Semantic micro-variation in distributive marking in Highland Mayan Sign Language

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Strategies of distributivity marking

Share-marking on verbs and numerals: *(The distributive share is 'what's distributed')*

(1)   a.   Xe'in-chap-<u>ala'</u> ri   umuli'.   (Kaqchikel)
                 INFL-grab-DIST the rabbits
                 I grabbed each rabbit.

       b.   Xeki-chap <u>öx-öx</u>   umili'.
                 INFL-grab three-DIST rabbits
                 They each grabbed three rabbits.
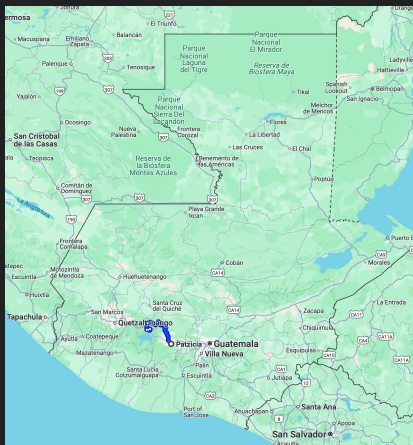
Strategies in sign languages:
     - Movement over an area of space, reduplication, alternating hands. Can be combined.
     - So far, no full compositional analyses at a sub-lexical level.

Highland Mayan Sign Language:
     - Similar strategies, but lots of semantic variation.
     - Micro-variation can help us understand the semantic contribution of each element.

Highland Mayan Sign Language

- A language (or group of languages) used by deaf people and the people they interact with in Indigenous Maya communities in Highland Guatemala.

- No previous work on the grammar of HMSL
- The present results are based on two field trips that included production and comprehension tasks with 23 signers.

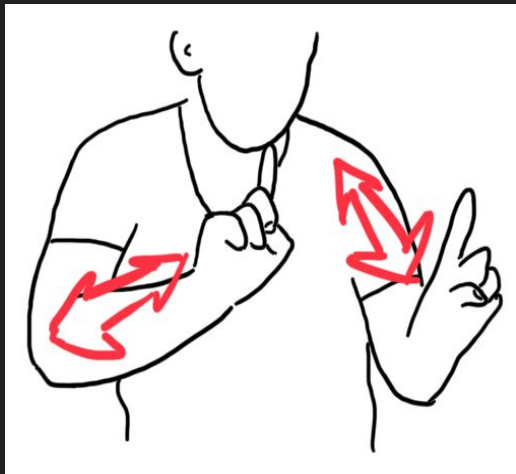# (Singular) agreement of numerals in HMSL
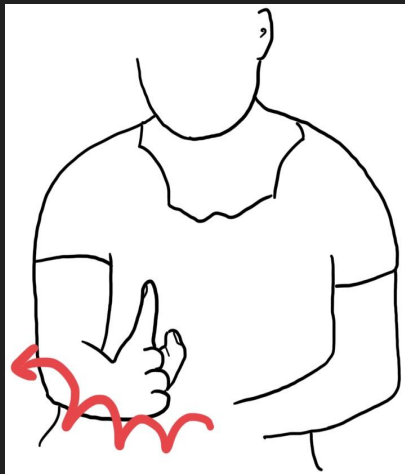
"N-for-i"

"Two (boxes) for you"
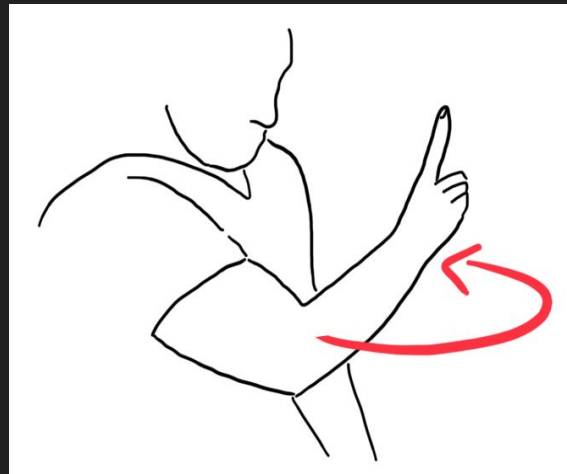

"Two (people) for that box"

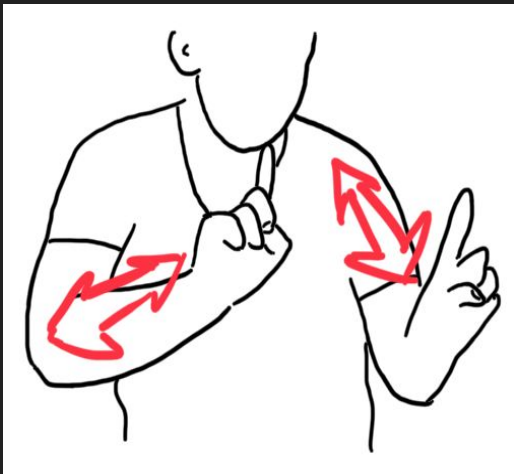# Distributive marking in HMSL

ONE-alt

ONE-arc-punct

ONE-arc-non-punct

Distributive marking in HMSL

ONE-alt

Observation 1:

- '-alt' inflection also appears on verbs and nouns.
- For urban sign languages (notably French SL), VERB-alt requires distribution with respect to the thematic role of an event.

Claim:

- 'N-for-i' adds thematic structure to a numeral
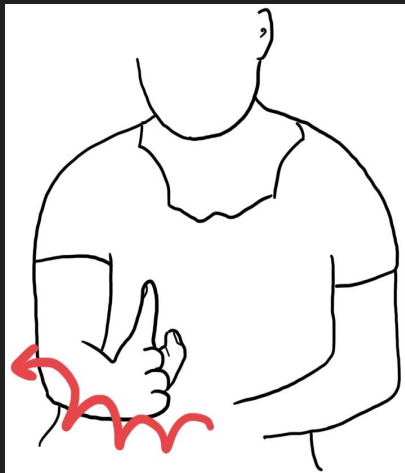- ONE-alt is compositionally built from 'N-for-i' + '-alt'

Distributive marking in HMSL
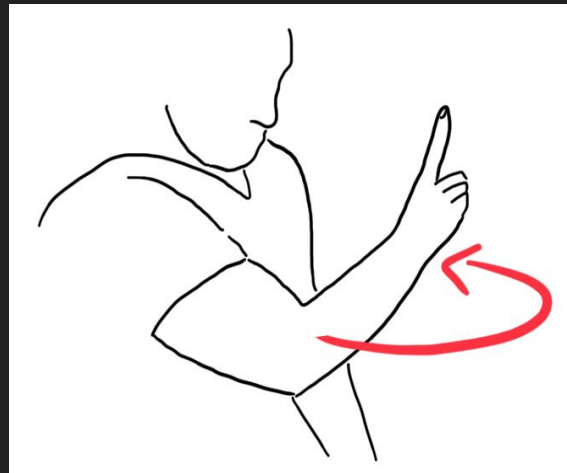
Observation 2:

- Non-punctuated arc movement shows variation in its interpretation.
- In a comprehension task, signers evenly split (50-50 distributive vs. collective)

Claim:

- '-arc-punct'   ≈ 'every'
- '-arc-non-punct' ≈ 'all'

ONE-arc-punct

ONE-arc-non-punct

For more, come see our poster!