



# Variation in NGT mouthings

## Code-mixing or not?

Richard Bank

Centre for Language Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen &  
International Max Planck Research School for Language Sciences, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

### Background

In Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT), mouth actions are ubiquitous.

- Mouth gestures: part of the language
- Mouthings: influence from the surrounding spoken language

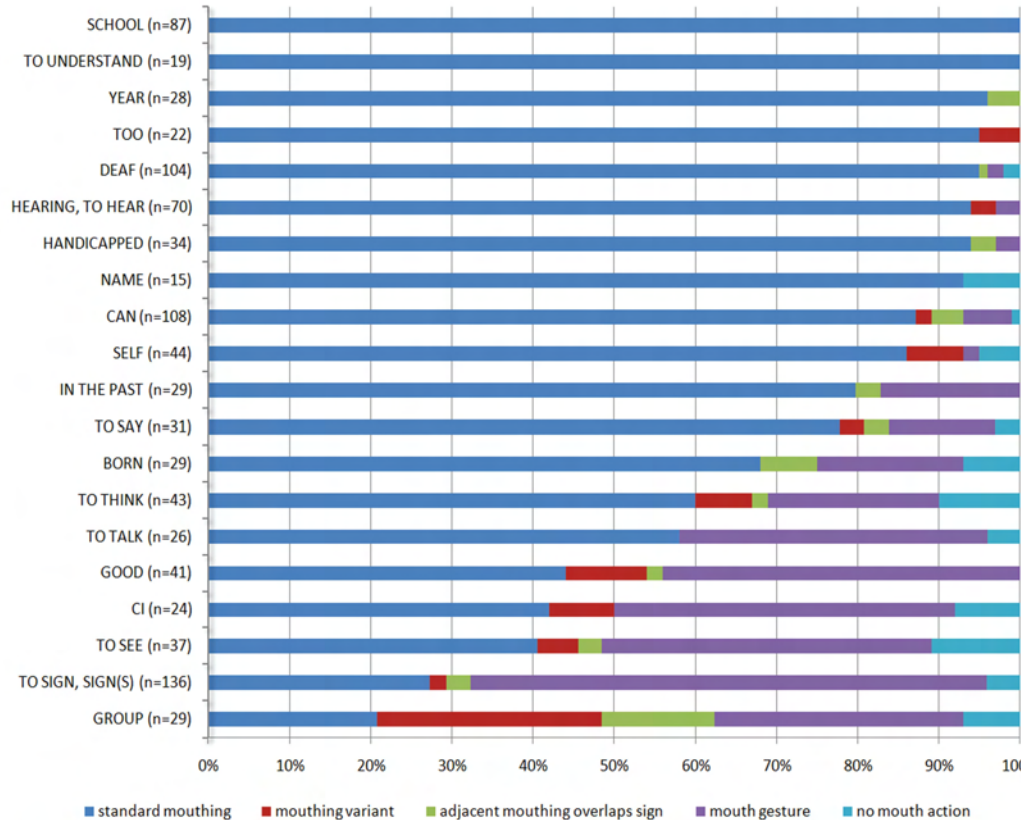
The linguistic status of mouthings remains unclear. The possibility of code-mixing has to be considered.

### Questions

- Is there a specification in the NGT-lexicon for mouthings?
- To what extent can mouthings in NGT considered to be a form of code-mixing with Dutch?

### Hypotheses

Consistency in the combination of mouthing and manual sign suggests lexical specification (as borrowings from the spoken language), whereas variation in mouthings would point to code-mixing by the user (living in a hearing world).



### Results

In general: consistency in use of mouthings

- 40% of signs use the same mouthing for over 92% of its tokens
- 60% of signs use the same mouthing for over 75% of its tokens
- Not much variation in use of Dutch lexical items; the little variation found was usually in same semantic field (e.g. with GROUP: mouthing *group*, variant *class*)
- Wide variety in proportion of mouth gestures

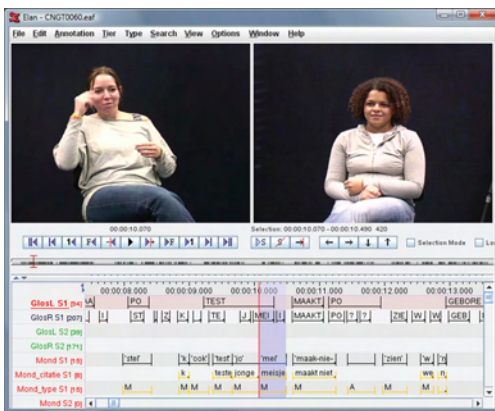
### Examples

gloss	standard mouthing	mouthing variant	mouthing gesture
SCHOOL	school	-	-
IN-THE-PAST	earlier	-	pfff
SIGN	sign	interpreter	pfff
GROUP	group	class	(various)

Note: for the purpose of presenting this poster, English translations of Dutch words and glosses were used.

### The Corpus NGT and its annotation

- 92 signers, 72 hours, 2375 clips
- 20 highly frequent signs in the corpus were selected for mouth annotation, with focus on content signs
- 954 tokens of these 20 types were annotated for mouth actions
- Focus on what is perceived on the mouth (Mouth tier)
- Screenshot (left): Elan annotation software with separate tiers (per signer) for Left & Right Hand, Visible Mouthing, Mouthing Citation Form (intended meaning), Mouth Action Type (i.e. mouthing or mouth gesture)



### Conclusion

- For certain signs specific mouthings appear to be compulsory, suggesting lexicalisation of mouthings
- For other signs there is the choice between mouthing and mouth gesture, suggesting code-mixing
- Low rate of variation within mouthings, suggesting constraints on code-mixing

Thank you: Inge Alferink, Saskia Aukema, Onno Crasborn, Micha Hulsbosch, Anna Sáfár. Contact author: r.bank@let.ru.nl