

## **Interpreting emotional state from facial expressions in adult signers**

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Emotion is inextricably linked to cognition, and the ability to recognize emotional states is therefore an important factor in being able to make predictions about the behavior of interlocutors. While many cues are available to help infer the emotional states of others, one cue that has been the focus of most research is facial expression. The face also conveys a wide range of other cues and can be used, with varying degrees of success, to infer biological traits (e.g. biological sex), intentionality (e.g. sarcasm), and physiological states (e.g. anxiety). In the case of sign language users, the matter is further complicated by the ways in which such languages use the face linguistically, for example prosodic marking, obligatory non-manuals, and intensity markers. The extent to which the linguistic use of the face overlaps with its role in expressing emotional states presents a challenge to the human brain which must distinguish the function of a specific visual facial input and then interpret that input – linguistically or emotionally. In this presentation I will outline the challenge that the human visual system faces, and discuss some data that may shed light on the ways in which facial expressions are – or are not – reliable cues to emotional state in individuals who use signed languages.