



The Center for Gesture, Sign, and Language presents:



Donna Jo Napoli (Swarthmore College)

The drive for ease of articulation in sign languages and repercussions for the lexicon and for historical linguistics.

Thursday, October 27, 3:30-5:00pm

Neubauer Collegium, 5701 S Woodlawn Ave., 1st floor

To RSVP, click here: <https://cgsl.wufoo.com/forms/rsvp-for-cgsl-fall-colloquium/>

Sign languages exhibit a drive for ease of articulation in the movement parameter by reducing active effort via several mechanisms, including reducing the number of articulators, the number of articulations, and the mass that is moved. They also exhibit the drive by reducing reactive effort -- which is the effort to resist incidental movement of a body part caused by movement in another body part; for example, the swinging of an arm can cause the torso to rock or spin. Avoiding signs that would call for reactive effort turns out to have an effect on the shape of the lexicon. Finally, in reconstructing the history of a sign language, recognition of biomechanical methods for reducing effort allows one to develop standards for judging whether the movement parameter of signs in different languages can be judged "the same" or not.

Influence of predicate sense on sign order: Intensional and extensional verbs

Friday, October 28, 12-1:30pm

Rosenwald Hall 329, 1101 E 58th St.

To RSVP, click here: <https://cgsl.wufoo.com/forms/rsvp-for-cgsl-fall-workshop/>

Studies in 2012 and 2014 of non-signing speakers of Turkish and Dutch found that when they were given images of people performing intensional and extensional acts and asked to gesture them for others, they placed the "object" before an extensional "verb" but after an intensional "verb". We repeated this experiment, using the same prompts, for signers of Libras (of Brazil) and found the same results with strong statistical significance. We consider two possible accounts, one based on heaviness of the verb (defined morphologically -- and this is a factor that others have proposed triggers object fronting) and one based on the sense of the predicate. In the second account, word order reflects the order in which we visualize the objects -- as existing before the act or only coming into existence (or recognition, as in the case of perception verbs) after the act. We conclude that the semantic one is superior in being more explanatory and in generalizing to gesture.

Free and open to the public. ASL-English interpreting will be provided. Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this event should contact Laura Tharsen at ltharsen@uchicago.edu. Organized by [The Center for Gesture, Sign, and Language](#) with support from the [Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society](#) and the [Department of Linguistics](#)