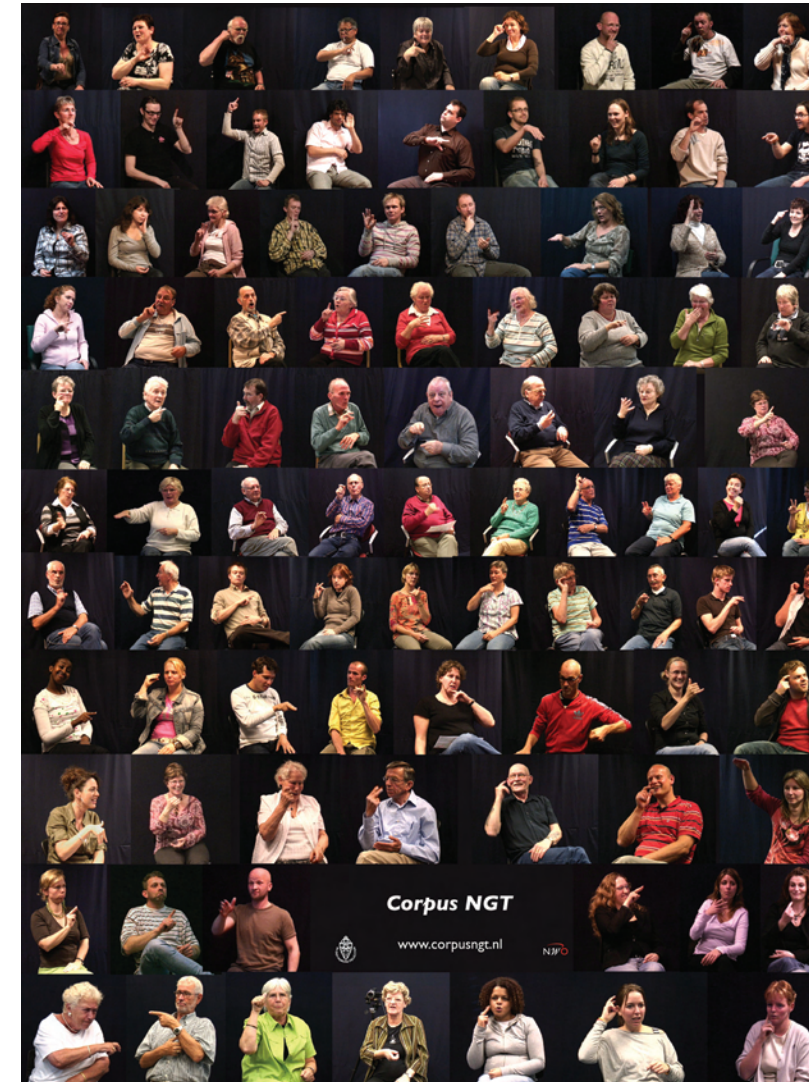


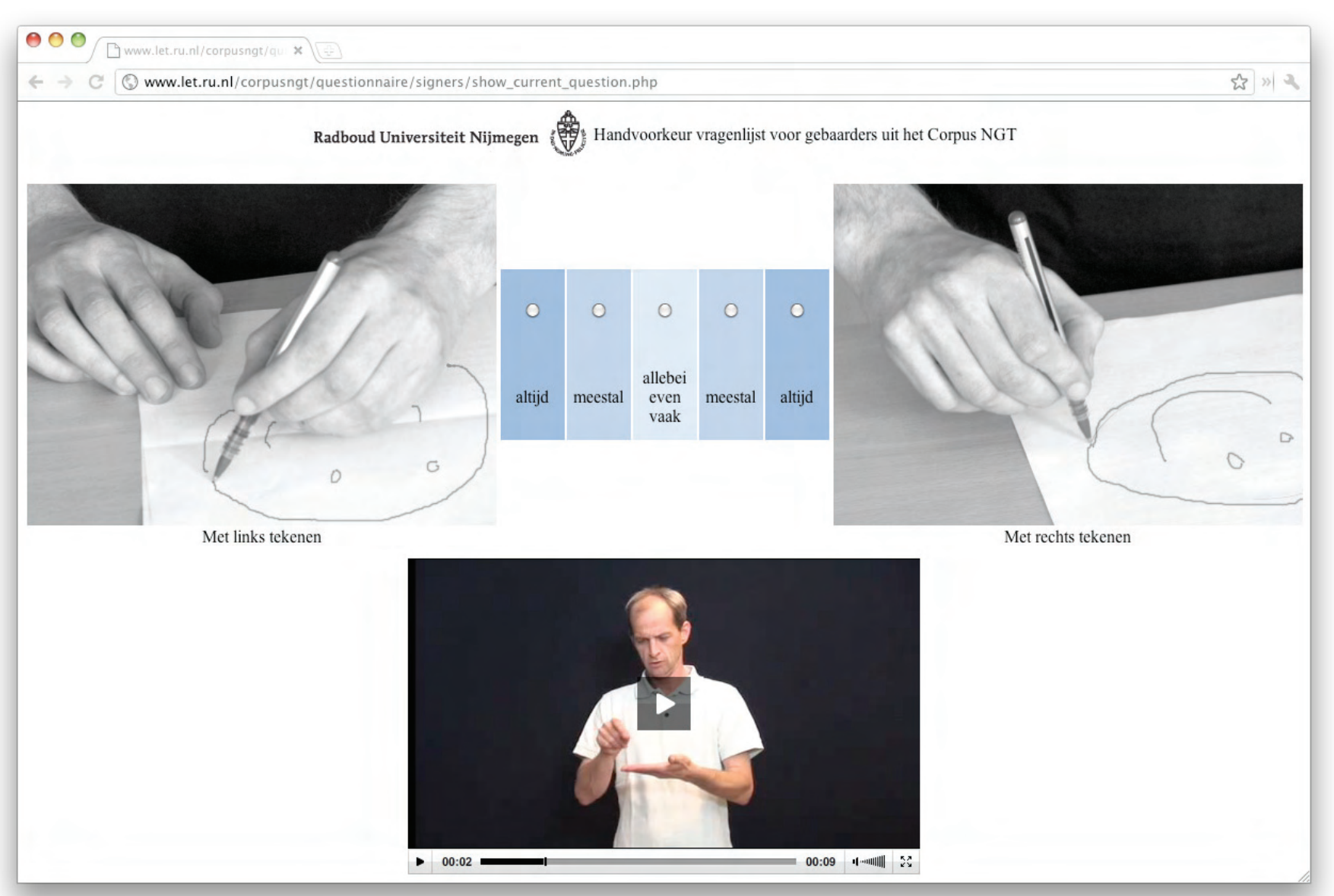
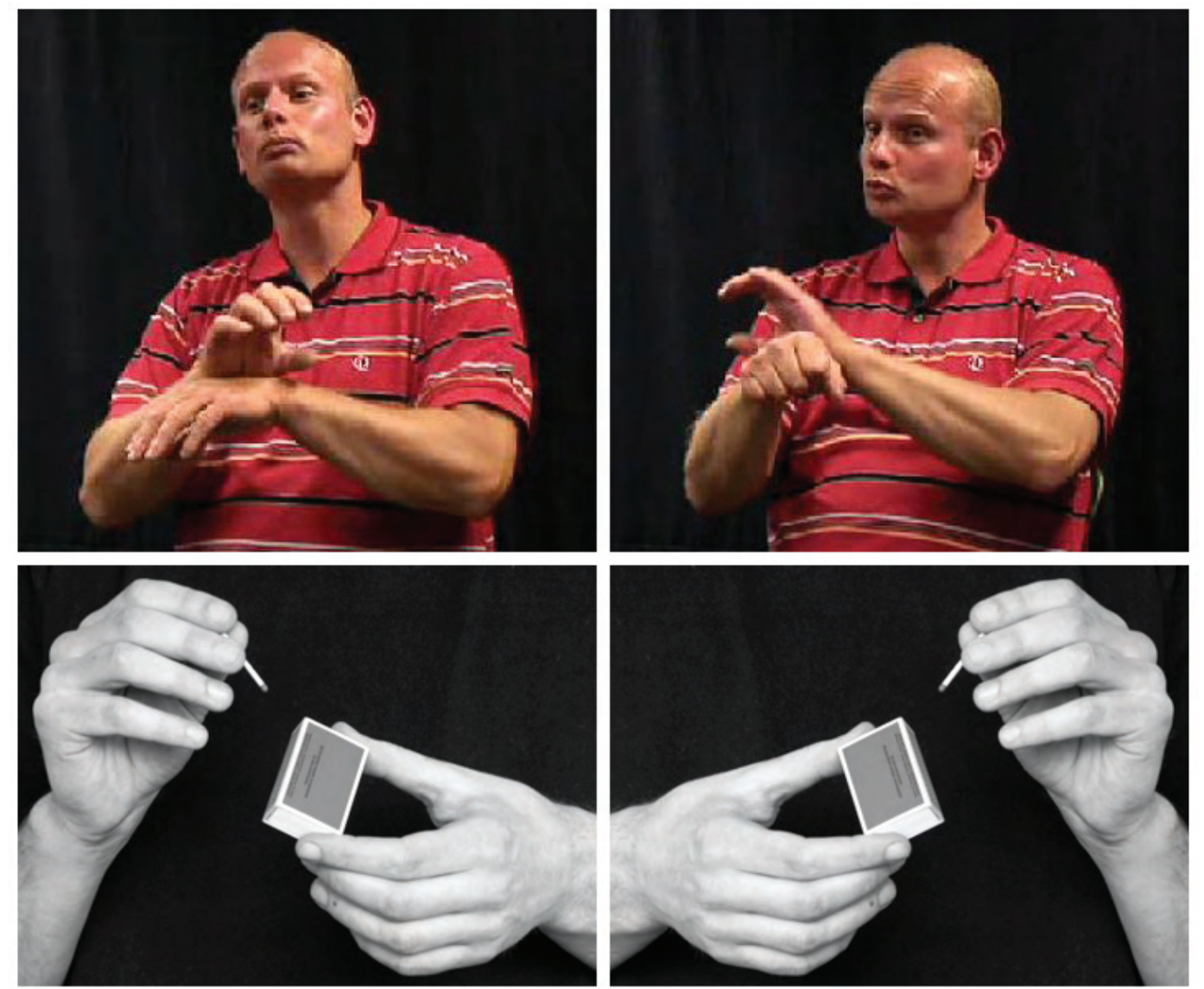
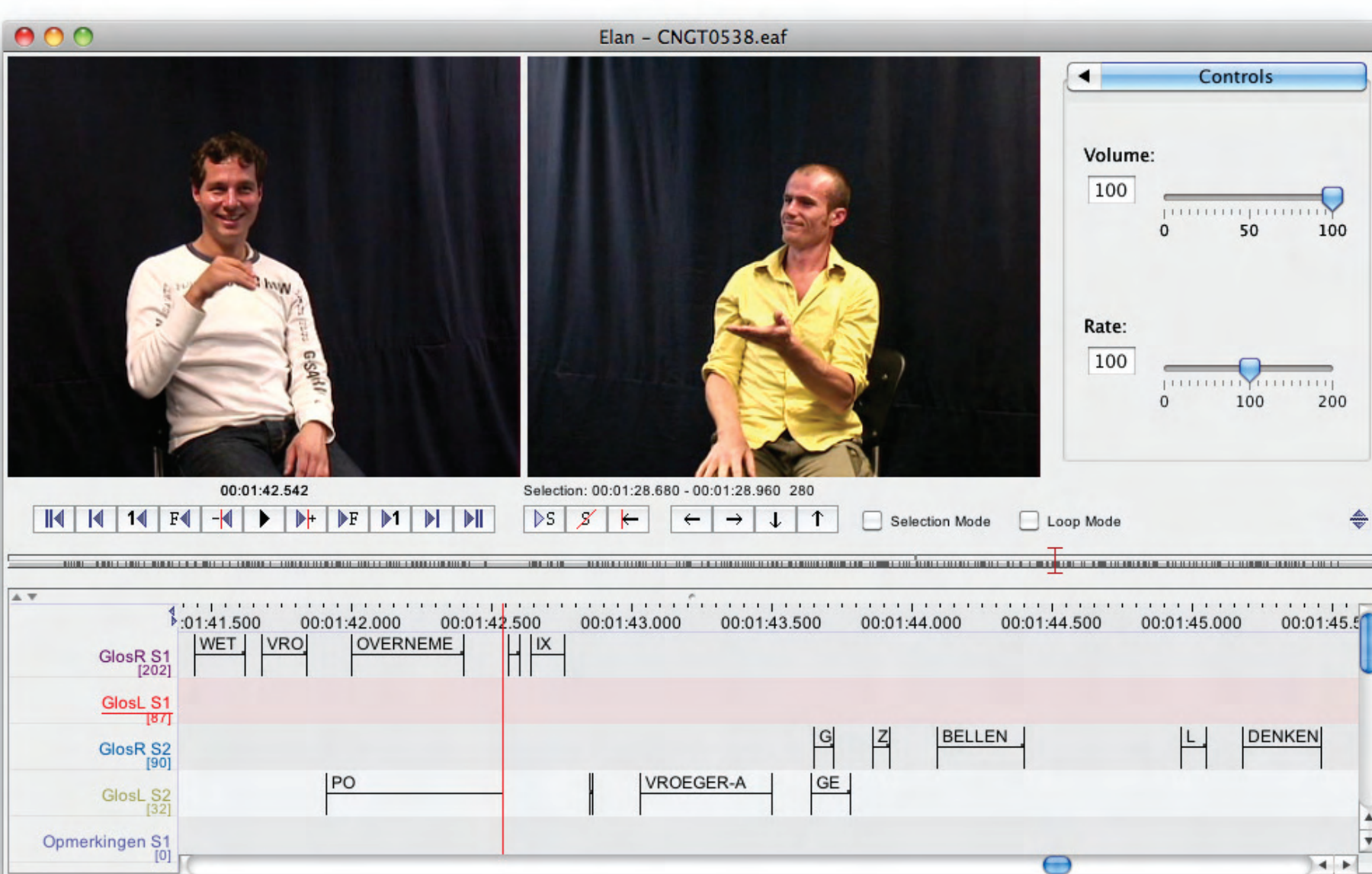
Handedness in the Corpus NGT

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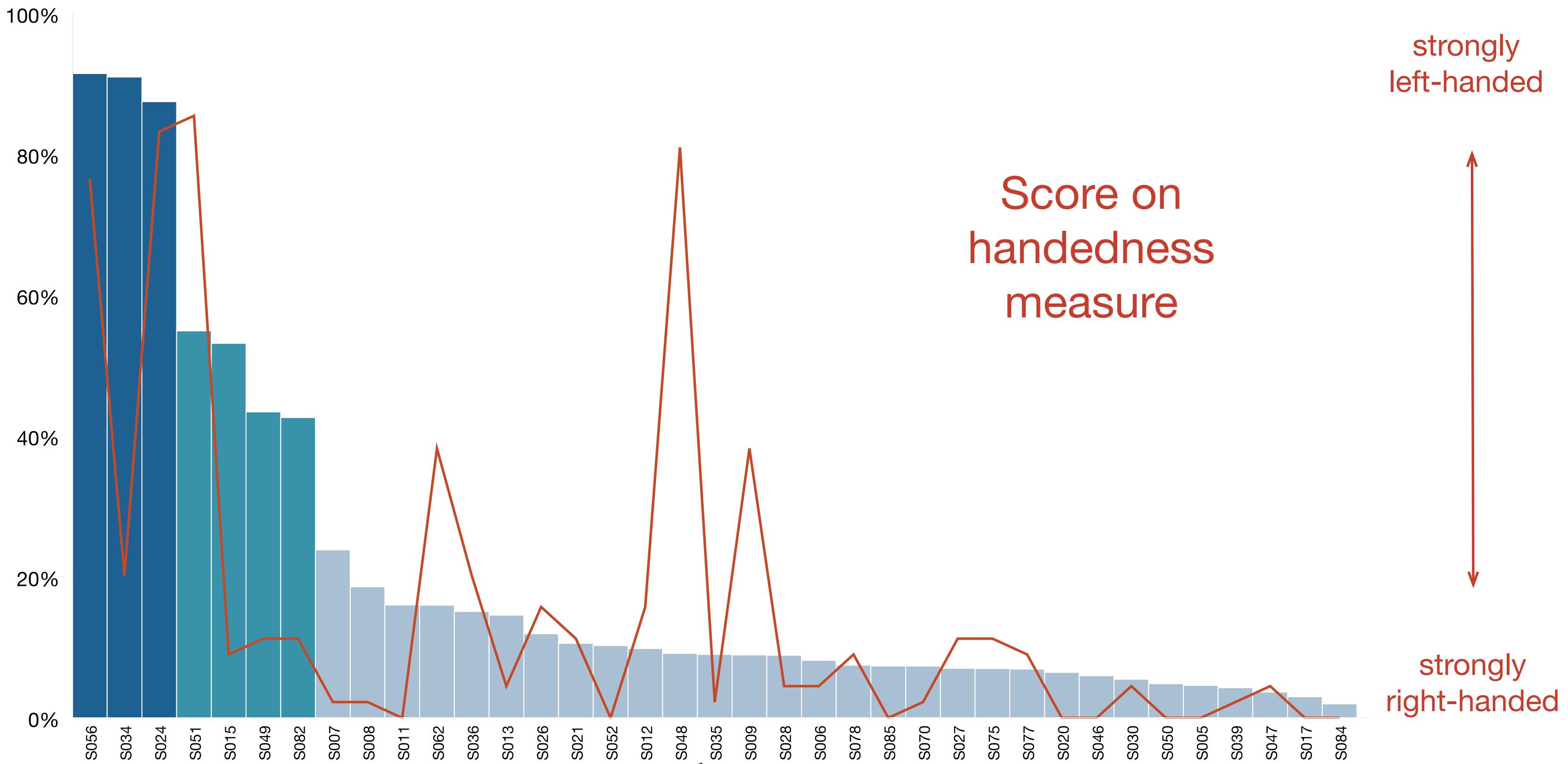
Introduction
It is assumed that “signers, like everyone else, are generally either right-handed or left-handed, and sign accordingly in everyday signing”¹. However, empirical evidence about hand preference in signing is scant. We use corpus and questionnaire data to investigate handedness for signing and everyday activities as well as the relationship between the two.



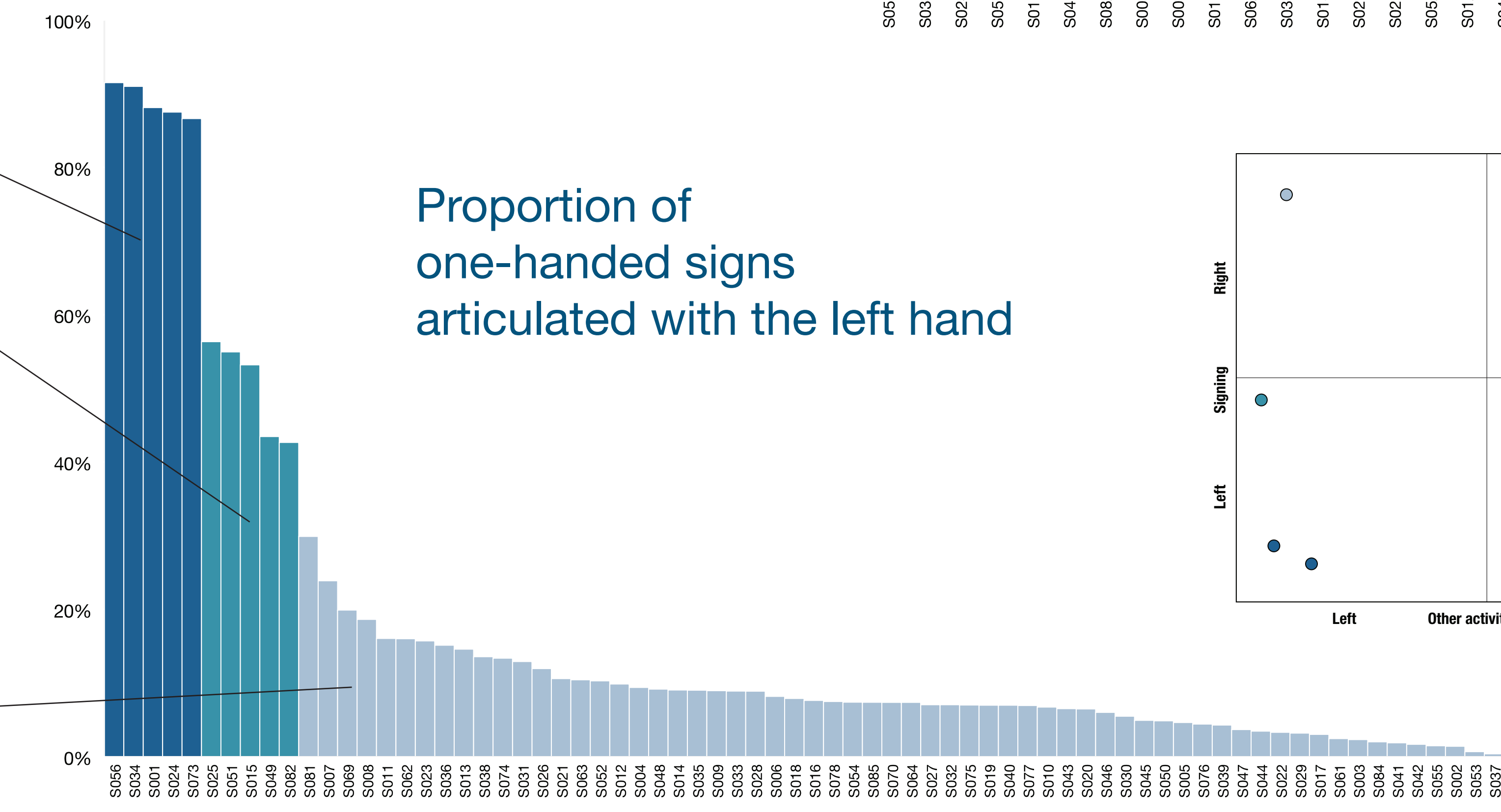
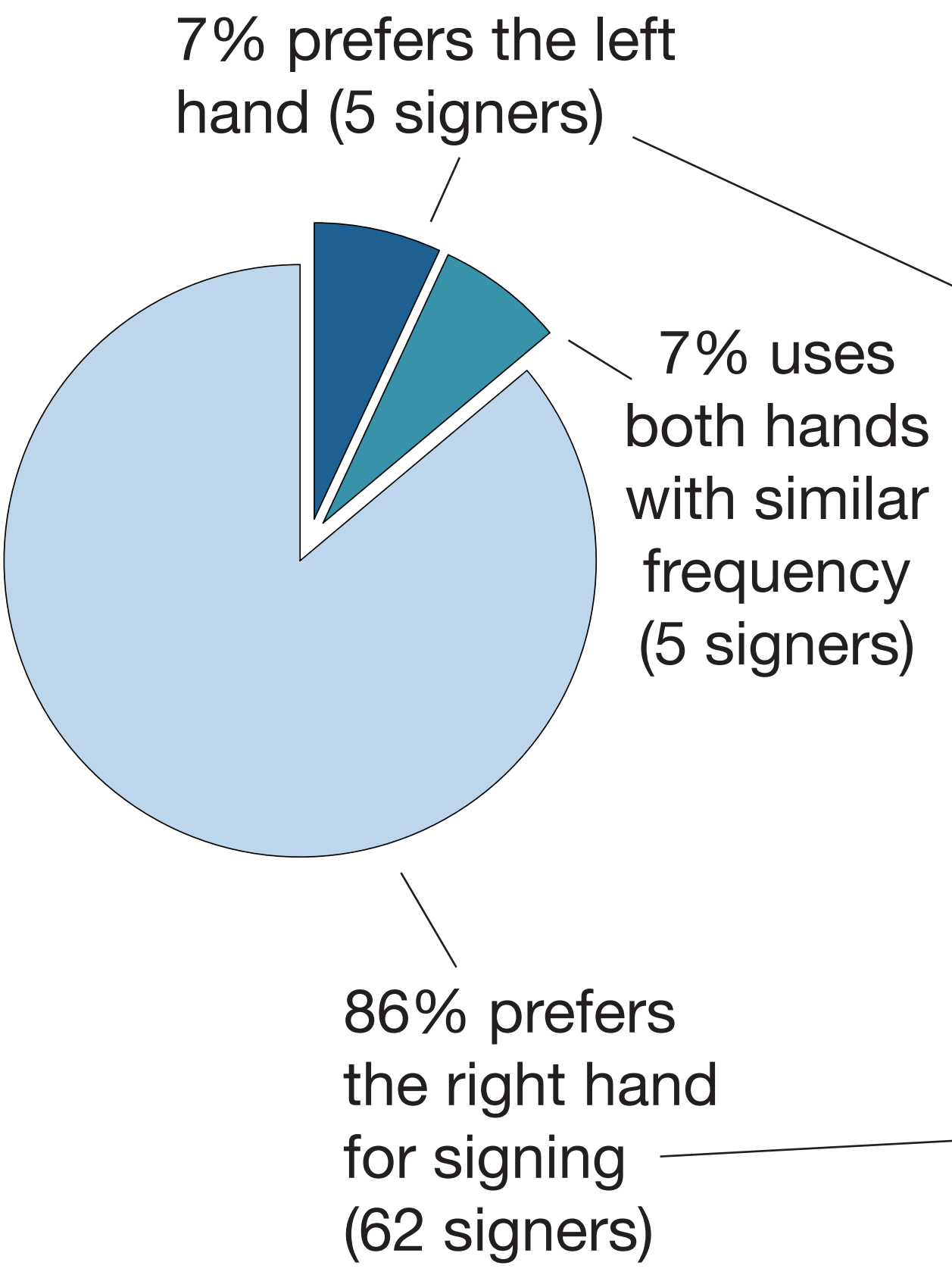
Corpus NGT
over 100.000 glosses
left- and right-hand tier
per signer
more than 100 glosses
for 72 signers
(September 2010)



Corpus
We obtained gloss counts for each hand-tier separately, as well as a counts of identical overlapping glosses (two-handed signs). The number of left-, right- and two-handed signs was calculated for each signer. The majority of signers used their right hand for 70% or more of one-handed signs. Five signers show the opposite pattern, and five signers exhibit no distinct preference.

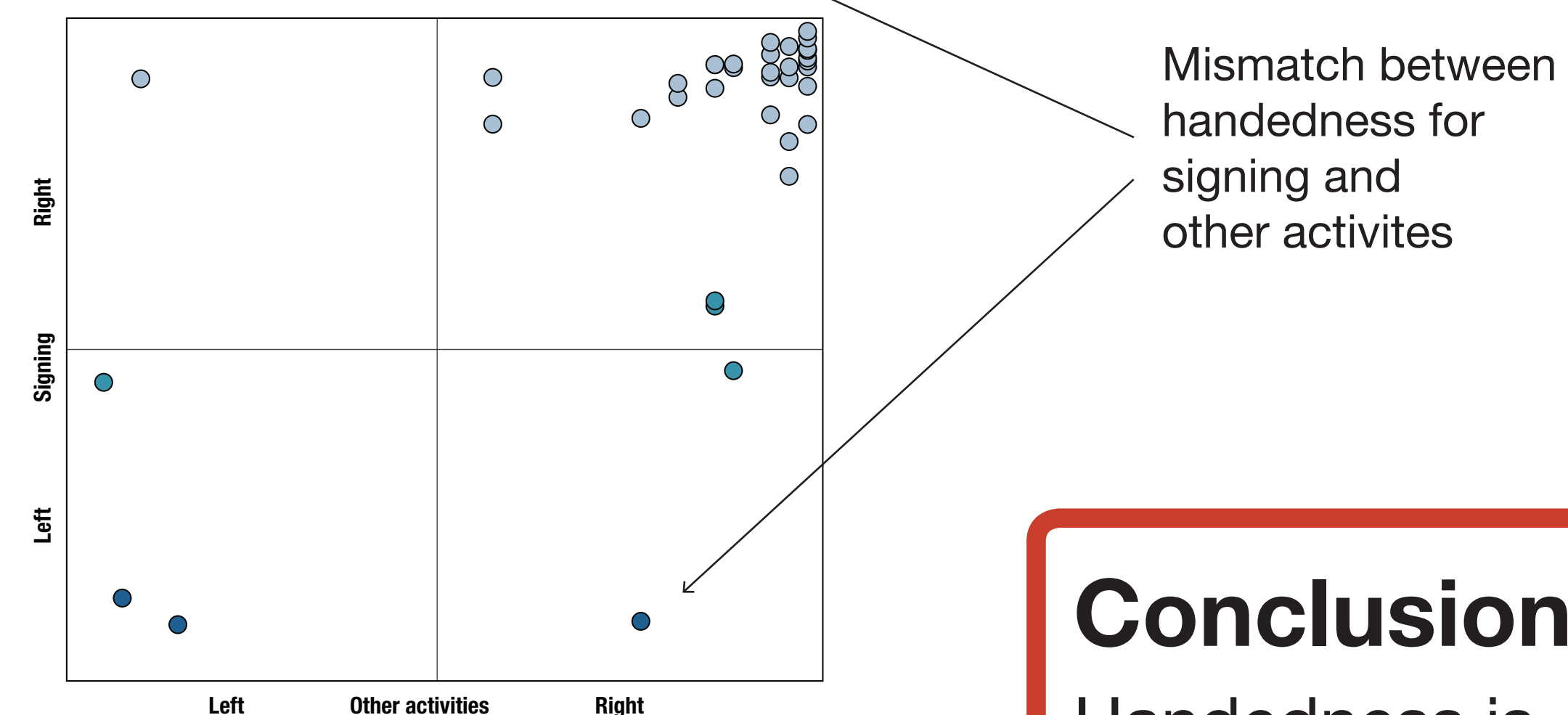


Questionnaire
Using existing handedness inventories and new items, we designed an extended questionnaire about everyday activities and signing. Data collection is conducted through a website, but a paper-and-pencil version is also available. In September 2010, the comparison between questionnaire results and gloss statistics could be made for 37 participants. We found that hand preference for signing and for everyday activities does not always go hand in hand. When comparing hand use in signing with preliminary results from the questionnaire, 3 participants showed a clear discrepancy between the two measures.



Proportion of one-handed signs articulated with the left hand

Each bar represents a signer.



Conclusion
Handedness is indeed “a deceptively simple phenomenon”²: the determinants of hand preference for signing are yet to be uncovered. Further research is needed to investigate the possible linguistic effects of handedness, for example in the use of signing space or dominance reversals.

Acknowledgments
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References
1. Klima, E. S. & Bellugi, U. (1976). Poetry and song in a language without sound. *Cognition* 4:1, 45--97.
2. McManus, I. C. (1999). Handedness, cerebral lateralization and the evolution of language. In M.C.Corballis & S. E. G. Lea (Eds.), *The descent of mind: Psychological perspectives on hominid evolution*. (pp. 194-217). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

