Scope-taking strategies and the order of clausal categories in German Sign Language

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The scope order of clausal categories has been claimed to be universal. In this talk we adopt a universalist cartographic approach to clausal syntax. By discussing several CP-internal categories (e.g., speech-act markings, evaluation, epistemic modality, or scalarity), IP-internal categories (e.g., volition and deontic, as well as other kinds of modality, or several outer aspects), as well as VoiceP-internal categories (lower aspectual categories such as frequentative aspect II or celerative aspect II) we illustrate a striking regularity in strategies of scope-taking in German Sign Language (DGS): The wider/higher the scope of a clausal operator is, the more likely its expression will occur with a high body part by way of layering. Namely, descending from the eyebrows to the lower face, tentatively to the shoulders, and finally switching to manual expressions. For intermediate operators a left-to-right concatenation strategy is employed, lower categories are expressed by way of a manual right-to-left concatenation strategy. The lower aspectual categories find layered expression within the manual sign. Hence, we propose a highly regular natural mapping of the scope-order of clausal categories onto the body. This sort of mapping can also be observed in other sign languages and may turn out to be universal.