Metaphorical height contrasts across sign languages and in cross-signing

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"Is space used to convey valence across sign languages?"

Data & Methodology

Dataset 1
786 property signs (positive vs. negative)
27 sign languages

Dataset 2
15 mins of cross-signing
(NGT ~ Chinese SL)

Analyses
Manual/automated
sign height and movement directions + stats and plots

In the language sample, movement in signing space is associated with valence (pos vs. neg):
- Upwards = positive
- Outwards = positive!

Supports the idea of spatial metaphors in language!

Directions movements are relevant

Vertical contrasts in cross-signing

Positive

Good, happy, alive, ...

Negative

Bad, sad, dead, ...

In cross-signing, height is used for metaphorical contrasts such as:
- Age
- Quantity
- Valence

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References