

Introduction

In sign languages, the order of subject (S), object (O) and verb (V) within an unmarked declarative sentence can be influenced by various morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors (Napoli et al. 2017, Pavlič 2016, Kimmelman 2012, Milković et al. 2006):

- Morphosyntactic: verb type, classifier constructions, aspectual marking, verb doubling, heaviness of the object
- Semantic: reversibility and animacy of the arguments, verb meaning, figure-ground principle
- Pragmatic: information structural categories like topic/comment and focus/background

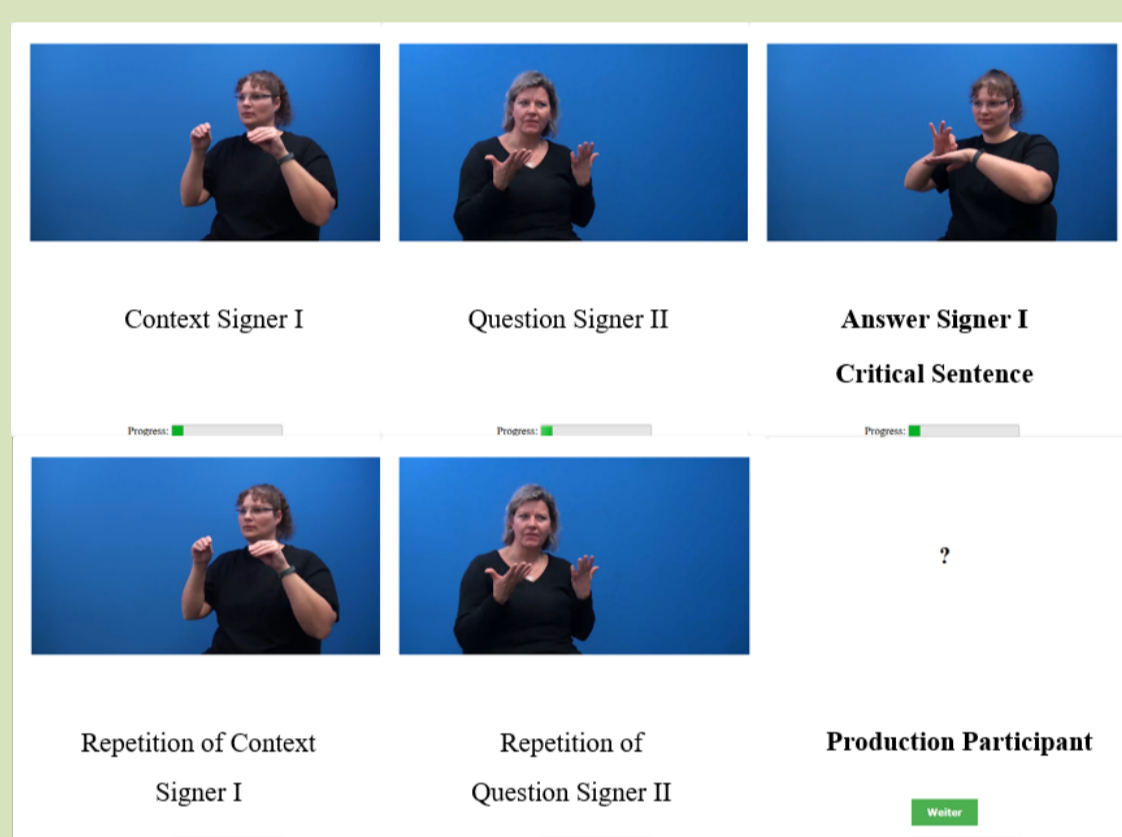
Based on descriptive research, DGS has been described as an argument-configurational language and the basic word order has been identified as SOV (Happ & Vorköper 2006, Rathmann 2003, Glück & Pfau 1998). Factors influencing word order have not been investigated so far.

Research question: Does verb type affect word order in DGS?

Methodology

Sentence Reproduction Task

- Modified SRT (Penzich et al. in prep.)



Conditions

- **Order:** verb-final vs. not verb-final
 - **Verb type:** plain, forward and backward agreement, spatial, handling verbs
- 1) IX_{3a} GIRL_{3a} POSS_{3a} NICE DOLL LOVE
(plain verb, SOV)
 - 2) IX_{3a} GIRL_{3a} LOVE POSS_{3a} NICE DOLL
(plain verb, SVO)
- 'The girl loves her nice doll.'

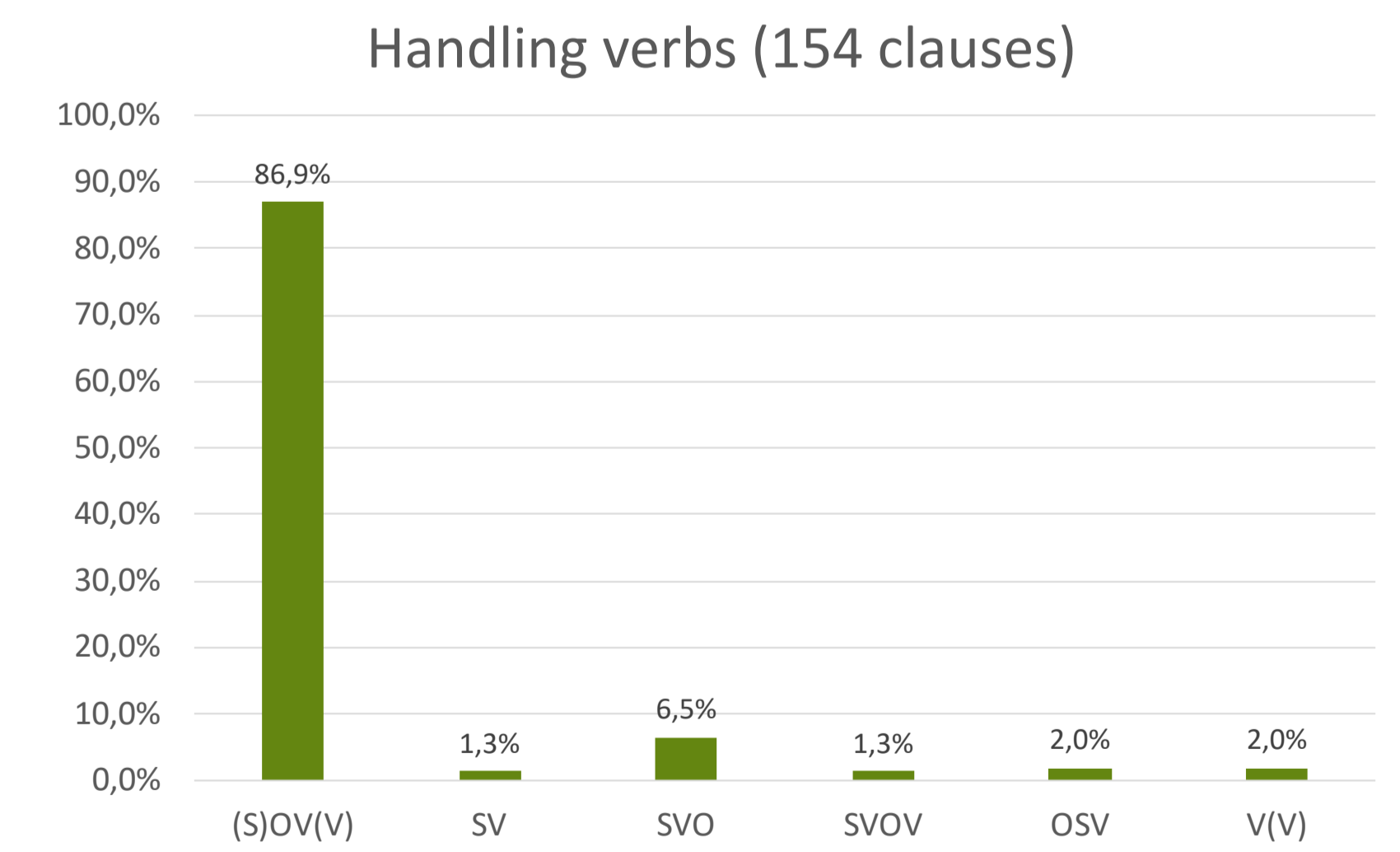
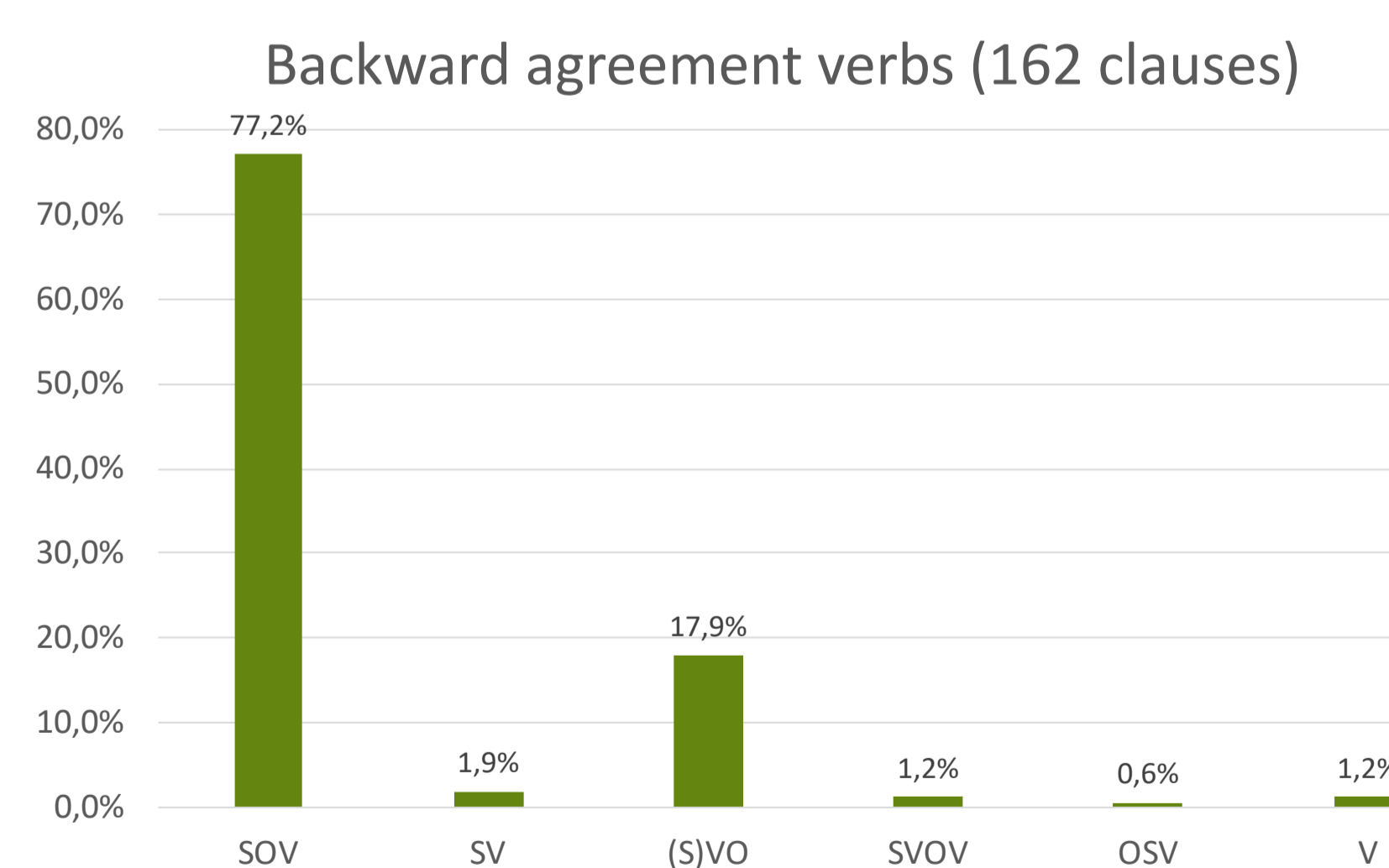
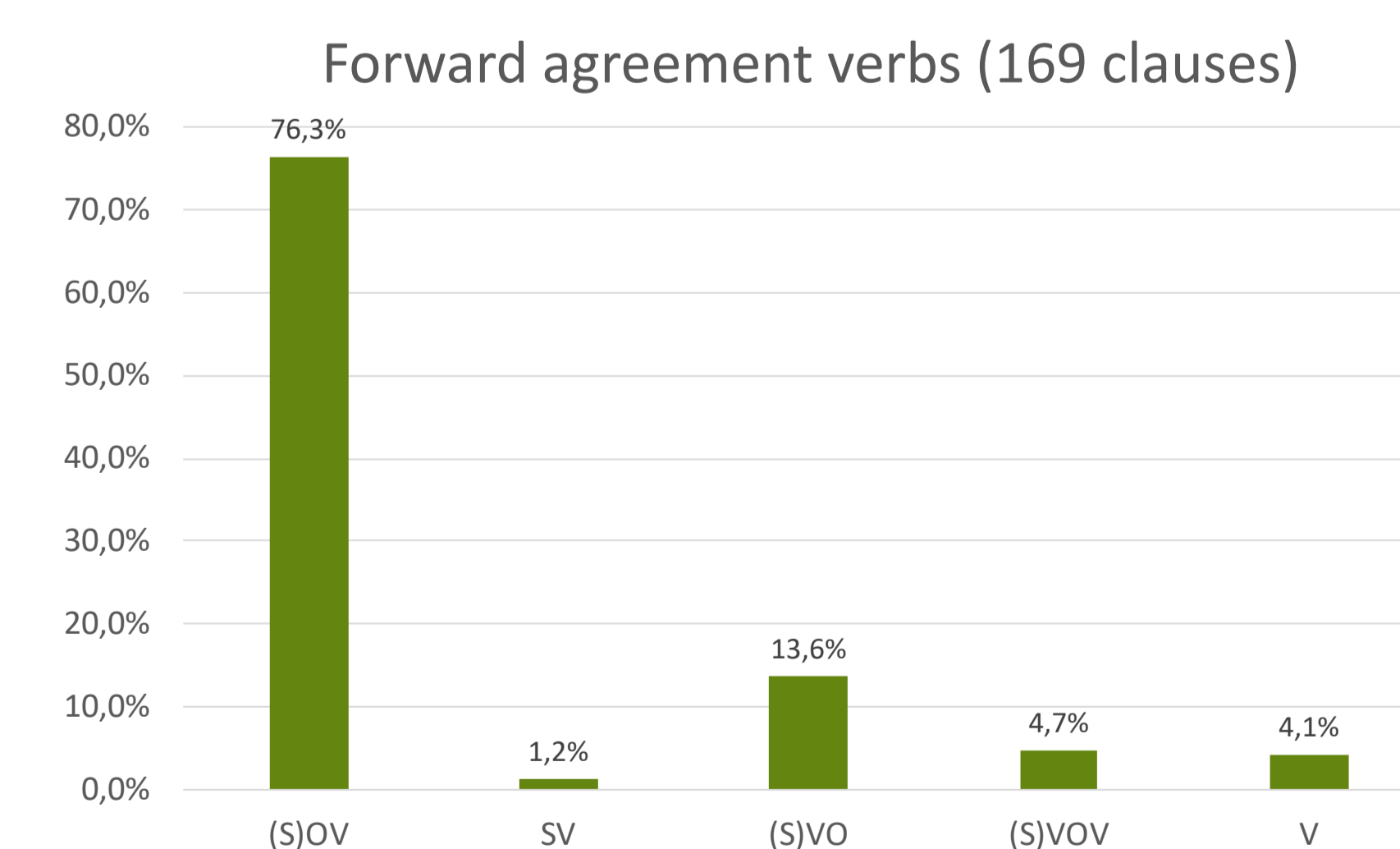
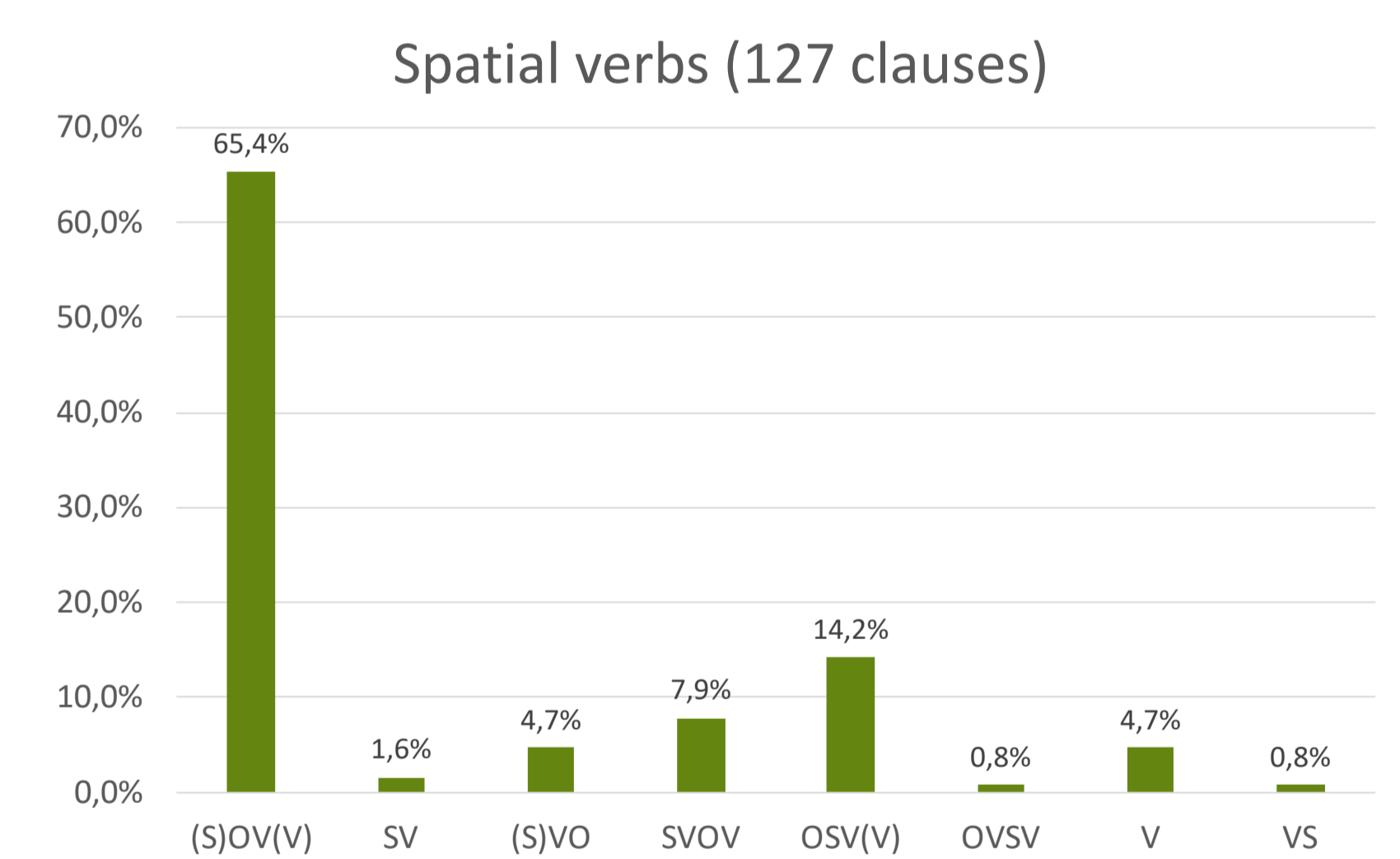
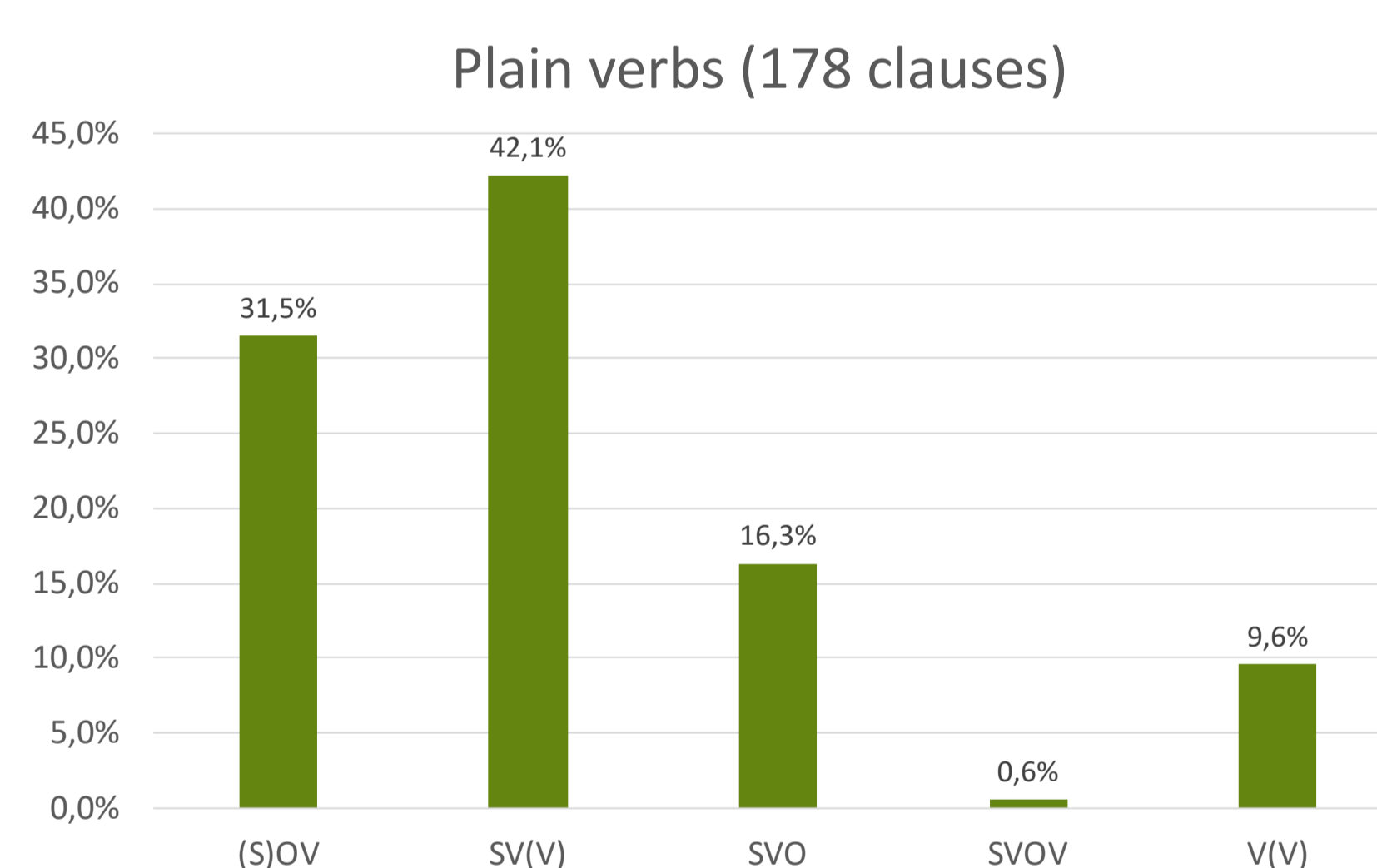
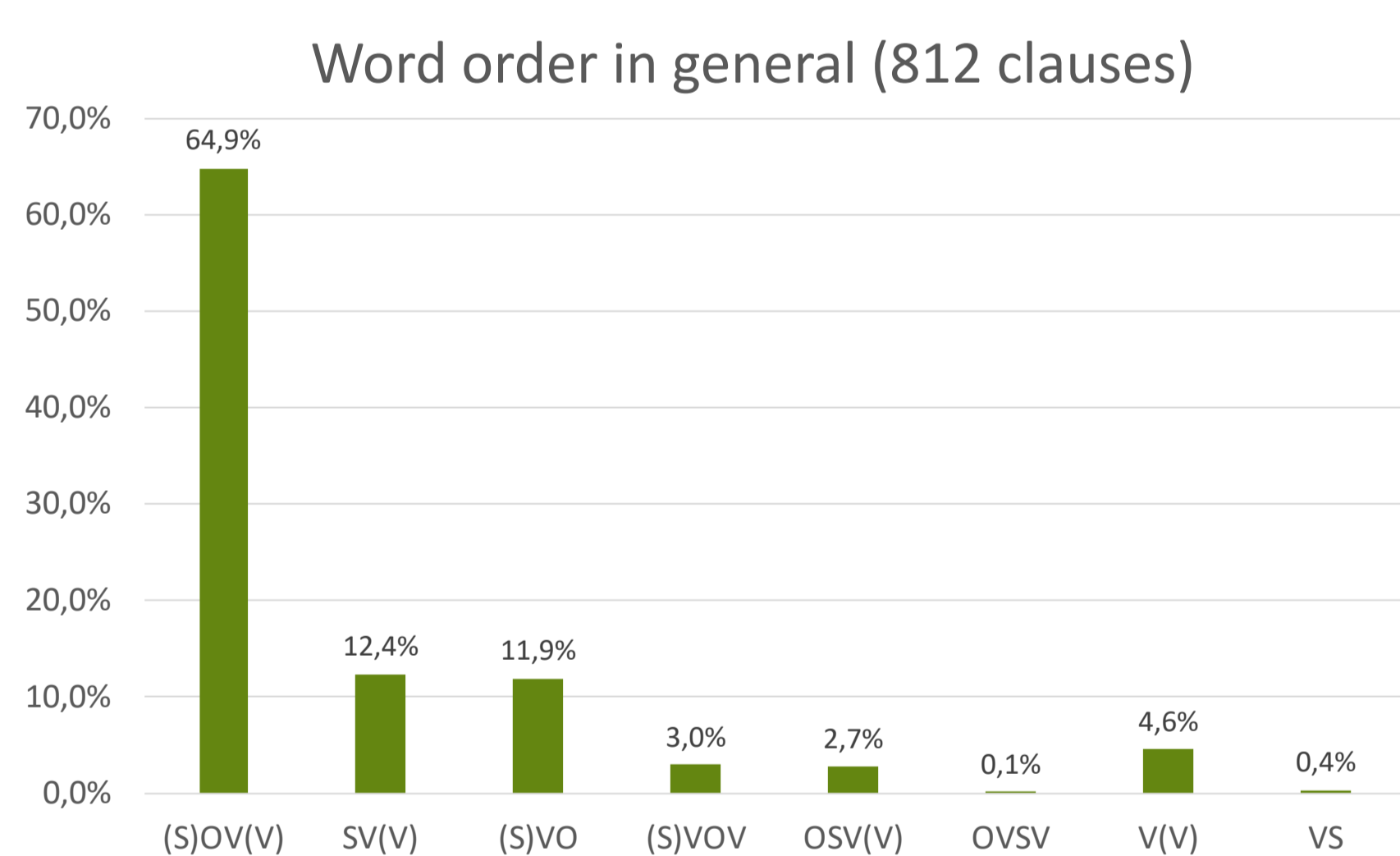
Design

- Programmed questionnaire with OnExp (Onea 2011)
- 80 sentences (N = 2x5x10)
 - 10 Conditions
 - 8 sentences per condition
- 8 filler content questions
- Two pseudorandomized lists

Participants: 22 (13 female, 9 male) native or near-native signers from different regions of Germany (19-48 years, mean: 31.7)

Results

- Produced utterances were divided in clauses
- S: most agent-like argument; O: most patient-like argument; V: predicate



In the majority of cases, subjects are placed pre-verbally. Object position is usually verb-final, but

- Plain verbs allow for OV and VO order. Does animacy of the arguments matter?
- Spatial verbs prefer OV order but OSV order is found as well. Is OSV realized due to different strategies (syntactic or spatial; Kimmelman 2012)? Or is OSV an instance of topic marking (Pavlič 2016)?
- Agreement and handling verbs show a preference for OV order. Are these verbs placed sentence-finally because their phonological shape is affected (Napoli & Sutton-Spence 2014)?

References
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