

Greetings from the festival – how listing is used in a signed postcard

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This study looks the information structure of a video message a native sign language user has sent to her local sign language community's Facebook group. This is a so called single-case analysis. The signer is attending a culture festival abroad and posted the message which is like a postcard we send from holidays: 'hi', where am I, how is it here, what have I done here, what has been the best so far, 'bye' (Östman, 2004). The message is short, like postcards tend to be, and it is signed without long preparations before putting the camera on, background being what it is, and other people are hanging around. The structure is, using a written language comparison, built up with kind of bullet points and with specific, cohesion creating words and expressions.

How does the signer create a coherent message to the community from this festival? There are several lists in that short message – the signer mentions different types of program and debate topics – and they are marked with various surface mechanisms, signs and gestural elements that create cohesion that exploit the morphosyntactic system around the signer (Barberá Altimira, 2012; Liddell, 2003; Morgan, 2000; Siltaloppi, forthcoming; Siltaloppi, 2018). The different methods in the video are (1) signing the listed item (item being an action, program number, or place) and simultaneously making an upper body movement forward, back, or sideways to express the needed reference place, (2) giving the items a reference place on the fingers of the other hand – this signer is right handed and uses the fingers of the left hand as a reference place for the listed items (again, actions, program numbers, places), and (3) signing a listed item and then either PLUS or ALSO before an another item to make these listed two items belong to a same list.

In this study it is shown that these listing methods in the video postcard can, in the terms of Construction Grammar, be called a LIST CONSTRUCTION, and that the different physical realizations of this construction could be interchangeable in those listing events. The LIST CONSTRUCTION is not just something you do with your hands. Rather, it is a combination of various actions of the signer's hands and body and it is a pairing of form and meaning that is similarly understood both by the signer and the viewer. In this short video message, the LIST CONSTRUCTION is realized in three different ways. This poses a question of the role of "form" in "form-meaning pairings" in constructions in general.

This video is signed in Finland-Swedish Sign Language (FinSSL), an endangered sign language with approximately 90 native deaf users in Finland (Andersson-Koski, 2015). The video is one-minute long and filmed with the signer's own mobile phone.

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