Methodology of the typological study
TYPOLOGICAL PARAMETERS:

attributive vs. predicative possession

possessor and possessum

‘have’-construction vs. ‘belong’-construction

alienable vs. inalienable possession

DATA COLLECTION

*A.1.1 What are the possible word orders?

[ ] pron - poss
[ ] poss – pron
[X] pron - poss – pron
[ ] poss – pron – poss
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COMPARISON WITH SPOKEN LANGUAGE DATA

INDUCTIVE GENERALISATIONS
Data

- 32 sign languages
- Data from fieldwork within the Sign Language Typology Group
- Work with co-researchers
- Very few published materials
- Methodological innovation: Work with standardised elicitation materials
“Picture comparison game”
“Family tree game”
The structures in the domain of possession in sign languages
Two case studies:

Ugandan Sign Language
Kata Kolok, Bali
Ugandan Sign Language

- Two sets of possessive pronouns
- 'have'-construction, with spatial inflection
- Two signs for negative possession
Possessive pronouns
Existential with spatial inflection
Negative possession

CHILDREN PA
'I don't have children (at the moment).
IX:2 COME PA WHY?
'Why didn't you come yesterday?'
*TIME PA

IX:1TIME NONE
'I have no time.'
CHILDREN NONE
'I don't have children (and I never will).'

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Kata Kolok

- No possessive pronouns
- (Almost) no possessive constructions (location, existence and possession express in the same way)
- Sign GOOD can express possession
- No special sign for negative possession.
IX:B BORN FEMALE TWO
'I have two daughters.'

IX:2 COW IX:location?
'Do you have cows there? Are those your cows? Are your cows over there?'

IX:B MARRY FEMALE GOOD / CRAZY
'I have a wife. She is crazy.'

RICE NEG
'There is no rice. I/we/they have no rice. It's not rice.'
Typological summary: Sign languages

- Three handshapes used in possessive pronouns: A, B, V
- Interesting distribution of V-handshape across sign languages: France, Turkey, Greece, Brazil, Mexico
- Many East Asian sign languages have no possessive pronouns
- Many spatial inflections with possession.
- Often complex differences in meaning with different signs for possession.
- Illnesses, “pain” etc are often not expressed as possession.
- Possession of abstract and concrete items may use different structures.
**Typological summary: Signed and spoken languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken languages</th>
<th>Sign languages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close association between existence and possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equivalent patterns for predicative possession (‘have’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>various morphological structures, incl. affixing</td>
<td>mainly spatial or isolating morphology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many complex language-specific peculiarities in individual structures (e.g. selectional restrictions)</td>
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</tbody>
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→ There is little evidence for a unified sign language type. Sign language structures in this domain differ radically from each other. A specific sign language may resemble a specific spoken language more than another sign language.