Are We DONE Yet?
A corpus-based analysis of DONE as a sentence-boundary diagnostic in DGS
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Motivation
• How can we identify sentential boundaries in natural conversations in German Sign Language (DGS)?
  • Prosodic ([3],[4]), propositional [3], and syntactic-semantic diagnostics [9] all have limitations when analyzing spontaneous conversations and narratives, e.g. in corpora.
  • Some manual signs frequently occur in sentence-initial or -final position and could help predict sentential boundaries.

The Public DGS Corpus
• Contains annotations for manual signs and time-aligned German translations. Translations were produced mostly by DGS interpreters instructed to follow the source text closely and to use short sentences.
• Does not contain continuous syntactic tagging.

Data preparation
• We included 2540 tokens from the Public DGS Corpus [8] in the analysis.
  TTs with n tokens of a target sign were included n times in the analysis.
• Not included in analysis:
  Single-sign TTs
  TTs longer than 17 signs (> 1.5 of IQR)
  Aborted sentences

Further analysis
Follow-up question:
Is each use of DONE equally likely to occur sentence-finally?
175 TTs (length: 4-10 signs) were selected at random for further analysis. We identified the following two uses of DONE1/2/4:

1. Sentence-final focus marker
   WORD KNOW YOU D-E-R DIE A-S DONE T-H-E DONE4
   ‘They have no words like ‘der’, ‘die’, or ‘das’, only ‘the’.

2. Non-final aspect marker
   DONE1B TO-WAIT1A DONE1B CL:shake-someone UP-OFF
   ‘When she was done, she waited for a while and then she shook the two of them awake.’

3. Sentence-final discourse marker
   ID/VISA RIDDLER WITH DONE1B OUT DONE4
   ‘They checked all your documents and the visa, and then you were allowed to go back.’ [end of story]

Discussion & Conclusion
All DONE?
• The multifunctional signs DONE4 and (to a lesser extent) DONE1/2 may help identify sentence boundaries in DGS.
• Some functions of these signs are associated more strongly with sentential boundaries than others:
  • Final: Restrictive focus & discourse marking
  • Initial: Emerging temporal conjunction or temporal adverbial clause

On TTs
• Our analyses revealed that some TT-final or -initial tokens should be re-analysed as belonging to the following or previous DGS sentence.

References:

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