

Phonological concerns in using ASL Signbank to represent usage in the ASL communities

Julie A. Hochgesang, Gallaudet University

The ASL Signbank is a cloud-based lexical database for American Sign Language (ASL) modeled on existing signbanks for other signed languages such as Auslan, British Sign Language, and Dutch Sign Language. These signbanks are used to store identifying glosses (“ID glosses”) or textual labels for conventionalized or “lexical” signs. The ASL Signbank has been created primarily to support annotation of ASL videos to make them machine-readable. Each ASL Signbank entry (representing a single sign in ASL) also contains information about the sign itself such as phonological and morphological properties. All of the entries are organized via lemmatization principles. In my presentation, I will describe in more detail just how these entries are organized by discussing our lemmatization practices and issues. I will also detail descriptions of each ASL Signbank entry, focusing on phonological description. I will close with reflection on some ongoing issues of such organization or application, especially considering the impacts of our choices in representation in usage, text and beyond.