

Then, Now and Beyond: **The Use of Self-enactments in Layered Stance-taking in Flemish Sign Language**

Fien Andries

KU Leuven, Belgium

Fien.andries@kuleuven.be

Enactment in signed interactions

- **Enactment (or CA/CD)**: "signer uses his or her **body** (the head, face, arms and torso) to represent the **thoughts, feelings or actions of a referent** using the surrounding space on a **real world scale**" (Cormier, Smith & Sevcikova, 2013)



Enactment in signed interactions

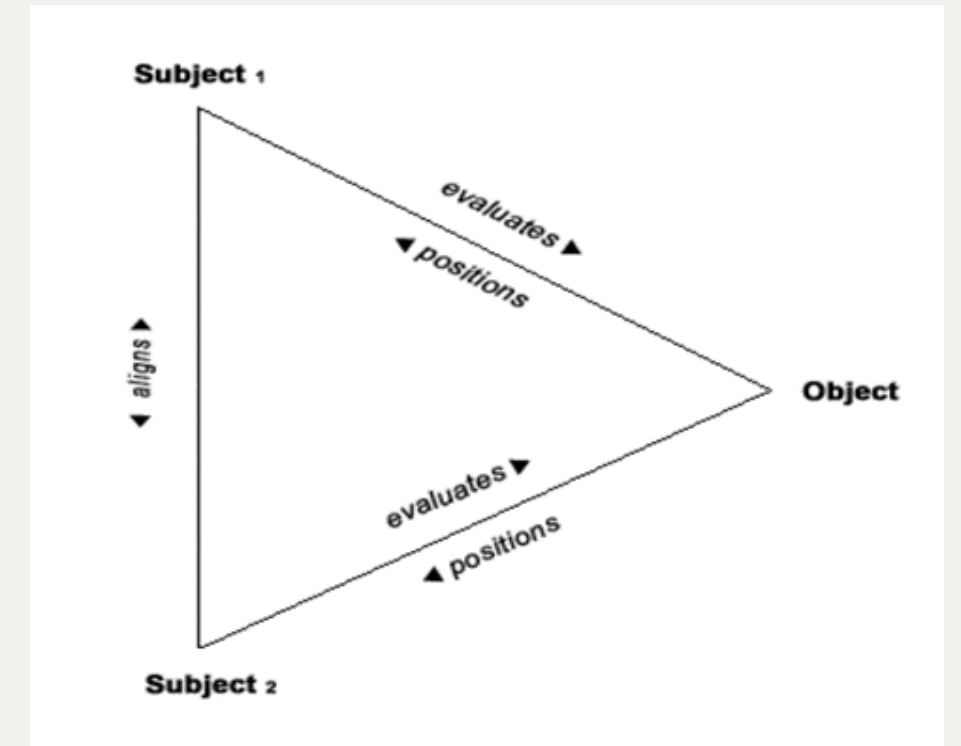
- **Enactment (or CA/CD):** "signer uses his or her **body** (the head, face, arms and torso) to represent the **thoughts, feelings or actions of a referent** using the surrounding space on a **real world scale**" (Cormier, Smith & Sevcikova, 2013)
- Viewpoints and roles can alternate quickly
- Possible to combine viewpoints, including or excluding the narrator
 - E.g. through body partitioning (Dudis, 2004)

Enactment in signed interactions



Enactment & stance

- Suitable for **stance expression**
 - Public act, achieved dialogically in interaction
 - Stance subject evaluates stance object
 - Evaluating, positioning and aligning (Du Bois, 2007, p.163)
 - Epistemic, deontic, affective



Enactment & stance

- Stance stacking: “In some cases, multiple stances can be produced (or rejected) at once: a “stacked stance” (Dancygier, 2012)
 - When signers express a stance during enactment
 - Cluster of multiple stance expressions
 - From different viewpoints (different stance subjects)
- The narrator’s stance(s)
- Character’s stance
- Combination of the two

Polyphony and enactment

→ Polyphonic enactments

- Letting multiple 'voices' speak
- An interactant "reports (linguistic) actions to (simultaneously) contextualize a stance towards the reported speech as well as towards the quoted characters" (Günthner 1999, p. 704)
- "The representation of (linguistic) actions" and, on the other hand, "commentaries about these actions" (Besnier 1993, p. 161)

Self-enactments

- Self-enactments:
 - Layered and/or polyphonic
 - What did I do/feel/say/think?
 - How do I look back at that? How do I (re)shape that?



→ How do signers use self-enactments to portray how they felt in past events and simultaneously express how they feel about these events at time of the interaction?

Expression of affective & epistemic change of state

- E.g. learning about some news, finding out about a certain event...
- Multimodal markers:
 - Surprise/shock:
 - Widened eyes (Kaukomaa et al., 2015; Schröder, 2020)
 - Raised brows (Kaukomaa et al., 2015)
 - Frozen body posture (Schröder, 2020)
 - Change of knowledge state:
 - Eyebrow flash (Mondada 2009)
 - Gaze at co-participant (Vranjes et al., 2018)
 - Change of posture (Mondada 2009)

Research questions

Then

1

How do signers use self-enactments to express epistemic and affective changes in the past?

Now

2

What polyphonic strategies do signers use to express stance of the narrator in the here and now?

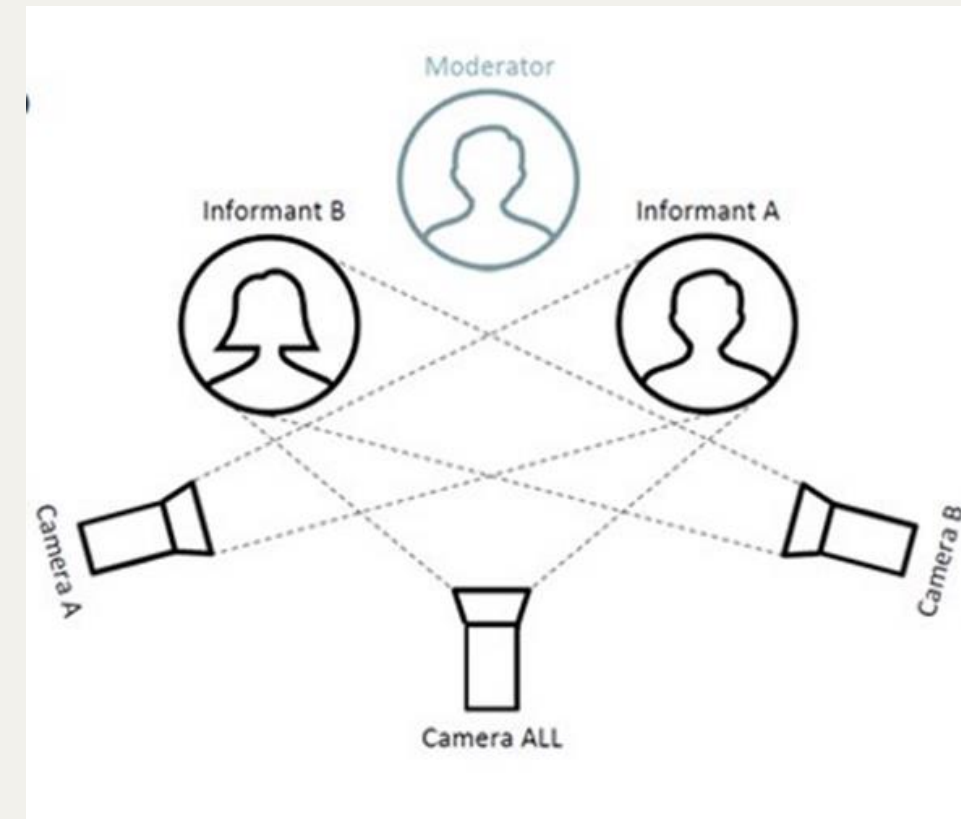
Beyond

3

How do signers report these events with regard to information accessibility?

Dataset

- From the Corpus VGT (Van Herreweghe et al., 2015)
- 5 hours of dyadic conversations
- 34 signers from different regions
- Free conversations (without moderator)
- Guided conversations
 - 'What do you remember about?'
 - 9-11 attacks
 - Death of princess Diana
 - First man on the moon
 - Fall of the Berlin Wall
- Annotated in ELAN (Wittenburg et al., 2006)



Case selection criteria

- Stance related enactments
- Of the signer themselves in a past event
- Sequence with epistemic change
 - E.g. learning about a certain event

40 sequences



Multimodal close analysis of 20 randomly selected cases

Results: overview

- 40 sequences
 - Including a total of 161 enactments
 - 129 self-enactments
 - 4 cases of doubt
 - left out
- Enactments of
 - Only Signer Past Self (SPS) = 19 cases
 - Other character + SPS = 21 cases
- Number of enactments per sequence
 - Ranging from 1 up to 15 enactments

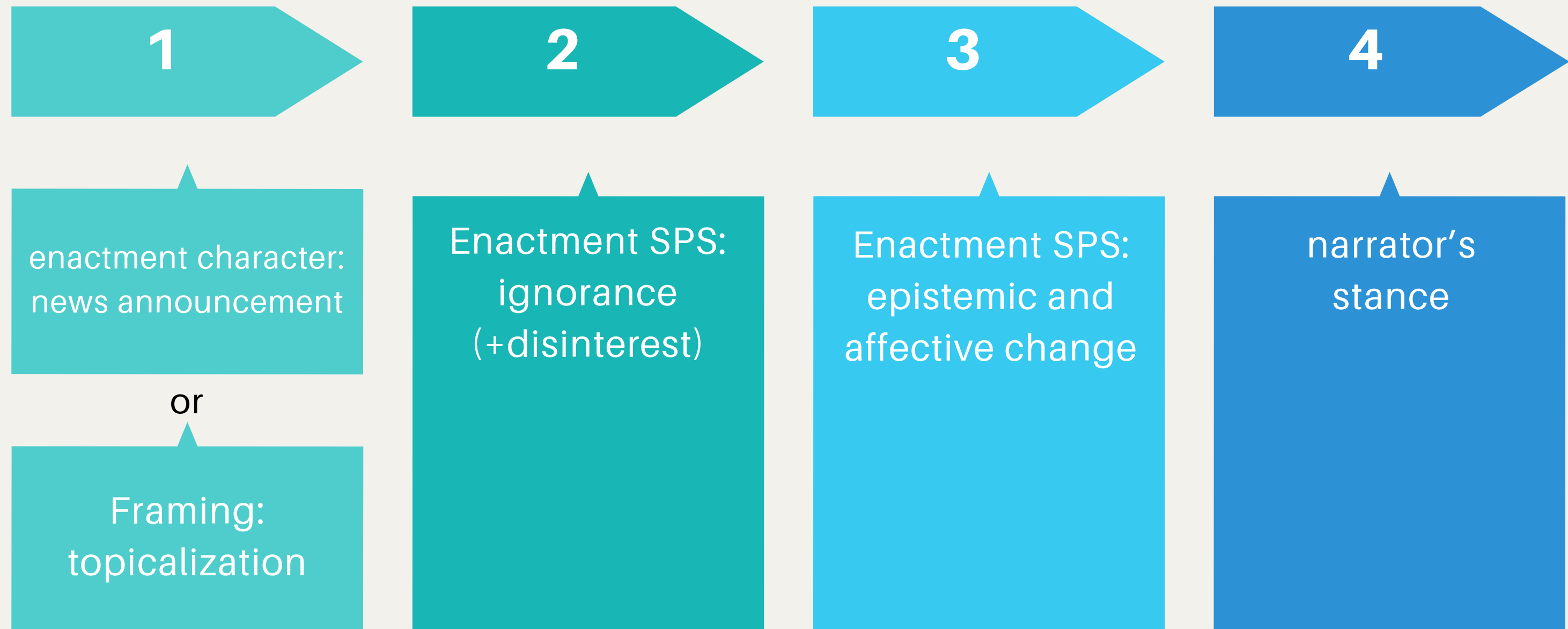
Results

RQ 1: How do signers use self-enactments to express epistemic and affective changes in the past?

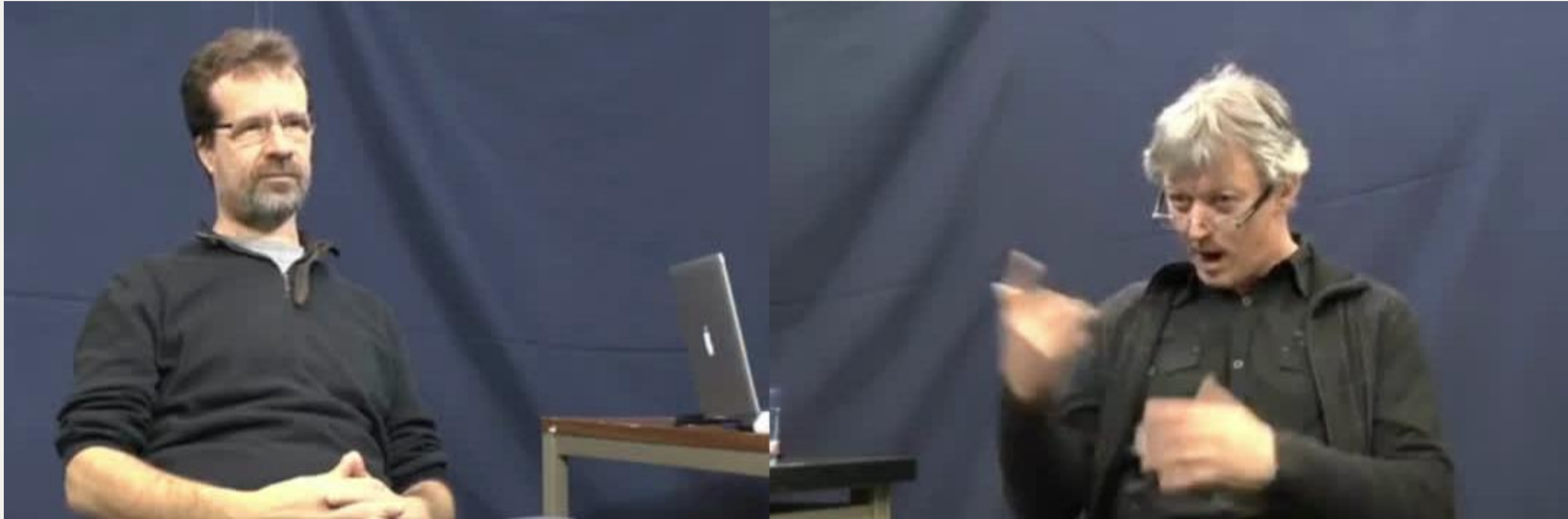
1. Sequential unfolding in interaction

- Sequence of multiple enactments
- Including viewpoint shifts
 - Narration, enactment SPS, (enactment character)
- Narrative build-up with enactments
 - Showing evolution in state of mind
 - Highlighting contrast between different points in time
- Creation of contrasts:
 - Within the past space - development of SPS past stance
 - (Contrast with initially reported stance of other character)

Prototypical sequential unfolding



Prototypical sequential unfolding



enactment character:
news announcement

Enactment SPS:
ignorance
(+disinterest)

Enactment SPS:
epistemic and
affective change

narrator's
stance

Prototypical sequential unfolding



enactment character:
news announcement

Enactment SPS:
ignorance
(+disinterest)

Enactment SPS:
epistemic and
affective change

narrator's
stance

Prototypical sequential unfolding



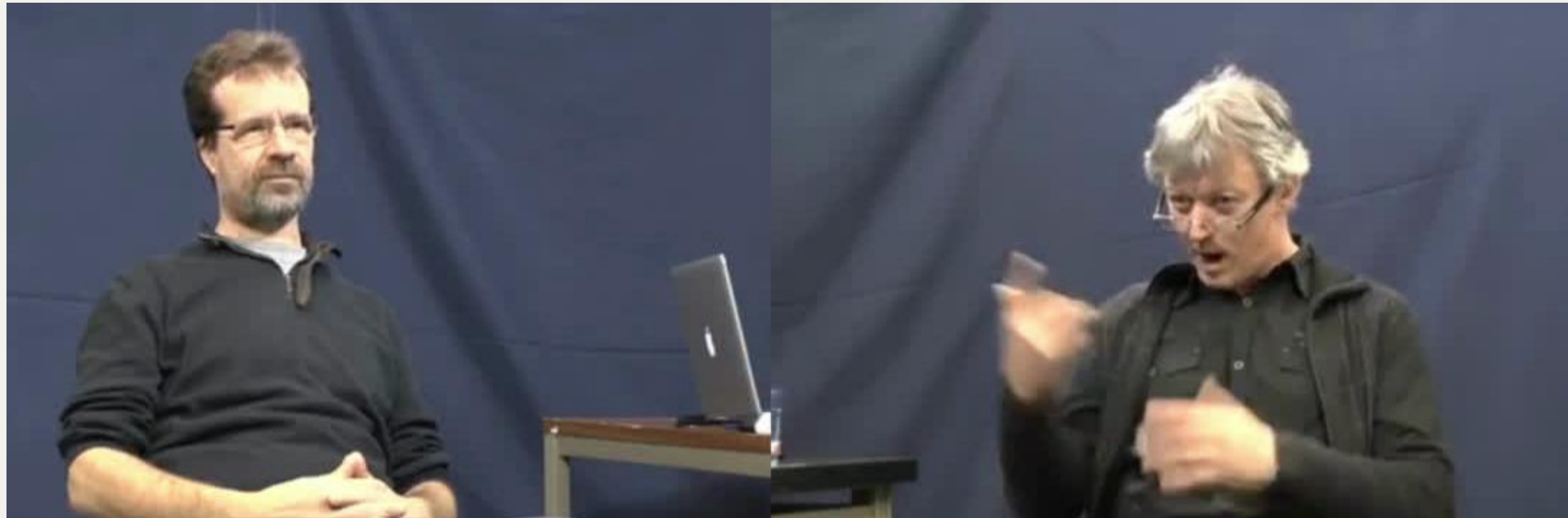
enactment character:
news announcement

Enactment SPS:
ignorance
(+disinterest)

Enactment SPS:
epistemic and
affective change

narrator's
stance

Prototypical sequential unfolding



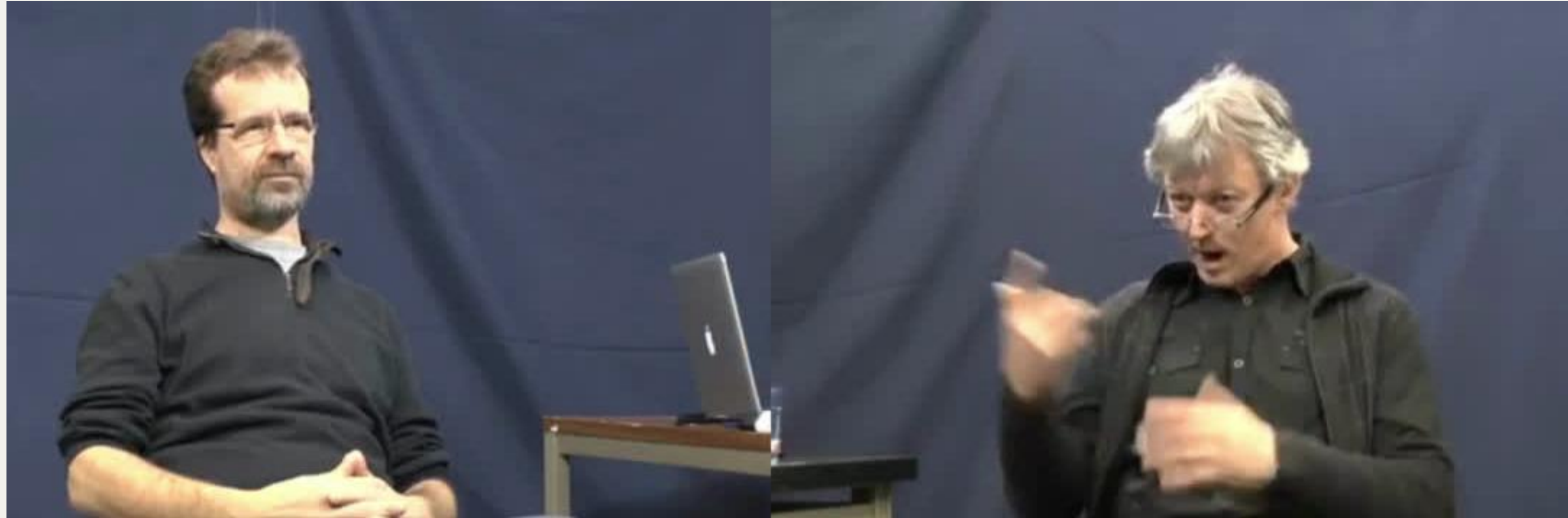
enactment character:
news announcement

Enactment SPS:
ignorance
(+disinterest)

Enactment SPS:
epistemic and
affective change

narrator's
stance

Prototypical sequential unfolding



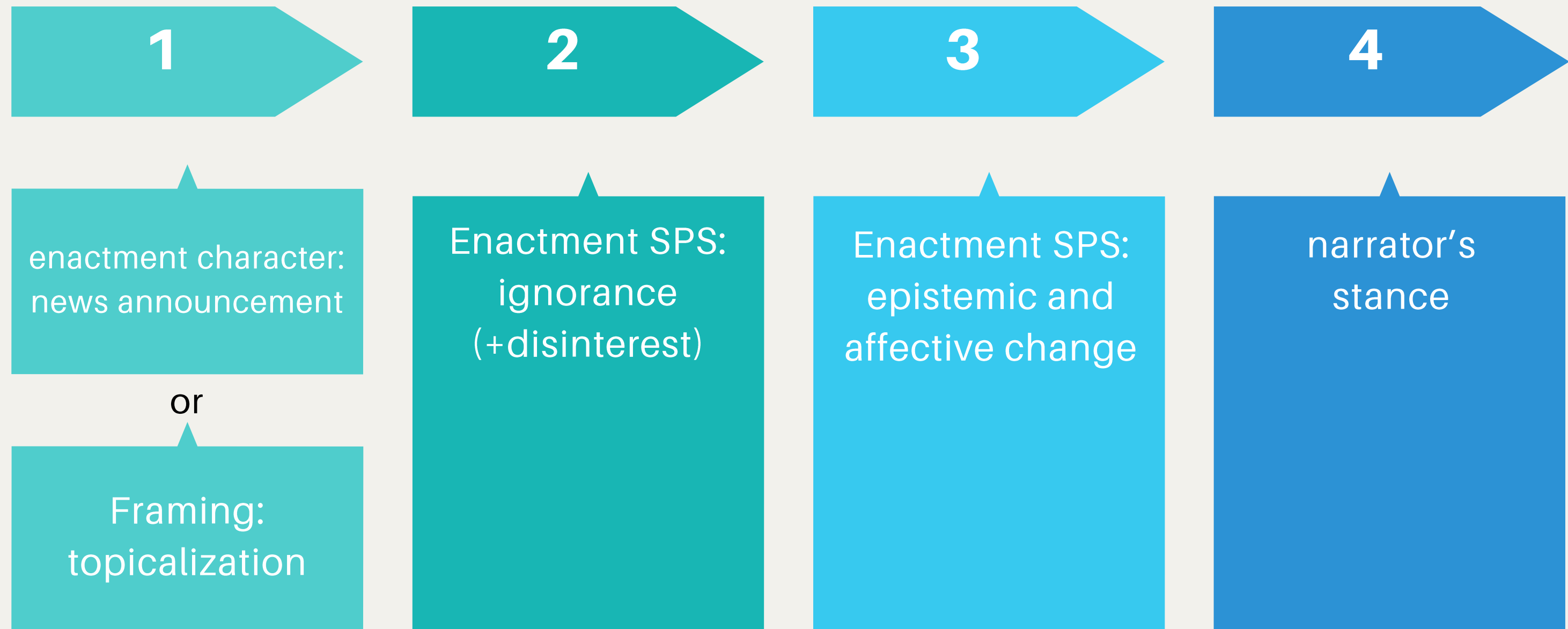
enactment character:
news announcement

Enactment SPS:
ignorance
(+disinterest)

Enactment SPS:
epistemic and
affective change

narrator's
stance

Prototypical sequential unfolding



Results

RQ 1: How do signers use self-enactments to express epistemic and affective changes in the past?

2. Multimodal markers used in enactments

2

Enactment SPS:
ignorance
(+disinterest)

- Frowned eyebrows
- Mouth shrug
- Head tilt
- PU gesture
- Throw Away gesture (Bressemer & Müller, 2014)
- Shrug



Results

RQ 1: How do signers use self-enactments to express epistemic and affective changes in the past?

2. Multimodal markers used in enactments

3

Enactment SPS:
epistemic and
affective change

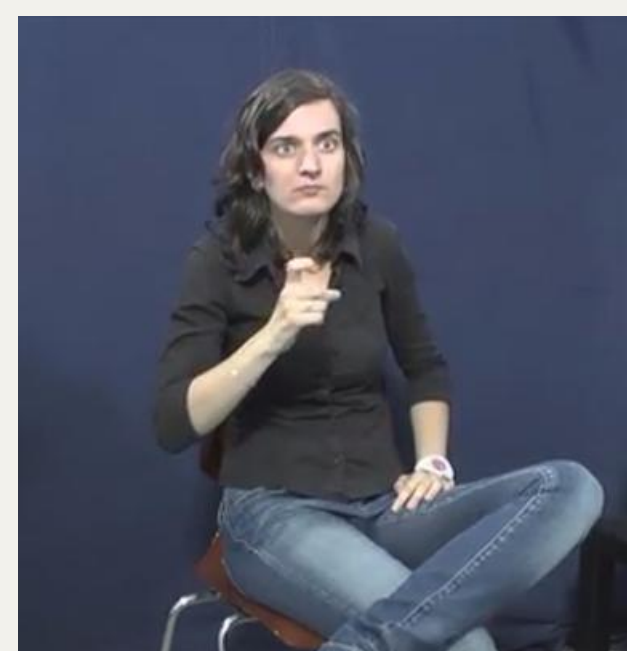
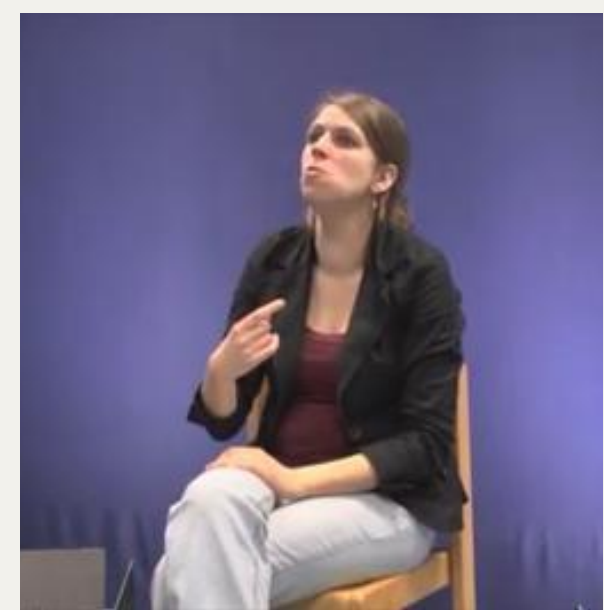
Suprise/shock

- Eyebrow flash/raised eyebrows
- Frown
- Eyes wide opened
- Open mouth/pouted lips
- Head moving forward
- Torso moving forward
- Pu gesture
- Fast signing pace



Results

RQ 1: How do signers use self-enactments to express epistemic and affective changes in the past?



Results

RQ 2: What polyphonic strategies do signers use to express stance of the narrator in the here and now?

- Narrative strategies
 - Sequential unfolding: building up tension in the storytelling, highlighting and staging certain past emotions
 - Design of enactments of other character & SPS: staging of emotional development with multimodal gestalts

Results

RQ 2: What polyphonic strategies do signers use to express stance of the narrator in the here and now?

- Combining narrator's viewpoint with enacted viewpoint
 - Body partitioning
 - Lexical and manual gestural elements adding narrator's viewpoint
 - Eye gaze towards the interlocutor at end of the enactment
 - Elaborations
 - Adding the narrator's stance after the enactment

→ Layering

- a. Stances: Epistemic + affective stance (in the past space)
- b. Viewpoints: affective stance in past and in the present

Results

RQ 3: How do signers report these events with regard to information accessibility?

- Signers include their experiences and feelings about information accessibility
 - In 8 out of 20 cases
- Enactments of coworkers, classmates or other third parties talking about the event
- Enactment of signer in the past not getting accessible information
 - frustration
 - confusion
 - stress
 - disinterest
 - resignation

Results

RQ 3: How do signers report these events with regard to information accessibility?



Results

RQ 3: How do signers report these events with regard to information accessibility?



Results

RQ 3: How do signers report these events with regard to information accessibility?

- Staging of low accessibility in moments of crisis communication
- Common ground between participants
 - Not elaborated on
- Enactments used to highlight stances beyond the borders of interaction
 - Addressing societal issues
 - Give shape to recurrent personal experiences with this inaccessibility

Summary & conclusion

- Sequences of self-enactment highlight a variety of functions of enactments within a short time frame
 1. Expressing stances in the past:
 - Narrative build up
 - Multimodal gestalts
 2. Expressing polyphonic stances:
 - Narrative build up
 - Staging of emotions
 - Adding narrator's stance (simultaneously or sequentially)
 3. Addressing broader social/societal dynamics:
 - Staging of low accessibility in moments of crisis communication

Summary & conclusion

- Relevance of studying enactments in dialogical settings
- Expressing emotions from different viewpoints
- Dialogic nature of stance and enactment
 - Alignment and co-enactments (Andries, forthcoming)

Disclaimer: Influence of theme of the guided conversations in dataset

References

- Besnier, N. (1993). Reported speech and affect on Nukulaelae Atoll. *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*, 161–181.
- Bressem, J., & Müller, C. (2014). 120. The family of Away gestures: Negation, refusal, and negative assessment. In 120. The family of Away gestures: Negation, refusal, and negative assessment (pp. 1592–1604). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110302028.1592>
- Cormier, K., Smith, S., & Zwets, M. (2013). Framing constructed action in British Sign Language narratives. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 55, 119–139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.06.002>
- Dancygier, B. (2012). Negation, stance verbs, and intersubjectivity. In B. Dancygier & E. Sweetser (Eds.), *Viewpoint in Language: A Multimodal Perspective* (pp. 69–93). Cambridge University Press.
- Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The Stance Triangle. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (pp. 139–182). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Dudis, P. (2004). Body partitioning and real-space blends. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 15, 223–238. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cogl.2004.009>
- Ferrara, L., & Halvorsen, R. P. (2017). Depicting and describing meanings with iconic signs in Norwegian Sign Language. *Gesture*, 16(3), 371–395. <https://doi.org/10.1075/gest.00001.fer>
- Günthner, S. (1999). Polyphony and the ‘layering of voices’ in reported dialogues: An analysis of the use of prosodic devices in everyday reported speech. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31(5), 685–708. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)00093-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00093-9)

References

- Janzen, T. (2019). Shared spaces, shared mind: Connecting past and present viewpoints in American Sign Language narratives. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 30(2), 253–279. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cog-2018-0045>
- Kaukomaa, T., Peräkylä, A., & Ruusuvuori, J. (2015). How Listeners Use Facial Expression to Shift the Emotional Stance of the Speaker's Utterance. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 48(3), 319–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2015.1058607>
- Mondada, L. (2009). The Embodied and Negotiated Production of Assessments in Instructed Actions. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 42(4), 329–361. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351810903296473>
- Schröder, U. (2020). Zwischen den Welten: Zur kognitiven und kommunikativen Ko-Konstruktion von Alteritätserfahrung. *Linguistik Online*, 104(4), 137–165. <https://doi.org/10.13092/lo.104.7321>
- Van Herreweghe, M., Vermeerbergen, M., Demey, E., De Durpel, H., Nyffels, H., & Verstraete, S. (2015). Het Corpus VGT. Een digitaal open access corpus van videos and annotaties van Vlaamse Gebarentaal, ontwikkeld aan de Universiteit Gent ism KU Leuven. <www.corpusvgt.be>. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-6973686>
- Vranjes, J., Brône, G., & Feyaerts, K. (2018). Dual feedback in interpreter-mediated interactions: On the role of gaze in the production of listener responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 134, 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.06.002>
- Wittenburg, P., Brugman, H., Russel, A., Klassmann, A., & Sloetjes, H. (2006). ELAN: a professional framework for multimodality research. *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2006)*, 1556–1559.

Thank you!

Questions, remarks, suggestions?



fien.andries@kuleuven.be

Special thanks to Myriam Vermeerbergen and Geert Brône
& the organizers of the workshop!

Expression of affective & epistemic change of state

- E.g. learning about some news, finding out about a certain event...)
- Storytelling & narration
 - Phases of narrative build-up and tension
 - More enactments around story climax (Niemelä, 2010)



Prototypical sequential unfolding

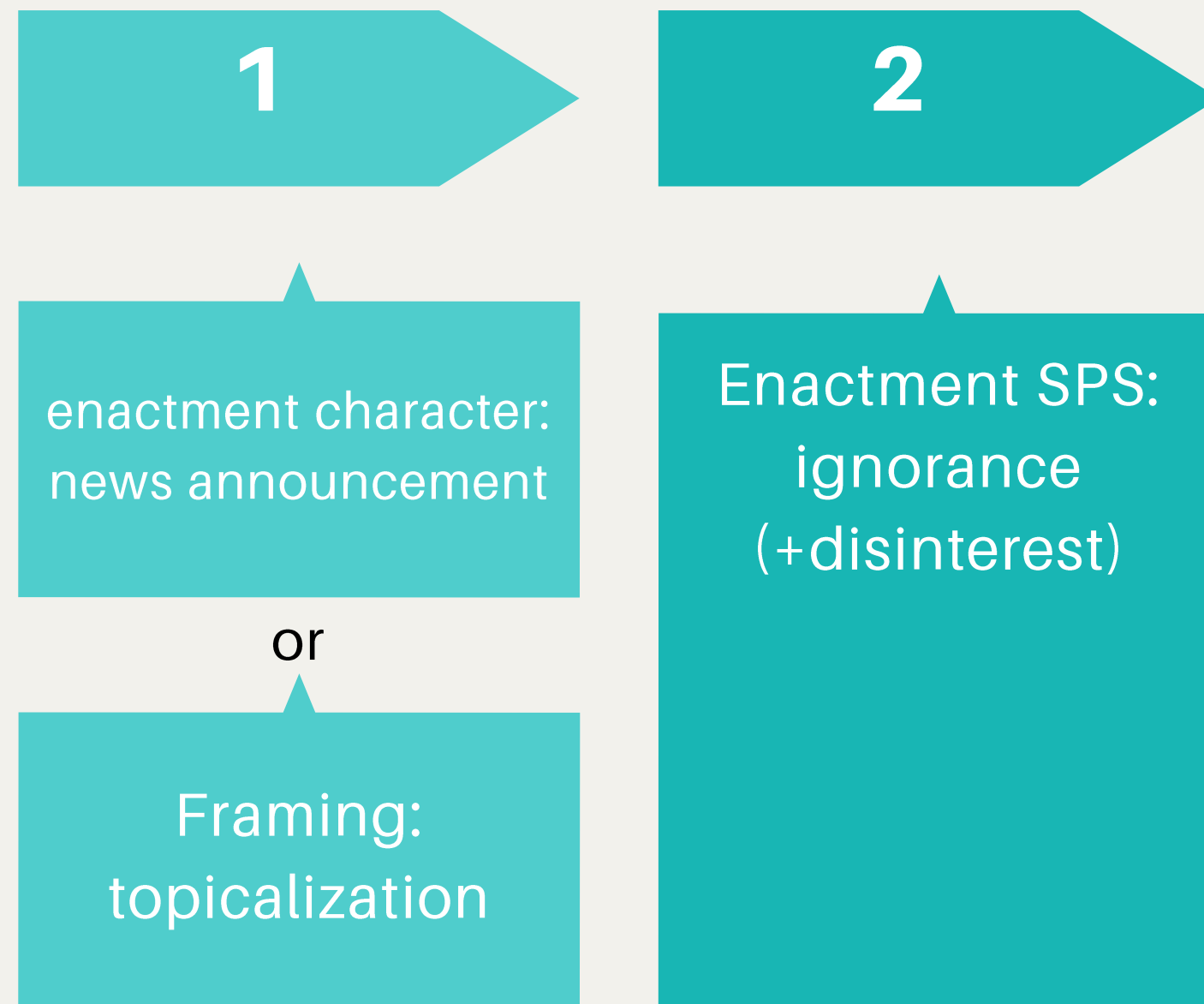
1

enactment character:
news announcement

or

Framing:
topicalization

Prototypical sequential unfolding



Prototypical sequential unfolding

