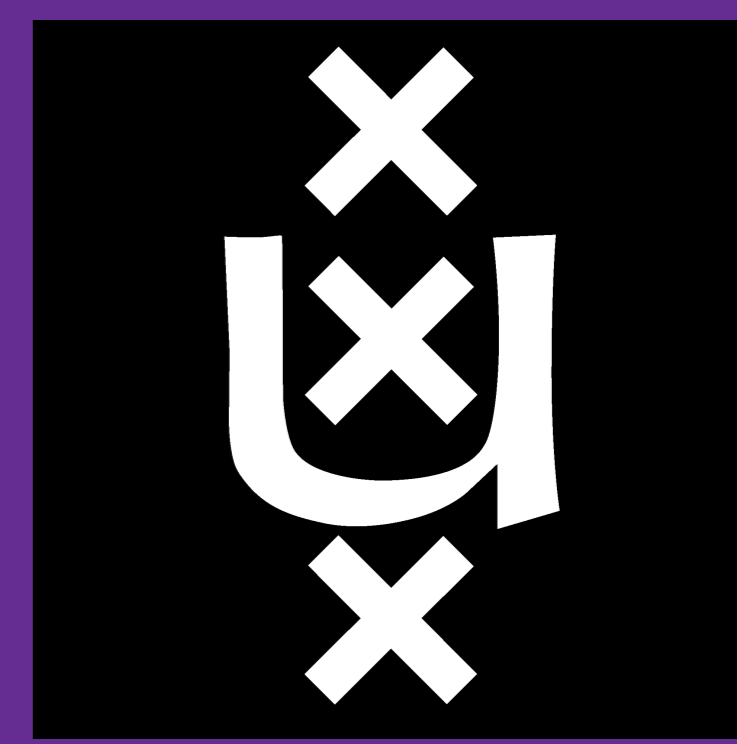


# Role shift non-manuals in NGT do not signal context shift but rather contrast between perspectives

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## What this work is about

Novel corpus findings in the Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT) show that the function of RS-NMMs might be distinct from that of context shift, suggesting an analysis in terms of perspective shift.

## Role shift in sign languages

**Role shift (RS)** is a construction commonly used in sign languages to **report utterances or thoughts** from an agent's perspective (the attitude holder).

It is signaled by non-manual markers (RS-NMMs): **eye gaze shift, body leans, and head turns** (Figure 1).

Indexicals can 'shift' under role shift: in the scope of an attitude verb, context-dependent expressions such as *IX-1*, *IX-2* and *HERE* obtain their reference from the reported context, being 'shifted away' from the context of utterance (Friedman 1975, Meier 1990).

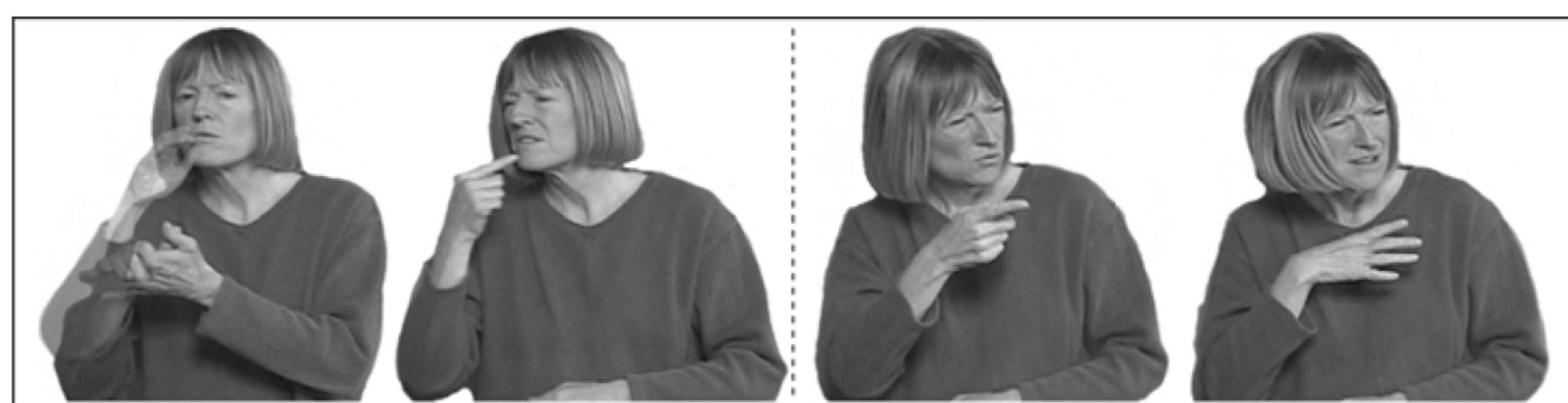


Figure 1: RS NMMs: eye gaze shift, body lean, head turn in American Sign Language (from Lillo-Martin (2012): 369.)

## Role shift as context shift?

Due to its likeness to quotation in spoken languages, RS has come to be identified as context shift (Lillo-Martin 1995, Quer 2005, Herrmann and Steinbach 2012, Schlenker 2017). This implies that **every indexical within the scope of a RS-NMM** is expected to shift.

Conversely, this implies that shifted readings of indexicals require the presence of RS-NMMs.

However, previous studies on Russian Sign Language (Kimmelman and Khristoforova, 2018) and Hong-Kong Sign Language (Gan, 2021) have shown that this is too strong a claim, providing data of shifted indexicals without the corresponding RS-NMMs.

## Methodology

Corpus NGT (Crasborn and Zwitserlood, 2008)

Search for a gloss SAY (ZEGGEN in Dutch glosses) co-occurring with pronominal pointing signs (i.e., *IX-1*, *IX-2* and *IX-3* for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>d</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup>-person pronouns) within a 5-gloss window.

Quotes were annotated in ELAN for the interpretation of IXs, RS-NMMs and their scope.

## Results

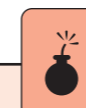
- 48 quotations
- 15 quotes featured indexical shift, involving at least one RS-NMM.

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## Results

- 4 quotes featuring a shifted readings of the indexical *IX-2* **without** RS-NMMs, as in (1) - (2)
- 8 examples in which the signer reports her own utterance using RS-NMMs, hence producing 'role shift without shifting', (3).



In NGT, some reports can involve **shifted readings of *IX-2* without RS-NMMs** (1)-(2), as well as **unshifted readings of *IX-1* with RS-NMMs**, (3).

- (1)  $IX-1$  SAY  $IX-2$  <sup>negation</sup> NICE  $IX-2$   
'I said: "You are not nice!"' [CNGT0092, 00:01:26.455 - 00:01:26.973]
- (2) PARENTS  $IX-3B$  SAY  $3b$ ACT-ON<sub>1</sub>  $IX-2$  SIGNING <sup>negation</sup> GOOD  $IX-2$  SIGNING  $IX-2$   
 $3b$ ACT-ON<sub>1</sub>  
'Parent told me: "Your signing is not good!"'  
[CNGT0224, 00:02:24.190 - 00:02:27.770]
- (3) { $IX-1$ } NEVER SAY <sup>gaze up</sup>  $IX-1$  DISABLED NEVER SAY  
'I never said: "I am disabled!"' [CNGT0006, 00:03:21.667 - 00:03:24.568]

	$IX-3[rs\ IX-1]$	$IX-n[rs\ IX-2]$	$IX-1[rs\ IX-1]$
RS-NMMs	✓	✗	✓
Shift	✓	✓	✗

Table 1: Co-variation of shifted readings for indexicals and presence of RS-NMMs in the NGT corpus

## Discussion

Analyzing RS-NMMs as overt realizations of POV operator (Lillo-Martin 1995, Quer 2005) or a context-shifting operator (Schlenker, 2017) seems too strong: both would fail to predict the patterns in (1)-(3), in which (un)shifting is dissociated from the presence/absence of RS-NMMs.

What seems to be of relevance here is some notion of *perspective*: RS-NMMs triggers a *perspective shift* from the actual speaker to a reported one (Harris, 2021).

When the perspectival agent does not change, as in (1) - (2), no RS-NMMs are licensed; However, RS-NMMs appear when the perspectival agent reports something about his past self, as in (3).

## Open issues

The data suggest that perspective under role-shift is 'anchored' to a specific discourse center (Roberts, 2020), the agent, and that the value of other indexicals such as *IX-2* is computed against this center.

This is unpredicted by standard semantic analyses stemming from Kaplan 1989, which formalize contexts as a tuple of parameters  $\langle s, a, w, t, l \rangle$ . specifying a speaker, an addressee, a world, a time and (possibly) a location of utterance.