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Do Sign Languages Have Imperatives? Examining Some Constructions in Three Sign Languages

In this presentation I discuss sign language constructions that express different modality flavors (e.g., commands, advice, pleas) and look like the following: GO HOME!. Although such examples in the previous literature have been suggested to belong to the imperative clause type, similarly to the spoken language data, the lack of clear morphological and syntactic evidence poses some strong challenges. I bring together new data from three sign languages (Greek (GSL), German (DGS) and American Sign Language (ASL)) and explore the question of whether the signed modality has a distinguished clause type for the expression of imperative meanings similar to spoken languages.