

DRAFT CURRICULUM AND STRUCTURE OF FINNISH SIGN LANGUAGE

Riitta Vivolin-Karén & Kaisa Alanne

translation Raili Ojala-Signell and Liz Scott Gibson

**The Finnish Association of the Deaf
published 2003**

INTRODUCTION	4
The Curriculum	4
The structure of sign language	4
DRAFT FOR THE CURRICULUM	6
Background	6
About Finnish Sign Language	6
Objectives for the studies of sign language as a foreign language	7
CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 1	7
Sub-section on knowledge	8
Sub-section on skills	8
Sub-section on culture	8
CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 2	9
Sub-section on knowledge	9
Sub-section on skills	9
Sub-section on culture	10
CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 3	10
Sub-section on knowledge	10
Sub-section on skills	10
Sub-section on culture	10
CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 4	11
Sub-section on knowledge	11
Sub-section on skills	11
Sub-section on culture	11
THE CURRICULUM OF FINNISH SIGN LANGUAGE IN A NUTSHELL	12
ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF SIGN LANGUAGE	14
SIGN	14
Different kinds of signs	14
Structure of sign	19
VERB	30
Verbs which do not use space	30
Verbs which inflect after the object	30
The character and length of the action in the verb sign	31
Conclusion	33
ROLE SHIFT	34
PLURAL FORM	35
1. The sign is repeated	35
2. Separate sign expressing pluralism	36
3. Context expresses plurality	37
4. The verb expresses plurality	38

ABOUT COMPARISONS	38
1. The size or form of the sign will change	39
2. Separate sign expressing the comparison	39
3. Opposites	40
4. Growth of facial expression and intensity	40
5. Separate sign expressing comparative	40
6. Separate sign expressing superlative	41

NEW SIGNS	41
1. Polysynthetic signs, i.e. the classifier formations	41
2. Conversion	42
3. Derivation	42
4. Incorporation	42
5. Borrowing	42
6. Abbreviation	43
7. Terming	43
8. Enlarging the meaning of existing signs	43
9. Paraphrasing an explanation into a sign	43
10. Fingerspelling	44
11. Made-up words	44

INTRODUCTION

This publication consists of two parts: a draft curriculum and a description of the structure of Finnish Sign Language. The aim of both parts is to challenge the reader to reflect upon their own knowledge, skills and views, both of sign language and its teaching.

The Curriculum

The draft curriculum has been prepared to meet the needs of teaching sign language to adults. A general competence level description of languages has been used as the base for the plan, whereby language competence is divided into six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2; in Finland level 1-6). This draft curriculum covers competence levels 1-4 (A1-B2). Descriptions of a general competence level of languages have been used as the base for the curriculum, as the objective is to include Finnish Sign Language as one of the languages available in general language exams. This competence level scale is a central part of such general language exams.

Constructing the curriculum has not been without problems. One of the biggest problems is that Finnish Sign Language has not yet been subject to sufficient research in order to publish a covering description of its grammar. However, because sign language is constantly being taught and learned, a curriculum is also needed to support its teaching.

Based on a competence level description, a level 1 one student should have a command of some of the most central structures of the basic grammar. But what is included in the basic grammar of Finnish Sign Language, and which are the most central structures in the basic grammar? What should be taught first to hearing adults about Finnish Sign Language, and how should teaching proceed from one level to another? The Hely project has been looking for answers to questions like these. Our proposals for these answers have been collected in this publication. This is the first attempt to describe that knowledge, competence and skills, which should be taught and learned at sign language courses of different levels.

The description of general language competence can be found on the home pages of the Department of Education at www.oph.fi/kielitutkinnot.

The structure of sign language

When we began to put together the proposed curriculum, we realised that it was also essential to collect information on Finnish Sign Language in order for this to be included in it. As a result, the latter part of the publication was developed. It is not, and is not trying to be, a comprehensive description of the grammar of Finnish Sign Language. Selected descriptions of features of sign language, which traditionally have been used in teaching foreign languages, have been included. These have some research information associated with them, and should be discussed with hearing students. There are also some observations on the structure of Finnish Sign Language arising from the Hely project.

The objective was to group different kinds of grammatical features of Finnish Sign Language and give names to these categories. By grouping and naming these features we aimed to give tools to

those who are teaching and studying sign language in order that the teaching and study of sign language might progress as favourably as possible.

There were difficulties in describing the structure. Many features of the structure discussed here seemed to closely overlap with one another e.g., there is information on pointing both under its own heading and also in the paragraph describing plurals and sentence structure. It may be seen, then, that the information in the section on structure does not necessarily include all the information available under that specific heading. Accordingly, readers should familiarise themselves with the whole text, despite being interested in only some particular grammatical feature.

We have used the following notation system in the description of structure:

- Here signs have been described by glosses, i.e. with Finnish words, which have been written in capital letters, e.g. AT HOME
- The number after the gloss indicates where the sign mentioned in the article can be found in the Basic Dictionary of Finnish Sign Language
- If there is a letter N in front of the number pointing to the dictionary article, it means that the sign in question can be found in the first additional part for the Basic Finnish Sign Language dictionary: Numerals and expressions for numbers
- If there is a letter S in front of the number relating to the dictionary article, it means that the sign in question can be found in the publication: “By signing from sex into babies,- signs connected with the sexuality and reproduction of a human being” (The Finnish Association of the Deaf, Centre for Sign Language, 2002)
- X after the gloss means that the sign in question is repeated 2-4 times
- OS means pointing
- The sentence in *Italics* in examples is the equivalent of the example sentence in Finnish

DRAFT FOR THE CURRICULUM

Finnish Sign Language as a foreign language Competence levels 1-4

Background

Finnish Sign Language has been taught on different kinds of courses from 1960's onwards. In the beginning, instruction was based on teaching signs following Finnish language order, according to the views existing at that time. Later, information received from research on sign languages in general and Finnish Sign Language in particular had a major impact on methods of instruction, so that teaching of Finnish sign language and signed Finnish have diverged.

Although some information is already available on the structure of Finnish Sign Language, and although Finnish Sign Language is taught as a foreign language in dozens, and even possibly hundreds of different courses, not a single curriculum has been published prior to this to support the work of teachers. Those who teach sign language alone have solved the question of what they should teach and how teaching progresses. It often has been difficult for those who study sign language to formulate for themselves a study path that progresses systematically. We hope that this curriculum can support the studies of both those who teach and those who study sign language for them to be able to construct systematically progressing studies in sign language. Finally, it is sign language using deaf people who will benefit, when it is ultimately easier for them than before to communicate directly with hearing people.

About Finnish Sign Language

Thousands of people use Finnish Sign Language every day. The estimate for the number of deaf people who use sign language in our country for whom sign language has the status of a mother tongue or first language is approximately 5000. In addition to people who are themselves Deaf, there is a group of hearing children of deaf parents for whom sign language similarly has the status of a mother tongue and first language. They have learned sign language in their childhood, either before they have learned the spoken language used in their environment, or at the same time as the spoken language. However, for a very big group, Finnish Sign Language has the status of a foreign language, which must be studied separately either in courses and/or interaction with sign language users.

When we compare the study of signed and spoken languages, we can find both similarities and differences. In both, the same basic features can be found: the learner has to study vocabulary, grammar and cultural features connected with the language in order to be able to communicate in what is a foreign language to them. When we look at the expressions of signed and spoken languages we can identify the differences: in spoken languages, the auditive channel is used (voice and hearing), in sign languages, the visual, in other words a channel based on vision. The second difference in the majority of the most familiar spoken languages to us is that, at least thus far, a writing system has not yet developed, or been developed, for sign language. In learning, these differences are striking; a person who is going to start learning sign language for the first time has to start practising using a new linguistic channel (a visual channel instead of the auditive channel) and instead of practising by using writing, the student has to use some other practice method to develop language skills.

Objectives for the studies of sign language as a foreign language

The objective of studies in sign language is that hearing adults may develop such knowledge of, and skills in, sign language and the culture of sign language users, that they might be in interaction with deaf and other sign language using people in both a linguistic and culturally appropriate way. In addition to linguistic competence, the students should develop a real interest in and understanding of the culture and societal status of sign language users.

The curriculum at each level is divided into sub-sections of knowledge, skills and culture. With this division we would like to encourage sign language teachers to consciously take into consideration these sub-parts and consider the balance between them both in the course and lesson plans. However, within the sign language course and single lesson all these sub-sections should join seamlessly together.

CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 1

At level 1, the foundation is established for sign language studies. That is why students on the first level should immediately be given information and tools for their use, which will support sign language studies at subsequent levels. With the help of such tools they will be enabled to make observations on sign language outside formal lessons. In practice, this means that on level 1, the students will receive as wide as possible, (although still inevitably a superficial) picture of sign language. Within the sub-section of culture, skills are practised which are needed when a sign language using deaf person and a hearing person who has a command of the elements of sign language meet.

Based on the general description level, the objectives for studies in sign language on level 1 will be that the student:

- Can function in most general interaction situations of sign language
- Understands expressions which are short, slowly and clearly signed and connected directly to their own life or direct concrete environment
- Produces short expressions in sign language
- Fingerspells clearly and understands slow and clear fingerspelling
- Acquires information from quite easy sign language recordings
- Produces simple and short phrases either on recordings or for the group
- Knows the most basic or core signs, which are mainly formed of frozen signs
- Knows the core structures of grammar

Sub-section on knowledge

In the sub-section on information the student receives a wide-ranging general picture of sign language structure. The learner:

- Acquaints him/herself with the most general terms used when discussing the structure of sign language and knows how to use them
- Familiarises him/herself with the signs, which are frozen and productively built in the division of signs, although cannot yet classify signs based on that
- Practises to identify the structural parts of signs and distinguishes them from a single sign
- Familiarises him/herself with the use of space both at a sign and sentence level
- Familiarises him/herself with the meaning of the non-manual features both at a sign and sentence level (non-manualism as a phonological, morphological and syntactical feature)
- Familiarises him/herself with some note taking system of sign language and starts consciously to develop a note taking system for him/herself to support the learning of signs and sign language expressions

Sub-section on skills

The learner practises the following basics for interaction in sign language:

- Naming of things, matters and everyday activities included in the close environment and life circles of the learner. Naming is mainly done by using frozen signs, but may include some of the most central signs built from the productive lexicon. Gaps may still quite often be found in the structural parts of the signs
- Structures of the most simple use of space on a sentence level
- Different types of basic sentences (attention is especially given to the non-manual structural features).
- The manual alphabet so that the learner can fingerspell him/herself (but understanding of fingerspelling still causes problems).
- Basic numbers and ordinals from numeral signs and incorporated numeral signs, which are typically connected with floors (e.g 1st floor of a house) and expressions of time
- The most common greetings and courtesies

Sub-section on culture

The learner learns to take into consideration the presence of a deaf sign language user in situations connected to his/her own life circles. The learner becomes acquainted with those norms of sign language culture which are connected with the initiation of discussion, continuation, and finishing discussion. The learner:

- Knows how to get the attention of the discussion partner
- Knows how to start and to finish the discussion in the culturally appropriate way
- Understands the importance of eye contact in a discussion between two people
- Knows how to introduce him/herself and use the most common greetings and courtesy expressions suitable for the situation, and understands equivalent expressions

CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 2

At level 1 the structure of sign language was dealt with widely, but superficially. On level 2 the structures are discussed in more depth and more comprehensively.

Based on the general level description, the objective of level 2 studies in sign language is that the learner:

- Understands clear and simplified signing, which deals with everyday and familiar matters
- Functions in sign language situations, which are routine-like and demand simple exchanges of information, although there are still gaps in structural features
- Can express concise, simple utterances on everyday matters, although still vaguely
- Understands easily short, simple recordings in sign language, and finds out what the main issues are from recordings dealing with familiar matters
- Has command of the basic grammar
- Has command of the most common basic sign vocabulary

Sub-section on knowledge

At level 1 the learner has formed a general picture of the structure of sign language. From level 2 onwards, this picture will be deepened and widened. The learner:

- Strengthens his/her knowledge of the inflection of verbs
- Widens his/her knowledge of the use of space by familiarising him/herself with the comparisons and plurals
- Familiarises him/herself with localisation, defining and pronoun like pointing
- Familiarises him/herself with the basic sign order in a sign language sentence

Sub-section on skills

The learner (building on the previously acquired basic structures) practises more complicated structures and interaction skills. The learner learns:

- To describe things and matters based on their qualities and to understand equivalent signing
- To compare things and matters with each other, e.g. based on their size, form and quality and to learn equivalent signing
- To tell about him/herself, family, home and nearby environment and most common incidents and actions in connection with them and to learn to understand equivalent slow and reasonably paced signing
- To use and to understand plural expressions
- The basics of the use of space
 - The use of space in face to face discussion and about objects in the same room
 - To put two concrete things or actors in the signing space and to give an account of them
- To produce and to understand the pronoun-like pointing to objects in sight
- To inflect the most common verbs, which change direction
- The basics of different types of pointing viz. localising, defining, and pronoun like pointing. However, the use of pointing in one's own signing is still tentative
- Incorporated numeral signs (grade forms, prices)

Sub-section on culture

The learner becomes acquainted with the everyday life of a sign language using person, in practical solutions and technical equipment.

CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 3

At level 3 in sign language studies, we will start to study and practise how more complex concepts are expressed in sign language. Studies emphasise the practice of skills in both comprehension and production.

Based on the general level description, the objective of studies at level 3 is that the learner:

- Understands the central idea from sign language texts, which contain plenty of productive signs, when the theme is reasonably familiar
- Understands regular texts, and which include only a few productively built signs, when the theme is not familiar from before
- Follows well signing in normal tempo, whilst more demanding themes might cause problems if the signing sequence is long and the theme is not familiar
- Understands the central content in recordings and TV programmes in sign language where the theme is familiar from before
- Functions in most regular practical situations in sign language, although once in a while a lack of grammatical structures and gaps in vocabulary make understanding difficult
- Has a good command of sign vocabulary in everyday situations
- Has a good command of the most common structures of basic grammar

Sub-section on knowledge

The learner familiarises him/herself with the structure of texts in sign language, which are longer than one sentence. Attention is particularly given to the order in which matters are expressed, rhythm and pausing in signing. The learner:

- Deepens his/her knowledge on the structure of polysynthetic signs
- Familiarises him/herself with the aspectual inflection of verbs
- Familiarises him/herself with tenses

Sub-section on skills

The learner understands fairly well polysynthetic signs when familiar issues are being discussed, although once in a while the nuances might be left unnoticed. The learner:

- Knows how to use polysynthetic signs in contexts familiar to him/herself and understands the most common polysynthetic signs
- Knows how to inflect the most common verbs connected with everyday life for aspect and understands equivalent expressions
- Knows how to use tenses and understands equivalent expressions

Sub-section on culture

The learner familiarises him/herself with the signing community, its activities before and now, and important persons who have had an effect on it.

CURRICULUM FOR LEVEL 4

At level 4, the learner functions quite well in discussion situations in sign language. On level 4 the learner deepens his/her knowledge and skills, especially in the use of space and command of texts in sign language. The learner familiarises him/herself with the different forms of texts in sign language.

Based on the general level description, we can define that on level 4, the sign language learner:

- Understands signing in normal tempo on general themes, both in face to face discussions and in sign language recordings, but
 - Fast signing and variations still bring problems
 - Nuance differences might be left partly unclear
- Understands the main features in recordings of sign language with unfamiliar themes
- Can express his/her thoughts in sign language in longer, coherent entities
- Distinguishes the different types of register in sign language and can produce content in different styles
- Has a reasonable command of the basic grammar and vocabulary

Sub-section on knowledge

At level 4 in the section on knowledge, the main emphasis of studies is in the differing types of sign language text. The learner:

- Studies the different types of sign language texts in different kinds of situations and their special features
- Familiarises him/herself with the classification of new signs

Sub-section on skills

The learner is able to discuss fluently most subjects in sign language. When discussing more unfamiliar subjects, some nuances might be left unnoticed. The learner practises:

- To notice and understand different types of sign language texts
- To produce different types of sign language texts in his/her own signing
- To produce, when needed, new signs in order to be understood, but once in a while the comprehension of new signs causes problems

Sub-section on culture

The learner familiarises him/herself with the rules of group discussions and is able to participate in a discussion in a group. The learner familiarises him/herself with sign language from the legislative point of view and with the current status of sign language in Finland.

THE CURRICULUM OF FINNISH SIGN LANGUAGE IN A NUTSHELL

KNOWLEDGE

Level 1

The basic grammar of sign language

- The terms used about the structure
- The fixed signs and frozen and productive lexicon
- Structural parts of fixed signs
- The use of space at the level of signs and sentence
- Non-manual features at the level of phonology, morphology and syntax
- Note taking of signs

Level 2

Enlarging and deepening of basic grammar

- Verb inflection
- Plural forms
- Comparisons
- Pointing: localising, defining, pronoun like
- The basic sign order in a sentence

Level 3

Text entities

- Use of space
- Rhythm
- Pausing
- Tenses
- Structure of polysynthetic signs
- Verb inflection in aspect
- Structure of longer texts (sign and subject order)

Level 4

Text entities

- Sign language text types in different situations
- New signs

SKILLS

Level 1

Simple discussion on concrete subjects

- Signs which are connected to the close environment (fixed signs and classifiers)
- Greetings, courtesies
- Manual alphabet
- Numerals (cardinals, ordinals, signs incorporated with time and floors)
- Basic sentence types (statements, negation, questions)

Level 2

Discussion on familiar issues

- Plural forms of familiar issues and things

- Comparison forms of familiar issues and things
- Short stories on familiar matters and issues which are part of the nearby environment
- Use of different kinds of pointing
- Most common verbs, which change direction
- Grades and prices of incorporated numeral signs

Level 3

Longer texts

- Tenses/expression of time
- Polysynthetic signs
- Aspect forms of verbs
- Pausing
- Rhythm

Level 4

Longer texts

- Different types of sign language text: official, unofficial
- New signs

CULTURE

Level 1

The basic skills to meet a deaf person

- Getting attention, eye-gaze...

Level 2

The everyday life of a deaf person

- Deaf club, technical equipment...

Level 3

The sign language community before and now

- Schools, deaf club activities, important people...

Level 4

Sign language community and society

- Participation in group discussion
- Legislation in everyday life

ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF SIGN LANGUAGE

SIGN

Sign languages consist of signs which, when combined, form sentences and longer text entities. Such combination is done following the grammatical structures of each sign language. Signs have also been compared with the words in spoken languages; signs have the same task in sign languages as words have in spoken languages.

Signs can be observed and classified in different ways. In this publication, signs are observed in a way in which it is hoped to serve those who teach and study sign language as a foreign language.

At the beginning, we observe two different ways of classifying signs. At the end, we will explore the structure of a single sign.

Different kinds of signs

1. One-handed or two-handed sign

Some signs are produced with one hand, in other words, they are so-called one-handed signs. Some signs are produced with two hands, in other words, they are so-called two-handed signs.

A right handed signer produces the one-handed signs mainly with the right hand, and the left handed signer with the left hand. One-handed signs are e.g. signs for HEVONEN (horse; 632), OMENA (apple; 1027) and TV (929).

Both in the one- and two-handed signs, the right hand of the signer is called the dominant hand and the left hand is the non-dominant hand. For the left handed signer, the names for the hands are the other way around.

Two handed signs can further be divided into three classes based on the role of the hands:

- a) both hands move
 - both hands generally have the same hand configuration
 - the movement of the hands can be
 - a. a copying movement, when the hands move simultaneously and in the same direction MUKAAN (along 693)
 - b. an opposite movement, when the hands meet each other or are separated from one another EROTA (to get divorced; 504)
 - c. changing movement, when the hands do the same movement in different directions passing each other KEITTIÖ (kitchen; 692)
- b) the dominant hand moves and the non-dominant hand stays in its place
 - the non-dominant hand is the place of articulation for the sign
 - both hands have the same hand configuration LEIPÄ (bread;89)
- c) the dominant hand moves and the non-dominant hand stays in its place
 - the non-dominant hand is the place of articulation for the sign
 - the hands have different configurations VOI (butter;767)

2. Fixed sign or productively structured sign

Signs are divided into fixed signs and productively structured signs.

Fixed sign

With a fixed sign, we mean a sign which is generally used; it has a citation form and limited number of meanings. The Basic Dictionary of Finnish Sign Language consists of fixed signs.

For example:

HEVONEN (horse; 632)

LUKEA (to read; 44)

YSTÄVÄ (friend; 332)

The fixed sign is composed of a hand configuration, movement, location, orientation, and non-manual structural parts. None of the structural parts of the fixed sign alone carries a meaning. The meaning of the sign is conveyed only when all the structural parts are combined.

Productively structured sign

In addition to fixed signs, there are a large number of productively structured/built signs in sign languages, which have rarely been described in dictionaries because of their transient connection to the situation. Sign languages seem to have a typical tendency to build signs productively. Some signs created and used in a particular situation cease to exist after the situation ends. However, some of them survive, are disseminated into common use, become stabilised, and finally are changed into fixed signs. The equivalent phenomenon can also be found in spoken languages. A word that has first been created for some temporary use in a situation can later be stabilised into the fixed vocabulary of a language.

For instance:

KÄNNYKKÄ (cellphone; 872) – in the beginning the sign was one of the many productively structured signs pointing to cellular phones. During ensuing years, it has become permanent and changed into a fixed sign.

Productively structured signs have been studied in different countries' sign languages. The productively structured signs can further be divided into two classes: polysynthetic signs and specifiers of size and shape.

Polysynthetic sign

A polysynthetic sign is always a verb. In other words, it always expresses activity that is happening.

A polysynthetic sign is combined of the same structural parts as a fixed sign, i.e. hand configuration, location, movement, orientation and non-manual structural parts. In the polysynthetic sign, every one of the structural parts, unlike the fixed sign, also carries a meaning alone. In a polysynthetic sign, one cannot find a basic form of the sign, in other words, the stem of the sign where additional information (morpheme) is added.

In formal language, a polysynthetic sign is generally preceded by some other sign (the main sign), about which the polysynthetic sign gives some additional information. In everyday language and in some sentence and subject contexts, the polysynthetic signs also seem to be able to exist alone without the main sign.

Next, we will briefly introduce the structural parts of a polysynthetic sign:

Hand configuration

The hand configuration of a polysynthetic sign is called a classifier. The selection of a classifier is affected by:

1) Whether the referent is living or lifeless

- For a living referent, the V configuration is often used (human being, animal)
- Configurations for a lifeless referent are, e.g.
 - B, which is used when you talk about flat, square objects, such as a car, book, picture
 - G, which is used for thin, oblong objects, such as a pen, stick
 - 5 with bent fingers, generally refers to three-dimensional objects, such as an apple, rock, houses looked at with a bird's-eye view. In some sentence constructions, it can also refer to a big and closely-packed group of people

2) How the referent is moving

- If the referent is moving by itself, the selection of referent is affected by the feature of the referent which is distinguishable as the biggest or clearest.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table;263), PAPERI (paper;527)+B classifier

Paperi on pöydällä. (The paper is on the table.)

The B classifier refers to the biggest feature of the paper, in other words, to its area.

- If the referent is moving by an outside force, the selection of the configuration is affected by the smallest feature of the referent.

For example:

PAPERI (paper;527)+ classifier, which looks like the signer is holding the paper in his/her hand in between the thumb and forefinger.

Paperi siirrettiin toiseen paikkaan. (The paper was removed to another place.)

The classifier refers to the smallest feature of the paper, in other word to its thinness.

Movement

Whether the referent moves or stays in its place is shown by the movement of the polysynthetic sign.

1) The referent is not moving.

The stability of the referent in its place is shown with a little movement downwards.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table;527), B classifier+a little movement downwards

Paperi on pöydällä. (The paper is on the table.)

2) The whole referent moves from one place to another.

The movement of the polysynthetic sign is affected by what is known of the starting and ending point of the movement of the referent.

a) It is known where the movement of the referent has begun, but not where the movement will end.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table;263), PAPERI (paper;527), B classifier+movement, which starts from that point of the signing space where the paper is thought to have been, but the ending point of the movement is not clearly marked.

Paperi lennähtää pois pöydältä. (The paper flies off the table.)

b) It is not known where the movement of the referent has begun, but it is known where it stops.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table;263), PAPERI (paper;527), classifier, which looks like the signer was holding a piece of paper in his hand in between the thumb and forefinger + movement where only the ending point is clearly marked, the movement ends at the sign PÖYTÄ (table).

Paperi laitetaan pöydälle. (The paper is put on the table.)

c) It is known where the movement of the referent has started and it is known where it ends.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table;263), PÖYTÄ (table;263), PAPERI (paper;527), classifier, which looks like the signer was holding a piece of paper in his hand in between the thumb and forefinger + movement where both the starting and end points are clearly marked (the beginning of the movement is by the PÖYTÄ sign where the paper is moved from, and the ending point is by the PÖYTÄ sign where the paper is put)

Paperi siirretään pöydältä toiselle. (The paper is moved from one table to another.)

d) It is not known where the movement of the referent starts and where the movement ends.

For example:

PUU (tree;254), LEHTI (leaf;975), B classifier + movement from up downwards in front of the signer's face (the beginning or ending point of the movement are not clearly marked)

Lehti putosi puusta. (A leaf fell from the tree.)

3) A movement is taking place in the referent without the referent changing places.

The movement of the polysynthetic sign can be seen only in the change in the orientation of the hand.

For example:

KANNETTAVA+TIETOKONE (portable computer;4), B classifier + movement (one hand moves on the top of the other hand).

Kannettavan tietokoneen näyttöruutu painettiin kiinni näppäintason päälle. (The lid of the laptop was closed over the top of the keyboard.)

POLKUPYÖRÄ (bicycle;419), B classifier + movement (the hand moves to the direction where the bicycle has fallen over)

Polkupyörä kaatui kumolleen. (The bicycle fell over.)

4) The referent has got stuck in its base.

The movement of the polysynthetic sign is a small, held movement.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table;263), LAUTANEN (plate), B classifier + small, held movement, which emphasises being stuck.

Lautanen oli pöydässä kiinni kuin liimattuna. (The plate was stuck on the table like it was glued.)

In addition to the above mentioned features, for instance, the following can be expressed by changing the movement of the polysynthetic sign:

- Dependent on which direction the movement of the referent is directed to (up, down, to the side...), the movement of the polysynthetic sign follows the movement of the referent
- How the referent is moving (fast, slow, floating, curving, shaking...); the movement of the polysynthetic sign follows the way in which the referent is moving.

In short, it can be said that the movement of the polysynthetic sign tries to describe the way and direction of the movement which the referent is making, or emphasises the immobility of the referent.

Place

The place of the polysynthetic sign can be either on the body of the signer, in the non-dominant hand, or in neutral space in front of the signer.

The body of the signer is the place for the polysynthetic sign when something about that part of the human body is referred to. But when e.g. something is mentioned about the foot, the place of the polysynthetic sign is on the non-dominant hand, instead of on the foot.

For example:

RINNAN-ALUE, KIPU (pain in the chest area; 1127) polysynthetic sign (the sign describing pain is made on that part of the chest where the pain is said to be)

Rinnassa oleva kipu oli kova ja sykkivä. (The pain on the chest was hard and throbbing.)

When the non-dominant hand is the place for the polysynthetic sign, the hand configuration is chosen following the same principles as the configuration of the dominant hand in polysynthetic signs.

For example:

LINTU, PUHELIN (telephone;909), LANKA (wire;1214), polysynthetic sign; G hand configuration in non-dominant hand (describes a thin referent, i.e. the telephone wire); V configuration in the dominant hand + movement, which describes staying in one place (V configuration describes something living, with two feet).

Lintu istuu puhelinlangalla. (A bird is sitting on the telephone wire.)

In the size and shape specifiers, the course of the movement of the sign follows the form and size of the referent. In the other words, the movement can be either straight, circular or with many shapes, and the bigger the referent the bigger the movement.

For example:

Referring to the frame of a picture, the movement of the sign is bigger the bigger the frame is. The movement also shows the shape of the frame (square, triangle, hexagon, circle...)

An abbreviation SASS is often used for the specifiers of the size and shape, which comes from English words *size and shape specifiers*.

Structure of sign

General

A sign is not one undivided unit. Every sign can be divided in smaller parts, which here are called structural parts of a sign. Here, attention is given to the structural parts of fixed signs (see productive signs earlier).

The structural parts of a sign can be divided in two main categories: manual and non-manual structural parts. The manual parts are hand configuration, place of articulation, movement and orientation. Non-manual parts are generally the mouth movements connected to the sign and the movements of the cheeks and body. Looking at the structural parts of signs helps the learner to visualise and remember signs.

Although one structural part does not usually carry a meaning, changing one structural part into another can change the meaning of the sign. In the following example, there are sign pairs, so-called minimal pairs where the changing of one structural part into another changes the meaning of the sign.

For example:

MUSTA (black;2) – MUISTAA (remember;425) the hand configuration changes

TIETÄÄ (to know;3) – PYYTÄÄ (to ask;20) the place of the sign changes

LEIPÄ (bread;89) – RAHA (money;92) the orientation of the hand changes

KEITTÄÄ (to cook;692) – IHMETELLÄ (to wonder;691) the movement changes

SYRJÄHYPPY (escapade;318) – ULKOMAAT (abroad;317) the mouth movement changes

The structural parts have also been called cheremes or phonemes.

1. Hand configuration of the sign

The hand configuration means that entity is formed by how the fingers and palm perform during the sign. In one sign there can be more than one configuration because the configuration can change during the sign, i.e., the configuration can be different at the beginning of the sign from what it is at the end.

The hand configuration and the number of configurations vary between sign languages. The hand configurations of Finnish Sign Language have been mentioned in the following publications: Terhi Rissanen: Viittomakielen perusrakenne, Suomalaisen viittomakielen perussanakirja, Anja Malm (toim.) Viittomakieliset Suomessa, Ritva Takkinen: Käsimuotojen salat.

In the publication Viittomakieliset Suomessa (pages 173-175) Leena Savolainen divided the hand configurations into eight categories:

- Palm configuration
- Fist configuration
- Grasp configuration
- One fingered configuration
- Two fingered configuration
- Three fingered configuration
- Four fingered configuration

- Five fingered configuration

2. Movement

With movement, we mean that movement which the hands make during the sign. In almost all signs there is some kind of movement. The ordinals 1-8 in numeral signs are exceptions and the majority of the handalphabet where there is no movement.

From the movement of the sign, the direction and manner of movement can be looked at separately.

The movement of the sign can be directed as follows:

- The movement of the sign can be towards the signer or away from the signer (depth level)
- The movement of the sign can be either up or downwards (vertical level)
- The movement of the sign can be towards to the side, when the movement is either to the right or to the left (horizontal level)
- The movement of the sign can be either in one direction or back and forth

The movement of the sign can begin on the body of the signer:

- From the upper arm
- From the elbow, when the movement can be:
 - Direct movement (KÄYDÄ KOULUA go to school 594, RIITTÄÄ enough 597)
 - Gentle curving movement (SANOJA to say 602, PÄÄSIÄINEN Easter 605)
 - Circle movement (KAHVI coffee 401)
 - Twisting movement: the hand moves so that the direction of the palm changes (MITÄ KUULUU how are you 576, PITÄÄ to like something 555)
- From the wrist, when the movement is formed from the bending of the wrist either backwards (MILLOIN when 1141) or inwards (is used to get the other person's attention ANTEEKSI Excuse me 953)

The movement can also be the opening of the hand (HÄLYTYSAJONEUVO emergency vehicle 1156) or closing of the hand (NUHA runny nose 875), fluttering the fingers (JÄRVI lake 972, MONTAKO how many 957), bending the fingers (KOSTEA damp 1092) or making a crumbling movement: moving the thumb against the other fingertips or the fingertip of one finger (VÄHÄN a little bit 924).

In some signs the dominant hand touches the signer's body, head or non-dominant hand. The touching can appear in the beginning of the sign, at the end, or both in the beginning and at the end. The touching can be continuous or just a slight touch.

See more about movement in 1. One- or two-handed sign.

3. Place of articulation

With the place of articulation we mean the place where the sign is made. The places of articulation are the following

- neutral space, i.e. a place in front of the signer's body (OSASTO department 370)

Part of signs produced in neutral space are such that they can be placed in neutral space in the same place and in the same relationship to each other, as the signer may wish to say where they have been. The phenomenon has been called localisation and description because the signer shows as if he is describing the reality as exactly as is possible following a certain space or place.

Another feature of signs is such that their placement in neutral space demands a pointing or productive sign (a polysynthetic sign or specifier for size and shape) as support.

The gaze of the signer follows the placement of the referents in the signing space.

The sign placed in the signing space represents that referent which is referred to during the signing utterance. The referent can be either concrete or abstract. One place can also represent either one or many referents at the same time. When the referent has once been placed in the signing space, it can be referred to later simply by pointing.

For example:

When you talk about the furnishing of your own office, the pieces of furniture are placed in the neutral space in front of the signer in the way they are in relation to each other either with a fixed sign, or with a pointing or productive sign connected with the fixed sign. The signer directs his gaze to the placed referents. For instance, when a table has once been placed in the signing space, it can be referred to later on by simply pointing.

- the area of head where as separate areas can be distinguished
 - o top of the head (HATTU hat 1)
 - o temple/forehead (TIETÄÄ to know 3)
 - o eyes (SININEN blue 718)
 - o nose (PETTYÄ to get disappointed 29)
 - o cheek/ear (KILTTI good/nice 16)
 - o mouth (HYVÄ good 30)
 - o chin (KUKA who 37)
 - o neck (JANO thirst 41)
 - o face (EI HUOMAA does not notice 43)

- the body of the signer where the following can be distinguished as separate areas
 - o shoulders (MINISTERI minister 1040)
 - o chest/stomach (LOUKKAANTUA to be hurt 943)
 - o waist (KADEHTIA to be jealous 1132)
 - o feet (KOIRA dog 56)

- the non-dominant hand (only in two-handed signs), where the following can be distinguished as their own areas
 - o palm/back of the hand (KANNATTAA to support 394)
 - o forearm/elbow (KOIVU birch 434)
 - o upper arm (PALVELLA to serve 79)

Some of the signs are such that the place of articulation does not change during the sign. In other signs the place of articulation is different at the beginning and at the end of the sign (KORVATA to make up 460).

4. Orientation

By orientation we mean the position and direction of the hand in relation to the body of the signer. There are only a limited number of orientation positions in sign languages. Orientations which are difficult to carry out are rarely used in sign languages. In addition, the actual bending of joints limits the possible number of orientations.

The possible orientation directions, i.e. the directions towards which the fingers and palm can be directed are:

- Up or down
- Towards the signer or away from the signer
- To the left or right of the signer

In the group of one-handed signs produced in neutral space, there are numerous minimal pairs in which only the change of orientation changes the whole meaning of the sign. Such minimal pairs are, for example

- in one-handed signs: JOHTAJA (director;476) where the orientation of the thumb is upwards and HUONO (bad) where the orientation is downwards and KUKKA (flower;1142) and LAMPPU (lamp;1144)
- in two-handed signs: RAHA (money;92), ASIA (matter, issue;1142) and LEIPÄ (bread;89)

5. Non-manual structures

By non-manual structural parts we mean those structural parts of signs which are produced in some other way beside the use of hands. In addition to the movements of head, facial expressions and mouth, movements of the body are also considered to be non-manual structural parts.

Here we deal briefly with only the classification of mouth movements.

There are two types of mouth movements:

a) Sign language mouth movement

The sign language mouth movement does not have any connection to the word lip-pattern of the spoken language, but it is solely a mouth movement connected with a sign or expression in sign language.

In the Basic Dictionary of Finnish Sign Language, on pages 23-27, you can find a description of 15 different sign language mouth movements, but the list is not complete. In the dictionary you can also find a sign KYLLÄ (yes;1219), which is produced solely by mouth movement.

b) Finnish word lip-pattern

With the mouth movement which follows the Finnish word lip-pattern we mean a Finnish word equivalent to the sign, which is produced without voice. It rarely can be seen as complete on the mouth movement. The word lip-pattern on the mouth movement can be, for instance, only the beginning of the word equivalent to the sign.

The Finnish word lip-pattern is used, for instance, when proper names are signed, either by fingerspelling them completely or by signing their name sign, or when a concept is signed which does not yet have an established sign.

Additional information:

- Rissanen, Terhi: Viittomakielen perusrakenne (page 87), Helsingin yliopisto nro 12, 1985, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki
- Pimiä, P., Rissanen, T. Kolme kirjoitusta viittomakielestä, Helsingin yliopisto, nro 17, 1987, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki
- Valli, C. And Lucas, C: Linguistics of American Sign Language, An Introduction, 1995, Gallaudet University Press, USA
- Kuurojen Liitto ry, Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus: Suomalaisen viittomakielen perussanakirja, 1998, Libris OY, Helsinki
- Sutton, R. & Woll, B: The Linguistics of British Sign Language, 1999, Cambridge University Press, UK
- Malm, A. (ed.): Viittomakieliset Suomessa (p. 175), Finn Lectura, 2000, RT-print OY Pieksämäki
- Wallin, L. Two kinds of productive signs in Swedish Sign Language (in publication Sign Language & Linguistics 3:2 2000, p. 237-256), John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Jantunen, T.: Suomalaisen viittomakielen synnystä, vakiintumisesta ja kuvaamisen periaatteista (pro gradu –tutkielma, Helsingin yliopisto 2000), Kuurojen Liitto ry, julkaisusarja L1/2001

POINTING

The task of pointing can be divided roughly into two: its task is either to locate the referent in the signing space or to function as a subject marker, i.e., to indicate the specific referent and when it is talked about.

By pointing we can locate or point to either one or more referents.

Pointing can be either manual or non-manual. In manual pointing, the hand configuration most generally is the G configuration. In some situations, pointing can also be produced with B configuration. In non-manual pointing, the gaze of the signer functions as the pointer.

Pointing as a locative

When the referent is mentioned in the signing for the first time, it often is located in the signing space with the help of pointing. By pointing, we can show in which place in the signing space the referent is in relation to the signer or other referents.

When locative pointing includes information on the distance of the referent to the signer, the distance is shown both in manual and non-manual markers. If the referent is far away, the signer screws up his eyes, the gaze is directed to a distance and the arm is stretched straight or almost straight. If the referent is close to the signer, the arm stays little bent and pointing close to the signer's body.

Pointing as a subject marker

Pointing as a subject marker is shown in two ways:

1) If the referent present, it is placed first of all by pointing (if it is just that specific referent that is mentioned) and only after that, the sign referring to the referent and other issues connected with it is produced.

For example:

When we talk about a bed which is in the same room, we refer to the bed first by pointing (it is just that specific bed we are talking about) and then sign SÄNKY (bed;821) and then relate what we wish to say about the bed.

2) The signer points to the already located referent in the signing space, which thus is not concretely present and seen. After pointing, the associated information about the referent is stated.

For example:

PÖYTÄ (table; 263), JO (already;219) KAKSI (two), KUPPI (cup;351), OS (pointing), OS (locative pointing), OS (subject marker) TEE (tea;923), OS (subject marker) KAHVI (coffee;401), OS (pointing)

Pöydällä oli kaksi kuppia. Toisessa oli teetä ja toisessa kahvia. (There were two cups on the table. One had tea in it, the other one coffee.)

In the beginning the cups are defined at a certain place in the signing space with pointing (the cups are located). When more information is given about the cups, it is sufficient that that place where the cup was located is pointed to.

SENTENCE

Basic research has not been carried out about the syntax of Finnish Sign Language. Some work has been done on e.g. the formation of questions and negation forms, but a comprehensive description on the structure of a sentence is missing.

What is a sentence? Over one hundred definitions for a sentence can be found in linguistics. A sentence has been defined to be, e.g. a linguistic expression of a thought. Here we see that a sentence is the smallest unit of linguistic expression which can exist itself by forming one total sentence. At its shortest form, a sentence can be only one sign long.

Here the sentences have been divided according to their meant usage into statements, commands and conditional clauses. Almost every sentence type is introduced with its possible and typical sign order and the non-manual features of the sentence are described.

In the example sentences, we generally introduce only one possible way to sign the wanted item. The same thing can often be signed in many different ways, which all are as correct as each other. However, it is impossible here to describe all the many different possibilities.

Statements

By statements we mean sentences where we provide information about the referent and its location and/or its function. The sign referring to the referent is usually placed at the beginning of the sentence and after that, signs will be produced which indicate the location and/or function of the referent. The statement can be positive (affirmative sentence) or negative (negation).

Affirmative sentence

An affirmative statement sentence usually indicates where the referent is and/or what the referent is like, how the referent is functioning etc.

For example:

SATAA (it is raining;1072)

Sataa (It is raining)

TYTTÖ (girl;947), OS (pointing), KAUNIS (beautiful;361), OS (pointing)

Tuo tyttö on kaunis. (That girl is beautiful.)

At the beginning of the sentence a sign is placed, which refers to the subject of the discussion, i.e. the girl, and subsequently we are told what she is like, in other words, beautiful. If the girl can be seen by both discussion partners, the gaze of the signer is directed towards the girl during pointing.

KAUNIS (beautiful;361), TYTTÖ (girl;947), OS (pointing), LUKEA (read, 44), OS (pointing)

Kaunis tyttö lukee. (The beautiful girl is reading.)

The subject of the discussion is a beautiful girl, and that is why the referring signs to it are placed at the beginning of the sentence. Only after that, are we told what she is doing. The pointing at the end of the sentence may also be omitted.

In an affirmative sentence head nodding can also be included. The nodding is included in the sentence especially when the signer wants to assure something or to be assured of something. The nodding emphasises that the issue is just exactly as the signer is relating. Nodding or a nod as affirmative operator is used e.g. when a positive answer is given to a proposed question.

For example:

KUURO, deaf;568), OS (pointing)

Kyllä hän on kuuro. (Yes, he is deaf.)

When nodding is seen in connection with the sentence, the signer wishes to assure the discussion partner that the person he is talking about is deaf, not hearing. The example sentence can be used, for instance, when you answer a question *Onko hän kuuro?* (Is he deaf?)

Negative sentence

Negation can be expressed solely by head shaking or with a sign showing negation, which is often also connected with a head shake.

Head shaking is the most common negative expression in everyday discussion situations. Shaking of the head covers the whole area of signed text, which one wants to express as negative. The area intended to be negated may be a whole sentence or only a part of a sentence. In addition, the face of the signer can shrink; the eyebrows fall down and the nose wrinkles slightly and rises up.

For example:

SATAA (to rain; 1072)

Siellä ei sada. (It does not rain there.)

When the signer shakes his head at the same time with SATAA (to rain) sign, the meaning of the sentence becomes negative.

VAUVA (baby;212), OS (pointing), ITKEÄ (cry;681), OS (pointing)

Vauva ei itke. (Baby is not crying.)

First the subject is signed (VAUVA baby), then by pointing you show where the baby is in relation to the signer, and at the end what the baby is doing (ITKEÄ cry). When the sentence is negated (vauva ei itke; baby is not crying), the head is shaken during the sign ITKEÄ (cry).

MINÄ (I), KÄVELLÄ (walk;839), MINÄ, ISTUA (sit;849), ODOTTAA (wait;345)

Minä en kävele vaan istun ja odotan. (I do not walk, but sit and wait.)

The negation is shown as a head shake during the sign KÄVELLÄ (walk).

The sentence can also include **a sign showing negation**. The place of signs showing negation can vary in a sentence. Often it is after the matter that is negated. Sometimes the place of the sign showing negation is affected by which matter is required to be emphasised. In some parts of signs showing negation includes referring to the time, place or how something was done.

For example:

MINÄ (I), SYÖDÄ (eat;1168), EI (no;954)

Kiitos, mutta en halua syödä. (Thank you, but I do not want to eat.)

The sentence is appropriate for a situation where the signer wants to refuse the food offered. The head shake is shown with the sign EI (no).

MINÄ, VALEHDELLA (lie;938), EI-KOKSKAAN (never;118), MINÄ

Or

MINÄ, EI-KOSKAAN, VALEHDELLA, MINÄ

Minä en valehtele koskaan. (I never lie.)

The head shake is expressed with the sign EI-KOSKAAN (never).

In Finnish Sign Language there is also a group of verb signs whose negative form differs from their affirmative form. The verb signs including negation are also generally connected with a head shake.

For example:

OS (pointing), EI-PIDÄ (do not like), MINÄ, OS (pointing)

En pidä siitä. (I do not like it.)

The negation is included in the sign EI-PIDÄ (do not like;944), in addition the signer shakes his head, screws up his eyes and wrinkles his nose. The pointing is directed to the referent talked about or a place in the signing space representing it. The pointing at the end may be omitted.

In an affirmative sentence *I like it* we would use e.g. the sign TYKÄTÄ (to be fond of;427) Other equivalent verb pairs are:

HALUTA (to want;49) – EI-HALUA (does not want; 290)

ON-NÄHNYT (have seen;783) – EI-OLE-NÄHNYT (have not seen;784)

OLLA (to be;250) – EI-OLE (it is not;251)

KYKENEE (to be able;1050) – EI-KYKENE (is not able;721)

Interrogative sentence

Interrogative sentences are divided into yes-no –questions, questions which demand a separate interrogative sign, and rhetorical interrogative sentences. With yes-no –interrogative sentences, we mean sentences where a YES or NO answer is expected. For sentences where there is a separate sign showing the question, the person asking is expecting a more detailed, longer answer beside a YES or NO. For rhetorical interrogative sentences, no reply is expected at all because they actually contain an argument or expression of feeling instead of a question.

YES-NO questions

In YES-NO questions, there is no separate question sign nor clearly marked signing order from which the sentence could be noted to be a question. The fact that it actually is a question can only be noted from the non-manual features: the area around the signer's eyes opens up, i.e. the eye brows rise and the eyes are big. The signer also bends forward a little, and the last sign in the sentence is left in the air, so that the hands stop in the signing space in that place where the last sign ended and are left suspended as if waiting for an answer.

For example:

ÄITI (mother;516), KOTI (home;161), OS (pointing)

Onko äiti kotona? (Is mother at home?)

During the whole sentence the signer's body is bent forward a little, the eye area is opened up and the final pointing at the end will remain in the air waiting for an answer. The pointing also shows that the person who asks is not at home, but somewhere else.

The sentence can also be signed without the pointing:

ÄITI (mother;516), KOTI (home;161), KOTONA (at home;184)

Onko äiti kotona? (Is mother at home?)

Without the pointing, the signed sentence in question indicates that the person asking is at home and wants to know if mother is also at home. A sign OLLA (to be;250) can also be added to the end of the sentence without the meaning of the sentence changing.

ÄITI (mother;516), KOTI (home;161), KOTONA (at home;184), EI-OLE (is not;251)

Eikö äiti ole kotona? (Is mother not at home?)

The sentence is negative-interrogative. During the sentence the signer is shaking his head, the facial expression is typical for YES-NO sentences, the verb will be at the end, which includes the negative clause. Instead of the KOTONA (at home;184) sign, there can also be pointing to home or a place which represents home. The pointing can also be at the end of the sentence.

In an interrogative sentence, the sign KOTI (home;161) needs a sign as its pair, which points to the place where home is. The pair sign can be either pointing or sign KOTONA (at home;184)

Interrogative sentence with an interrogative sign

When the sentence has a sign which shows the question, its place is either at the beginning of the sentence or both at the beginning and at the end. In addition to the interrogative sign, the signer's facial expression closes (the eye brows get nearer each other, the area of eyes is reduced), the face is pushed slightly forward and the shoulders may rise a little. The last sign of the sentence stays in the air waiting for the answer.

For example:

LAPSET (children;59), ITKEÄ (cry;681) MIKSI (why;615)

If the children are in sight of the signer, the signed sentence can also be like this (the pointing is directed towards the group of children):

LAPSET (children;59), OS (pointing), ITKEÄ (cry;681) MIKSI (why;615), OS (pointing)

Miksi lapset itkevät? (Why are the children crying?)

The signer's facial expression is reduced; the face slightly pushed forward during the whole sentence, and the last sign of the sentence is left in the air.

Rhetorical interrogative sentence

Interrogative signs can also exist in rhetorical interrogative sentences, in other words in interrogative sentences where an answer is not expected. Rhetorical interrogative sentences differ from other sentences which include an interrogative sign by use of non-manual features: the eyebrows rise and the eyes grow bigger (as opposed to sentences which include an interrogative sign) the face does not push forward and the shoulders do not rise. The rhetorical question is usually followed by a short break before the signer continues with his signing.

For example:

TÄNÄÄN (today;181), ILTA (evening;285), LUENTO (lecture;85), AIHE (theme;898), MIKÄ (what;614), LAPSET (children;59) TV (929), KATSELLA (watch;789)

Tämäniltaisen luentomme aiheena on lasten TV:n katselu. (The theme for tonight's lecture is children's TV watching.)

The rhetorical question arises from both the facial expression during the interrogative sign MIKÄ and in the subsequent short pause.

Conditional sentence

The conditional expression usually is usually at the beginning of a sentence. The marker for the conditional sentence can be sign EHKÄ, JOS (perhaps, if; 709) at the beginning of the sentence, but the conditional often comes up purely in the non-manual features; eyebrows rise and the face is pushed forward. At the end of the conditional sentence there is usually a short pause, and only then is it expressed what will happen if the condition is fulfilled.

For example:

HUOMENNA (tomorrow;573), SATAA (rain;1072), EI-VOI (cannot;721), UIDA (swim;217), MENNÄ (to go;73)

JOS (if;709), HUOMENNA (tomorrow;573), SATAA (rain;1072), EI-VOI (cannot;721), UIDA (swim;217), MENNÄ (to go;73)

Jos huomenna sataa, ei voi mennä uimaan. (If it rains tomorrow, one cannot go swimming.)

The eyebrows of the signer lift up and the face is pushed forward during the signs JOS; HUOMENNA and SATAA, after which there is a short pause. Then the sentence continues with a negative clause, where the head shake covers the signs EI-VOI, UIDA and MENNÄ.

Imperative sentence

In an imperative sentence, the order is expressed both in the verb and in the pointing added to the verb, in other words, in the imperative marker. Often the verb often is at the beginning of the sentence, and the pointing in connection with it is produced more intensively than a normal pointing. Before the verb there may also be signs pointing to time, such as PIAN (soon), HETI (at once;699), and NYT (now;180).

The imperative marker is directed towards the person who is being told and direction can be added in the way in which the imperative marker is used as to where the person in question should go in order to fulfil the order he has been given.

The imperative sentence includes also the following non-manual markers: the signer of the imperative sentence gives more intense eye contact to the person receiving the order, and possibly a slightly angrier facial expression when the forehead of the signer becomes slightly wrinkled.

For example:

NYT (now;180), SYÖDÄ (to eat;1168), OS (pointing)

Nyt syömään ja heti! (Come and eat right away!)

The pointing is directed towards the place of eating. The signs are made with a greater intensity and the face of the signer may be slightly angry looking.

Additional information:

Paunu, J: Viito elävästi 2, (1983), K.J.Gummerus Osakeyhtiön kirjapaino, Jyväskylä

Rissanen, T.: Viittomakielen perusrakenne, (1985), Helsingin yliopiston julkaisuja nro 12, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki

Valli, C. & Lucas, C.: Linguistics of American Sign Language, An Introduction, (1998), Gallaudet University Press, USA
Rissanen, T.: Suomalaisen viittomakielen lauseoppia, (artikkeli kirjasta Viittomakieliset Suomessa, toim. Malm, A.), (2000), RT_Print Oy, Pieksämäki
Jantunen, T.: <http://www.helsinki.fi/~tjjantu/syntaksi/> (3.4.2003)

VERB

In this section Finnish Sign Language verbs are discussed. Initially we will consider both the verbs which do not use space, and verbs which inflect after the object and subject. At the end of the paragraph, the inflection of verb signs is looked at following the character and length of the activity.

In sign language the verbs can be divided into four categories: verbs which do not use space, verbs which inflect after the object, verbs which inflect after the object and subject, and polysynthetic verbs. Next we will look at each group separately. Polysynthetic verbs have been discussed in paragraph “**Fixed sign or productively structured sign**”.

Verbs which do not use space

The place of articulation of the verbs which do not use space is almost always on the body of the signer. However, there are a few exceptions, such as the verb LAULAA (to sing).

The verbs whose place of articulation is on the body of the signer usually refer to the state of the body, feelings, activities or incidents. The actor or object of the activity does not affect the direction of the verb sign, which does not use space or the orientation of the hand.

For example:

HALUTA (to want;49)

PALVELLA (to serve;79)

MUISTAA (to remember;425)

Verbs which inflect after the object

The movement and/or orientation of the verbs, which inflect after the object, is always directed from the signer towards the activity or object of the activity. If the doing or activity is directed to something that already exists, the object is signed and sometimes placed in the signing space before the verb. If it is the activity that creates the object, the object is signed only after the action.

For example:

HUONE (room;343), OS (pointing), MINÄ (I), IMUROIDA (vacuum;533)

Imuroin tuon huoneen. (I vacuum that room.)

IMUROIDA (to vacuum) sign is directed to the direction where the room has been placed by pointing.

PAITA (shirt;983), OS (pointing), MINÄ, OSTAA (to buy;483), OS (pointing)

Ostan tuon paidan. (I buy that shirt.)

OSTAA (to buy) sign is directed to that direction where PAITA (shirt) has been placed by pointing.

MINÄ, SYTYTTÄÄ (to light), TULI (fire;128)

Sytytän tulen. (I light the fire)

Verbs which inflect after object and subject

Both the actor (subject) and object of the activity (object) appear from the movement and/or orientation of the verbs, which inflect after object and subject. Most often the subject and/or object are placed first in space, and then the verb is signed.

For example:

LÄHETTÄÄ (to send;1145) movement starts in that place of the signing space where the sender has been located, and the movement is directed/ends in that place of the signing space where the receiver has been located. If the sender is somebody else other than the signer himself, the sender is told and located in the signing space before the LÄHETTÄÄ (to send) sign. Often the receiver is located in the signing space before the verb is signed. The signer can himself also take either the role of the sender or receiver, when the sign is directed either from the signer towards the sender or receiver towards the signer. The hand orientation changes so that the opening hand (fingers) is directed from the sender to the receiver, or towards that place which represents the receiver.

Part of the verbs, which inflect after the object or subject, can be changed so that it may be seen from way the sign is produced whether there are numerous subjects.

For example:

LÄHETTÄÄ (to send;1145) is repeated so that the starting point of the movement moves, e.g. sideways each time, the ending point staying at the same point of the signing space.

Monet lähettivät minulle. (Many people sent me.)

Part of the verbs which inflect after the object and subject can be changed so that it can be seen from the sign whether there are numerous objects.

For example:

LÄHETTÄÄ (to send;1145) the movement can be

- repetitive, when the ending point of the movement moves every time, e.g. sideways
- a curving movement, when the end part of the movement changes into a curve

Minä lähetin monille. (I sent to many people.)

Part of the verbs which inflect after the object and subject can be changed, so that it can be seen from the sign whether the actor of the action and the object of the activity function reciprocally.

For example:

Both hands sign the sign LÄHETTÄÄ (to send; 1145)

- at the same time so that the movement of the signs is directed towards each other (opposite movement)

He lähettivät toisilleen yhtä aikaa. (They sent to each other at the same time.)

- in turns towards one another (alternate movement)

He lähettivät toinen toisilleen. (They sent to one another.)

Verbs which inflect after the object or subject are also called multi-directional verbs.

The character and length of the action in the verb sign

The verb sign can be inflected in aspect. With the verb inflected in aspect we show the character of the action and often also the length of the action. The verb can show what the action was like, how long it took, whether the action still is going on, or if it has already ended.

Activity is permanent

By inflecting the verb sign, we can show that a condition or activity has changed into being permanent, or is an activity which still continues. In such a case, the movement of the verb sign generally decreases, and the movement is repeated a few times (4-6 times). Often the body is bent

slightly forward and the facial expression reduces. In connection with the verb sign, the signs AINA (always;564) or JATKUVASTI (continuously;818) are also often present.

For example:

TE-KAKSI (you two), JO (already;219), NAIMISISSA (married;1208), KAUAN (long;617), JO (already;219), JATKUVASTI (continuously;818), RAKASTUA (fall in love;1143): the sign is repeated many times, whilst at the same time the movement of the sign decreases, and the facial expression reduces, TE-KAKSI (you two)

Vaikka olette olleet jo pitkään naimisissa olette yhä edelleen rakastuneita. (Although you two have been married for a long time, you are still in love.)

OMA (own;45), TYTÄR (daughter;275), AINA (always;564), ILOINEN (happy;173)

Tyttäreni on aina yhtä iloinen. (My daughter is always as happy.)

During the sign ILOINEN (happy) the facial expression reduces, the size of the sign movement decreases and it is repeated many times.

With some verbs the sign is stretched. By stretching we mean stretching the movement of the sign in stages to be longer. Thus the movement will not be repeated further.

For example:

ÄITI (mother;516), LIHAVA (fat;984): the movement of the sign moves by stages outwards from the signer's body

Äiti vaan lihoo lihomistaan. (Mother just keeps getting fatter.)

Action takes a long time

By inflecting the verb sign, we can also express that some actions take a long time. The movement of the verb slows down and is repeated a few times and the facial expression is reduced. Often the sign KAUAN (long time;617) is also added in connection with the verb.

For example:

KAUAN (long time;617), MINÄ, AJAA-POLKUPYÖRÄLLÄ (ride a bicycle;419), SAAPUA (arrive;311)

Pyöräilin pitkän aikaa ennen kuin olin perillä. (I cycled for a long time before I arrived at my destination.)

The sign AJAA-POLKUPYÖRÄLLÄ (ride a bicycle) is repeated a few times, the movement of the sign is quite slow and the facial expression reduces.

Action takes a very short time

By inflecting the verb sign, it is also possible to express whether an action or incident has lasted only for a very short time. The movement of the verb sign is fast, small and quite tense.

For example:

ODOTTAA (to wait;65), MINÄ, SYÖDÄ (to eat;1168): the movement changes to being small and fast

Odota siinä, mina syön nopeasti. (Wait there, I will eat quickly.)

Action is repeated, but at long intervals

If you want to express that the action happens repeatedly, but at long intervals, the movement of the verb sign is slow and steadily paced, and the movement is repeated a few times. Often the signer's mouth is slightly open and the cheeks puff out air.

For example:

SINÄ (you), MINÄ (I), TAVATA (to meet:703): the movement is repeated slowly a few times
Tapaamme silloin tällöin. (We meet each other once in a while.)

Action is repeated often

When you relate that the action has been repeated many times, the verb sign is repeated fast a few times. The movement of the sign also reduces slightly. Through the speed of the repetition the signer can express how often the action had been repeated in his opinion. The faster the repetitions are, the more often the action has happened.

For example:

SINÄ (you), MINÄ (I), TAVATA (to meet:703): the movement is repeated a few times, very fast, one after the other
Tapaamme hyvin usein or Tapaamme yhtenäin. (We meet very often or We keep constantly meeting each other.)

Action has ended

When you relate that some action has ceased, a sign indicating the ending will be added after the verb sign, such as VALMIS (ready:124) and LOPPU (end;115 and 140). Very often sign JO (already:219) is added to the sentence expressing that something has ended after the sign, which shows ending. Sometimes JO (already;219) can be used alone after the verb sign without the sign expressing the ending.

For example:

MINÄ (I), LUKEA (read;44), VALMIS (ready;124), JO (already;219) or MINÄ, LUKEA, JO
Olen jo lukenut sen. (I have already read it.)

Conclusion

The possible classification criteria for the verb signs introduced in this paragraph are not comprehensive. In addition, we have primarily introduced only the manual features of verb inflections. Non-manual features have not been dealt with as widely as they would have deserved.

Additional information:

Rissanen, T.: Viittomakielen perusrakenne, (1985), Helsingin yliopiston julkaisuja nro 12, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki

Kuurojen Liitto ry, Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus: Suomalaisen viittomakielen perussanakirja, 1998, Libris OY, Helsinki

Jantunen, T.: <http://www.helsinki.fi/~tjjantu/morfologia/> (7.4.2003)

ROLE SHIFT

Role shift in sign language has been depicted as a device whereby the signer is describing and relating events in a signed account from somebody else's viewpoint. The signer seems to be stepping into someone else's shoes or taking on somebody else's role.

Role shift exists when the signer relates real everyday events or when he describes fictitious incidents, for instance if he is telling a fairy tale. The signer usually takes the role of a living character included in the story (human being or animal), and relates the incidents from that character's viewpoint. The signer can also choose the viewpoint of a lifeless referent existing in the story, such as an aeroplane.

During one story the signer can take many different roles, and he can change from one role to another numerous times as the story is progressing. During one story the signer may describe the incidents in 2-4 different roles. Before the signer changes role, he gives a hint about whose role he is moving into. The hint can, for instance, be a sign referring to the new role (TYTTÖ girl; MIES man...) or simply pointing with G configuration, or a gaze towards the place where the living or lifeless thing in question has been placed before. After this, the signer moves into the role he has chosen and gives an account of the incidents from a different viewpoint.

Role shift is seen in the signer when his pose changes. The pose may change drastically, but often it is a question of a small and slight change. At its smallest, the alteration in pose can be seen only in the change of the gaze direction. At its greatest, the alteration in pose can be seen in the change of shoulder line, head and gaze direction.

If, for instance, there are two different sized discussion partners in the story (short and tall), the shoulder line and direction of the head change, so that in one role he has the left shoulder more forward than the right one, and at the same time the face has been directed to the right and slightly downwards (the taller of the discussion partners), and in the other role the directions are the opposite (the right shoulder more forward and the face directed to the left slightly upwards - the shorter discussion partner). In the example situation, the role shift at its smallest can be recognised simply by directing the gaze downwards to the right and upwards to the left.

For example:

MINÄ, TARVITA (to need;948), 20, EURO (N p.159), MINÄ,
ÄITI (mother;516), KIELTÄÄ (deny;919)

- *Tarvitsisin 20 euroa.* (I would need 20 euro)
- *En anna!* (I will not give you.)

In the beginning, the signer is in the role of a person asking for money when his gaze is towards the direction where the mother has been located earlier at the beginning of telling the story. Then, the signer gives a hint about the change of role by signing ÄITI (mother), after which the signer takes the mother's role (at the least the direction of the gaze will change and the shoulder line may also be directed from the mother towards the direction of the person asking for money) and signs the answer KIELTÄÄ (to deny;919) towards the direction of the person asking for money.

With the help of role shift, the signer indicates the place in which the referent exists in the signing space in relation to the other referents in the story, what the environment looks like from the viewpoint of the referent in question, and what referent itself is like. In other words, the signer functions in the same way as the referent whose role he has taken. Often this phenomenon has been described as the signer 'living' the role he has adopted.

Most often, role shift is used in common interaction situations. In very official sign language texts it is less used, and in an official TV news sign language text, role shift is not used at all.

Additional information:

Rissanen, T.: The Categories of Nominals and Verbals and Their in Finnish Sign Language (p.59-61), Licenciate work, Institute of General Linguistics, University of Turku, 1998

PLURAL FORM

By plural it is meant that there is more than one of something.

Pluralism in Finnish Sign Language is generally expressed by either repeating the main sign or adding a separate sign, which expresses pluralism. In some cases the plurality can be seen from the verb or context.

1. The sign is repeated

Pluralism can be expressed by repeating the noun sign (usually it is the movement of the sign which is repeated). Signs in this group consist of those whose place of articulation is in neutral space, and which do not include repeated movement.

If the noun sign is one-handed in singular form, it often changes into being two-handed in the plural form. Thus the non-dominant hand is copying the configuration and movement of the dominant hand. The number of repetitions is not clearly limited; generally the sign is repeated 2-3 times.

For example:

One-handed sign KUKKA (flower;1142) can be changed into plural expression KUKAT (flowers) in two different ways:

- 1) by repeating the sign one-handedly 2-3 times (at each repetition the place of articulation changes)
- 2) changing the sign into two-handed (non-dominant hand is copying the configuration and movement of the sign) and by repeating it 2-3 times (with each repetition the place of articulation changes)

When you want to express the relationships between the referents in addition to pluralism, the repetitions of the sign are e.g. placed in the signing space by imitating reality.

For example:

IKKUNA (window;688) KUKKAx (flower;1142)

When you wish to relate e.g. that there are flowers on the window sill, the sign KUKKA (flower) is repeated either one- or two-handedly, and the places of articulation of the sign are placed in the IKKUNA (window) sign where you wish the flowers to be (either in front or behind the window).

2. Separate sign expressing pluralism

The plural expression can be formed by attaching a sign expressing plenitude or frequency in front of or after the main sign. The plenitude or frequency can be expressed by polysynthetic signs, pointing, numeral signs or other signs referring to numbers.

A separate sign expressing pluralism is especially needed when the noun sign is tied to the signer's body, or when its movement in the singular form already has repetitive movement in it.

For example:

TYTTÖ (girl;947)

AUTO (car;406)

HEVONEN (horse;632)

The polysynthetic sign as expression of plurality

The plural form can be expressed by repeating the polysynthetic sign added to the main sign. The place where the polysynthetic sign is repeated in the signing space and how it is repeated (hand configuration, orientation of the hand, movement of the sign, non-manual features) carry a meaning.

For example: (KLx means that the polysynthetic sign referring to the book is repeated 2-4 times)
PÖYTÄ (table;263), KIRJA (book;220), KLx

The way in which the polysynthetic sign is repeated indicates in which position and how many referents there are. The above example sentence could be translated into Finnish in many ways dependent on how the repeated polysynthetic signs are placed according to each other. The possible alternatives may be the following:

Pöydällä on kirjoja pinossa. (There are books in a pile on the table.)

Pöydällä on kirjoja monessa pinossa. (There are many piles of books on the table.)

Pöydällä on kirjoja vierekkäin. (There are books next to each other on the table.)

Pöydällä on kirjoja pystyssä vierekkäin. (There are books standing upright next to each other on the table.)

Pöydällä on kirjoja pystyssä vierekkäin, mutta oikeasta laidasta on yksi kaatunut kumolleen. (There are books standing upright next to each other on the table, but one on the right has fallen over.)

Pointing as an expression of plurality

Pointing after the main sign can also express plurality. Thus by pointing, the group of referents is located in the signing space. There are at least two types of pointing, which here are called *pointing to a group* and *picked out pointing*.

Pointing to a group. Here we mean pointing whereby the forefinger of the dominant hand is pointing to a group or crowd of referents. The movement of pointing is a wiping direct movement or curved movement.

For example:

TYTTÖ (girl;947), pointing to a group

Tuolla on tyttöjä. (There are girls over there.)

In addition to plurality, pointing can also express where the group of girls is situated in the signing space in relation to the signer and to other referents which have been placed in the signing space.

By picking out pointing the referents are, as if picked out from a bigger group of referents or a larger entity. The picking is done by pointing out the referents one after another with the forefinger

of the dominant hand. The plural form expressed by picking out pointing also emphasises the fact that the ones which have been picked out by pointing are a minority in the group, and the majority of the group is something else.

For example:

LAPSET (children;59) pointing referring to the group, TYTTÖ (girl;947), picking out pointing *Lapsijoukossa on joitakin tyttöjä.* (There are some girls in the group of children.)

The signed sentence also includes that meaning that the majority of the children are boys, and that you want to emphasise especially the existence of a few girls in the group.

Sign expressing quantity or frequency in expressing plurality

A sign expressing quantity or frequency can be added in front of or following the main sign. Such signs are, for instance, all number signs and signs like PALJON (a lot;51), VÄHÄN (a little;924), LUKUISA (numerous;978), MONI (many;1020), RYHMÄ (group;1081) and HARVOIN (rarely;1191). Thus the main sign is often repeated 2-3 times. If the main sign cannot be repeated (if its singular form already consists of a repetition or it is tied with the signer's body), the repetition moves to the polysynthetic sign or verb signed after the main sign.

For example:

OS (pointing), KAKSI (two), TALOX (house;204), OS (pointing)

Or

OS (pointing), KAKSI (two), TALO (house;204), KLX

Tuolla on kaksi taloa. (There are two houses there.)

The latter sign language sentence clarifies with the help of polysynthetic signs where the houses are situated in relation to each other and/or other referents.

KÄYDÄ-JONKUN-LUONAX (visit somebody;649)

Kävin monta kertaa hänen luonaan. (I visited him many times.)

The repetition can also be directed each time to a different place in the signing space, when the meaning of the sentence is:

Kävin monessa eri paikassa. (I visited many different places.) or *Kävin useamman eri henkilön luona.* (I visited many different persons.)

Further information on the expression of numbers and quantities can be found in the first supplement to the Basic dictionary of Finnish Sign Language. More detailed bibliographical information can be found at the end of this paragraph.

3. Context expresses plurality

Sometimes the only mark of plurality is the context, i.e. the subject or sentence context. The plurality, which can be understood only in the subject or sentence context, has to be connected with such a generally known matter where the more probable alternative is the plural form, and where the expression of a matter or thing in a singular form is an exception.

For example:

PÄIVÄKOTI (daycare;224), OS (pointing), TYTTÖ (girl;947), POIKA (boy;508), AINA (always;564), TAPELLA (fight), LEIKKIÄ (play;426) YHDESSÄ (together;114), EI-OSATA (do not know how to;557)

Päiväkodissa tytöt ja pojat aina tappelevat, eivätkä osaa leikkiä yhdessä. (In the daycare facility girls and boys always fight and do not know how to play together.)

The plural form is already expressed in PÄIVÄKOTI (daycare) sign: all know that both in daycare provision and in school there are always numerous children and both girls and boys. If you wish to indicate that one boy and one girl fight, you must emphasise that this time, it is a question of only one and not many.

4. The verb expresses plurality

In Finnish Sign Language there are also some fixed verbs whose meaning always is in plural form.

For example:

KATU (street;193), SOTILAS (soldier;448), MARSSIA (march;1087)

Sotilaat marssivat kadulla. (The soldiers are marching on the street.)

Additional information:

Paunu, J: Viito elävästi I, (1987), Yhteistyö Oy, Helsinki

Rissanen, T.: Viittomakielen perusrakenne, (1985), Helsingin yliopiston julkaisuja nro 12, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki

Pimiä, P., Rissanen, T. Kolme kirjoitusta viittomakielestä, Helsingin yliopisto, nro 17, 1987, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki

Numeroita ja lukumäärien ilmaisuja, Suomalaisen viittomakielen perussanakirja, Täydennysosa 1, Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 121 ja Kuurojen Liitto ry, 2002, Libris Oy, Helsinki (includes both a book and a video cassette)

ABOUT COMPARISONS

The classification of comparison in Finnish Sign Language has mainly been produced by the HELY project. When we describe the comparative forms in Finnish Sign Language, we should not solely use the traditional terms such as comparative and superlative, because different comparative forms are expressed in more layers. Here we have tried to describe some ways to express comparison forms, which most clearly differ from each other. The description is not complete.

Common to all comparative forms is the fact that they are expressed with a single sign both in manual and non-manual features. In manual features, the intensity of the movement of the sign and speed increases, when one is told that something is more or less than something else. In non-manual features, the change takes place in the facial expression: e.g. when a comparison is made about something being small/little... in the comparison it is getting stronger, in other words the face appears to shrink and the mouth often gets tighter. When making comparisons with being big/more...the eyes grow larger, the mouth may open up or the cheeks puff up.

This description on comparative forms does not deal with the comparisons of colours (red, redder...)

1. The size or form of the sign will change

From signs whose place of articulation is not tied to the signer's body, and which seem to draw the form of the referent, such signs can be made into comparison forms by changing the size or form of the sign. The signs are produced in the signing space either following the real or imagined placement. However, the sign cannot be repeated endlessly in different sizes, with a maximum perhaps of 3-4 repetitions.

For example:

TALO (house;204), OS (pointing), TALO (house;204), OS (pointing)

Tuo talo on suurempi/pienempi kuin tuo toinen. (That house is bigger/smaller than the other.)

Or also

Talot ovat erikokoisia. (The houses are of different size.)

TALO (house) signs are produced in different sizes.

Signs whose place of articulation is on the body of the signer, signs which refer to a certain part of the human body, and signs which describe the form of the body can be made into comparative forms by changing the size or form of the sign.

For example:

ENSIMMÄINEN (first;N51), RASKAUS (pregnancy;950), VATSAN-MUOTO (describe the form of the stomach by hand), NYT (now;180), TOINEN (second;N51), RASKAUS (pregnancy;950), VATSAN-MUOTO (describe the form of the stomach by hand)

The meaning of the sign language sentence depends on what kind of form the hands have been drawing from the stomach. The possible translation alternatives are the following:

Tämän toisen raskauden aikana vatsani on suurempi kuin ensimmäisen aikana. (During this second pregnancy my stomach is bigger than during the first pregnancy.)

Ensimmäisen raskauden aikana vatsani oli paljon suurempi kuin tämän toisen aikana. (During the first pregnancy my stomach was much bigger than during this second pregnancy.)

Tämän toisen raskauden aikana vatsani on aivan erimallinen kuin ensimmäisellä kerralla. (During this second pregnancy my stomach is a completely different shape from the first time.)

2. Separate sign expressing the comparison

The comparative form can be expressed with a separate sign, which shows the comparative quality of the object. Thus changing of the size or form is left out or is expressed at the same time with the sign showing the comparative quality.

For example:

TALO (house;204), OS (pointing), PIENI (small), OS (pointing), TALO (house;204), OS (pointing), ISO (big;995), OS (pointing)

Tuo talo on suurempi/pienempi kuin tuo toinen. (That house is bigger/smaller than the other one.) or
Talot ovat erikokoisia. (The houses are of different sizes.)

TALO (house) signs can be signed together either in similar size or different size, the comparative form can be seen in the sign showing the comparative quality (PIENI small, ISO big).

Main signs, which have an iconic base, but which are not tied to the signer's body and which do not draw the form of the referent, need a separate sign in comparative forms, which expresses the comparative feature.

For example:

KIRJA (book;220), OS (pointing), grasp configuration, which describes the thickness of the book,
KIRJA (book;220), OS (pointing) grasp configuration, which describes the thickness of the book
Dependent on the distance between the thumb and forefinger in the grasp configuration there are the following translation possibilities:

Tuo kirja on paksumpi kuin tuo toinen. (That book is thicker than that other one.)

Tuo kirja on ohuempi kuin tuo toinen. (That book is thinner than that other one.)

3. Opposites

Comparative forms can be expressed by opposites so that two viewpoints are expressed from the same quality. In addition the signer can emphasise the viewpoint he has chosen by adding the sign KYLLÄ (yes;792) to it.

For example:

SOHVA (sofa;998), OS (pointing), KAUNIS (beautiful;361), OS (pointing), SOHVA (sofa;998), OS (Pointing), RUMA (ugly;861), OS (pointing) (KYLLÄ yes;972)

The following translation alternatives are possible:

Tuo toinen sohva on paljon kauniimpi kuin tuo toinen. (That sofa is more beautiful than the other one.)

Tuo toinen sohva on paljon rumempi kuin tuo toinen. (That other sofa is uglier than the other one.)

If you add the sign KYLLÄ (yes) in the example sentence, the meaning of the sentence will change slightly:

Kylläpä tuo toinen sohva onkin ruma tuohon toiseen verrattuna. (That other sofa certainly is uglier compared to the other one.)

4. Growth of facial expression and intensity

Sometimes the comparative forms are expressed solely through the growing intensity of facial expression and movement and the equivalent of the Finnish word in comparative form can be seen on the mouth.

For example:

HELLPO (easy;239), OS (pointing), HELLPO (easy;239), OS (pointing)

Tuo toinen on helpompi kuin tuo toinen. (That one is easier than the other one.)

The Finnish word figure equivalent *helpompi* (easier) is on the mouth of the latter sign.

The pointing shows which referent is indicated when the referents have already been placed during the discussion earlier in the signing space and thus they are already known by those who participate in the discussion.

If there are many referents, which are compared to each other, their stages of ease are expressed by increasing the intensity of the movement of the sign and strengthening the non-manual features.

5. Separate sign expressing comparative

The sign showing comparative (281, the latter picture+small movement upwards) can be added after the sign expressing quality, when the sign referring to the quality changes into comparative.

For example:

OMA (own;45), LAPSET (children;59), KAKSI (two;N3), HELPPO (easy;239), KOMPARATIIVIN TUNNUS (sign of comparative;281, the latter picture+small movement upwards), KUMPI (which one;790)

Kumpi lapsistasi on ollut helpempi? (Which one of your children has been easier?)

6. Separate sign expressing superlative

When you especially want to emphasise the superiority of some referent to the others, the sign ENSIMMÄINEN (first;N51) is added after the sign expressing the comparative quality. Thus it is not always necessary to refer to other referents in any way.

For example:

OMA (own;45), MIES (husband;1025), MAAILMA (world;338), KILTTI (good/nice;16), ENSIMMÄINEN (first;N51)

Mieheni on maailman kiltein. (My husband is the nicest in the world.)

ENSIMMÄINEN (first;N51) sign can also be used in connection with a sign expressing doing and action. Thus it emphasises the activity of doing, its preponderance of the other equivalent actions.

For example:

OMA (own;45), LUOKKA (class;370), VALEHDELLA (lie;938), ENSIMMÄINEN (first;N51), KUKA (who;37)

Kuka on luokkasi kovin valehtelija? (Who is the best liar in your class?)

NEW SIGNS

By new signs we mean signs which have been created during signing to refer to such referents which at the time did not have a commonly used sign or whose sign the signer did not know and which subsequently were established in general use. The classification of new signs presented here is based on the minutes of the Finnish Sign Language Board meeting held in February 2001.

In Finnish Sign Language new signs can be created in numerous different ways. In addition, some new signs can be seen to belong to more than one of the groups presented here. In the minutes of the Sign Language Board there are at least 11 ways in which new signs can be created.

It would be preferable if a new sign could always follow the structure of Finnish Sign Language signs when it comes to configuration, movement, place of articulation, and orientation, as well as non-manual features.

1. Polysynthetic signs, i.e. the classifier formations

Signs belonging to this group are created through metaphor. Thus the sign describes the form, size, combination, way of functioning or way of handling. When this kind of new sign changes into a fixed sign, it can function as a part of a compound sign or form it totally.

For example:

KÄNNYKKÄ (mobile phone;872)

The sign describes how a mobile phone is held in the hand during the call.

2. Conversion

Conversion means a change to the sign, which functions as polysynthetic predicate, to form a noun. At the same time, the sign changes into a fixed sign, its form (place, movement, facial expression) is neutralised, and a Finnish word lip-pattern is often initiated on the mouth.

For example:

Turn the key in the lock – AVAIN (key;529)

Hit with an axe – KIRVES (ax;141)

Fly by an aeroplane – LENTOKONE, LENTO (aeroplane, flight;918)

Comb – KAMPA (comb; sign not in the dictionary)

3. Derivation

A new sign is formed by changing the form of the existing sign, i.e. by subtracting and/or adding something from/to the sign

For example:

HENKILÖ/HÄN (person/S/he is added on the verb)

RAKENTAA (to build;256) – RAKENTAJA (builder;256)

In the article 256 in the Basic Dictionary of Finnish Sign Language the sign is translated into Finnish by rakentaa (to build) and rakentaja (builder). A sign HENKILÖ/HÄN (person/s/he) can also be added to the sign RAKENTAA (to build) and then the meaning is RAKENTAJA (builder).

Numbers and signs expressing numbers can be added in the orientation, movement or place of signs, which indicate buildings, prices or hours. Covering examples and further information can be found about the addition of numbers and quantities in the first supplement to the Basic Dictionary of Finnish Sign Language.

4. Incorporation

Compound signs are created by combining, usually, two signs. Combining three words is exceptional. Compound signs can also be borrowed from Finnish.

For example:

MUSTELMA (bruise) = MUSTA (black;2) + the sign drawing the area of the bruise

VUOROKAUSI (24 hrs) = PÄIVÄ (day;223) + YÖ (night;165), the order of the sign can also be the other way round

5. Borrowing

a) Citation borrowings

Signs which are directly borrowed from other sign languages are called citation borrowing. Such borrowings are, for instance, the signs for many countries and foreign cities.

b) Special borrowings

Signs which have been borrowed from other sign languages, and whose form has partly been changed are special borrowings.

For example:

HETERO (S48) (hetero on the mouth) is a direct borrowing from ASL sign STRAIGHT (the mouth movement is different from the FiSL HETERO sign)

c) General borrowings

A completely adapted borrowing into Finnish Sign Language from another sign language is called general borrowing.

c) Translation borrowings

Translation borrowing is formed by translating the word or sign from source language into target language so that the structure of source language is kept. In Finnish Sign Language translation borrowings usually are borrowed from the spoken language.

For example:

TIETOKONE (computer;4)

TEKSTIPUHELIN (text-telephone;910), signs are also used in opposite order from that which is described in the basic dictionary, in addition a translation borrowing is used for text-telephone, which is formed of signs TEKSTI (text;964) + PUHELIN (telephone;909)

6. Abbreviation

In Finnish Sign Language, for instance, initialised signs have been formed by abbreviation.

For example:

All signs for weekdays

7. Terming

The new sign can also be a sign borrowed from the standard language, which is taken as a term for professional term. Such phenomenon is called terming.

For example:

NÄKKILEIPÄ (ryecrisp;274) – DISKETTI (diskette;274)

8. Enlarging the meaning of existing signs

The new sign can also be created by enlarging the meaning of the existing sign. In Finnish Sign Language the different meanings of such signs can usually be seen on the mouth of the signer, which mainly follows the Finnish word lip-pattern

For example:

SUUNNITELLA (to plan;807) other translation equivalents are TEKNIikka (technology), INSINÖÖRI (engineer), JÄRJESTELMÄ (system), HANKE (project), TAKTIikka (tactics), the used lip-pattern usually confirms what the meaning of the sign is

9. Paraphrasing an explanation into a sign

For example:

PYYHE (towel;166)

10. Fingerspelling

The new sign can also be created by fingerspelling a whole word or so that the fingerspelling changes or crystallises into a sign. In changing/crystallising, the movements of fingerspelling can change and part of the fingerspelling can be omitted.

For example:

WC (toilet;1122)

TAKSI (taxi;928), the sign is formed from two so-called old handalphabet: T and X. The handalphabet X did not change in TAKSI sign, although Finland changed to using the so-called new handalphabet in the 1960's.

11. Made-up words

New signs, which are not based on any other model are rare.

Additional information:

Numeroita ja lukumäärien ilmaisuja, Suomalaisen viittomakielen perussanakirja, Täydennysosa 1, Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 121 ja Kuurojen Liitto ry, 2002, Libris Oy, Helsinki (includes both a book and a video cassette)