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Lithuanian Sign Language: Expressing Artistic Texts

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PREFACE

Tai ir yra mes.
Čia mes atrasti.
Žemė čia su mumis
vis kyla ir kyla į kalną.

Ant kalno rugiai –
apsikabinam ir laikomės.
Atrodo, kad jau iš krūtinių
čia pateka saulė.
<...>
Justinas Marcinkevičius „Mes“, 1980

It was none other than the community of Lithuanian Deaf signers that led me onto the path of doctoral studies – a community which, even in the darkest periods in Lithuania (and indeed across the world, particularly in Europe), never ceased to use Lithuanian Sign Language (LGK), to preserve it, and to create authentic and original artistic texts in LGK. In doing so, they have transmitted sensitive histories, authentic experiences, and a profound vision of the world from one generation to the next, thereby shaping an important part of linguistic and cultural heritage. I have always regarded the community of Deaf signers – and especially those who create artistic texts – as lighthouses. It is they, the authors, to whom I am sincerely and immeasurably grateful for enabling this work to become a dissertation. This community, and in the context of this study, the creators-authors of artistic texts, are lighthouses that illuminate even the darkest paths, sharing the light within their hearts with those who lack it. A recurring metaphorical motif – sign language is the language from the heart for the eye – appears in more than one artistic work by Lithuanian Deaf signers. It is that same *sun rising from within the chest*. Through their texts, creators reveal numerous themes, experiences, worldviews and perspectives that unite and connect us all. They share *the mountains they climb* each day, that which connects Deaf signers across the world, as well as what is uniquely Lithuanian. To me, these works are often guiding lights, illuminating with such clarity that these texts are about all of us – that they are us. *This is indeed us.* I embarked on the path of doctoral studies out of a love for languages, for community, and for science, as well as out of curiosity and a sincere desire to understand. Once I began to understand,

I could not keep it to myself; I believe that engaging with authentic artistic LGK texts will awaken in each of us a different understanding of LGK and encourage a sense of responsibility to contribute, through everyday actions, to the understanding, care, and continued relevance of this language – fostering not a fragmented but a consistent, personal, and political commitment to it. All of this is equally meant for the community itself. The preparation of such a study is by no means an easy journey. It can only be accomplished with the support of a large team. I am deeply grateful to the wider community for undertaking this journey together. First and foremost, I extend my gratitude to the community of Lithuanian Deaf signers – for creating, researching, nurturing, and living through LGK. I thank the creators-authors of artistic texts for their rich creativity and for enabling this research, as I could spend countless hours analysing these works: Nijolė Karmazienė, Arnoldas Matulis, Arūnas Bražinskas, Nina Šamakova, Justina Čiplytė, Lijana Čiplienė, Erika Jočytė, Larisa Voroneckaja, Andžėjus Voroneckis, Karolis Pilipavičius, Auksė Šidlauskė, Vilius Glušokas, Rūta Mingailaitė, Paulius Jurjonas, Lea Milašauskė, Adas Aužbikavičius, Greta Damševič, Donatas Kolosovas, Lukas Gužauskas, Gabrielius Katakinas, Marija Rimkutė and Marius Andrijauskas. I also thank the emerging generation of creators whose works are not included in this study. I am especially grateful to the cameraman, Linas Miskelis, whose work made it possible to record a substantial part of the artistic texts in such high quality. I am deeply grateful for his dedication, care, and invaluable contribution to preserving these works. I am profoundly grateful to the creator and source of inspiration, Debbie Z. Rennie, whose valuable insights greatly contributed to addressing the central research question of this dissertation. I am also deeply grateful for the wisdom she generously shared – not only about sign language literature and art, but also about life.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the entire team of the Sign Language Research Centre at Vilniaus Kolegija (University of Applied Sciences) for their support, guidance, and encouragement, and especially for the highly valuable insights and discoveries shared by Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva, Nijolė Pivorienė, and Mantrimas Danielius. I am grateful to my very first teachers at Vilniaus Kolegija, particularly Tomas Ivanauskas, who guided me and continues to guide me along the path of this language.

This work would not have been possible without the academic community. I would like to thank Professor Dr Rachel Sutton-Spence for opening entirely new horizons in my understanding of artistic texts and for revealing a new perspective on a truly fulfilling life rooted in authenticity, contentment and a profound sense of happiness. I am also very grateful to Professor Dr Vadim

Kimmelman for the enriching collaboration, our joint research, and the invaluable knowledge he has shared, as well as for his constant support and guidance. Our collaboration has allowed me to grow as a sign language researcher. I am deeply grateful for his wisdom and advice, both throughout my academic journey and in life. Our joint research has provided highly valuable insights for both the study itself and the organisation of the research process, while also offering a clear direction for future research. I wish to express my special gratitude to my Scientific Adviser, Professor Dr Loreta Vilkienė, for her constant support, sincere guidance, and insightful advice, for the countless hours and generous attention she has devoted to this work; and for her significant contribution to shaping ideas, insights, and discoveries into this dissertation, as well as for fostering my growth both as a researcher and as a more confident and fulfilled person. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Emerita Dr Meilutė Ramonienė for her valuable insights, guidance, and encouragement throughout this journey.

I thank the Department of Lithuanian Studies at Vilnius University for its consistently warm support and valuable direction. My sincere gratitude also goes to Professor Dr Daiva Aliūkaitė for her unwavering support, professionalism, and her broad, respectful perspectives on the Deaf signing community. I am also grateful to Dr Birutė Gudelienė, Secretary of the Doctoral Committee of the Faculty of Philology, for her sincere support and assistance with administrative matters related to my doctoral studies.

I am especially grateful to the First Lady for initiating a new tradition of presenting LGK literature and art at the Presidential Palace, for nurturing and sustaining it, for making these artistic works visible and accessible to the wider public, and for helping to establish it as a lasting tradition. I am deeply grateful to the team at the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania for embracing and nurturing this idea and for their sincere contribution to bringing it to life – especially Mindaugas Bundza, Vaida Budzevičienė, Vygailė Vilčiauskaitė, and Jaroslavas Bogdzevičius. I am also grateful to the team for ensuring that the major LGK literature and art events "Gyvenu ir jaučiu gestais" (*Live and Feel Through Signs*), held as part of the *Poetry Spring* Festival, were recorded.

I am also deeply grateful to the Lithuanian Writers' Union, especially Birutė Jonuškaitė and Vitalija Maksvytė, for their support of LGK literature and for helping to make it visible within the broader literary and cultural community. I also thank Janina Rutkauskienė and Indrė Valantinaitė for their contribution to the *Poetry Spring* Festival and, in particular, to the "Gyvenu ir jaučiu gestais" (*Live and Feel Through Signs*) events.

My sincere gratitude also goes to everyone involved in the project “Mes taip nesitarėm” (*Not What We Agreed*), which gave rise to many of the artistic works analysed in this dissertation. I am grateful to all those who, over the years, have contributed to making artistic LGK texts visible and to supporting the work of their creators – from policymakers to artists.

I am grateful to the translators and editors who helped bring this dissertation to completion on time: in particular, my sincere thanks for the immense professional contribution and exceptionally warm support to Dr Armandas Rumšas and Associate Professor Dr Justina Urbonaitė, as well as to Neringa Kaluinienė and Karolina Sadauskaitė-Varnelė. I am sincerely grateful to the external reviewers, Dr Fernanda de Araujo Machado and Associate Professor Dr Jurgita Astrauskienė, for their valuable comments, careful reading, and thoughtful guidance, all of which have significantly contributed to improving this dissertation.

Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to my family – my parents, my sister, my dear parents-in-law, my friends, my three children, and my beloved husband, Audrius, the greatest harbour in life’s storms.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SL – Sign Language

LGK – Lithuanian Sign Language

CL – classifier

VV – visual vernacular

CV – Computer Vision. Computer Vision is a field of artificial intelligence that trains computers to interpret and process visual information from the world, identifying patterns, objects, and structures in images or video streams (Szeliski 2010). This tool is also used by linguists.

ELAN – *EUDICO Linguistic Annotator*. It is a professional multimodal annotation program (video, audio) developed by the Max Planck Institute (The Language Archive) in Nijmegen, The Netherlands (Tacchetti 2018). ELAN has been utilised to analyse language, gesture, and various types of video and/or audio recordings (Zheng & Peng 2022: 469). This program is actively and widely used by sign language linguists to annotate sign language texts on various scientific topics.

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INTRODUCTION

Sign languages, including Lithuanian Sign Language (hereafter, LGK) which is the focus of this dissertation, are recognised as natural (Aarons 1994, Neidle et al. 2000, Valli & Lucas 2000, Meir & Cohen 2018, Danielius 2004, Sandler & Lillo-Martin 2006, Pfau et al. 2012), fully-fledged (Beermann et al. 1997, Emmorey 2001, Pfau et al. 2012), complex and independent (Pfau et al. 2012) languages. These are, in most cases, the primary languages used by Deaf signers. Through sign languages (hereafter, SL for singular and SLs for plural), Deaf[1] signers[2] acquire knowledge, receive and share information, and express themselves (cf. Teresė 2018). SL is thus an indispensable part of the identity of the Deaf signers' community worldwide (Emmorey 2001), and the background of the linguistic and cultural 'world' of the Deaf population (Ladd 2003). Simultaneously, in multiple cultures, as well as in academia, the term *signers* (*gestakalbiai* in Lithuanian) has become increasingly established,

[1] This dissertation follows the convention established by scholars such as Carol Padden, Tom Humphries (1988), Paddy Ladd (2003), and others, of capitalising the term *Deaf* to distinguish it from the audiological condition denoted by *deaf* (a person who is deaf or hard of hearing). The capitalised form, *Deaf*, emphasises a cultural and linguistic identity, referring to the sign language, the community of Deaf signers, and Deaf culture. Accordingly, this dissertation adopts a cultural-linguistic rather than a medical or audiological perspective on deafness.

[2] This term is used with the objective to dissociate from the disability of hearing as sign language is used by deaf individuals, weak-of-hearing, those who became deaf in their lifetime, and also hearing individuals (Pečiulytė-Silaeva 2022: 4). In other words, signers are those individuals who use sign language, regardless of their capacity to hear (or the remaining ability to hear). It is frequently highlighted that signers are, by default, bilingual, and that they communicate by employing bimodal communication (Webster, Safar 2020: 118; Emmorey, Borinstein, Thompson, Gollan 2008). In other words, signers know and actually use two languages and are usually competent in two languages of different modality, i.e., sign language and oral language (as used in writing). This dissertation adopts the view that the Deaf constitute a linguistic and cultural community and are understood from a linguistic and cultural rather than a medical or audiological perspective. In Lithuania, where this research was conducted and this dissertation was written, there is not yet an established convention of capitalising the term *Deaf* to denote a cultural and linguistic community rather than an audiological or medical perspective of deafness. Instead, the term *deaf signers* is becoming increasingly common. In the Lithuanian context, *signers* refer to individuals whose primary, or one of their primary, languages is LGK, and whose identity is associated with LGK and the Deaf cultural community. Accordingly, the term *Deaf signers* is used throughout this dissertation as the primary designation. Where the context is clear or where particular linguistic or cultural aspects are emphasised, the terms *Deaf* and *signers* are also used separately.

reflecting the recognition of SLs as independent, fully fledged languages that coexist with all other languages of the world, such as French and English.

All of these are important reasons for promoting SL research which began in the 1960s in the USA[3] and, "[s]ince the 1980s, linguistic analyses of more and more SL have been carried out, including languages from South Africa, Nigeria, Sweden, Belgium, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, England, Quebec, Mexico, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Brazil, Argentina, Japan, Taiwan, Bali, Australia, New Zealand, India/Pakistan, and Israel" (Taub 2001: 223). Other SLs such as German Sign Language, etc. have been analysed as well. Early linguistic research on SLs aimed to dispel the prevailing misconceptions about these languages (Taub 2001) and set out to demonstrate their equivalence to spoken languages (Pfau et al. 2012). SL researchers have analysed various aspects of SL, including its grammar, lexicon, and the phonological and morphological structures of signs (Stokoe 1960, 1980; Liddell & Johnson 1989, and others), non-manual elements (Herrmann & Steinbach 2011; Wilbur 2000; Meir & Sandler 2008; Pfau et al. 2012), metaphors (Wilcox 1993; O'Brien 1999; Wilcox & Jarque 2000; Taub 2001, and others) and other aspects. When SLs were recognised as full-fledged, independent languages, as noted by William Stokoe – who is considered to be a pioneer in SL scholarship – "<...> something more than a language emerged from underground. A language does not just provide a community of users with a way to communicate; it preserves their memories, encapsulates their hopes and desires, and safeguards their values – all the more so when its use involves art" (Stokoe, as cited in Dirksen et al. 2006: xiii). Deaf individuals frequently employ artistic texts in SL as a key medium to articulate their communal and personal stories, as well as their worldviews. Not long after the commencement of the research mentioned above, an analysis of Deaf folklore began to emerge (Rutherford 1987; Carmel 1996). Consequently, the broader subject of SL literature was raised (Kelleher 1986; Frishberg 1998; Bahan 1993, 2006b; Dirksen et al. 1998; Bauman et al. 2006; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016, etc.; for more coverage on this aspect, see Section 1.3.1.), and research on various types of artistic SL texts has begun to emerge.

[3] Dr. William C. Stokoe, a pioneering scholar in sign language research, was a prominent figure at Gallaudet University where he began his ground-breaking work on sign languages. His early studies and publications underscored that the American Sign Language (ASL) – and, by extension, all other sign languages – possesses an independent linguistic structure that is distinct from, yet equivalent to, that of spoken language.

Artistic texts in SL are a key component of the Deaf signing community's linguistic and cultural heritage (Peters 2000). They are artistic works created and performed by Deaf individuals (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 4) in various SLs around the world. Texts created in SL can be of various types and take various forms, including storytelling, which forms the foundation of SL literature (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 44); SL poetry, which consists of visual and artistic compositions achieved through gestural, plastic, and rhythmic body movements (Teresė 2018). Rhythm in SL artistic texts arises from patterned movement, including variations in timing, repetition, and intensity, while rhyme is created through the repetition of phonological parameters such as handshape, movement, location, and the use of space[4] (Teresė 2021). Another form of linguistic art, which is currently gaining global popularity and recognition within the Deaf community, is Visual Vernacular (hereinafter referred to as VV). This unique expression employs a variety of techniques to create striking visual imagery (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 61); it is characterised by the use of highly expressive body movements, facial expressions, iconic gestures, and cinematic elements (Asmal & Kaneko 2020: 491). Regarding the analysis of artistic texts in SL, it has been observed that researchers tend to devote significant attention to SL poetry (see Section 1.3.2.) as well as other associated aspects of poetic expression, including the analysis of rhyme. Among the first researchers to delve into SL poetry were Edward S. Klima and Ursula Bellugi (1979), Clayton Valli (1993), Brianne Brown (2001), Michiko Kaneko (2008, 2011), who, together with Rachel Sutton-Spence, conducted the most extensive studies (2001, 2003, 2005) on this topic; also, Sutton-Spence cooperated with Donna Jo Napoli (2010). Scholars have already attempted to examine various elements which are present in artistic SL works, including the mechanisms that produce rhyme in SL poetry, such as symmetry and neologisms; the employment of ambiguity, metaphors, and allusions; the inclusion of non-manual elements; lyrical subjects and objects; and anthropomorphism – i.e., all aspects that render the text artistic have already received some attention in academia. Other aspects investigated include the techniques employed for poetic effect, features of the text's openings and closings, themes, and so on. It is important to emphasise that only a very limited number of researchers

[4] The examination of sign language poetry, which is the subject of research in this thesis, extends to linguistic play found in sign language (Sutton-Spence 2005): ABC stories, number stories, and narratives crafted through selected handshapes. These linguistic games, while recognised, fall beyond the scope of this thesis and are briefly addressed in Section 1.3.1, only insofar as they are relevant to this thesis.

worldwide specialise in the study of artistic texts in SL and are familiar with their specific characteristics. The most prominent scholars devoted to studying artistic texts in SL are R. Sutton-Spence (2005, 2007; the researcher also published works in collaboration with Kaneko in 2007, and 2016). Other major works deserving the highest acclaim have been written by M. Kaneko (2008, 2011, and in collaboration with Sutton-Spence in 2012 and 2017, also in collaboration with Mesch 2013). A highly valuable research project was the publication by Sutton-Spence and Ronice Muller de Quadros (2005); also noteworthy are the works by Ben Bahan (2006), E. Klima and U. Bellugi (1979), as well as Sarah Taub (2001). The research methodologies and insights of these scholars form the theoretical foundation of the present PhD thesis, which **focuses on artistic texts and their expression in LGK**. In this work, the terms 'artistic texts' or 'SL literature', including LGK literature, denote various forms of artistic works conveyed through SL, distinguished by their rich layers of meaning and an abundance of diverse artistic expressions[5].

Novelty and relevance of the topic

The currently existing research on artistic texts in SL is scarce. In Lithuania, scholarly investigation into this area is still in its early stages of development. An initial exploration of this field was undertaken in 2018 by the author of this dissertation during the preparation of her Master's thesis at Vilnius University (Teresė 2018). Before that, no studies had been conducted in Lithuania on this topic. This dissertation represents the first comprehensive work to examine the expression of artistic texts in LGK. Consequently, this study is especially novel and relevant for several reasons, which are outlined below:

Artistic texts expressed in LGK have not yet undergone systematic scientific analysis and description, which makes this study novel within the context of LGK research.

Artistic LGK texts provide insight into the authentic experiences and perspectives of Deaf signers. The lack of systematic collection and analysis of these works may lead to an incomplete understanding of the worldviews of the Deaf signing community in Lithuania, as conveyed through their specific artistic methods and thematic choices, which may also result in communication and comprehension challenges within and beyond the Deaf signing community.

[5] For additional details on artistic texts in SL, including forms of expression and means of artistic expression, refer to Sections 1.3 and 1.5.

The importance of systematically collecting, documenting, and preserving SL literature is also reflected in international practice, particularly in the compilation and study of national literary anthologies (Clark 2009; Machado 2017; Sutton-Spence & Machado 2023; Sutton-Spence et al. 2020). Such initiatives contribute to the preservation and recognition of the literary heritage of Deaf signers and provide an important basis for documenting the development and distinctive features of literary traditions in different Deaf signing communities.

Research on SL literature has been shown to challenge negative attitudes towards SL and Deaf people, particularly in contexts where these languages are associated with low prestige (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 8). It has also revealed the rich and varied linguistic heritage of the Deaf community, highlighting the need to recognise SLs as fully expressive languages (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 9). In this respect, the analysis of artistic LGK texts has the potential to challenge misconceptions about LGK[6] and to promote further scientific research, which remains limited.

Research on artistic texts in LGK is also relevant in the broader context of SL studies from a socio-cultural perspective. Each language, including LGK, is inherently connected to a specific culture (Evans & Green 2006), and this relationship is manifested through expressive means such as metaphor, neologisms, non-manual features, and symmetry, which reflect culturally specific norms, values, and ways of thinking. In this sense, language encapsulates cultural identity. As the cultures of Deaf signing communities differ significantly worldwide, it is essential to investigate the different SLs in order to assess the extent to which findings are transferable across contexts and to identify both shared and language-specific features (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: xx). The findings of this dissertation may therefore contribute to comparative research on artistic expression in SLs and serve as a resource for further studies on the socio-cultural characteristics of the LGK community.

[6] Despite the absence of research on the prestige of LGK in Lithuania, the observations made by the author of this dissertation – stemming from active engagement with the Deaf community and Deaf individuals – indicate a noticeable awareness of this issue among the Deaf themselves. Notably, spoken Lithuanian continues to dominate in schools for the Deaf, where teachers either lack proficiency in LGK, or use it sporadically and to a minimal extent. Deaf individuals frequently encounter poor-quality translations, and there is a near-total lack of research into their language. Additionally, the inappropriate and offensive term ‘deaf-mute’ is still erroneously used in reference to Deaf individuals in Lithuania, perpetuating attitudes of pity and ignorance towards the Deaf community.

Additionally, the study seeks to identify features distinctive to LGK and to explore whether such features are also present in the artistic texts of other SLs.

This dissertation introduces a novel methodological approach to the analysis of artistic LGK texts by applying *Computer Vision* (hereafter, CV) tools, specifically *MediaPipe Holistic* and *OpenFace*. The suitability of this method was verified through a pilot study conducted as part of an international scientific collaboration and subsequently applied in an extended analysis. This extended study also combines quantitative analysis based on CV with qualitative investigation through a focus group, thus contributing to the methodological development of research on artistic expression in SL.

Specifically, the **object** of this PhD thesis is artistic texts in LGK, with a focus on the expressive means through which the aesthetic and emotive functions of the language are realised.

Aim and objectives of the research

Previous studies by various researchers have described a broad range of expressive means used in artistic SL texts. Against this background, the present dissertation is guided by the broader research question of what makes an LGK text artistic. Given the breadth of these expressive means identified in previous research, it was beyond the scope of a single dissertation to investigate all of them systematically. Therefore, it was necessary to decide which expressive means would be examined in this dissertation. This decision was informed primarily by the analytical framework presented by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), which remains the most comprehensive and up-to-date overview of artistic expression in SL literature, while also taking into account the aims and methodology of the present research. Accordingly, it was decided to examine global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, neologisms, non-manual elements, and symmetry.

The **aim** of this study is to explore, based on the analysis of artistic LGK texts, how global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, and neologisms, as well as non-manual elements and symmetry, are manifested in LGK texts, how these means are created, and what meanings and functions they convey. To accomplish the aim of this research, the following objectives have been established:

1. To systematically synthesise previous research on artistic expression in SL artistic texts in order to establish the theoretical framework for the analysis of artistic LGK texts.

2. To collect a sample of research materials composed of artistic LGK texts created and performed by native Deaf users of LGK between 2017 and 2025[7], as well as of retellings of these artistic texts.
3. To prepare the research material for analysis by standardising the visual conditions of the recordings and eliminating sound elements irrelevant for this research (for more information, see Section 2).
4. To conduct a qualitative analysis of the research material – artistic LGK texts – by annotating them in ELAN and to identify global metaphors in order to establish what determines their emergence.
5. To carry out a qualitative analysis of the research material by using ELAN, focusing on metaphors at the phonological level, and to determine how these metaphors are created.
6. To perform a qualitative analysis of artistic LGK texts by using ELAN, focusing on neologisms, in order to determine how they are formed and what functions they perform in artistic expression.
7. To prepare research materials for quantitative analysis by using *Computer Vision* (CV)[8] tools: for the pilot study, using CV MediaPipe Holistic, 10 records (5 artistic LGK texts and 5 retellings) were employed; for the extended study, using CV MediaPipe Holistic and OpenFace, 24 records (12 artistic LGK texts and 12 retellings) were employed.
8. To conduct a pilot quantitative analysis using the CV MediaPipe Holistic tool to evaluate its suitability for identifying differences between artistic LGK texts and their retellings, with particular emphasis on non-manual elements and symmetry.
9. To conduct a comprehensive quantitative analysis using CV tools MediaPipe and OpenFace in order to identify differences between artistic LGK texts and their retellings according to predefined criteria, with particular emphasis on non-manual elements and symmetry.
10. To conduct a qualitative analysis by recruiting a focus group and conducting focus group discussions to analyse the CV results in order to interpret the data gathered during the quantitative analysis, and to establish what functions of artistic expression are performed by the identified parameters in artistic LGK texts in comparison with their retellings.

[7] For additional details regarding the process of material collection and the criteria for selection, please refer to the section titled *Data and Research Methodology*.

[8] For more on the software which has been used in the research, see Section 2.2.2.

Theoretical and practical value of the study

The research conducted in this dissertation provides substantive theoretical and practical contributions to the study of artistic LGK texts. It offers a systematic account of the expressive means employed by Deaf signing creators and examines how artistic expression is structured in LGK. By comparing LGK with other SLs, the study contributes to broader research on SLs. The findings are also of practical relevance to researchers and practitioners, particularly regarding the interpretation and application of artistic expression. The dissertation also provides an in-depth analysis of the mechanisms underlying the creation of specific artistic devices. Furthermore, it juxtaposes the expressive means found in LGK with those identified in artistic texts of other SLs. Consequently, this research into the expressive means of artistic LGK texts contributes to the broader body of research on artistic texts and expressive means in SLs globally. The analysis presented in this thesis not only aligns LGK studies with their international counterparts but also enriches existing research in this domain. Additionally, the material is of considerable value to generalists in the field of SL research as it encompasses descriptions of means of artistic expression, thus affirming the study's unequivocal practical relevance.

The present thesis explores *neologism constructs*, in which cinematographic means are employed. Such constructs, although they are observed in artistic texts in other SLs, have never been systematically explored and discussed in the scholarly literature, and therefore the present research may encourage and provide a stronger foundation for further investigation. Hence, this research may prompt scholarly exploration of these constructs and their expression in artistic SL texts.

In addition, this dissertation contributes to the methodological advancement of SL research by integrating CV tools into the analysis of artistic LGK texts. In collaboration with Prof. Vadim Kimmelman (University of Bergen, Norway), the suitability of the MediaPipe Holistic tool for analysing artistic LGK texts was first examined through a pilot study, and, following its validation, subsequently applied in a comprehensive analysis. The combination of quantitative CV-based analysis with qualitative investigation through a focus group provides a novel framework for examining the functions of expressive means in SL. This approach demonstrates the potential of CV methods for the analysis of artistic and non-artistic texts in other SLs, thereby opening new directions for future research in this field.

This research is also of high relevance to Lithuanian society because LGK is an inherent part of Lithuania's linguistic and cultural heritage. This is the SL of Lithuania, used exclusively within the Lithuanian Deaf signing community by its members. Therefore, research on LGK is endowed not only with linguistic, but also with broader cultural and societal significance. In this thesis, LGK is analysed not from the perspective of translation and interpreting, but as an independent language with its own distinctive forms of artistic expression and unique structure. In this way, this thesis contributes to the development of LGK research as well as to strengthening the perception of LGK as a full-fledged language not only within academia, but also in the broader public sphere.

The analysis of artistic texts in SL is relevant and valuable to the Deaf signing community, as such works are closely connected with identity, culture, and self-expression, contributing to a sense of pride in their language, heritage, and identity (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 9, 20). In the Lithuanian context, the limited accessibility of original artistic LGK texts restricts their visibility and transmission. This dissertation addresses this gap by analysing how Lithuanian Deaf artists convey their worldview through artistic LGK texts.

At present, Deaf children in Lithuania receive only partial exposure to artistic texts in SL, and particularly to original artistic LGK texts. Educational practices rely primarily on translations from spoken languages and on written Lithuanian texts, with insufficient attention to original artistic expression in LGK. This dissertation draws attention to this imbalance and contributes to addressing it by supporting the integration of original artistic LGK texts and creative language use into educational contexts, thereby fostering creativity, self-expression, and identity development (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 20), as also illustrated by individual experiences of Deaf children[9].

Interpreters of LGK often lack sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge of artistic means of expression in LGK, making it challenging to render artistic expression accurately during interpreting. In Lithuania, training materials have been developed to support interpreter qualification, primarily focusing on the interpretation of idiomatic expressions, phraseology, and

[9] Smith and Sutton-Spence (2007) discuss a narrative in which a Deaf individual's experience is presented: as a child, he predominantly engaged in vocal speech and lip-reading during school hours, which led him to identify as an *oral deaf* person. However, his participation in after-school activities, where he created narratives in SL, profoundly influenced his self-perception. During these activities, he felt an authentic connection to his identity as a *Deaf* person (Smith & Sutton-Spence 2007).

terminology (Barisevičius et al. 2010; Čereškaitė et al. 2014). However, these materials do not sufficiently address the recognition and interpretation of artistic means of expression in LGK, particularly regarding the use of original artistic language. This dissertation represents an initial step towards addressing this need by offering insights into the interpretation of artistic expression and contributing to a broader understanding of the Deaf signing community from linguistic and cultural perspectives.

As previously noted, the scarcity of research on artistic LGK texts has contributed to the marginalisation of the Lithuanian Deaf signing community by leaving one of its principal modes of self-expression unrecognised and inaccessible to hearing individuals[10]. During the period of preparing this dissertation (2018–2025), the author of the dissertation initiated the preparation of a number of publications, contributed to the development of methodological tools[11], established international collaboration in this field, and ensured the continuation of projects involving artistic LGK texts. The dissertation material and the research findings can be valuable for educating the public about the culture of the Lithuanian Deaf signing community, LGK, and its linguistic and cultural heritage in various ways and forms, as has already been demonstrated during the preparation of this dissertation.

There is great potential to further develop research on and the promotion of the language and culture of the Deaf signing community. For instance, an online platform could be created, containing video recordings of artistic LGK texts along with descriptions of these texts in spoken language; events could also be organised to display artistic LGK texts, where artistic translations of these texts could be presented by literary scholars, poets, and others in spoken language, as well as through adapted musical solutions aimed at enhancing accessibility for hearing audiences[12].

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[10] In the autumn of 2021, *Judesys* (Movement), an artistic work by the Deaf artist Larisa Voroneckaja, was premiered in Lithuania. The presentation aimed to acquaint the public with Lithuanian sign language literature and its modes of expression. The execution of this project involved the author of this thesis, who conducted a detailed analysis of the work, focusing on its genre, style, and semantics. The originator of the idea of this project and its chief executive was Dovilė Baliukevičienė.

[11] The teaching resource called *Aš ir gestų kalba* [“Sign Language and Me”] (2021) has been designed for Deaf students in grades 5–6: https://www.emokykla.lt/skaitmenines-mokymo-priemones/priemones/priemone/333.

[12] The author of this thesis is a literary curator of the international project “Not What We Agreed”; in the course of developing this project, six artistic LGK texts were created. These artistic texts were also supplemented with artistic renderings in oral

Research material and methods

The research was conducted from 2017 to late May 2025. In total, 57 artistic texts were collected, together with their retellings[13]. The latter are presented to facilitate a better understanding of the content of the artistic texts and the means of artistic expression involved; they are not analysed independently of the original artistic versions. In the research, their analysis is only implemented when employing the *CV MediaPipe* tool. For more information on the research material, the selection criteria employed, etc., see Sections 2.2.2.1.1.1, 2.2.2.1.1.2 and 2.2.2.1.2.

The present research employed the following methods (covering both quantitative and qualitative approaches): Objectives 4, 5 and 6 of the thesis were implemented by employing *ELAN*. The conducted qualitative analysis (see Section 2.2.1.) involved the analysis of 57 artistic texts to identify global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, and neologisms. This analysis sought to answer the following questions: 1) what determines the emergence of global metaphors, and what global metaphors are created? 2) how are metaphors at the phonological level created, and what are they? 3) how are neologisms (as means of artistic expression) created and rendered, and what artistic functions do they perform in artistic texts?

In cooperation with Professor and SL researcher Vadim Kimmelman of the University of Bergen (Norway), it was realised that the pursuit of the aim of this thesis could be further advanced by investigating the research material (in this case, including both the artistic versions and their retellings) employing the CV tool(s) (to be described specifically in Section 2.2.2.). Thus, a subset of this material, consisting of 10 video recordings (5 recordings of artistic texts and 5 of retellings), was analysed using the MediaPipe Holistic tool, thereby fulfilling Objective 8 of this research, namely, to conduct a pilot quantitative study using the CV MediaPipe Holistic tool in order to examine the differences between artistic LGK texts and their retellings. This stage of research sought to evaluate the suitability of the tool for analysing artistic SL texts by examining hand activity, symmetry, body leans, and eyebrow movements. This pilot research resulted in the following scholarly publication: Kimmelman, V., Teresė, A. 2023. In implementing Objective 9

(i.e., spoken) Lithuanian and with a musical soundtrack. These works represent part of an audiovisual album: https://en.dominykasvaitiekunas.lt/mestaipnesitarem/albumas

[13] For a detailed description of the research material, including the artistic texts, their retellings, and the selection criteria, see Section 2.1.

of this thesis, i.e., to conduct a comprehensive quantitative analysis using CV tools in order to identify differences between artistic LGK texts and their retellings according to predefined criteria, the pilot study employing the MediaPipe Holistic and OpenFace tools was extended. At this stage, 12 artistic texts along with their 12 retellings (24 video recordings in total) were explored to identify differences in manual and non-manual kinematic features and to determine how these differences contribute to making a text artistic. In other words, this stage of the research sought to answer the question of what makes a text artistic by examining symmetry, hand activity, body leans, eyebrow movements, eye aperture dynamics, and eye gaze activity. Having conducted the analysis, an intermediate conclusion was drawn that the results were similar in the two cases and, therefore, a decision was made not to compare all the retellings with their artistic originals, but instead to limit the analysis to the established number of artistic works and their retold versions rather than analysing the entire sample of the collected material.

The analysis of the means of artistic expression identified during the quantitative research was conducted by an international focus group (for more information on this point, see Section 2.2.2.1.2.3), thereby fulfilling Objective 10 of the thesis, namely, to analyse and interpret the CV results through focus group discussions and to establish the functions performed by the identified parameters in artistic LGK texts in comparison with their retellings. Two online meetings were held with the focus group, during which the means of expression were named and their significance and function(s) in artistic texts were discussed. In other words, the focus group contributed to establishing how these means, i.e., specific non-manual elements and symmetry, contribute to the creation of artistic expression. This extended research (like the pilot study), conducted in collaboration with Prof. Vadim Kimmelman, forms part of the present thesis (see Section 3.5). This study is also presented in a co-authored scholarly article by Teresė and Kimmelman, which is currently under review in an international peer-reviewed journal.

Statements to be defended

1. Global metaphors in artistic LGK texts are systematically derived from the following recurring thematic fields: *language, values, and communication; social prejudice and ignorance; identity and cultural belonging* or *in-betweenness; resistance and social struggle; Deaf culture and community; Deaf identity and experience; sensory worlds;* as well as from *universal and existential themes.* These thematic fields

are not local or accidental; rather, they represent a broader field of artistic expression in SL commonly observed in Deaf signing communities across various countries. Furthermore, global metaphors are most commonly grounded not in a single isolated topic but in the interaction of several thematic layers, allowing for the creation of a continuous, multi-layered artistic structure.

2. *Neologism constructs* in artistic LGK texts are among the most complex means of artistic expression in LGK. In artistic texts, these constructs function as an independent tool for creating artistic imagery and may also be employed to create metaphors. Furthermore, neologism constructs can serve as a central means of artistic expression within a particular work, organising its entire visual structure while highlighting the originality of the author's style and revealing the symbolic meaning of the text as well as the cultural worldview of a Deaf signer.
3. In artistic LGK texts, authors systematically employ non-manual elements as means of artistic expression, whereas the broader use of non-manual elements, i.e., a wider range of hand, shoulder, and upper body movements is perceived as *sonority*, or, more precisely, *visual sonority*. The way in which visual sonority is employed in artistic SL texts is a feature observed exclusively in artistic texts.
4. In artistic LGK texts, *embodiment*, understood as the 'incarnation' of characters, objects, and phenomena, is a means of artistic expression that contributes to the artistic quality of a text and allows artistic texts to be distinguished from non-artistic texts.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of three parts: the theoretical, methodological, and research sections. The theoretical part begins with an overview of SL and the linguistic and cultural perspective of the Deaf signing community. This is followed by an overview of the concept of SL literature, including the question of defining SL literature and artistic texts. The thesis offers an overview of the themes, protagonists, and symbolic motifs represented in artistic SL texts. This part also features an overview of research on artistic SL texts. Afterwards, attention is shifted towards the object of this thesis, namely, the means of artistic expression manifested in artistic SL texts. In the course of this overview, extensive coverage is provided for metaphors at the global level, metaphors at the phonological level, neologisms, non-manual elements as a means of artistic expression, and the use of symmetry.

Meanwhile, Section Two of the thesis focuses on the research methodology. This section describes the collection and compilation of the research corpus. It also provides a description of data preparation for the subsequent stages of the study. The section on methodology also introduces the research tools, i.e., ELAN, CV MediaPipe Holistic and OpenFace, as well as the members of the focus group and some specific aspects of the analysis conducted by this group.

Section Three of this thesis is devoted to analysing the means of artistic expression in artistic LGK texts, notably, global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, and neologism constructs. This section of the thesis addresses the questions of how these means are created, what they are, and what artistic expression they create in artistic works. It then presents the results of the analysis conducted using the MediaPipe Holistic tool and examines whether this tool is suitable for academically grounded and valid research on artistic LGK texts. The chapter subsequently discusses the extended study, which combined the CV tools with focus group discussions (their findings provided a basis for the qualitative research). Hence, this extended research answers the question about the functions performed by the means of artistic expression identified in the course of the research – i.e., non-manual features and symmetry – in an artistic text. This section provides extensive coverage of the means identified in the research sample, notably, embodiment and visual sonority.

The final chapter presents the conclusions of the research, the limitations of the analysis, its potential drawbacks, and avenues for further scholarly research. It also includes a list of references containing 241 entries. The thesis contains two appendices. The main body of the thesis includes 6 tables and 63 figures.

Approbation of the research

The following articles have been published on the basis of the dissertation research:

1. Teresė, A. 2022. *Lietuvių gestų kalbos poezija: gesto lokalizacija kaip metaforos raiškos priemonė* [Lithuanian Sign Language Poetry: Location as Mean of Expression of Metaphors]. Taikomoji Kalbotyra, *17*, 9–37. https://doi.org/10.15388/Taikalbot.2022.17.1
2. Kimmelman, V., Teresė, A. 2023. *Analyzing Literary Texts in Lithuanian Sign Language with Computer Vision: A Proof of Concept*.

In R. Galimullin & S. Touileb (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 5th Symposium of the Norwegian AI Society* (NAIS 2023) (Vol. 3413, pp. 1–14). CEUR Workshop Proceedings. Retrieved from https://ceur-ws.org/Vol-3431/paper5.pdf

3. Teresė, A., Kimmelman, V. 2026. *Analyzing Lithuanian Sign Language literature with Computer Vision and Focus Group: Embodiment and Prosody as Artistic Devices in Sign Languages.* Sign Language and Linguistics, John Benjamins Publishing Company. Publishing in progress.

Papers presented in conferences and seminars based on dissertation research:

1. *Vyrų ir moterų kalbinė raiška lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijoje* [Male and Female Linguistic Expression in Lithuanian Sign Language Poetry]. Socforumas. May 18, 2019. Molėtai Municipality, Lithuania. [The paper was presented as: Linguistic Expression of Male and Female Creators in Lithuanian Sign Language Poetry]. Paper presented in Lithuanian.
2. *Meninės raiškos priemonių atpažinimo, interpretavimo ir vertimo problematika lietuvių gestų kalbos vertėjų darbe* [Challenges in Recognition, Interpretation, and Translation of Artistic Expressions by Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreters]. Taikomosios kalbotyros konferencija Kalba ir žmonės: komunikacija daugiakalbiame pasaulyje. Sept 27, 2019. Vilnius, Lithuania. Applied Linguistics Conference *Language and People*: *Communication in a Multilingual World*. Paper presented in Lithuanian.
3. *Metaforos lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijoje: atpažinimo, interpretavimo ir vertimo problematika* [Metaphors in Lithuanian Sign Language Poetry: Problems of Identification, Interpretation and Translation]. International conference *Bridges in the Baltics*. Oct 22, 2019. Riga, Latvia. Paper presented in Lithuanian/English.
4. *Lietuvių gestų kalbos poezija: plaštakos lokalizacija kaip metaforos raiškos priemonė* [Lithuanian Sign Language Poetry: Location as Mean of Expression of Metaphors]. Jaunųjų tyrėjų tarptautinė mokslinė konferencija. May 13, 2021. Online; International Conference of Young Researchers.
5. *Lithuanian Sign Language: The Phenomenon and Features of Visual Vernacular*. 8th International Baltic Student Conference *Bridges in the Baltics*. October 2021. Vilnius, Lithuania.

6. *Lithuanian Sign Language Literature: Metaphors at the Phonological Level.* Conference *of Young Sign Language Linguists – CYSLL.* Apr 28, 2022. Czech Republic (online); Paper presented in International Sign.
7. *What do the Deaf People Speak about in Artistic Texts in Lithuanian Sign Language and how do They Do it?* 9th International Baltic Student Conference *Bridges in the Baltics*. Sept 23, 2022. Warsaw, Poland.
8. *Is There Rhyme in Sign Languages?* International Conference of Applied Linguistics at Vilnius University Languages and People: Problems and Solutions. Sept 26, 2022. Vilnius, Lithuania (also online). Paper presented in International Sign.
9. *Figures of Speech in Lithuanian Sign Language. SILC* (Sign Language, Interpreting, Linguistics and Communication) seminars. Apr 28, 2023. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. Bergen, Norway, Paper presented in International Sign.

Publications related to the dissertation topic and research dissemination:

A compilation of artistic LGK texts entitled "The 12 Flights Through Life" published by the Lithuanian Deaf Association (2022). This inaugural publication serves as a resource for Deaf signers and hearing individuals alike, effectively reaching a diverse readership. It is available in print in libraries across major and minor cities throughout Lithuania, including Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Nida, among others. In addition to the printed edition, an electronic version of this publication is available at: http://www.lkd.lt/lgk-meniniai-kuriniai.

In addition, the publication *Not What We Agreed*, released as part of the project of the same name (2026), is likewise intended for both Deaf and hearing audiences. Part of the publication consists of artistic LGK texts, which are also analysed in the present thesis.

Research collaboration

The author of this thesis notes that the first steps in conducting this doctoral research and the level of precision achieved in the course of the investigation were inspired by the same sources, notably the authors of artistic LGK texts, the LGK community, and LGK specialists. A particularly significant research collaboration in the research presented in this thesis was with Professor Vadim Kimmelman. The cases explored in this thesis were discussed with and verified by Professor throughout the course of the research. Professor

Kimmelman's extensive academic background and expertise led him to suggest, during the author's internship in 2022, that the body of material compiled for the present research could be explored using CV tool(s), which had not previously been applied in this field. This innovation contributed to the pioneering nature of the research and yielded highly valuable findings. Another major contributor to the research that ultimately resulted in this dissertation was Professor Rachel Sutton-Spence. It was Professor Sutton-Spence who advised and inspired the author of this thesis during her internship in Brazil in 2024. Following the internship, Professor Sutton-Spence continued to support this research with great dedication through regular remote consultations, helping to verify the research claims by drawing on examples from the research corpus. Professor Sutton-Spence's extensive experience in the field of SL literature, together with her background in researching Deaf signing communities worldwide, her expertise, and her competencies as a SL researcher, laid the foundation for understanding artistic expression in artistic LGK texts, as well as for identifying and analysing artistic means of expression.

Another passionate source of inspiration for undertaking the work on this thesis was the LGK expert Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva who was of great help in identifying cases included in the research and verifying the choices made, especially regarding neologism constructs. All of the cases discussed in this thesis were examined together with a team of Lithuanian Deaf LGK artists, linguists, and SL researchers, who were not only generous in sharing their creative output but also exceptionally insightful, always willing to engage in academic dialogue, which greatly facilitated the analysis of the research data and completion of this thesis. Thank you, everyone.

1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Concept of Sign Languages and Linguistic and Cultural Perspective of the Deaf Community

SLs have not always been treated and perceived as natural, independent, complex and full-fledged languages. Prior to the dawn of SL linguistics, these languages had been considered a primitive and universal(ised) way of communication by using gestures (Bloomfield 1993; Pfau et al. 2012). This attitude, which was widespread (and, in some communities, still remains so) throughout the world, gave rise to some persistent myths and erroneous concepts about SL surviving to the present day. Such myths claim that all SLs in the world, including LGK, are international[14] and universal; have no grammar; are unsuitable for expressing abstract notions (i.e., that it is highly specific); consist merely of mime or a collection of pictures; represent spoken language expressed with the hands; and were artificially created by hearing people to enable Deaf people to study and learn (Markowicz, quoted from Grosjean 2010; Teresė 2018: 12; Frishberg 1975; Taub 2001; Emmorey 2002; Danielius 2004: 9–12). Thus, it is possible to claim that one of the reasons why SLs have historically been studied in relation to establishing their linguistic status in comparison to spoken languages is precisely the persistence of these widespread misconceptions. From the pioneering research works on SL by William Stokoe (1960; 1980; 2001) to later investigations by Sandler and Lillo-Martin (2006), Pfau, Steinbach and Salzmann (2012), Brentari (2019), Slonimska, Özyürek and Capirci (2020; 2022), the phonology, morphology, and syntax of SLs have been analysed in an effort to demonstrate that they possess the same fundamental linguistic components as spoken languages, although they are manifested in a different way. Roland Pfau, Martin Salzmann and Markus Steinbach (2018), when analysing SL syntax, observe that even though SLs and spoken languages are grounded on the same (i.e., shared) linguistic principles, their structural realisation may differ considerably – in the words of these authors, "[c]ommon ingredients but unusual recipe" (Pfau et al. 2018). It follows that any discussion of SLs must embrace the same elements existing in spoken languages; however, these

[14] The author of this thesis believes that even the widely established use of the term 'sign language' rather than 'sign languages' indicates the persistence of this myth even today; such usage also further contributes to this misconception being so deeply rooted.

elements are expressed and function differently because SLs operate in visual-spatial modality. Hence, the research conducted to date has not only contributed to establishing the linguistic status of SLs, but has also prompted a paradigm shift in the concept of language.

Along with the developments in the concept of language, attitudes to language users also changed. Notably, Paddy Ladd (2003), targeting the medically oriented term *deafness*, which was met with dissatisfaction in the *Deaf Community* (cf. Moore & Levitan 1992), suggested the concept of *deafhood*[15] as a response to the definition of being deaf as imposed by majority societies. This 'majority definition' became overwhelming and hopelessly rigid. For a long time, this interpretation was based on the understanding of deafness as some deficiency and/or lack, which contributed to the marginalisation of the deaf community and the undervaluation and denigration of SLs[16]. *Deafhood* is defined as a process through which the deaf may actualise and reconsider their identity – not in the sense of hearing loss, but rather through cultural and linguistic self-consciousness[17].

On the grounds of insights derived from previous 'deaf studies', H. Dirksen, L. Bauman and Joseph J. Murray (2014) suggested using the concept of *Deaf Gain*, which interprets deafness not as a kind of loss, but rather as an intellectual, creative, and cultural value contributing to the variety in mankind, as well as a cognitive and epistemological contribution to society. This broader perspective also resonates with Noam Chomsky's (2000; 2002) suggestion that language is an inherent feature of humans, it is a peculiar 'existence-in-itself', a gift received through inheritance. However, in the case of the deaf, this gift is usually not transferred within the family since a large proportion of deaf people are born into hearing families, and they acquire SL through their communities later. Consequently, this language becomes contextualised not only through biological inheritance, but also through collective cultural experience. This theoretical perspective is reflected in the Deaf Gain and Deafhood paradigm, through which, SL is perceived as an

[15] According to Ladd (2007), the concept of deafness is complicated, and yet it is also incessantly developing. This is not a strict idea of what it should be; rather, it is a personal path of discovery. In order to understand where one is now, it is necessary to consider where one has come from.

[16] This process is reflected in the long-standing misconceptions surrounding SLs.

[17] "The opposition between deafness and deafhood is manifested in a way that deafness pigeon-holes humans into small boxes according to their ability to hear and ability to become the hearing ones. Whereas deafhood does not place emphasis on the ability to hear, but, rather, focuses on culture, language, and community. There is one more difference in the sense that deafhood unites everyone into a single large group, while deafness splits apart into small fractions" (Nordell 2016: 10).

intellectual, creative and cultural, linguistic value, while also adhering to the view that, like any other language, SL is an inborn, inherent property of those who use SL. It is acquired by inheritance – it is transferred to new users either biologically or within the community, and this forms the starting point of this doctoral thesis. Such an attitude allows us to conduct a complex analysis of artistic texts in LGK while taking a profound interest in the means of artistic expression used in these texts.

While this thesis analyses artistic texts in LGK and also takes a closer look at SL literature of other countries, it becomes ever more apparent that it is possible to discuss not only the linguistic and cultural artistic manifestation of the users of a particular national SL. Even though each Deaf community is deeply rooted in the social and cultural context of its country, it also makes a unique contribution to the world(wide) SL literature, and LGK users also contribute their fair share. However, artistic texts also reveal a broader dimension of the community experience(s) and the shared element of the Deaf people (and SL users more broadly) reflected in their texts. The shared historical experience is that of language deprivation, the consequences of the Milan Congress of 1880, and long-term marginalisation, which, together, create a collective memory transcending nations and borders.

Thus, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, it may be argued that a certain commonality and sharedness exist among the Deaf and SL users, which arise not only from a shared place of residence, but also from shared linguistic, cultural and historical experience. In spite of individual SL being different from each other, they are nevertheless united by structural principles grounded in the visual-spatial modality (see Section 1.2), which brings individual SLs closer to one another than to spoken languages. Similarly, the collective experience of users of various SL languages transcends national boundaries. The relationship between 'language' and 'nation' can be deemed essential, e.g., "[l]anguage is as if the spirit of a nation, providing the nation with life" (Norvilas 2012: p. 79)[18]. If language is perceived as a principle shaping self-consciousness and uniting a community, then, presuppositions are created for raising such questions as whether the artistic expression of SLs represents only the heritage of *one particular* national language, or whether it

[18] This is an attitude commonly considered to stem from the period of Romanticism. In the words of Norvilas (2012), the best-known explanation of the relationship between 'language' and 'nation' first appeared during the period of German Romanticism (Edwards 1985). It is usually connected with such prominent figures as Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. From the point of view adopted by Romanticism, the relationship between 'language' and 'nation' is regarded as inherently essential (Norvilas 2012: 79).

simultaneously constitutes a piece of the mosaic embracing the *entire cultural field* of SLs, which transcends national boundaries.

This issue becomes extremely prominent when observing the contemporary literature of SLs, in which the trend towards minimising the use of clearly localised signs is becoming increasingly apparent (this is most pronounced in the VV, which shall be discussed in more detail in Section 1.3.1.), or towards eliminating these localised signs outright, while developing productive signs (for a broader discussion of this point, see Section 1.5.2.), and adopting international signs. Such expression not only aesthetically transforms works of art but also actualises the issue of the shared cultural heritage of SLs and the boundaries of the self-awareness of the community.

1.2 Modality and Structural Properties of Sign Languages

This thesis focuses on the manifestation of artistic texts in LGK; however, in this context, it is essential to discuss the modality of SLs along with their peculiarities of expression and structure, as these determine the specific principles of expression and structure that are explored in this thesis and help us gain a better understanding of the analysis of artistic texts in SL.

It should be highlighted that SLs differ from spoken languages in terms of the channels of perception: *vision* and *audition* (Pfau et al. 2012: 4). This leads to further essential differences between spoken languages and SLs. First of all, their modalities differ: SLs employ the visual-gestural modality, whereas spoken languages employ the auditory-vocal modality. In addition, spoken languages more typically manifest the *linear organisation* of language elements, in which linguistic units are realised according to the principle of sequence, with *one element following another* (whether these are sounds or letters). In comparison, SL manifests a *greater potential for simultaneity*, which allows several language elements to be realised at the same time (Meier et al. 2002). The term *elements* is reserved here for the classes of phonemes: 1. Handshape; 2. Palm orientation; 3. Location; 4. Movement. Also, in this context, non-manual features (elements) (Valli & Lucas 2000; Danielius 2004; Pfau et al. 2012; Fenlon et al. 2015, etc.), and lip movements are taken into account (these are discussed in greater detail in other subsections of Section 1.2.)[19]. Section 1.5.1.2. discusses the classes of phonemes as a tool for creating one of the means of artistic expression, namely, metaphors, and thus

[19] According to Mantrimas Danielius (2004), non-manual features belong to the phonological level of SL, but "[t]hey cannot be considered phonemes just because they are not related with hands" (Danielius 2004: 35).

it is essential to discuss each of these classes in detail. Lip movements are deemed to be, for the most part, beyond the scope of this thesis.

Palm. According to various researchers, the palm is the most important part of the hand in the structure of a gesture (Brentari 2010; Brentari & Coppola 2014; Danielius 2014: 36). The shapes of the palm, which are otherwise referred to as configurations, are universal when discussing different SLs. It is the recording of these configurations that is different as each national state records signs by adopting a certain system and tradition, which does not necessarily conform to all other alternatives. One of the parts of recording a sign is, essentially, configuration. The present thesis discusses specific cases, illustrates them with figures, describes them, and, when focusing on configuration, the title of a specific gesture configuration is provided. To make the analysis clearer, this thesis adopts the descriptions of the handshape used by SL researchers, and, since this thesis is specifically interested in LGK, the handshape descriptions suggested by Danielius (2004). Handshapes are marked with numbers, letters, and/or certain symbols. This depends on the nature of the shape. For instance, the configuration of the LGK sign LABAS (En. *hello*) is Bn, whereas the variable sign SAULĖ (En. *the Sun*) is 4s → 4^. Considering the aim and object of this thesis, the theoretical part of the text describes not only cases in LGK, but also texts sourced from other languages, such as the American Sign Language (hereinafter, ASL); in this case, ASL configurations are presented, and, whenever necessary, these configurations are commented upon. It should be highlighted that, while conducting the analysis in this thesis, only those elements of a sign are commented upon that are specifically discussed in the relevant (sub-)section, and, if required, other relevant classes are also indicated. However, this thesis does not commit to an extensive and detailed description of signs if this is not necessary for discussing a particular case.

Orientation. It is usually deemed to be a less significant element than configuration, and only two parameters are involved, specifically, the directions of the palm and the fingers (Brentari 2012). The notation of the palm and the fingers in LGK is as follows: *to the left* (*to the side – š*[20]*), to the right* (*to the opposite side – k*) when the right hand is used. When the left hand is used, the notation is reversed: *to the side* means to the right, *to the left* means to the left; *towards oneself* (*s*) or *forward* (*p*); *upwards* (*a*) or *downwards* (*ž*). When describing the practical research, some cases are discussed by using this notation as well.

[20] These letters are used to denote conventional notation of the orientation class in Lithuanian sign language research.

Location. LGK locations in LGK research are classified into six areas: 1) Head; 2) Neck; 3) Body; 4) Hand + Arm; 5) Palm; 6) In front of oneself – neutral position. The SL researcher Frishberg (1975), when analysing the historical evolution of SLs, observed that, in the course of their development, the distribution of the location of a sign (i.e., localisation) comprises two fundamental groups: the head space, which includes signs that are in contact with the face, and the body space, which includes signs below the neck level. In the present thesis, when discussing metaphors created through localisation, reference is made to a broader distribution system involving five areas of signs.

Movement (Fenlon et al. 2015: 7) is the fourth and most complex element of a sign. The movement of a sign always determines changes in one of the already discussed elements of a sign (Danielius 2004). Movement types are described according to certain properties, which are called *movement changes* and embrace the following properties of movement: one-time vs. repeated, one direction vs. forward-and-back, continuous vs. brief vs. fixed, free vs. touching vs. swiping along, fast vs. slow, and uninterrupted vs. twitching. In this thesis, when discussing metaphors created by employing movement, the types of movement are discussed.

In the context of this thesis, it is essential to emphasise that 'greater' and 'smaller' forms of a sign can be compared to 'shouting' and 'whispering' in oral languages (Pfau et al. 2012) – and this can already be aligned with super-segmental elements that are singled out in oral languages, which corresponds to non-manual elements in SLs.

As well as in oral languages, there is a connection between phonemes and super-segmental elements (intonation, stress); equivalently, in SLs, there is a connection between phonemes and non-manual elements. According to Danielius (2004: 63), "[n]on-hand elements – these are primarily face movements (mostly eyebrows and lips, but also cheeks, tongue and nose), and certain movements of the head and body." Non-manual elements in SLs supplement the sizes, shapes, or other features/properties of the indicated objects/subjects, or specify them more precisely. Facial expressions are also employed in spoken languages (and facial expressions render feelings in the discourses of both spoken and SLs (Ekman 1972; Ekman & Friesen 1978; Ekman & Oster 1979); yet, in SLs, this property is particularly important because of their multifunctionality, since face movements constitute not only part of grammar (Reilly et al. 2006), but also indicate feelings and emotions. Grammatical expression in SL is also related to certain movements of the head and body, or to the gaze direction, but it should be highlighted that non-manual

elements (including the gaze, facial movements, head and shoulder movements, and directions of the gaze), are broadly used in artistic texts of SLs (Engber-Pedersen 1993 et al.). This point shall be discussed in more detail in Section 1.5.3.

Another difference of note is that arbitrariness is common in spoken languages, whereas iconicity is encountered in SLs. As stated by Valli and Lucas (2000), "<...> *arbitrariness* means that a specific symbolic form does not correspond to the meaning of the item or action which it symbolises. *Iconicity* means that a specific symbolic form <...> reflects the item or the action it symbolises" (Valli & Lucas 2000: 5). In other words, signs are usually motivated, while words in spoken languages are usually not. The considerably greater motivation of signs in SLs than of words in spoken languages can be illustrated by the following examples (this property is found across all SLs, and the presented example represents a trend in LGK): the sign STIRNA[21] (En. *roe deer*) is formed by demonstrating the animal's smallish antlers, whereas the sign KATĖ (En. *cat*) depicts long whiskers. However, it is not clear why the sign GELTONAS (En. *yellow*) (palm I) or the sign PRIEŽASTIS (En. *cause*) (A/Bn) is formed in that particular way. These examples prove that all languages – both spoken and sign languages – exhibit features of both arbitrariness and iconicity. It should be remarked that iconicity is also extensively explored in research on SL metaphors (Pfau et al. 2012; Taub 2001); see Section 1.4.

Moreover, SLs are characterised by the extensive use of signs that may be created or modified in discourse through what has been described as the *productive lexicon*, which allows signers to combine a limited set of iconic building blocks to represent objects, movements, and spatial relations (Taub 2001; Sandler & Lillo-Martin 2006; Pfau et al. 2012; Brentari 2019). This feature is generally considered to be a characteristic property of SLs and is closely related to their visual-gestural modality. It is therefore not surprising that similar productive mechanisms are also widely observed in SL literature. In studies of SL literary texts, such forms are often referred to as *productive signs* (Sutton-Spence 2005). In the linguistic literature, they are also discussed under related terms such as *depicting signs* or *classifier constructions*, which emphasise their iconic and productive nature (Taub 2001; Sandler & Lillo-

[21] "<...> most sign language researchers use the term *glosses* when they seek to refer to signs" (Taub 2001: 4). A gloss is a conventional written label for a sign, written in capitals, for instance, STIRNA (En. *roe deer*), LĖKTUVAS (En. *aircraft*), KATĖ (En. *cat*), etc.

Martin 2006; Pfau et al. 2012; Brentari 2019). This phenomenon is discussed in greater detail in Section 1.5.2 of this dissertation.

Hence, the feasibility afforded by the SL *visual-gestural modality*, *simultaneity*, as discussed in the present section, and the main phonological parameters – namely, *handshape, orientation, location* and *movement*, together with *non-manual features*, allow for a better understanding of the peculiarities of SL structure, which are of importance when discussing means of artistic expression in artistic LGK texts. Authentic LGK artistic texts are investigated in the field research part of this thesis, and, consequently, particular attention is paid to the artistic means employed in these texts. The primary focus is placed on metaphors, including both global metaphors, and metaphors at the phonological level, which are created by employing different phonological classes discussed in this section. The analysis then continues with neologisms, including *productive signs*, which are related to the *productive lexicon*. Iconicity, as discussed in this section, is considered one of the key features of SL as the form of signs is often motivated by their meaning, and this property provides a basis for various possibilities of artistic expression, for instance, in the creation of metaphors or the use of *productive signs* (Taub 2001; Pfau et al. 2012). In addition, particular attention is paid to certain *non-manual features*, which, in artistic LGK texts, act as means of independent artistic expression. The analysis of these linguistic elements allows us to reveal how various linguistic means can be employed in artistic LGK texts to create artistic expression.

1.3 The Concept of SL Literature

1.3.1 The question of defining SL literature and artistic texts

The object of this thesis is the expression of artistic texts in LGK; however, before proceeding with this analysis, it is essential to outline the concepts of SL literature and artistic texts.

It should primarily be noted that there is no universal concept of literature, i.e., *literature* (fiction) is not defined unequivocally in theory. One of the most common ways of defining literature is to relate it to fiction. As noted by Terry Eagleton, "[y]ou can define it, for example, as 'imaginative' writing[22] in the sense of fiction – writing which is not literally true" (Eagleton 1996: 1).

[22] Most commonly, the concept of *literature* is defined through the prism of oral language and writing; however, the present thesis takes a broader view of the definitions of both language and literature, and therefore such cases are not discussed.

However, the literary theorist immediately demonstrates that such a definition is insufficient, since many fictional texts are not considered literature, while numerous literary works cannot be reduced to fictionality alone. Therefore, the concept of 'literature' cannot be grounded solely on the criterion of fiction. Another direction in defining literature relates it to a specific way of organising language. Eagleton claims that literature "<…> transforms and intensifies ordinary language <…>" (Eagleton 1996: 2). In other words, a literary text distinguishes itself not only by *what* is expressed there, but rather (and primarily) by *how* it is done. Hence, literature is defined as an entirety of texts functioning within a certain culture, the worth and value of which are determined not only by the information transferred through these texts, but also by the form or the way in which this information is presented. Nevertheless, this criterion is not absolute. Eagleton highlights that "'[l]iterature' may not be a definable set of texts, but a way of reading them, a set of value-judgements" (Eagleton 1996: 9). In other words, 'literariness' is formed not only through the structure of a text or its artistic expression, but also through the ways it is experienced, evaluated, and through the historical and cultural contexts within which a text acquires (or does not acquire) the status of literature. It should be noted that this is observed in the case of SL as well. There are texts created in various SLs that conform to the above-outlined criteria.

Another criterion through which a text can be attributed (or not) to literature is its emotional and aesthetic impact on the reader (Eliot 1988; Fowler 2006). A literary work may deliver pleasure or satisfaction, calm down, cause frustration, disgust or other feelings. However, the emotional impact is not a sufficient criterion, either, as it can be evoked by non-fictional texts as well. Consequently, it is essential to take into consideration another criterion, namely, aesthetic impact. Kazimieras Župerka (2012), while discussing emotional impact in artistic texts, also emphasises aesthetic impact. It is this function that is most appreciated in the artistic field and regarded as outstanding by Župerka. In his words, "aesthetic impact <...> can be defined as the duality of the surrounding reality, as the apparition of another space" (Župerka 2012: 94). Both emotional and aesthetic functions are exactly those which, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, are commonly observed in artistic texts in SL. In other words, the same type of impact – both emotional and aesthetic – can be observed in the case of SL artistic texts as well.

Another criterion for artistic texts is the issue of their authorship. A literary work has an identifiable author, who is known to others. Authorship is also prominent when discussing SL, and even specifically artistic texts in LGK.

For instance, the present thesis analyses the artistic text *Medžioklė* (En. *The Hunt*) by the author Arnoldas Matulis, and the community immediately recognises that this text is his. This also indicates that specific artistic texts in SL are related to specific authors, and this is another property of literature.

Thus, as mentioned above, all the above-outlined criteria are of relevance when discussing SL literature as well. However, it should be noted that the concept of SL literature is not uniform throughout the academic writings on SL. Different researchers of SL (Peters 2000, etc.) even refer to SL artistic texts differently: literature of the Deaf, SL literature, SL poetry, creativity. It should be noted that the researchers Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) even discuss the folklore of the Deaf – *Deaflore* (the term *signlore* can also be used)[23]. However, this remains beyond the scope of this thesis, and therefore this branch of academic research shall not be elaborated upon further in this text. When discussing SL poetry, it is essential to highlight that even Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), who are the most prodigious researchers in this field, also sometimes refer to SL literature as SL poetry, i.e., poetry is not singled out as a specific branch of literature, but rather it embraces all types and genres of SL literature instead. It is therefore important to note that a similar trend is observed in the study of fiction in spoken languages. According to Algis Kalėda (1982), "[p]rior to the 18th century, all verbal works of art were most commonly named 'poetry'; in Ancient Greek, this word meant creative work in general. The verb *poiein* was used to describe purposeful human activity related with re-creation, doing something, laying something out according to certain rules (in German, *Dichtung* even presently means poetry or creative work)" (Kalėda 1982: 27). Thus, the variation of the presently discussed concepts may also be related to the outset of SL research

[23] These concepts and folklore phenomena have also been discussed by other foreign researchers, for instance, by Peters (2000). Both *Deaflore* and *signlore* as terms were introduced by the American Deaf studies researcher Simon Carmel (1996). Even though Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) point out that these two concepts are not always easy to distinguish, Carmel uses them to refer to different groups of works: (1) *Deaflore* embraces works that are created by Deaf people, whereas the works themselves reveal the author's insights and attitude towards 'traditional' knowledge. This covers such content (or perspectives) as knowledge, values, beliefs, behaviour and habits, expressed in various forms of artistic SL, for instance, in SL poetry, jokes, legends, riddles, stories and narratives of personal experience, as well as the context of these manifestations; (2) *Signlore* involves the Deaf folklore in which attention is directed towards SL. That is, in such works, language itself is of importance, as well as the way in which signs are used while offering one's perspective on Deaf culture. In other words, *signlore* involves the ways in which Deaf people create and present their folklore (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016).

in this field. It should be stressed out that such reference to all artistic texts as 'poetry' is common in Lithuania as well, i.e., LGK-using authors frequently call their own and others' artistic texts as LGK poetry, even though sufficiently prominent genre differences can be observed.

It should also be noted that LGK creative work is referred to as 'LGK art' both by creators and audiences. Recently, the concept of 'literature' has been getting more and more widespread, however, within the SL community, discussions are ongoing about where literature starts, and what constitutes LGK art. No clear-cut answer to this question has been provided either in Lithuania or internationally.

The researcher Cynthia L. Peters (2000) suggests that Deaf[24] literature embraces all the written works by the Deaf, and also includes SL works, i.e., those works which are presented in SL. The most active researchers in the field of SL literature are Sutton-Spence and Kaneko who observe that there is a distinction between 'Deaf literature' and 'SL literature': "[s]ign language literature may be considered part of deaf literature, but the term specifically refers to pieces that are performed in SL and are almost always produced by deaf people" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 4). Thus, their work introduces a clear-cut terminological distinction between Deaf literature and SL literature. Meanwhile, the present thesis systematically uses the term 'SL literature', thereby highlighting language as the main foundation of artistic expression within a work – instead of the author's ability to hear or any medical definition of deafness. Such an understanding also implies that such works are typically created by Deaf people using signs, and that their primary language is a particular SL. The author of this thesis adopts the opinion that SL literature is primarily 'literature of the Deaf' whose primary language is a particular SL. For instance, Lithuanian SL users are authors of LGK literature, i.e., artistic texts in LGK.

It is worth noting that other authors, e.g., Peters (2000), when analysing various artistic texts, refer to them more generally, by naming them *SL art(s)*. This designation, as can be observed abroad (in the opinion of the author of this thesis), is also deeply entrenched[25]; it is also used in the Lithuanian Deaf community. However, with the research on such texts becoming increasingly extensive, researchers tend to suggest more and more emphatically that this is

[24] Here, the reference is to Americans and ASL.

[25] For instance, a traditional event is held in Sweden. In 2025, it was referred to as *Sign Language Art*, and, during the event, authentic SL works of art were being created and presented. The title of the event makes it evident that the emphasis is placed not on literature but rather on art.

SL literature; whereas for practical purposes, the concept of 'SL art' is used. Thus, despite the ongoing discussion both in the academia and within the Deaf community, the discussion continues regarding how to name the entirety of SL texts and/or creative work, although there is an increasingly prominent tendency to refer to it as SL literature. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) claim that it is irrelevant whether one deals with a literary work, or even folklore, poetry or prose; all artistic SL texts, i.e., stories narrated by members of the SL community may be considered part of a broader category of SL literature. Therefore, this thesis also adopts the term 'LGK literature' to refer to the entirety of artistic works in LGK, which are performed by Deaf people and whose content is not necessarily related with the Deaf community, but which are nevertheless presented from the point of view of a Deaf person.

There are some variations in naming specific works of SL art attributed to the entirety of SL art. Researchers make attempts to divide works of art by genres; however, as will be shown below (see Section 1.4), this is usually a major challenge. It may initially be observed that poetry has been one of the most frequently discussed and analysed forms of SL literature, as reflected in the works of the pioneer Clayton Valli (1993), Rachel Sutton-Spence and Michiko Kaneko (2016), as well as Tommaso Russo, Rosaria Giuranna and Elena Pizzuto (2001), Marion Blondel and Christopher Miller (2001). In some earlier studies, the discussion of SL artistic works is largely framed in terms of poetry, even where the boundaries between poetry and other forms of SL literature are not clearly defined (Bauman, Nelson, Rose 2006; Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016). However, different sources use different terms for these works, for instance, poetry, narration (stories) or narratives, and, in some cases, other forms of visual artistic expression are discussed as well, such as VV.

In the context of this thesis, it is essential to discuss the definitions and development of essential artistic texts, as well as forms of visual artistic expression. When discussing SL literature, one of the most important and most frequently investigated forms by researchers is SL poetry. The origins of SL poetry are usually related to the Deaf poet Dorothy Miles. According to Sutton-Spence (2005), Miles is considered one of the pioneers of SL poetry who helped this form of creativity gain its own artistic identity. By trying out and exploring the potential of expression in ASL, Miles got acquainted with various forms of 'language game', which are referred to in the literature as

language play or *language art*, for instance, *ABC stories*[26], *number stories*[27] or *one-handshape stories*[28]. Such forms are considered creative linguistic practices allowing to conduct experiments with the structure of SLs and their visual potential (or scope) (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016; Bauman, Nelson, Rose 2006). Nevertheless, most researchers perceive these forms not as an independent genre of SL literature, but rather as early creative practices which contributed to the further development of SL poetry. These forms, as noted by the author of this thesis, can still be interpreted as an introduction, the early steps towards authentic creativity in SLs. Later, in 1967, Miles joined the American National Theatre of the Deaf and started creating poetry in ASL. The early attempts were primarily translations from English into ASL. After these initial attempts, a fundamental step was taken as Miles started creating SL poetry by following the same principles as those used in the English language; however, when implementing this transfer from English to SL, she was critical of these principles. At that time, it was a full-scale revolution which attracted the interest of other Deaf people and inspired them. Thus, independent works started being created in ASL, by intentionally applying poetic principles and transferring them into the visual-spatial modality of the language. As highlighted by Sutton-Spence (2005), "[s]ign language poetry also shows hearing people the beauty and complexity of SL and teaches them to respect Deaf culture, proving to them that SL poetry is possible" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 19). Sutton-Spence (2005) notes that Miles expected that SL poetry would help reveal the artistic potential of this language and would contribute to its recognition in broader society. Furthermore, Sutton-Spence observes that Miles sought to "bring to public attention the beauty and power of sign language itself and would thereby help to raise the status of Sign Language peoples" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 227). Elsewhere, Sutton-Spence emphasises that "[p]erhaps most importantly, sign language poetry also empowers Deaf people by focusing on the beauty and potential of sign language" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 21). Hence, SL poetry is considered one of the earliest and most broadly researched forms of SL

[26] "<…> these are artistic stories created by only using the finger alphabet. History seeks to present a certain word or name" (Teresė 2018: 29).

[27] "<…> these are artistic stories created by using numbers. History seeks to present a certain combination of numbers/digits, or to list numbers in a row (for instance, from 1 to 10)" (Teresė 2018: 29).

[28] "<…> these are artistic stories created by using a single selected shape of the palm, i.e., by using only one shape of the palm (while both hands are usually used for narration), by employing means of artistic expression. These stories present an artistic plot including all the aspects and details of the narration" (Teresė 2018: 30).

literature; therefore, in early research, the term 'poetry' was occasionally used in a relatively broad sense, embracing various artistic SL texts. Even though later research started featuring broader perspectives and attempting to distinguish different forms of artistic texts, there are no clearly defined boundaries between genres in SL literature at present. This issue is discussed in more detail in the next subchapter.

Another form of artistic expression, namely, VV, has also been mentioned. The very term 'vernacular' in spoken languages usually denotes the natural language or dialect of a specific community which is used in their daily life (based on the Oxford English Dictionary; Cambridge Dictionary; Merriam-Webster Dictionary). However, in the context of SL artistic texts, 'vernacular' gains a different meaning as it is related to visual expression. The roots of VV can be traced back to the Deaf actor Bernard Bragg, who, while studying mime art in Paris, developed a novel stage technique based on the principles of cinematography: "I changed it into a smaller frame size, and utilised film techniques. I used cuts and edits, close ups and long shots. I started that style, and I called it Visual Vernacular, for lack of a better term" (Bragg, quoted from Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 61). Meanwhile, Brandwijk (2018) defines VV as a form of art, passed down from generation to generation, which nevertheless previously had no recognition as an independent form of art. Stroesser (2015) emphasises that the term 'visual' highlights visual perception, while 'vernacular' refers to a linguistic phenomenon observed in a community and shared by its members.

Erwan Cifra[29] defines VV as *art in Deaf language and a completely visual technique, global phenomenon*. In other words, VV is based on the cinematographic principle of narration, when the body, facial expression and movement – together – create a visual act. In this context, Bauman, Nelson and Rose (2006) note that "Visual Vernacular emphasizes the iconic and cinematic possibilities of sign language, where the body becomes the camera, the actor, and the scene". Hence, the above-mentioned researchers tend to highlight the visual and cinematographic nature of VV, whereby the story narration is constructed through body movements, facial expression, space, and iconic signs, while the expression of SL is employed to create a dynamic visual episode. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) also contributed to this issue by defining VV as a narration technique employing cinematography principles, facial expression, mimic and iconic signs, which makes it understandable even to those who cannot communicate in SL. Consequently,

[29] Source: personal website (https://www.visual-vernacular.org)

VV is described as a technique or a set of tools. Yet, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, VV functions slightly differently in practice as it has developed into an independent form of works of art. Works in VV are usually characterised by greater length than a single narrated story, by detailed depiction, clear cinematographic features, elements of acting, and the abundant use of non-manual elements. They are constructed from productive signs. Their essential feature is the refusal to use the commonly established meanings of signs, i.e., such signs as RAUDONAS (En. *red*), MAMA (En. *mother*) or NAMAI (En. *home*) are typically not used at all; instead, meanings are rendered with newly created (or modified) iconic signs[30].

Nevertheless, in practice, VV usually functions not only as a technique but also as an independent form of creative work. In such works of art, visual narration typically dominates, and non-manual elements are intensively used, while meanings are rendered through newly created iconic signs. Although theoretically VV can be employed when creating poetry or artistic narration, within the Deaf community it is usually perceived as a separate and independent form of works of art. However, with this interpretation, terminological ambiguity arises, as it is not always clear where the narration technique ends and where the independent type of the work of art starts. This issue is discussed in greater detail from the perspective of academic research in Section 1.3.1.

Story narration should also be mentioned in this context. A narrative is generally defined as the representation of events organised in a temporal sequence (Prince 1982). The researcher Peter S. Cook (2011) notes that SL narrations in many respects correspond to the strategies of oral narration, even though the means of expression are different because of the language modality, namely, movement, space, and VV. Thus, the presently mentioned 'narration' may be employed as a term for SL narration as well. SL narration stories are commonly defined as narrative texts where a sequence of events is presented, along with the actions of the characters and the development of the situation, and the narration itself is created by employing the visual-spatial opportunities provided by language, such as role shift, space structuring, and iconic depiction of actions (Bauman et al. 2006; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016; Cook 2011). Research (e.g., Sutton-Spence 2005) indicates that, in many Deaf communities, for a long time, the tradition of storytelling was

[30] This statement is based on the content of a webinar held at the Swedish theatre Riksteatern Crea, in which Debbie Z. Rennie and Giuseppe Giuranna (2021), discussed the practical and theoretical differences between VV and poetry, as well as on the thesis author's personal discussions with artists creating in SL.

predominant: "<...> within our definition of poetry, deaf communities have not usually maintained a poetic tradition – although they have often had very strong storytelling traditions. Storytelling uses an artistic form of language but the SL storytelling traditions did not develop into poetry until very recently (and many signed poems still have strong narrative features)" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 15). The earliest research on artistic texts in SL is related to attempts to analyse works by Miles, as described by Sutton-Spence (2005). Thus, Sutton-Spence notes that, "[i]n a sense then, many, if not most of her sign-poetic skills came from these storytelling roots, employing all of the principles above and more. Furthermore, using them in her work rendered them immediately recognisable to Deaf audiences, bringing both performer and audience" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 233). This allows one to claim that the tradition of artistic narration constitutes an important background to SL literature, from which poetry later developed. In this context, the importance of the audience, and, specifically, performativity, is discussed in more detail in Section 1.4. Meanwhile, in discussions on artistic LGK texts both in Lithuania and abroad, in an attempt to name their genre, these works are frequently described as 'close' to artistic narration. In other words, both the Lithuanian Deaf researchers as well as foreign researchers of this field emphasise the tradition of creating a narrative which is predominant in artistic LGK texts, along with the prominent stylistics of artistic narration. This already suggests that there exists a tradition of creating artistic texts among Lithuanian SL using LGK artists. Meanwhile, the very artistic narration in SL is denoted by specific means of expression, such as repetition or the creation of parallels, "<...> kinetic movement and the use of visual vernacular" (Cook 2011: 36). As observed by the author of this thesis, these peculiarities of expression are commonly observed in SL artistic texts.

As this thesis does not undertake to classify the analysed works of art by genre or any other feature(s), a need arises to refer to these texts by employing a specific term. In other words, the author sought to use a distinctive term for these texts. Meanwhile, Sadowska-Dobrowolska (2021) suggests that "[t]he artistic text is a linguistically organized unit, designed not to convey but to shape aesthetic experience in the reader" (Sadowska-Dobrowolska 2021: 66). This dissertation relies on specifically this concept and assumes that a text can be deemed to be an SL artistic text as long as it is expressed in SL (which is *equally* valuable and identical to spoken languages). The very concept of *artistic texts* immediately implies that a text is being referred to, i.e., a *texture of thoughts rendered through means of expression.* This thesis also places particular emphasis on the means of expression rather than on a type of

literature or a genre. In this context, the idea of Roman Jakobson (1960) (while discussing spoken languages) is of peculiar interest, as it directs the discussion towards the issue of expression in an artistic text as well as its function: "[p]oetics deals primarily with the question: what makes a verbal message a work of art?" (Jakobson 1960: 350). It is exactly this question that is being raised in the present thesis: what makes an SL text (and, more specifically, a LGK text) an artistic text? In other words, the question arises as to what linguistic, visual and structural means allow a text in SL to qualify as an artistic text. Consequently, this thesis focuses on linguistic means selected for creating an artistic text. In this thesis, *artistic texts* are perceived as texts that are recognised by SL users and Deaf people as artistic works, are created by a Deaf user of SL, provide scope for interpretation, are characterised by an abundance of means of artistic expression, and, according to the views expressed by SL users and text creators, fall within the scope of SL literature.

In this context, it is also essential to provide a brief description of the above-mentioned concept of genre, and to explain the use of this concept in the thesis. There are no universally accepted criteria for classifying artistic texts in SL literature research, or for determining what terms to use to define their types. Different authors use various concepts, e.g., *types*, *forms*, *categories* or *genres* (Bahan 2006; Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). For instance, Bahan (2006), when describing ASL literature, usually uses the terms *forms* and *categories*, while highlighting such types of writings as narration, ABC stories, number stories, and poetry. By contrast, Sutton-Spence (2005) as well as Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) discuss SL poetry and narration while simultaneously stressing that there are no clear boundaries allowing one to distinguish between different forms of literature. In the theory of spoken literature, a genre is defined as a lower within the types of literature (epic poetry, lyric poetry, and drama), which unites structurally, compositionally and thematically similar works of art (Wellek & Warren 1949; Culler 1997; Frow 2006). By contrast, in the context of SL artistic texts, a genre usually refers to specific types of artistic texts or works of art which can be distinguished by their: structure, function, formal characteristics, and means of artistic expression. In other words, in the literature of spoken languages, genre is commonly perceived as a relatively established group of literary works sharing certain structural, thematic and stylistic features. In the case of SL, such classification is more provisional as artistic texts are denoted by greater formal dynamism; moreover, different SLs may also exhibit different types of works (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Hence, the terminology used in the research of SL literature is not yet fully established,

and the use of different terms frequently depends on the selected perspective adopted in the research and the phenomena under analysis. This is partly related with broader discussions on the nature of creativity in SL – whether works should primarily be perceived as literature, as a form of visual and performative art, or as an intersection of these fields. It is precisely for this reason that the classification of artistic texts in SL and the terminology used to define them remain highly flexible and variable.

Upon considering these circumstances, the present thesis makes a deliberate choice not to use the term *genre* when discussing SL artistic texts – although in the tradition of spoken-language literature, it is usually related to relatively established and more clearly defined forms of literature. However, this does not mean that this term cannot be applied to the analysis of SL artistic texts in general; rather, its application would require broader theoretical discussions and a separate research study. Therefore, the present thesis opts to employ the term SL artistic text *categories* to refer to different categories of creative works, while singling out a certain 'entirety' of structural, functional and expressive features. In the following sections, this thesis discusses research on SL artistic texts and examines the means of expression, on the basis of which researchers in this field refer to these categories differently – as *genres*, *types*, or even *categories*. In order to avoid terminological variation, the author of this thesis deliberately adopts the term *categories (of SL artistic texts)*, primarily to maintain the consistency of the thesis.

1.3.2 What SL literature is about: Themes, protagonists and symbolic motifs in SL literature

The means of artistic expression manifested in SL literary texts are also related to the thematic area and characters of specific works. It is far from easy to discuss the thematic area of artistic texts in SL while completely separating the analysis from the characters of texts and their lyrical subjects/speakers. Therefore, the present subchapter undertakes to explore the themes and plots of artistic texts in foreign SL texts, together with their protagonists and lyrical subjects, while also considering the state-of-the-art research in this field.

SL literature, as well as literature in spoken languages, is denoted by thematic universality as, in it, plots and themes sourced from various cultures can be encountered. However, in most artistic texts in SL, the linguistic and cultural experience of the Deaf is clearly reflected. Most researchers – first and foremost Ben Bahan (2006), who has most extensively analysed the thematic dimensions of SL artistic texts, as well as Sutton-Spence (2005), Sutton-Spence and Müller de Quadros (2005), Sutton-Spence and Kaneko

(2016), Asmal and Kaneko (2020), Sutton-Spence and Fernanda de Araújo Machado (2023), and Christie and Wilkins (2007) note that Deaf creators frequently reflect on the experience of deafness, language, and identity in their works. Christie and Wilkins (2007) identify themes of resistance, affirmation and liberation. The thematic complexity is clearly demonstrated by Bahan (2006), who, drawing on a broad analysis of ASL narratives, identifies recurrent thematic domains, including (1) *communication, language and values,* (2) *social prejudice and ignorance*, and (3) *the sensory world*. Such texts often convey personal experience and an emotional engagement with deafness, as well as with the responses of the hearing majority to it. These themes indicate that SL artistic texts frequently reflect the specific experiences of Deaf individuals and their relationship with the dominant hearing culture.

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) also noted that, in many texts, their authors celebrate deafness, while the protagonist commonly expresses strong emotions about other people's reactions to their deafness, and to deafness itself (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 101). In the works of younger authors, more complex reflections on identity begin to emerge. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko describe the so-called in-betweenness – i.e., being between different cultural and social worlds. For instance, Sean Timon[31] delivers the following statement in his work: "I want to belong half in the deaf world and half in the hearing world / I don't want to half belong in a whole world" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Through these lines, the author reveals a slightly different concept of the world, which moves a sizable distance away from the earlier model promoted by the activists, in which deafness was the only axis of identity. What is more, some young authors poetically reflect on cochlear implants not as a rejection of deafness, but rather as a different attitude, suggesting that there are "[m]any ways to be deaf <…>" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 102). In other words, the poet "<…> rejects that identity for one more fluid, more fragmented and yet more satisfying" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 101). Consequently, SL literature testifies not only to the variety of cultural identity, but also to the artistic evolution of language and bodily expression. Hence, although one dominant thematic direction can be identified, the range of topics remains clear and broad. It is reflected in Table 1, where the insights of various authors have been systemised for the purposes of this thesis.

[31] This example is taken from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 101).

Table 1. Recurring themes, plots, protagonists and subjects in SL literary texts

Themes / subjects	Plots	Protagonists / subjects	Examples	Researchers
Deaf identity and experience	Personal narratives about deafness, identity formation	Deaf child, Deaf adult	"To a Deaf Child"	Sutton-Spence (2005), Sutton-Spence & Machado (2023)
Deaf culture and community	Narratives about Deaf culture, community life, belonging	Deaf community members	Various SL texts	Sutton-Spence & Machado (2023)
Communication and language	Communication barriers, language discovery	Deaf child, teacher, doctor	Various SL narratives	Bahan (2006)
Resistance and social struggle	Conflict with hearing society, experiences of prejudice	Deaf protagonist confronting social norms	Various SL narratives	Christie & Wilkins (2007)
Cultural belonging / in-betweenness	Identity negotiation between Deaf and hearing worlds	Hybrid identity subject	Sean Timon's poetry	Sutton-Spence & Kaneko (2016)

The data featured in Table 1 allow us to generalise about the most frequently singled out thematic directions in SL literature research. It is evident that, in many texts under analysis, the plots and protagonists (as well as other characters) are constructed around the cultural experience of the Deaf, the use of language, and their relationship with the hearing society. Researchers tend to point out that, in these stories, members of the Deaf community are frequently portrayed, along with the communication barriers they experience, social failure to be understood, or their efforts to establish their own cultural identity. For instance, Christie and Wilkins (2007), when investigating ASL literature, identified the recurrence of such topics as resistance, self-affirmation, and liberation.

Nevertheless, researchers have also observed that, along with these culturally specific texts, SL literature also encompasses more universal topics found in literature across various cultures, such as life, love, death, nature or personal transformation, which are typically represented in literatures of various cultures. However, in SL texts, they are frequently rendered through visual expression and the perspective of the personal experience of a Deaf person (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In these texts, protagonists and lyrical subjects frequently embody the collective experience of the Deaf or symbolic social roles. Humans may serve as protagonists, e.g., a Deaf child, a Deaf adult, parents, teachers, or physicians, but they can also be substituted by symbolic or metaphorical characters. In this way, characters in SL literature frequently act not just as characters within the narrative, but also as symbols representing cultural and social experiences.

Apart from themes and narrative structures, symbolism also occupies an important position in SL literature. Some of the above-listed researchers observe that authors frequently employ visual symbols and metaphors which draw on the iconic and spatial potential provided by SL.

Table 2. Symbolic motifs in SL literary texts

Symbol / motif	Meaning	Example
Flying / birds	Freedom, liberation, spiritual elevation	"The Hang Glider" (Sutton-Spence 2005)
Butterfly	Transformation, lightness	"To a Deaf Child" (Sutton-Spence 2005)
Vision / eye	Visual language, knowledge, identity	"Language for the Eye" (Sutton-Spence 2005)
Tree	Growth, stability, harmony	TREE sign imagery (Sutton-Spence 2005)
Journey / climbing	Personal and collective development	"The Staircase" (Sutton-Spence 2005)
Animal allegory	Social critique	"Me Hippopotamus GAPE" (Bahan 2006)

To generalise, one may suggest that the most recurrent themes in SL literature include the experience of deafness, SL, and the celebration of deafness. On top of that, universal themes are also encountered, including love, the search for meaning in life, or personal transformation – these are frequently rendered specifically from the perspective of a Deaf individual.

The protagonists and lyrical subjects appearing in the texts – humans, animals, or symbolic characters – allow the authors, while using artistic language, to reflect on the experiences of the Deaf community, social relationships, and cultural identity. Consequently, SL literature becomes not only a form of aesthetic and emotional expression, but also an important space for Deaf culture and the representation of collective experience.

It is important to highlight that the present thesis does not aim to separately analyse the topics of artistic LGK texts, their protagonists and symbolic motifs. However, as mentioned above, these constitute an inseparable part of artistic texts, and it is impossible to isolate artistic expression from the macro-level, i.e., the content of a work of art and its context. Therefore, in the field research, when discussing specific cases, the theme of a work may also be considered along with other elements related with the content of the text, thereby allowing for a fuller understanding of the particular means of expression under discussion.

1.4 Overview of SL Artistic Text Research

The development of SL artistic text research does not always align with the creative practice of the Deaf communities themselves. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) noted that "<…> deaf communities have a long tradition of 'prose' storytelling, but what we now call sign language poetry only emerged in certain countries in the 1970s or 1980s (and not all deaf communities create it even today)" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 117). Thus, in practice, within the Deaf communities, there primarily existed various forms of telling stories; it may be argued that this tradition was dominant, whereas what is referred to today as SL poetry represents a relatively later form of creative activity. However, the spark that ignited academic research emanated specifically from these works. Hence, the initial attention of researchers fell on SL poetry, which was analysed in various aspects, although other artistic texts in SL were also explored, including artistic narration, humorous stories (jokes), and folklore texts. Recently, the attention of researchers has increasingly focused on VV, which has become broadly established in Deaf communities around the world. Scholars dealing with SL artistic texts explore not only their expression and the means of artistic expression employed in these texts (see Section 1.5); they also primarily discuss these categories and their defining characteristics. However, well-defined borders between them have not yet been established.

Thus, the first step was an analysis of ASL poetry and its distinctive features, in comparison with narration. One of the pioneers who committed

himself to exploring (artistic) texts in (American) SL and who set out to define the poetics of ASL poetry, as well as to present a theory of the art of ASL poetry, and who explicitly named certain (artistic) works in SL as *poetry* is Valli (1993). This researcher analysed SL artistic works from a linguistic perspective, while also paying particular attention to meter and rhyme. He explored the distinction between poetry and prose by discussing not only the linguistic features of SL but also by comparing SL artistic texts with spoken English poetry and the elements most commonly encountered in it, such as alliteration, voice timbre, etc. According to Valli, SL poetry is an artistic form of language which, for aesthetic purposes, employs phonological, syntactic, and visual elements of SL. It abounds in rhyme created through the phonological parameters of SL – configuration, orientation, movement, tuning of localisation, repetitions, while altering only one of these elements. In addition, SL poetry frequently exhibits repetitions, an extensive use of non-manual elements, and a wide range of movement patterns, including the deliberate cessation of movement to create a meaningful pause and rhythm, thereby transforming ordinary language into a vehicle for conveying creative ideas indirectly. According to Valli, SL poetry tends to differ from prose in several respects. He discusses the following characteristics: (1) form – poetry features rhythm and repetitions, and its form is less structured; (2) stylistics – poetry commonly employs metaphors and neologisms (which are more common than in prose); (3) objective – the poet primarily seeks emotional impact, whereas the author of prose habitually seeks to transfer information; (4) linguistic expression – poetry is characterised by richer artistic expression, whereas prose is close to everyday communication. Valli presents a model distinguishing poetry from prose, which, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, is consistent and clear, and the criteria singled out by Valli offer a systematic definition of the peculiar features of these texts. It should be remarked that this distinction largely overlaps with the insights of the focus group participants on the differences between artistic texts and their retelling, as described in the part of this thesis presenting its field research (see Section 1.4).

Nevertheless, it is worth discussing the third feature listed by Valli, namely, the objective. Even though Valli highlights the importance of information transfer in prose, it may still be questioned whether, in the context of artistic narration, emotional and aesthetic impact are not equally important, i.e., whether they are *not* essential components of a story. It can be assumed that even if information transfer is regarded as the key objective of prose, the emotional impact in an artistic text retains its *essential* role and remains inseparable from the content.

Valli (1993) also names several highly specific differences between poetry and narration: "[c]lassifiers can be used without any prior subject, not-like prose in which a classifier tends to come after a subject. Markedness is something found in ASL poetry but not in ASL prose, such as creating a new sign (not like invented signs; created signs are more like ASL but rarely used in prose), or a sign produced out of signing space (this is not allowed in prose)" (Valli 1993: 39). In other words, Valli suggests that, even syntactically, poetry and prose differ, as the location of the classifier is different in narration, neologisms are more common in poetry and poetry also uses signs more freely; that is, departures from the conventional signing space can be observed only in poetry, and are impossible to identify in prose. Valli's claims presuppose that the text category (prose versus poetry) in SL may even influence the structure of expression. In this context, poetry is perceived as capable of transcending the habitual grammatical order, allowing for broader artistic expression than prose. Nevertheless, none of these differences has been verified empirically, i.e., systematically (*tangibly*) measured.

The issues raised by Valli (i.e., *how* poetry differs from prose) have always been, and still are highly relevant in more recent academic works. Peter S. Cook (2011) also devoted himself to analysing SL poetry and its relationship with other forms of artistic expression, while also discussing SL storytelling. According to Valli (1993), and later argued by Cook (2011), a story can be distinguished from poetry (even though this is not a clearly defined borderline) by its structure, linguistic means and their identity, especially rhyme and rhythm, and the sheer volume of the work of art (Valli 1993; Cook et al. 2011). According to previous research, SL poems are typically around 2–3 minutes in length (Machado 2017, Sutton-Spence 2021). This observation is further confirmed by Lithuanian Deaf creators of artistic texts, who noted that a poem usually lasts 2–3 minutes, whereas other forms of artistic expression may be considerably longer, lasting 5 minutes or more. Members of the community have also observed that narrative texts are more flexible, as they can be supplemented, expanded, or otherwise modified, whereas a poem is generally regarded as self-contained and structurally more rigid work.

More recent researchers of SL literature, notably, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), primarily focused their attention on the means employed in artistic texts, while also building their findings on the trends identified by Valli. They discussed prose and poetry and concluded that "<...> there is no satisfactory way to separate SL *poetry* from SL prose (that is, any literature which is not poetry) because the distinction is ultimately an artificial one" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko, 2016: 117). Nevertheless, attempts are still being

made to discuss the potential differences by naming such elements as: (1) length of the work; (2) line segmentation; (3) purpose and function; (4) flexibility of texts; (5) vocabulary; (6) rhythm and signing speed; (7) plot and characters; (8) rules. The researchers claim that SL poetry, compared with prose, is shorter, less segmented, intentionally structured, and oriented towards the aesthetic function of language. In poetry, greater willingness to experiment is common as newly created and modified signs (see section 1.5.2.), more intensive use of non-manual features, rhythm, tempo, space and symmetry can be observed. In poetry, the plot need not be consistent and/or chronological, and the language can be abstract and multilayered. By contrast, prose seeks clarity and a consecutive sequence of events, while using conventional signs that can be easily recognised by the community, and its rhythm and tempo primarily serve to convey the content rather than to highlight language as such.

Nevertheless, these researchers highlight that none of these differences can unequivocally define the status of poetry and prose, since this distinction is relative and based on the combination of all these features. They claim that the distinction between poetry and narration can differ depending on the context of a specific work, its form, origin and target audience (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 45). In other words, these features act not as clear boundaries, but rather as points on a continuum. Accordingly, the transition between poetry and prose is gradual rather than marked by a strict boundary separating the two. A specific work may possess some of the features attributed to poetry, for instance, by being brief and rhythmically structured or by making more intensive use of space and non-manual elements, while also maintaining prose-typical features, such as a conventional narrative structure or a clear plot. In such cases, the work of art may be interpreted differently, depending on the importance assigned to certain features. Therefore, one category may transition into another, and the boundary between poetry and prose in SL literature remains flexible and variable. Finally, it is important to note the claim by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) that whatever is typically observed in artistic texts in Language One, need not necessarily be observed in Language Two. In other words, it is necessary to examine artistic texts in various languages and analyse whether these features are equally present in the artistic texts of the other SL.

Even though Valli (1993), one of the pioneering researchers in this field, already indicated some aspects distinguishing prose from poetry, he nevertheless used qualifying expressions such as ‘less’ and ‘more’, etc. Moreover, many scholars suggest – as the previously presented overview

indicates – that it is nevertheless complicated to draw a clear distinction between poetry and prose. This distinction will always be considered conditional and relative (Sutton-Spence 2005). One may find cases in works of prose where poetic features are manifested, whereas some poetic works resemble prose (Matterson & Jones 2000).

Based on previous research on SL artistic texts conducted over a period of more than nine years (albeit without intentionally attempting to distinguish and group all texts), the author of this thesis sees potential in outlining potential distinctions between different *categories* of works. The author thus agrees that some texts can be clearly attributed to prose or poetry; however, the features of some artistic texts that would allow them to be classified are too indistinct, or such features are entirely absent, making it impossible to position such works on one or the other side of the proposed boundary.

The Deaf LGK user and expert Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva, for whom, LGK is a first language 'language-from-birth', in personal discussions with the author of this thesis, suggested in 2021 to create a scientifically-based scale, or continuum, which would allow to position works appropriately according to their features indicating that a work is 'more' prose, poetry, or something else. The idea of such a continuum has also been acknowledged by the American-Swedish SL poet Debbie Z. Rennie, who is a Deaf signer herself and shared this point with the author of this thesis in a one-on-one personal discussion in 2024–2025. Thus, the insights by Valli, as well as Pečiulytė-Silaeva and Rennie are separated by nearly 30 years, yet their similarity indicates that these issues are not temporary or confined only to the early stage of SL literature research. This issue rather reflects the very nature of this literature, where the boundaries between categories are frequently relatively flexible and less clearly defined than in the traditional 'written' literature. Simultaneously, the question arises as to why this distinction is required at all.

In parallel with this trend of research attempting to perceive the differences between 'poetry' and 'prose' scholars have also raised broader questions. One of them is related to the classification of *all* artistic texts in SL. Ben Bahan (2006a, 2006b) is probably the scholar whose analysis has been the broadest, and who has explored the highest number of different SL texts. Hence, he certainly provides strong grounds for developing a system of categories for these works of art. In his work, six main categories of creative works in SL have been singled out: 1) narrative, 2) songs, 3) stories with certain *constraints*, 4) poetry, 5) *group* narrative, and (6) *sign* play. In the opinion of the author of this thesis, the system of SL artistic text categories suggested by Bahan marks an important step towards systematising artistic texts in SL.

Moreover, it suggests that texts belonging to different categories are also characterised by specific means of expression. Hence, such classification helps conduct the analysis of artistic texts in a structured manner.

Sutton-Spence (2005) is the most active and consistent scholar in the research of SL poetry. She explored the means of expression within this category; in her works, she analysed repetition, symmetry, ambiguity, metaphor, allusion, neologisms, and themes. In addition, she also examined the role of performativity in SL poetry. Initially, she investigated specific works by the SL poet Dorothy Miles with the objective of demonstrating how the above-mentioned poetic means function in authentic texts. In her later works, Sutton-Spence also explored some other artistic strategies employed in SL literature. Later, in collaboration with Ronice Muller de Quadros (2005), Sutton-Spence explored the identity of the Deaf, as revealed in SL poetry. Subsequently, together with Kaneko (2007), Sutton-Spence explored features of symmetry features from a broader perspective. In collaboration with Donna Jo Napoli (2010), Sutton-Spence analysed how anthropomorphism is manifested in artistic texts. Subsequently, Sutton-Spence, again in collaboration with Kaneko (2016), extensively explored SL literature in general, and specifically its relation to folklore, the protagonists of artistic texts, their themes, as well as the means of expression, including metaphors, neologisms, ambiguity, repetitions, symmetry, and non-manual features.

Sutton-Spence, primarily with Donna Jo Napoli (2012), and later also with Kaneko (2016), explored humour, as it is perceived in the Deaf community, as well as SL humour. Almost simultaneously, specific poetic structures and forms were also analysed: Kaneko (2011) researched the application of haiku principles in SL poetic texts, whereas Jackson (2006) investigated the organisation of rhythm and rhyme in SL poetic texts. Other topics already covered in scholarly research include the meaning of metaphors in the conceptualisation of experience in visual language (Taub 2006). In some works, the relation between SL literature and the cultural context together with the expression of the Deaf community identity, was investigated (Napoli 2017). Researchers have also explored the positioning of SL literature in a broader context of the culture of the Deaf and their artistic practice, while also discussing the relationship between literary expression, performativity, and visual aesthetics (Bauman 2004; Nelson 2006). It may be noted that performativity is indeed a unique feature of artistic texts in SL, and, given the practical material analysed in this thesis, this point warrants more detailed discussion.

The researchers whose valuable insights have frequently been referred to throughout this chapter – Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) – suggest that performativity is an essential feature of artistic texts in SL. They state that "[w]hen the story is performed live, the presence of the audience can be very influential but even in recordings of sign language stories, the literary event is only complete when the audience has seen it and responded to it" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 15). This means that a work of art is fully realised in the act of performing and experiencing it. In the opinion of the author of this thesis, the aspect of performativity helps perceive one more difference between textual categories: poetic works remain stable, and they are repeated almost identically – when performed live, when recorded or when performed repeatedly. By contrast, texts representing other categories, such as narrations, tend to vary more depending on the audience, context, and specific circumstances of their performance. It should be highlighted that the creation of video recordings of artistic texts in SL is an essential step because, in this way, works of art, as well as their authorship, are preserved for the future and become available to Deaf people and SL users throughout the world, as well as to anyone interested in these languages and their culture.

Hence, all the above-outlined research and manifested trends identified in it suggest that the study of SL literature and/or art is developing in a variety of directions, ranging from poetic structures and stylistic means to thematic, cultural, and identity aspects, as well as the distinctive means and features of expression observed in these works of art.

Currently, VV has been gaining considerable popularity among SL users; it is extensively created, introduced at major events and seminars, whereas workshops devoted to VV have also become increasingly common. However, despite the widespread popularity of VV in the international Deaf community, this phenomenon remains relatively under-researched. Brandwijk (2018), as well as Atiyah Asmal and Kaneko (2020) analyse body movement, gaze direction, movements of the eyelids and lips as well as cinematographic elements, whereas Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) also briefly discuss VV as a technique of SL narration based on cinematographic principles and visual bodily expression. Cristiano José dos Santos Monteiro (2023), in turn, examines VV in relation to Deaf literature and culture, conceptualising it as a form of performing art and exploring its place within Deaf literature. However, no author explicitly defines it as an independent SL category, thereby leaving the positioning of this phenomenon in the system of artistic texts in SL open to interpretation.

However, it is still complicated to clearly define the limits of VV. Researchers emphasise that VV is based on classifiers, whereas the author of this thesis suggests that depicting signs are of importance in this context. In practical contexts, and, as revealed in discussions with creative artists in this field, it has been highlighted that the essential difference between VV and other artistic texts in SL is the absence of signs with well-established meanings. It is this peculiarity that makes VV works more readily understandable at an international level; however, they are difficult to 'translate'. Drawing on discussions with Lithuanian and foreign SL users, the author of this thesis further suggests an insight that, according to the Deaf, this is a category which strengthens their identity while uniting them as a community. Hearing people are often fascinated by this category because the basic content of such works of art can be perceived without even knowing the SL. Moreover, works of art attributed to this learn both SL and SL users.

This thesis, as mentioned above, does not aim to distinguish works of art according to categories; however, the presence of VV works in the compendium of the texts to be analysed, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, indicates that theoretical insights and community perception do not always perfectly overlap. This allows the author to raise a question regarding the positioning of VV in the system of SL artistic texts. Thus, even though pioneering attempts to investigate the currently flourishing phenomenon of VV have been made, the primary focus of scholarly research on SL artistic texts has remained the analysis of their means of artistic expression. This thesis follows the same line of inquiry; accordingly, these means of expression are discussed in more detail in Section 1.5.

On the grounds of the above-outlined development of SL literature research, the directions of research, and the issues highlighted by scholars in this field, the exploration of artistic LGK texts in this thesis is primarily grounded in research oriented towards the analysis of the means of artistic expression. Of exceptional importance are the insights by Sutton-Spence (2005) as well as Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) on the means of expression employed in SL artistic texts, such as metaphors, neologisms, non-manual elements, and symmetry. Works of other authors interested in metaphors (e.g., Taub 2001), symmetry (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2007) as well as the role of other poetic structures in SL literature, are also considered. Hence, the insights presented in this work are subsequently applied for the analysis of the expression found in artistic LGK texts, with attention being primarily paid to the creation of metaphors, neologisms, non-manual elements, and principles of symmetry. Furthermore, when analysing literary

works, the thematic aspects of SL artistic texts discussed by foreign researchers are also considered, allowing for the interpretation of the themes appearing in artistic LGK texts in a broader context.

1.5 Means of Artistic Expression in Sign Language Literature

When researchers discuss various means of artistic expression in SL, they mention symmetry, repetitions, neologisms, non-manual elements, cinematographic techniques, and ambiguities (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Metaphors have also been extensively analysed (Wilcox 2000; Taub 2001; Sutton-Spence 2005; Pfau et al. 2012; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In SL literature (as well as in literature in spoken languages), metaphors are perceived not only as poetic and ornamental means: **"**[i]n sign language literature, the use of figures of speech – especially metaphor and personification – are not ornamental but foundational to the construction of meaning" (H-Dirksen et al. 2006: 1). Metonymy is also commonly observed in SL literature (Wilcox 2000) as is synonymy (Chamberlain et al. 2000; Pfau et al. 2012). This makes it evident that means of artistic expression typically observed in literature in spoken languages are also found in SL literature; however, their realisation inherently *does* differ.

The present thesis focuses on several means of artistic expression, notably, metaphors, neologisms and nonce-words, as well as specific non-manual elements (body and hand movements, eyelid, eyebrow and gaze expression) as the means of artistic expression. Their treatment in SL research shall be presented in the following sections. Nevertheless, the analysis of the empirical material has also revealed other means of expression that occur only in individual works and thereby contribute to their uniqueness. In such cases, these means are examined as part of the analysis of the respective works.

1.5.1 Metaphor

In stylistics and rhetoric, metaphor is traditionally defined as a trope, i.e., a figurative expression with a non-literal meaning, which is based on alignment of unrelated things or phenomena, their comparison, or presenting them as identical on the grounds of the similarity of certain properties (Koženiauskienė 1999; 2013). Such a concept of metaphor reflects the traditional, stylistic approach to the metaphor as a means of language ornamentation and expression. In the words of Renata Baltrūnaitė (1998), metaphor is one of the most efficient means of linguistic expression, as it not only makes language richer and more appealing, but also allows one to express

their subjective opinions, attitudes, etc. However, metaphor is also a way of cognition, one of the most deeply rooted and even 'inevitable' ways of understanding the world known in the history of human consciousness (Nisbet 1976). In other words, metaphor is a tool for making language richer, for presenting one's experience indirectly, for understanding the world, etc.

When defining metaphors, it is essential to highlight that metaphor is not merely a form of linguistic ornamentation or a privilege of poets and orators (Gibbs 1994). Such a view would certainly be incorrect. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor, which is referred to as 'conceptual' or 'cognitive' (Marcinkevičienė 1994, 2006), is perceived as "a way of seeing and reasoning: reasoning by seeing, and seeing by reasoning" (Daujotytė 2001: 124). Hence, in cognitive linguistics, the study of metaphors has gained a new dimension (Petrėnienė 2011: 55). Here, metaphor "is not only an artistic means" (Sumanova 2017: 98), "it is related with human intellectual activity" (Bitinienė 2007: 36), and is described as "one of the fundamental tools allowing to gain a deeper insight into mechanisms of reasoning <…>" (Vaivadaitė-Kaidi 2011). In other words, conceptual metaphors are a tool through which abstract concepts can be understood and, simultaneously, reasoned about.

Even though poetic and cognitive metaphors were previously (and frequently still are) distinguished (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Ortony 1993; Vladarskienė 2020: 1, etc.), the view has recently gained prevalence that "metaphor is habitually encountered in speech if all humans, and language of all iterations" (Cibulskienė 2005: 52), and, therefore, this distinction has begun to raise questions. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the theory of conceptual metaphor started being applied to the analysis of poetic metaphors in spoken *languages* (Kövecses 2010; Turner 2000, etc.). This approach has also been reflected in SL research (Taub 2001; Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2012; 2016, etc.).

The academic study of metaphors in SL, which essentially began in 1993 (Wilcox 1993, O'Brien 1999, Taub 2001, Meir 2010, Cohen & Meir 2015, Meir & Cohen 2018, etc.) demonstrates that metaphor is widely used in SL. Foreign SL researchers have examined conceptual metaphors (Taub, Meir, Cohen and others), whereas poetic metaphors in artistic SL texts have been investigated in the framework of the conceptual metaphor theory (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In this context, however, it is essential to highlight that metaphors in SL are created in ways that differ substantially from those in spoken languages (Meir & Cohen 2018: 2). In this field, the works of pioneering SL researchers on metaphor in SL, notably, Phyllis P. Wilcox

(2000) and Sarah F. Taub (2001), are particularly important. Their studies discuss the manifestation of metaphors in SL, while highlighting essential elements and processes involved in the creation of metaphorical signs, and especially those denoting abstract concepts. To describe this process, the aforementioned researchers suggest the term *mapping*. This term is also extensively used by other researchers, for instance, Emmorey (2014), Jarque (2005), Meir and Cohen (2018), etc., who have discussed the manifestation of metaphors and related it to iconicity, commonly encountered in SL.

The relationship between metaphors and iconicity has been extensively analysed by Masako Hiraga (2005); however, in her work, iconicity is related not to SL, but rather with spoken languages; therefore, *iconicity* gains an even broader scope of meaning: "Cognitive poetics sees iconicity as a structural mapping between the form and meaning of the text, and metaphor as a system mapping between the conceptual domains mediated by the text" (Hiraga 2005: 27). In other words, Hiraga claims that iconicity is a relationship of similarity or correspondence, whereby the structure of expression reflects the conceptual content. In SL, this concept gains an even broader scope because it not only includes the insights offered by Hiraga, but also links them to the modality-specific characteristics of SL.

As the object of the present thesis is the means of artistic expression in SLs, the following discussion focuses on the concept of metaphor in the SL context, while also relating it to insights from cognitive linguistics, since, as mentioned above, this framework can be applied to the analysis of metaphors encountered in SL artistic texts. Therefore, if it is assumed that an iconic sign is created prior to the creation of a metaphor, the analysis begins with the iconic sign.

Iconicity has already been briefly covered in Section 1.2 of this thesis; yet, this concept requires broader discussion in relation to artistic expression: "*Iconicity means that the specific symbolic form of the palm <...> depicts an item or an action it symbolises*" (Valli & Lucas 2002: 5). In other words, SL signs are frequently motivated (unlike words in spoken languages, where arbitrariness is common). This property has been regarded by SL researchers as being of exceptional importance, since iconicity "opens up different opportunities from those offered by *aural or oral expression*" (Müller & Cienki 2009). Iconicity in SL, when exploring SL metaphors, and especially conceptual ones, was defined by Wilcox et al. (2000) not as a relationship between a sign and a word, but rather as a relationship between two conceptual spaces. Researchers of metaphor in SL, particularly Wilcox (2000) and Taub (2001), focused primarily on outlining the interrelationship between iconicity

and metaphor in SL. Their research revealed how different phonological classes of a sign[32] may iconically represent some components of the meaning of that sign, and may subsequently be metaphorically connected with an abstract concept from a different semantic field (Meir & Cohen 2018: 2). To illustrate the relationship between iconicity and metaphor, SL researchers Irit Meir and Ariel Cohen (2018) present an example of the Israeli Sign Language signs EAT and LEARN. It is notable that the sign EAT is the same in LGK, whereas the localisation of the sign LEARN is different; see Figure. 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Iconic sign EAT



Figure 2. The metaphorical use of an iconic sign when rendering the action pertaining to an abstract concept. The sign LEARN

Note. Both illustrations were sourced from Meir and Cohen (2018: 3)

Thus, researchers suggest handshape in the sign EAT (see Figure 1), i.e., the hand configuration representing a small object being held in the hand and about to be put into the mouth, makes the sign iconic; in other words, the sign resembles the action taking place in reality. The same handshape configuration is preserved in the sign LEARN (see Figure 2); however, the location of the sign shifts as this time the sign is produced at the temple (by comparison, the LGK sign LEARN is produced near the face). "In this sign, iconic depiction is *aligned*, *related* with an abstract field of intellectual activity, when practicing which, objects (ideas, information, knowledge) are placed into a contained (into the head)" (Meir & Cohen 2015: 2). Thus, a

[32] While discussing phonology in SL, foreign sign language researchers employ the term *phonological components* (Meir & Cohen 2018), whereas the term *phonological classes* is more common in Lithuania (Danielius 2004). For more on phonological classes, refer to Section 1.5.1.

metaphorical transformation of the sign EAT takes place: the location of the sign is shifted, and the sign thereby acquires the meaning LEARN.

Figures 1 and 2 show two different signs, one of which (EAT) is iconic and bears no metaphorical meaning, whereas the other (LEARN) is also iconic, but is used metaphorically to represent an abstract concept. It is essential to highlight that the presently discussed sign LEARN, which bears a metaphorical meaning, is included in the Israeli Sign Language dictionary, as well as in the LGK dictionary, and therefore users of the respective SLs conventionally associate the sign with this meaning. This could be perceived as a metaphor at the cognitive level. Taub (2001) defines it as a *lexicalised* metaphor. Lexicalised metaphors fall beyond the scope of the present thesis.

When discussing the relationship between iconicity and metaphors in SL, it is essential to note the importance of context. It should be specified that certain iconic signs may be metaphorical even when considered outside of their context. One such example of a conceptual metaphor expressed in LGK could be the verb NEPAISYTI (*to disregard*)[33], whose expression is close to that of the conceptual metaphor COMMUNICATION IS SENDING[34]. The sign NEPAISYTI (*to disregard*) is produced as follows: the signer indicates that something rebounds from the ear, as if something has been said by an interlocutor, but then bounces away. Hence, in this particular case, it is clear that this iconic sign functions as a realisation of conceptual metaphor independently of the context in which the sign is used.

However, there are cases in which an iconic sign gains metaphorical meaning only in a certain context. This is especially prominent in SL poetry. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) emphasise that certain signs in a non-poetic context may be iconic without necessarily being metaphorical. That is, these specific iconic signs acquire a symbolic, figurative meaning only in a poetic context, in artistic works in SL. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) further highlight that it is particularly the poetic context that activates metaphorical elements in SL. Therefore, these researchers suggest that *creative metaphors* should be analysed at two levels: first, at the *micro* level when each particular element is analysed separately, and second, at the *macro* level, when the entire context of the artistic text, its circumstances, and the overall content are considered. From the works by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016, etc.),

[33] The recording of the sign NEPAISYTI (*to disregard*) and its meanings are more broadly presented in LGK dictionary: http://gestai.ndt.lt/component/signs/11163-nepaisyti-3 (last checked 13 Apr 2021).

[34] An analogous example of a conceptual metaphor in British Sign Language was presented by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012: 8).

it is evident that they adopt these two methods of analysis and use them together, i.e., the analysis of metaphors is necessarily related to the poetic context as well. As the material of the field research described in this thesis is LGK literature and its expression, which also includes metaphors, both presently discussed (*micro* and *macro*) levels are therefore considered in the analysis, following the approach of Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012).

It is noteworthy that the metaphorical expression found in SL artistic texts can be identified and analysed on the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) note that metaphors in SL artistic texts may be analysed within this theoretical framework, originally formulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) and further developed by Lakoff and Mark Turner (1989). Within this framework, metaphors are understood as part of everyday thought, while poetic metaphor is viewed as a non-conventional use of conventional metaphor. Based on this approach, various conceptual metaphors may be activated in SL artistic texts, for example, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, as well as orientational metaphors that associate evaluation with spatial directions, such as GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN. Such metaphors may also be realised through spatial and other parameters characteristic of SL expression. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) further highlight the metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, which, according to the authors, is particularly prominent in SL artistic texts. Vision constitutes a fundamental channel of experience for both the creator and the audience; therefore, seeing becomes a primary means for perceiving, interpreting, and experiencing the text. For this reason, this metaphor is particularly frequent and significant in SL literature: understanding is conceptualised in terms of seeing, while not seeing is construed as a limitation or loss of understanding.

It is important to emphasise that, in this dissertation, metaphor is understood in a broad sense, drawing on insights from cognitive linguistics, yet not limited to the analysis of conceptual metaphors alone. Although Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides an important analytical framework, it should be noted that, in this dissertation, the system of conceptual metaphors is not employed as the primary model of analysis and is not systematically reconstructed. This methodological stance is adopted following the approach of SL literature researchers Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012, 2016). Accordingly, the focus of this dissertation is on metaphors that are realised in artistic LGK texts in original ways, as contextually constructed instances of artistic expression. The analysis focuses on those metaphorical phenomena that are not lexicalised and whose meaning emerges only within a specific artistic context.

Furthermore, the aim of this study is not to identify and classify all possible conceptual metaphors, but rather to examine how metaphorical meaning is created through specific modes of expression – both at the global and the phonological levels – in order to address the research question of the dissertation. Therefore, the conceptual metaphor approach is employed in this study only selectively, namely, in cases where it contributes to the interpretation of specific instances of metaphorical expression observed in the analysed texts. With this in mind, metaphors in this dissertation are analysed at two levels: as elements of phonological expression (at the sub-lexical, or micro level), and as phenomena organising the structure of the entire text (at the macro level).

It should also be noted that even though SL research has discussed lexicalised metaphors that are conventionally understood by language users, in the present thesis, attention is devoted to metaphorical expression in artistic LGK texts, where the metaphorical meaning can frequently be identified only in the broader context of the relevant work of art. In such cases, an authentic, non-lexicalised metaphor is involved, i.e., this metaphor is not necessarily immediately and equally understood or identified by everyone.

1.5.1.1 Metaphor at the global level

According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), "[w]hile most studies in SL metaphor focus on the lexical level, metaphor in SL literature can be found at several levels" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In the words of Sutton-Spence (2005; 2016) and Kaneko (2016), metaphors can be realised in different ways as, for example, the entire text can function as a single metaphor. These authors refer to such cases as *allegory*, *extended metaphor*, or *global metaphor* (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 109). In other words, the entire work has a figurative meaning. Sutton-Spence (2005) provides the ASL poem *Elephants Dancing* as an example: a story about animals is narrated; these animals are trained to serve humans at the expense of their own freedom. In this story, the poet, while seemingly narrating a story about animal training, actually addresses the experience of Deaf people who are obliged to conform to the norms and expectations of hearing society. The researcher emphasises that "[n]owhere in the poem is there any reference to Deaf people, but when we observe the poems in the light of the experience of Deaf people, we can look for this 'hidden' meaning" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 118). This is an example of a global metaphor.

It should be noted that, when analysing SL metaphors in the framework of this thesis, a cognitive linguistic approach is adopted. Its representatives

Lakoff and Turner (1989) note that the reading of a text (in a spoken language) as a global metaphor is restricted to three essential ways: (1) the use of conventional conceptual mapping; (2) the use of ordinary knowledge; and (3) iconicity – a mapping between the structure of a text and the meaning or image it conveys (Lakoff & Turner 1989: 146–147). As stated by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), drawing on Lakoff and Turner (1989), a poetic text can frequently be interpreted as a source of several global metaphors, and, therefore, different audiences with different experiences and from different cultural contexts may understand the same work of art differently. This was corroborated by Wilcox (2000) who provided examples demonstrating that different audiences interpreted the same work in ASL differently. It is for this reason that, in cognitive poetics, iconicity is understood as a relationship between the textual structure and the meaning or visual image it represents.

1.5.1.2 Metaphor at the phonological level

Such scholars as Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016) and others distinguish metaphors created by employing means at the phonological level in SL. The phonological level in SL embraces four SL classes of phonemes: handshape (its configuration), palm position (its orientation), the location of the palm (its localisation), and movement. Non-manual elements, such as various facial and head movements, are also attributed to the phonological level in SL[35]. It is essential to note that SL, unlike spoken languages, is characterised by a high degree of simultaneity, i.e., the smallest elements of a sign are typically realised simultaneously. In other words, the phonological elements of an SL sign are generally produced together, at the same time, and are not necessarily arranged sequentially in the way that sounds or letters are in spoken languages.

It should also be highlighted that Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) use the term *metaphors at the phonological level* in their work to describe the expression of metaphors by employing means at the phonological level, i.e., by employing such elements as configuration, orientation, localisation,

[35] Non-manual elements have been attributed to the phonological level of SL by the Lithuanian sign language researcher Danielius (2004) as well as by some international researchers (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016, etc.). However, it is essential to note that, according to Danielius (2004), non-manual elements cannot be considered phonemes, as they are not related to hand movements. In SL, their relationship with phonemes is highly similar to that between relationship of super-segment elements of spoken languages (such as stress and intonation) and phonemes (Danielius 2004: 35).

movement, and non-manual elements. These researchers also note that Deaf authors of artistic texts commonly employ one of these elements to create and convey metaphors in poetic SL works of art. Most of the examples presented below are related to conceptual (cognitive) metaphors; however, in artistic texts in SL, metaphorical meaning may also be created in cases that do not involve conceptual metaphors, but in which metaphorical meaning is created through the use or modification of elements at a phonological level. Below, all five elements of the phonological level, which, according to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko, may be employed when creating metaphors in artistic texts in SL are presented. This analytical approach is applied to the analysis of LGK literary works, encompassing not only conceptual metaphors, but also cases in which a metaphor is created through the use of one of the aforementioned phonological classes.

1.5.1.2.1 Handshape as a means of metaphor creation

As mentioned above, the first phonological class of phonemes is handshape (its configuration), which may also contribute to metaphor expression. In the words of Sutton-Spence (2005: 26), "[t]he target domains [of SL] are emotional effects commonly associated with particular handshapes", whereas "physical configuration of handshapes often stands for abstract concepts" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 110). Hence, scholars such as Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) suggest that specific handshapes, which do not have meanings of their own and are not themselves used to denote abstract concepts, may contribute to the construction of meaning in artistic texts in SL, including poetry. It is specifically in poetic works that signs may be modified while their basic handshape is preserved; poets may also create neologisms, while particular handshapes may be used to convey metaphors and, specifically due to the poetic context, may themselves be perceived as metaphorical.

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016) present the following examples: a specific handshape can be described as open and be selected to convey positive emotions and positive concepts, whereas a closed handshape can be used to express negative ones; 'sharp' and 'non-sharp' handshapes may be used to represent an unfavourable or favourable situation for the protagonist (either a human or another entity in a poetic work of art), respectively. It is important to note that Sutton-Spence and Kaneko also present specific configurations which illustrate the insights presented above, but they are related to British Sign Language (BSL). Thus, negativity and 'sharpness' can

be rendered by such handshapes in BSL as: 5+ and 1+[36]. In these configurations, the fingers are bent, and this, in the opinion of the scholars, indicates the above-mentioned qualities. For instance, a poetic work may tell the story of an apple whose handshape (in British Sign Language) involves bent fingers, thereby also conveying negativity and creating a negative mood. It is essential to note that, in this particular case, the concept itself does not carry any emotional charge or connotation. The 'non-sharp' properties, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, are rendered by the following configurations in LGK: B, 5, etc. In this case, the fingers are extended[37], aligned and touching each other (B), or slightly spread out (5).

It is also notable (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2012; 2016) that Deaf artists can opt to use only certain configurations in their works in order to express a certain mood or a personal point of view, without revealing it through any additional signs. For instance, when depicting a cochlear implant and a person who turns its mechanism on, the poet may express this idea only through configurations in which the fingers are consistently bent, thereby indicating that this process is painful for the Deaf community and that the choice to receive of a cochlear implant is perceived in a negative light by the Deaf[38].

The metaphor researchers Sutton-Spence (2005; 2012; 2016) and Kaneko (2008; 2011; 2012; 2016) also discuss the opposite situation in which poets may employ such configurations as A (in this particular case, this configuration is equivalent to that in LGK), a tight fist, which is frequently employed in signs representing bravery, courage, or strength. This configuration may be employed in poetic works to convey the above-mentioned additional meanings. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko highlight that, in all the cases indicated, the signs selected by poets neither gain nor lose iconicity, as they are already iconic; however, within a poetic context, a

[36] These configurations are presented in the LGK dictionary.

[37] Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012), when discussing handshapes in which the fingers are straight, suggest that these may represent metonymic expressions. However, they do not explore metonymy in SL in greater depth or develop these preliminary observations further. Instead, they analyse the relevant configurations primarily in terms of the relationship between metaphor and iconicity. Given that research on metonymy in SL is still at a relatively early stage internationally and, to the best of the author's knowledge, has not yet been undertaken in Lithuania, the present thesis deliberately focuses on handshapes without considering metonymic expression.

[38] Here and throughout the theoretical part of this thesis, examples from the works of foreign poets are reproduced as presented by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016).

specific configuration may be perceived as a metaphor by the addressee/recipient of a work of art.

It is important to note that Kaneko (2008; 2011) refers to attempts to connect certain configurations with negative or positive concepts as *handshape symbolism*. In other words, Kaneko claims that configurations with bent fingers are associated with signs that symbolise negative concepts, such as PYKTIS (*anger*) or APGAILĖTINAS (*miserable*); in British Sign Language, these signs are produced with bent fingers. Somewhat equivalent examples in LGK could be such signs as PIKTAS (*angry*) and GOBŠUS (*greedy*). Such observations have also been presented by other SL researchers, for instance, by Brennan (1990), Bouvet (1997), and Zeshan (2000). In this context, Kaneko (2009, 2011), and, later, together with Sutton-Spence (2012), analyses this handshape symbolism in terms of metaphor.

It is important to note that these metaphors are not associated exclusively with negative concepts. In the opinion of the researchers Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016), configurations involving bent or similarly positioned fingers may sometimes also be employed to express neutral or even positive concepts. Specifically, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) highlight that, in everyday language, the symbolic meanings of certain handshapes may not be prominently manifested, yet they may become apparent in poetic works. Therefore, the present thesis examines metaphors (as well as other means of expression) in close relationship with the context of their use, that is, LGK literary works. In other words, the research is conducted at two levels: at the micro-level, *sublexical features* are analysed, for instance, *phonological* elements, whereas at the macro-level, the artistic context and the content of the literary work are considered.

1.5.1.2.2 Palm orientation as a means of metaphor creation

The SL researcher Ronnie Wilbur (1987) investigated and described the metaphorical use of palm orientation and emphasised that it may be employed to convey metaphorical meaning. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) illustrated this observation with the example of the signs GOOD and BAD in Americal Sign Language. It is important to note that the palm orientation of these two signs in ASL differs from that of LGK. The two authors highlighted that, in ASL, the sign GOOD is produced with the palm facing upwards, whereas the sign BAD is articulated with the palm facing in the opposite direction, i.e., by directing the palm downwards. Thus, the positive meaning of the sign GOOD is aligned with the orientation of the palm, i.e., upwards,

reflecting the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP, whereas downwards is associated with badness (BAD IS DOWN). Meanwhile, the orientation of the LGK signs GERAS (*good*) and BLOGAS (*bad*) is as follows: for the sign GERAS (*good*), the fingers are directed forward, and the palm is oriented to the side, while, for BLOGAS (*bad*), the fingers are directed upwards, whereas the palm, as in the case of GERAS (*good*), is oriented to the side. The palm configurations of these two signs are also different[39].

However, by analogy with the illustration of the signs GERAS (*good*) and BLOGAS (*bad*), provided by international SL researchers, an example from LGK could be provided using the sign GERĖTI (*to improve*) (LGKŽ – GERĖTI 2), whose orientation changes during its production: from a position in which the fingers and palms are directed downwards, the sign moves to a position in which the fingers are directed upwards and the palms are oriented towards the signer. Thus, the sign GERĖTI (*to improve*) has a positive meaning, and the orientation of this sign may be interpreted as reflecting this positive meaning.

Drawing on her own experience, the author of this thesis also provides an opposite case, i.e., the sign BLOGĖTI / SMUKTI / KRISTI (*to worsen*/*decrease*/*fall*). The palm orientation of this sign is, by analogy, the reverse of the above-described orientation observed in the sign GERĖTI (*to improve*): the position in which the fingers are directed upwards and the palm is oriented towards the signer develops into a position in which the fingers and palm are directed downwards. Thus, the sign has a negative meaning, which may likewise be reflected in its orientation, with downward orientation being associated with negative meaning. In other words, the orientation of signs, and specifically the upward or downward orientation of the fingers and the palm, can be related to the conceptual metaphors GERAI YRA AUKŠTYN (GOOD IS UPWARDS) and BLOGAI YRA ŽEMYN (BAD IS DOWNWARDS).

It should be highlighted that these examples represent orientational metaphors. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) identify the manifestation of such metaphors through several phonological classes of SL, including sign location, movement, and palm orientation. As the present subsection focuses on the latter, particular attention is devoted to orientational metaphors and the ways in which they can be realised through palm orientation.

As mentioned above, such metaphors are referred to as orientational when an abstract concept is structured in terms of spatial orientation, such as upwards or downwards. As noted by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016),

[39] The handshape for the sign GERAS (*good*) is An, while the handshape for the sign of BLOGAS (*bad*), this is I.

similarly to orientational metaphors in spoken languages, SL orientational metaphors may also involve spatial directions, i.e., forward or backward. These researchers associate this distinction with the visible and non-visible sides of the palm. To put it differently, a distinction can be made between the palm facing outwards, so that its inner surface is visible, and the opposite orientation, in which the back of the hand is presented. These insights can be connected with such orientational metaphors as GERAI YRA KRYPTIS Į PRIEKĮ (GOOD IS FORWARD) and BLOGAI YRA KRYPTIS ATGAL (BAD IS BACKWARD) (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016:114). These researchers claim that showing the palm in most Western cultures is frequently related to openness and positivity, whereas the 'opposite side' typically represents negativity and indicates that something is undesirable, or private (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 114). For instance, poets may employ palm orientation to create figurative meanings, directing the palm from outwards, away from themselves, to convey positive emotions experienced by the characters in a poetic work, such as joy, happiness, a sense of connection, or an intimate, warm interpersonal bond. By contrast, Deaf poets may convey sadness or loneliness by turning their palms towards themselves, or 'inwards.' Various sources (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2012; 2016, etc.) note that downward-facing palms may stand for the end of life, death and related concepts. In other words, the deliberate choice of palm orientation by poets may create figurative meanings and contribute to the emotional colouring of an artistic work.

1.5.1.2.3 Sign location as a means of metaphor creation

First of all, let us discuss the term localisation. It refers to the location at which the sign is produced and, in LGK, according to Danielius (2004), localisations can be grouped into broader areas, for instance, the head, neck, palm, the space in front of the signer, etc. These areas can, in turn, be divided into more specific localisations, for instance, above the head, at the front of the neck, on the palm, in neutral space or in front of the body, etc. Danielius (2004) also claims that the concept of 'neutral space' refers to the space in front of the signer, where signs are produced. Grammatically, this space is used in a variety of ways, and therefore, from a grammatical point of view, separate localisations are singled out in this space (Danielius 2004: 50). However, Danielius notes that, from a phonological point of view, this space constitutes a single localisation phoneme. In other words, the lexical meaning

of a sign remains the same regardless of whether it is produced on one side or the other.

What is more, Danielius (2004) emphasises that, from a phonological point of view, the signing space is a limited area in front of the signer. This space extends from the signer's body forwards and to the sides, upwards and downwards, as far as the hands can reach. However, a smaller area is actively used for signing. The latter extends only slightly more than half an arm's length forwards and to the sides; its upper boundary is the top of the head, whereas its lower boundary is the waist (Danielius 2004: 50)[40].

This section focuses on localisation as a means of metaphor creation. As noted by such SL literature researchers as Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) and others, the localisation of a sign is frequently important in the expression and conceptualisation of abstract concepts. For instance, signs whose meanings are related to mental activity (such as GALVOTI (*to think*), ŽINOTI (*to know*), SUPRASTI (*to understand*)) are frequently produced at or near the head. By contrast, signs whose meanings are related to emotions are frequently produced at the chest (e.g., MEILĖ (*love*)) (Brennan 1990). Scholars have noted that SL poets frequently use the chest location for the expression of emotions, identity, and the true *self*/*me* (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Thus, as highlighted above, abstract concepts are frequently metaphorically represented in SL. In other words, these are conceptual metaphors. However, as a number of SL researchers whose works are discussed here have noted, a similar process can be observed in the creation of individual metaphors. In such cases, a particular location may be consciously and deliberately selected for a sign or signs and may, in many cases, differ from their conventional location.

With regard to the aspect of sign location, one of the categories of conceptual metaphors, notably, *orientational* metaphors are particularly relevant in this context. As highlighted by SL researchers Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016), in SL literature, the signs denoting (or associated with) hearing individuals in positions of authority, such as physicians, teachers, etc., are frequently produced at a physically higher location, whereas signs referring to Deaf people or associated with Deaf people are produced at a lower location[41]. In other words, this represents the spatial encoding of status,

[40] Classes of phonemes are discussed more extensively in Danielius (2004: 34–57).

[41] The author of this thesis has personally observed that Lithuanian Deaf signers, when recounting situations occurring in a physician's office, not infrequently represent initially the opposite spatial arrangement, i.e., the 'I' is positioned higher than the physician. Arguably, this does not represent a difference in status, but

which, in SL, can be rendered by positioning signs accordingly in signing space, i.e. at a higher or lower location. Thus, the deliberate positioning of signs in space may also contribute to the creation of individual metaphors encountered in SL poetry.

However, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012: 32) emphasise that this type of analysis cannot be based solely on the location of individual signs, for instance, on whether signs encoding higher status or related concepts are produced at a higher location. The broader context in which these signs occur and the content of the poetic work must also be considered. In other words, when individual signs encoding status are analysed in isolation, outside the context of the poetic work and independently of the signs surrounding them, their metaphorical meaning may be lost.

When orientational metaphors are discussed, it is important to consider that cognitivists (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; 1999; Gibbs 2005, etc.) typically relate them to the above-mentioned hypothesis of embodiment and to metaphorical motivation through *image schemas*. According to Johnson (1987), an image schema is a recurrent pattern or structure arising from human bodily movement, perception, and interaction with the physical world and providing a basis for conceptual organisation (Johnson 1987: 29). In other words, "visual schemas arise in a conceptual system from bodily experience" (Vaivadaitė-Kaidi 2018: 29). Johnson (1987) argues that the notion of image schemas helps address one of the fundamental questions in cognitive semantics, namely, how meaning arises from bodily experience and provides structure for abstract concepts involved in reasoning (Lakoff & Johnson 1999).

It is also relevant to note the spatial distribution of signs, and, more specifically, the positioning of signs in front of the signer, i.e., at or near the centre of the signing space. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) indicate that some signs in poetic works that are deliberately positioned in a central location may be endowed with metaphorical meaning. In this way, poets may assign greater importance to a phenomenon, person, or other entity denoted by a particular sign than to other signs positioned away from the centre, i.e., secondary elements in relation to the foregrounded signs. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 111) relate this insight to the following conceptual metaphors: IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL versus LESS IMPORTANT IS PERIPHERAL.

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rather an attempt to reconstruct the situation as it actually occurred, with the positioning of the referents reflecting the physical location of the physician and the patient. Deaf individuals, like other patients, may remain standing after entering the physician's office while the physician remains seated. Therefore, the physical location of the physician is lower than that of the patient.

For instance, some foreign Deaf poets in works addressing Deaf and hearing communities, may position signs pertaining to Deaf people at the centre, whereas those related with hearing people may be positioned towards the sides, thereby conveying the idea that issues, topics, etc., related to the Deaf community are of more importance than those related to hearing people. When discussing the spatial position of signs at or away from the centre, it is also important to note the physical distance between specific signs, which may also be referred to as the spatial proximity of signs. SL researcher Taub (2001) discusses the conceptual metaphor INTIMACY IS PROXIMITY, which is frequently encountered in poetic works in SL. For instance, in SL poetry, a poet may reveal the relationship between a Deaf child and a hearing parent (for example, the father) by not only positioning the sign referring to the father centrally while shifting the sign referring to the child to the side, thereby suggesting that the father is more important and holds greater power, but also by establishing a greater physical distance between the signs representing the two characters. In other words, a considerable physical distance between the signs SON and FATHER in a poetic work may indicate a cold and strained relationship between the son and his father.

It is highly relevant to point out one more use of this phonological class (localisation), where metaphorical meaning is created through the spatial distribution of signs. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) suggest that Deaf poets may associate concepts carrying different emotional connotations with different sides as well as different vertical positions (in terms of the sign location), thereby developing a *diagonal space* for the distribution of signs. This may form a cline or line which, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, may contribute to the poetic balance of a work.

For instance, when a poet in his/her work depicts the difficulties involved in writing an academic paper, pressing deadlines, and the stress experienced by the protagonist, the negative experiences may be represented by signs positioned in the 'upper-right' area, whereas a short break by a river, where the protagonist sees a duckling, becomes a moment of respite. These positive experiences may thus be produced in the 'lower-left' area. Thus, the poet creates a diagonal line connecting these spatial positions. Notably, the two spaces are connected by the sign UPĖ (*river*), next to which, later in the poem, the human protagonist finds him/herself, while taking a break from his/her work.

It is also essential to highlight that, in this work, the duckling swims upriver, to the right, and upwards, i.e., towards the space previously marked by the poet as the location of painful experiences and high ambitions. A connection is thus established between the two characters through their

respective goals – the human protagonist's pursuit of completing and submitting a scholarly paper, and the duckling's effort to make its way upriver – based on mutual understanding as well as a shared direction of movement. Even though Sutton-Spence and Kaneko do not explicitly mention this interpretation, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, the work in question can also be analysed as a realisation of the conceptual metaphors A GOAL IS A DESTINATION and PURSUING A GOAL IS MOVING UPWARDS. Thus, as the case discussed above demonstrates, in poetic works created in SL, metaphors may be created by employing different sign locations, thereby creating a diagonal spatial arrangement by a line of movement.

To conclude this subsection, it should be emphasised that Deaf poets may deliberately employ the spatial distribution of signs to create metaphors, for instance, when expressing their identity or the true '*I*', in which case, signs may be produced at the chest, among other locations. Deaf poets may also employ orientational metaphors, and, in this way, encode the status/power of a character or an entity, with some signs positioned physically higher than others. The importance of particular phenomena, topics, or individuals may be metaphorically represented by positioning certain signs at the centre, whereas signs referring to elements of lesser importance may be positioned somewhat away from the centre. Human connections and relationships may be metaphorically rendered by poets by positioning certain signs physically closer to or farther away from each other. In addition, diagonal spaces may be created, with different sides and vertical positions marking different experiences, events, etc.

1.5.1.2.4 Movement as a means of metaphor creation

According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), in SL, meaning can also be metaphorically rendered through the speed and manner of producing a sign, as well as the direction of its movement (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). The choice of a specific rhythm and/or speed may indicate different emotions or degrees of emotional intensity. Thus, rapid movement may be associated with enjoyment, self-confidence, or even outright overconfidence (Jackson 2006, as cited in Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). By contrast, signs produced slowly may symbolise shyness, tiredness or old age; however, they may also indicate positive emotions, enjoyment, or relaxation (Jackson 2006, as cited in Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Therefore, the speed at which a particular movement is produced may contribute to the emotional colouring of the artistic work and may serve as a means of creating metaphorical meaning.

In the exploration of sign movements, researchers highlight that particular movement may carry metaphorical associations. For instance, "repetitions and mechanical movements <...> are frequently <...> a metaphor of inevitability in such events as elimination of something or death. Circular movements frequently refer to passing time <...>" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 112); such movements may also be metaphorically associated with the theme of the *circle of life*. Hence, movement constitutes another means of metaphor creation. When discussing metaphor expression in SL, and especially in relation to orientational metaphors, it is essential to note the role of movement direction. In the words of Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), "there is a clear and strong association between an upwards-directed movement of a sign and a positive meaning, and between a downwards-directed movement of a sign and a negative meaning" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 113). The prominent Deaf poet Dorothy Miles,[42] in one of her works, employs the motif of climbing a staircase. The viewer may perceive this movement as a metaphor for the pursuit of success. In the same work, Dorothy Miles employs downward-directed movements, such as sinking/drowning, decapitation, or falling, thereby conveying the idea of hardships and various dangers. In short, these examples demonstrate how poets may create orientational metaphors through upward- or downward-directed movements.

SL researchers Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) note that forward-directed movement is usually associated with a positive intention, whereas backward-directed movement tends to convey the opposite meaning. For instance, in an artistic text, a poet may represent a positive outcome by depicting the protagonist *flying forward* (literally, i.e., physically moving forwards), thereby creating a metaphor for the protagonist's determination to begin a new stage in life, meet other people, see new places, etc. In other words, when a poetic work ends with a forward-directed movement (i.e., flight forwards), the poet may deliberately employ this direction of movement to create metaphorical meaning.

[42] The emergence of SL poetry is commonly associated with Dorothy Miles. As noted by Rachel Sutton-Spence (2005), Miles is regarded as a pioneer of SL poetry, having contributed significantly to its development as a distinct form of artistic expression. During her studies at Gallaudet University (1957–1961), she became acquainted with what was then referred to as the "art" of sign language – ABC stories, number stories, and narratives created using a selected handshape (Teresė 2018: 32). However, as Sutton-Spence (2005: 22) notes, "<…> they were not recognised as containing elevated poetic language in any formal way and they were part of Deaf student culture and Deaf club culture, rather than single-authored original art forms of the language created through poetic principles."

When discussing metaphors created through movement, it is important to note different directions of movement, such as movement away from the body and movement towards the body. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), movements towards the body may suggest the emotional closeness of the protagonist, whereas outward-directed movements may suggest indifference or separation from someone or something else. However, other interpretations are also possible: "<...> outward-directed movements may represent something open and positive, whereas body-directed signs may suggest self-centredness (that is, something which is not extremely positive)" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 113).

These researchers also identify another possible interpretation of movements directed towards and away from the body. In their opinion (2016), poets can use movements directed towards the body to represent external pressure experienced by the protagonist. Hence, the protagonist is being forced to do something or to become someone else against his/her own will. For instance, in one poetic work by a non-Lithuanian poet, movements originating outside and directed towards the protagonist's body indicate pressure to communicate using the voice (it is presumed that this pressure stems from a hearing person and is directed towards a Deaf person), or pressure to conform to a heterosexual orientation. The protagonist attempts to repel this pressure by using movements directed away from the body.

In conclusion, it should be highlighted that, in some poetic works, movements directed towards the protagonist's body or in the opposite direction may serve as a means of creating metaphorical meaning; however, the specific meaning of the metaphor only becomes apparent in the broader context of the poetic work. In some cases, movements towards the body may signal emotional closeness, while, in other instances, they may represent the protagonist's seclusive nature or external pressure exerted upon the protagonist, from which they seek to break free.

1.5.1.2.5 Non-manual features as a means of metaphor creation

This subsection of the thesis focuses on those metaphors created through different classes of phonemes, one of which comprises non-manual elements. In line with the objective of this subsection, the following discussion identifies and examines in detail the non-manual features and their functions that various researchers have associated with metaphor creation in artistic SL texts.

To start with, non-manual elements, according to previous research, may contribute to the creation of one category of conceptual metaphors, namely,

orientational metaphors. These metaphors are particularly common in SLs due to their spatial nature. The author of this thesis has previously discussed orientational metaphors in LGK poetry (Teresė 2022) in relation to sign location. Such metaphors (i.e., orientational metaphors) may be created through sign location, for example when a poet deliberately positions particular signs higher or lower in relation to other signs in the surrounding signing space, thereby metaphorically conveying differences in the status of the characters represented in a poetic work. This type of metaphorical representation is frequently encountered in artistic texts in SL.

However, orientational metaphors can also be created by employing the class of non-manual elements. The gaze and its direction as a non-manual element may serve as a resource for constructing orientational metaphors in poetic works. More specifically, Deaf poets may employ gaze direction to metaphorically represent power relations between the characters of a literary work (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 200). For instance, when a poet depicts a character possessing greater power or occupying a position of superiority, the gaze may be directed downwards, towards another character depicted in the literary work, thereby signalling the difference in status between the two characters[43]. In other words, characters who have gained a certain authority may look *down on* other characters of lower status, both literally and metaphorically. This can serve as an example of an orientational metaphor whose construction relies not on the spatial positioning of signs but on the direction of the gaze.

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) claim that a gaze may also provide the audience of a poetic work performance with temporal information. Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999) note that looking *sideways* may serve as a reference to the past, looking straight ahead or looking down may refer to the present, while looking upwards may signal the future. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), SL literature typically exhibits economy of signing, and, therefore, the use of different directions of gaze to convey additional information may constitute a particularly effective means of providing the audience with further information in an SL literary work. For instance, a poet may depict a perfect world of the Deaf, while directing his/her gaze forward and slightly upwards, thereby suggesting to the audience that the poet is envisioning a bright future for the Deaf. Alternatively, a poet may direct the gaze sideways, thus directly reflecting one's past (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 200). Importantly, the author of this thesis observes that accounts of the

[43] All examples presented in Section 1.5.1.2.5 have been reproduced from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016).

functions attributed to gaze as a constituent part of non-manual features (Danielius 2004; Herrmann, Steinbach 2001; Pfau et al. 2001, etc.) make no reference to the function singled out by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko as well as by Woll, namely, that providing additional temporal information or indicating certain segments of time. Therefore, the author of this thesis is inclined to suggest that the feature discussed by these scholars may serve as a means of creating temporal metaphors.

Orientational metaphors in SL poetry may also be created by employing certain movements of the body; in this context, the position of the body, and that of the head, may be singled out (cf. Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). For instance, in a given work, an author may lower his/her head, thereby indirectly conveying sadness, pain, hardship, or a state of feeling depressed. Conversely, when the poet changes the position of the head by raising the chin, this may metaphorically communicate to the audience the protagonist's readiness to move forward and persevere. It is notable that Deaf poets employ the position of the chin in their artistic works relatively frequently, and this may symbolise a relatively wide range of experiences.

According to Ichida (2004), a forward chin position metaphorically signals the involvement of the protagonist, poet, or person assuming this position, whereas a lowered chin position, also referred to as the *back position*, denotes indifference or lack of involvement. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), the position of the chin (as well as the corresponding position of the entire body) may be employed by artists in different ways. For instance, in a literary work, a particular body position may be introduced abruptly as a means of realising a metaphor and occur only several times; alternatively, cases of such metaphorical use may form a sequence in which the artist gradually raises or lowers the chin, thereby allowing the audience to perceive the character's inner experiences and/or attitudes towards the issue explored in the poetic work. All the cases discussed above exemplify conceptual metaphors GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN, GOOD IS MOVING FORWARD and BAD IS MOVING BACKWARD (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 203).

According to Rachel Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), orientational metaphors in SL artistic texts may be created through non-manual features involving not only movements of the chin or head, as discussed above, but also full-body movements. In some cases, performers may deliberately deviate from conventional front-facing orientation and employ marked bodily shifts for expressive purposes. For example, in Paul Scott's *I Know Who (Stole My*

Heart)[44], the poet sharply turns his entire body approximately 90 degrees to the side while extending one arm with an open palm in a STOP sign (see Figure 3). This movement, occurring at the culmination of the performance, becomes highly salient and conveys the protagonist's determination and the establishment of an emotional boundary, metaphorically signalling that no one will be allowed to take his heart. Such use of full-body movement is described by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 204) as a non-conventional or marked expressive strategy. These examples demonstrate that non-manual features, including head and body orientation, may function as important resources for metaphor construction in SL artistic texts.

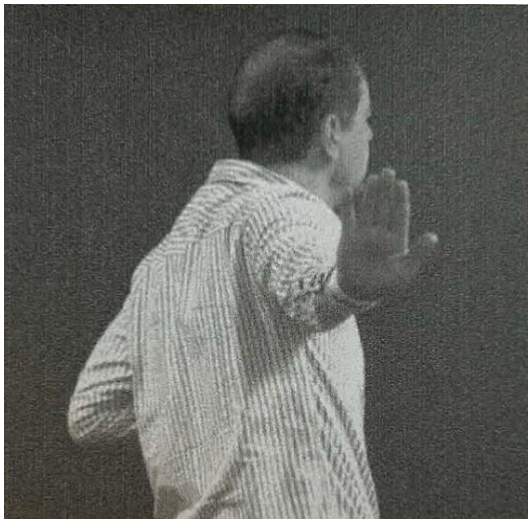


Figure 3. Metaphor created through body movement in *I Know Who (Stole My Heart)* by Paul Scott. Figure reproduced from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 204)

Researchers distinguish between articulated lip movements, formally referred to as *mouthing*, and lip movements that are not related to spoken language, for which the term *mouth gestures* is used (Boyes-Braem & Sutton-Spence 2001). As the latter – i.e., *mouth gestures* – are not related to spoken language, they may serve as a means of conveying various emotional or visual aspects, such as some properties of an object, movement, or action. In SL artistic texts, such lip movements may be employed to create an additional visual or poetic effect, thereby contributing to metaphorical expression (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). However, the present dissertation does not

[44] Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jpP3AQG43s.

include the analysis of lip movements within its scope; therefore, this means of expression is not discussed further[45].

For the purposes of the research conducted in this doctoral thesis, a broader conception of metaphor is adopted. This thesis analyses global metaphors in artistic LGK texts, as well as metaphors created through the use of one of the phonological classes of signs, whereby metaphorical meaning is generated. The analysis also draws on insights from cognitive linguistics; therefore, metaphorical expression is examined from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, with attention also being paid to conceptual metaphors realised in literary works.

1.5.1.3 Identification of metaphors in SL artistic texts

This section of the theoretical part of the thesis provides an overview of how specific instances of expression are identified as metaphorical. The issue of metaphor identification in spoken languages has remained an important area of research for several decades (Cameron 2003; Stefanowitsch 2004; 2006; Deignan 2005; Steen et al. 2010; Berber-Sardinha 2011, etc.). One of the most systematic and widely used procedures for identifying metaphor in spoken language [46] is the so-called MIP (which stands for Metaphor Identification Procedure), developed by the *Pragglejaz Group* (2007). Later, MIP was further developed into an extended and refined procedure known as MIPVU[47].

In simplified terms, the procedure involves several fundamental steps in determining whether a lexical unit is used metaphorically[48]: 1) reading the entire text to establish a general understanding of its meaning; 2) identifying the lexical units (usually words) in the text; 3) analysing each word by taking into account three factors: the *contextual meaning* of the word, the potential basic (physical, more concrete) meaning of the word, and subsequently, comparing the two meanings to see if they can be perceived as related through similarity. A specific lexical unit is identified as metaphorically used when its contextual meaning contrasts with its more basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

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[45] For more details on mouth actions, see Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016: 200.

[46] Scholars have proposed alternative approaches and criteria for identifying textual elements as metaphorical. For instance, the theoretical framework of *conceptual blending* (also referred to as conceptual integration) has been applied to the analysis of metaphor. For a more detailed discussion, see Turner and Fauconnier (2003), etc.

[47] For more information on MIPVU, see Steen et al. (2010).

[48] This method and its stages are discussed more extensively in: Pragglejaz Group (2007); Dorst and Kaal (2012); Pitcher (2013), etc.

It must be emphasised that these methods and procedures are applicable when analysing texts in spoken languages; however, SL scholars do not employ these procedures when analysing conventional metaphors, i.e., metaphors that are conventionally understood by language users (Taub 2001, etc.), nor are these procedures applied in the analysis of original metaphors in artistic SL texts (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2012; 2016). The aforementioned MIP, as well as other methods commonly employed in the analysis of spoken languages, cannot be directly applied to SL because of the different modality and specific nature of expression in SLs. This, in turn, raises the question of how a particular instance of expression can be identified as metaphorical or non-metaphorical.

As already mentioned in Section 1.5.1, SL researchers examining metaphors have addressed the specific characteristics of iconicity and metaphor in SL, as well as the relationship between the two. More specifically, Wilcox (2000) discusses this phenomenon in ASL, Jarque (2005) investigates it in the Catalan Sign Language, Cuxac (1999) and Sallandre and Cuxac (2002) examine this issue in French Sign Language, while Russo, Giuranna, and Pizzuto (2001) address it in Italian Sign Language.

One of the most frequently discussed models explaining the origin of metaphorical meaning in SL is Taub's (2001) Analogue-Building Model of Linguistic Iconicity. The principle suggested by Taub is that of double metaphorical transfer, commonly referred to as *double mapping*. According to this model, metaphorical meaning in SL emerges in two stages. First, the iconic form of a sign is related to a specific physical action or episode depicted by that form. Subsequently, this episode is metaphorically related to an abstract concept. Schematically, this process may be rendered as follows:

Iconic form of the sign → physical event/scene → abstract conceptual meaning

This means that, first, the shape of the sign iconically reflects a certain physical action, object, or situation. Then, this visual connection serves as a basis for metaphorical transfer, whereby a physical episode is related to an abstract concept or experience. In this way, the iconic form of a sign becomes an intermediate link in a chain that connects specific visual experience with abstract meaning (Taub 2001). However, it is important to note that this methodology is usually applied when investigating individual metaphorical signs, which are treated as separate lexical units, have a form that is independent of the context, and carry figurative meaning. In this way,

metaphors are usually explored in everyday (i.e., non-artistic) language rather than in artistic SL texts.

Meanwhile, when analysing metaphors in SL artistic texts, a broader poetic context becomes an essential factor (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2012; 2016) because, in some cases, metaphorical meaning is revealed only through the structure of the work of art and the context of the text as a whole. A similar perspective has also been offered by Hiraga (2005) who remarked that, in cognitive poetics, iconicity is perceived as "<…> structural mapping between the form and meaning of the text" (Hiraga 2005: 27). In this context, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) – two scholars with a profound interest in artistic SL texts and the metaphors they contain, as well as in metaphor creation through the use of elements at the phonological level (the latter constituting one of the objects of research in this thesis) – claim that the model developed by Taub, as well as other models, such as that proposed by Meir (2010) are excessively complicated and therefore limited in that they fail to account for the context of an artistic text, which cannot be disregarded when dealing with original and unique metaphors in artistic texts. Notably, original metaphors may, in some cases, acquire their figurative meaning specifically because of their artistic context.

One of the approaches to the analysis of artistic SL texts and, specifically, their means of expression, including metaphors, is the *iconic superstructure*, which is used in empirical research by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012). The term *superstructure* itself was first used by Klima and Bellugi (1979), who associated it with specific features unique to SL literature and analysed how signs can be modified or altered to create an aesthetic effect. In more recent research, this concept has been further developed by other authors. For instance, Demey, Van Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2008) associated it with sublexical iconic elements that can be activated at the syntactic or discourse level.

It is crucial to highlight that this approach is not a model or scheme comparable to Taub's (2001) Analogue-Building Model of Linguistic Iconicity, as discussed above. *Iconic superstructure* rather refers to an analytical perspective that makes it possible to investigate how, in artistic SL texts, recurrent features of iconic elements are organised and how they relate to the structure and themes of the entire literary work. Research tends to emphasise that a superstructure may encompass recurrent or similar features of different signs that are interrelated, thereby contributing to an overall structure of meaning in the literary work, whereas a broader context is

essential for these features to become apparent and to be interpreted (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2012: 13).

When applying this analytical perspective in research, two levels of analysis (*micro* versus *macro*) are commonly established. The microlevel involves the analysis of individual elements of a sign, for example, handshape, movement, localisation, orientation, or non-manual elements, whereas the macrolevel involves the examination of the structure of the entire text, its thematic organisation and the broader context, in which symbolic or metaphorical meanings may emerge.

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) do not present a schematic model of the *iconic superstructure*; however, for the purposes of this thesis, an analytical model of the iconic superstructure, based on the research of Sutton-Spence and Kaneko, can be schematically outlined as follows:

Sub-lexical elements of signs (handshape, movement, localisation, orientation, and non-manual features)

↓

Recurring iconic patterns in the text

↓

Their organisation within the structure of the literary text

↓

Interpretation in relation to the thematic and poetic context

↓

Possible symbolic or metaphorical meaning

Thus, analysis is initiated with the identification of sub-lexical sign elements, after which, their recurrence is explored along with their organisation within the structure of the text, and their meaning is interpreted in broader thematic and poetic contexts, in which symbolic or metaphorical meanings may be realised.

Hence, even though the concept of *iconic superstructure* helps explain how features of iconic elements are organised in artistic SL texts, and how they relate to the structure and context of a literary work, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012) conducted an analysis that was essentially based on distinguishing different levels of analysis. Their research dealt not only with individual elements of a sign or their modifications, but also with the broader structure of the artistic text and its context, through which potential symbolic or metaphorical meanings may be discerned. This is primarily relevant to the analysis of metaphors in artistic SL texts, as, in such texts, metaphorical

meaning frequently manifests itself only at the broader level of the literary work's structure and its poetic context.

On the basis of the research tradition discussed above, the present thesis undertakes to explore metaphors in artistic LGK texts by applying an analytical approach based on the micro and macro levels, as employed in the works of Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016). This approach allows for the investigation of not only sub-lexical elements of a sign but also the broader structure of an artistic text along with its context within which metaphorical meaning is manifested.

1.5.2 Neologism as a means of artistic expression

As scholarly research indicates, artistic SL texts make extensive use of neologisms. Neologisms are created words, collocations or phraseologisms which are new to a language. In linguistics, neologisms are defined as newly created lexical units or new meanings of already existing units which appear in language through its adaptation to the communicative, cultural or/and creative needs (Aitchison 2001; Crystal 2008). They are also used in language out of necessity, prompted by intensive economic, political, social, cultural and other processes, as well as by the pursuit of more modern, expressive, and fashionable linguistic expression (cf. Girčienė 2005: 1). In the context of SL specifically, neologisms are newly created or modified signs.

As indicated by previous research (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016; Teresė 2018), in artistic SL texts, artists commonly create new signs or modify existing ones in order to enhance the poetic effect, foreground metaphors, or direct the addressee's attention to specific points in the work of art. When the author selects this means of expression, the recipient of the work is also provided with an opportunity to experience it more profoundly, come closer to the author's original idea, and gain a better understanding of its content. According to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), neologisms are one of the means through which commonplace, everyday language can be transformed into poetic language; in this way, a poetic effect is created in SL texts (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 129).

The scholars also suggest that it is particularly neologisms – whether in spoken or SLs – that can attract the attention of readers and *recipients*. They provide artists with a means of demonstrating their linguistic skills. Neologisms serve as a means of artistic self-expression while also allowing poets to maintain a certain rhyming structure within a text. This is applicable both to spoken languages and to SLs. However, it is essential to underline that neologisms in SL are an extremely common phenomenon. This stems from the visual/image-based nature of expression in SL, the very origin of SL, and

its modality. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) discuss three ways in which Deaf authors of artistic texts create neologisms:

1. Modification of an existing sign.
2. Creation of a totally new sign.
3. Borrowing from other languages (including spoken ones); i.e., these are borrowed signs.

It is important to bear in mind that Sutton-Spence (2005) initially defined neologisms somewhat differently, in a narrower sense: "[t]he poetic *neologism* is presented once, then explained or elaborated upon, and then is repeated to allow the audience to enjoy it further" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 48). That is, the researcher suggests that a neologism is unique, a 'single item', a sign created by a specific author and subsequently systematically repeated within the work of art. This allows for the interpretation that modified signs, as well as borrowed signs, would not, in such a case, be regarded as neologisms. However, for the purposes of the present research, this thesis adopts the later (and broader) classification of neologisms proposed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016).

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) also suggest that the most common method adopted by Deaf artists when creating neologisms is the modification of already existing signs. Typically, one of the classes of SL phonemes is modified: 1) handshape or configuration; 2) palm position or orientation; 3) place or localisation of signs; 4) movement. This strategy has been adopted by artists for a variety of reasons, for instance, to maintain the rhyme of a poetic work of art (which is created through the repetition of handshape, movement, and space); a poet may modify the handshape of a specific sign by replacing it with a different one, i.e., one that would maintain the rhyme. Also, a Deaf artist may shift the sign localisation to produce all signs in a specific section of a work of art within the same localisation. A Deaf poet may modify a sign by altering its movement, i.e., a certain sign may be produced by moving the fingers (despite the absence of this kind of movement in the standard form) – in this way, in an artistic SL text of a tragic nature, a contrasting impression can be created, and the author may seek to emotionally affect the addressee (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 131).

A second way of creating neologisms is the development of entirely new signs. This alternative is chosen when the dictionary does not contain the required sign, or else when a Deaf artist is motivated by a desire for greater creativity (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 132). The two researchers also highlight (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 132) that, in such cases, neologisms are "<...> always visually motivated, making use of [a] classifier." The researchers also discuss the *productive lexicon*, which serves in the

creative process. The use of productive lexicon (i.e., classifier and/or depicting signs) is indispensable, and this is evident not only in the artistic SL texts explored in the course of this doctoral research, but also in the everyday communication in SL.

In other words, SL users frequently, and in various situations, resort to creating certain signs, due to the very nature of SL itself. SL is devoid of certain ready-made signs for every concept, and therefore its users, depending on objects, subjects, and actions that are being discussed, create novel signs by using, in the words of Danielius (2004), certain handshapes with item-type meanings together with movement elements with action-type meanings. In depicting signs, items (i.e., objects) in certain verb constructions are marked by proforms; this is considered the main function of *proforms* (Danielius 2004: 78). According to Danielius (2004), the proform is "[s]uch a shape of the palm whose use in a sign is motivated by denoting a certain item/object on the basis of its [physical] shape" (Danielius 2004: 77). Danielius (2004) uses the term *proform*; however, in the present thesis, the internationally more widely used term *classifier* is employed to refer to such handshapes. For instance, the signs KĖDĖ (En. *a chair*) or NAMAS (En. *a house*) are produced using classifiers that resemble the shapes of the respective objects. In the examples discussed here, nouns are conveyed by classifiers, yet, by employing the same classifiers, a sign representing a verb can be created. These cases are referred to as *constructed in the process of speaking*, or *depicting signs*. For example, the sign AŠARA (En. *a tear*) is a noun marked with a classifier (CL:1) (one finger is extended; it is long and narrow, which is suitable for representing a tear), whereas the meaning may be *to flow*. The classifier itself cannot be a verb; however, by employing classifiers, a sign may be turned into a verb.

In addition, for instance, LGK contains no ready-made sign NUKRISTI (En. *to fall [usually, to fall off somewhere]*). No such sign is available in the LGK dictionary, either. However, LGK users, depending on what has fallen, create such a sign in the course of a conversation by employing classifiers. Every time, this verb in LGK may be produced in a different way due to the different subjects and/or objects involved. That is, in the sentence O*buolys nukrito ant žemės* (*An apple has fallen onto the ground*), the sign for *nukristi* (*to fall*) will be produced using classifiers 4c and B, whereas in the sentence P*agautas vėjo popieriaus lapas nukrito ant puodelio* (*Caught by the wind, a sheet of paper has fallen onto the cup*), the sign for *nukristi* (*to fall*) will be shown with the classifiers B and Bc. The signs for 'to fall' in the case of the apple and the sheet of paper are produced with different classifiers, depending on the objects involved and what falls onto what (an apple falls onto the ground, while a sheet of paper falls onto the cup).

Hence, LGK users create the required sign in the course of interaction; as mentioned above, this sign is absent from the LGK dictionary. Here, it is

important to note that, currently, the LGK dictionary only contains *frozen signs* belonging to the *established lexicon*[49]. The fact that the LGK dictionary features only frozen signs is of major importance, for instance, when discussing neologisms. In the empirical research conducted in the framework of this thesis, when neologisms in artistic LGK texts were identified and described, the absence of the corresponding signs from the LGK dictionary served as one of the criteria for classifying them as neologisms.

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) are of the opinion that Deaf artists may employ already existing classifiers, i.e., classifiers that are already commonly and widely used in everyday communication; however, they can also use entirely new classifiers. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko present the following example: a Deaf poet may use a classifier denoting a cat (even though the sign KATĖ (En. *a cat*) is present in the dictionary). This newly created classifier may look as follows: the extended middle finger represents the animal's head, while the bent ring finger and index finger represent the animal's forelegs, whereas the bent thumb and little finger are visually perceived as its hind legs (see Figure 4). The lip articulation *meow* explicitly indicates that the referent is a cat. In LGK, it is common to use the classifier H when referring to running animals (see Figure 5); however, there is no classifier that bears any similarity to the one discussed above.



Figure 4. Neologism representing a walking cat, as shown in Paul Scott's work "Tree"[50]. Illustration is reproduced from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 133)



Figure 5. Sign BĖGTI (RUN), referring to an animal, produced using the classifier H/H, as presented in the LGK dictionary

[49] For more information on frozen signs/established lexicon, see Brennan (1990); Taub (2001); Vermeerbergen (2006); Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999); Johnston and Schembri (2007), etc.

[50] Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lf92PlzMAXo

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) note that "[t]here is often overlap between the modification of existing signs and the production of entirely new signs" (2016: 134). This can be interpreted as indicating that, sometimes, there are no clear boundaries or criteria that would allow a sign to be classified and attributed to one of the neologism categories. For instance, the ASL sign TWIN-TREES may be interpreted in two ways – as a modification of the already existing sign TREE (by modifying the parameters of its form), or as an entirely new sign[51]. This indicates that the dividing line between modified and newly created signs is not always clear-cut, and that this issue can be interpreted in different ways. The same can be claimed about neologisms encountered in artistic LGK texts, and their classification into a specific category is, at times, somewhat controversial.

With regard to terminology, for the purposes of the empirical research conducted in the framework of this thesis, a decision was taken not to divide the newly developed signs into more specific categories, such as *classifiers* or *depicting signs*, but, instead, to use the broader term *productive signs* proposed by Sutton-Spence (2005). The scholar emphasises that "productive signs (also known as 'classifier signs') can be used at any time to create entirely new signs, using what Sarah Taub (2001) has called 'a set of iconic building blocks for the description of physical objects, movements and locations'" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 48). In other words, depicting signs and classifiers are perceived in this thesis as belonging to the broader category of *productive signs*.

Although the term *neologism* is frequently used in research on SL literature, the cases analysed in this thesis do not always correspond to the narrower understanding of a poetic neologism discussed above. The analysed cases may function not only as separate, occasional, aesthetically foregrounded elements of a literary work, but also as part of a broader system of expression integrated into the textual structure. For this reason, the cases discussed here are collectively referred to as *productive signs*, a term that encompasses both individual, single-use signs and repeated signs created or modified within a text. In the context of this thesis, *productive signs* are treated as a category of neologisms, i.e., specific cases which, in artistic SL texts, perform the function of aesthetic expression commonly associated with neologisms.

In contrast, the term *lexicalised signs* (also referred to as *conventional signs*) is used to refer to conventionalised and well-established signs in LGK. Typically, these signs are included in the LGK dictionary; in cases where a

[51] This example has been taken from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 134).

sign is not attested in the dictionary, this is explicitly indicated. Since the aim of this study is not to provide a fine-grained typological classification of these signs or to determine the distinctions between the individual categories, the analysed cases are not further subdivided into narrower categories. In this dissertation, all analysed instances that fulfil the function of neologisms are consistently referred to as *productive signs*, thereby ensuring terminological consistency throughout the study.

For the purposes of the present analysis, cases are interpreted as modifications of an already existing sign when a recognisable basic sign is preserved, but a certain phonological parameter is modified (e.g., localisation, orientation, or movement). By contrast, in cases where several essential phonological parameters (such as configuration, movement, or orientation) are modified, and a clear formal relationship with the initial sign is no longer retained, the resulting form is deemed to represent a newly introduced unit, i.e., a neologism.

Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) note that signers may borrow words from the spoken language of the surrounding community to create neologistic expressions – this is the third method of creating so-called neologisms. As many Deaf signers are bilingual to some extent, poets can rely on the audience's knowledge of the spoken language and create a fusion between the two languages. An example provided by the authors is Paul Scott's poem *Home*[52], which is structured around the manual letters of the English word **H-O-M-E**, where each letter contributes both to the structure and the meaning of the stanza. Here, **H** is represented by two flat 'B' handshapes corresponding to the British manual letter *H*, which are used to depict the structure of the house, such as its walls and roof. By contrast, **O** is realised through the BSL sign *NOTHING*, which has an 'O' handshape, referring to what a hearing person would not find in the Deaf protagonist's house, such as sound or music. Next, **M** is conveyed through the 'M' mouth pattern, expressing relaxation and satisfaction as the poet comments on the pleasant aspects of his home. Finally, **E** is completed with a loud scream, 'Ee!', representing the noise in a Deaf person's house and forming the final letter of *HOME* (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). This theoretical perspective is also important in the context of this thesis, as it makes it possible to identify certain cases in which artistic LGK texts employ elements from spoken language, for instance, the manual alphabet, and to assess whether such cases can be interpreted as means of artistic expression.

[52] This example is taken from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 134).

1.5.3 Non-manual features as means of creating artistic expression

SLs operate through both manual and non-manual elements. First, it should be noted that non-manual features are an inseparable part of SL grammar, i.e., non-manual elements are used not solely as a means of creating artistic expression. According to Annika Herrmann and Markus Steinbach (2011), non-manuals "<...> express a variety of lexical, morphosyntactic, prosodic, semantic, and pragmatic functions such as attributive, adverbial, and aspectal modification, negation, sentence types, reported speech, constructed action, and information structuring" (Herrmann & Steinbach 2011: 1). Facial movements are also attributed to non-manual elements – these are primarily movements of the eyebrows and lips, but also movements of the cheeks, tongue, and nose, as well as certain movements of the head and the entire body (Danielius 2004: 63), to which the gaze, including its direction and other features, should also be added (Danielius 2004: 35). It has also been emphasised in previous research that non-manuals are characterised by two properties: they are multifunctional, and they can be layered with both manual and other non-manual markers; they accompany lexical signs, or they may align with syntactic or prosodic phrases (Sandler 1999; Wilbur & Patschke 1999; Brentari & Crossley 2002; Sandler & Lillo-Martin 2006; Dachkovsky & Sandler 2009; Herrmann 2012; Sandler 2012).

Non-manual elements as a means of artistic expression began to be analysed relatively recently. Here, the pioneering research of Peter C. Hauser, Donna Kelly, Gene Mirus (2008), Ronnie Wilbur (2009), Irit Meir and Wendy Sandler (2008) and a few others should be mentioned. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) claim that non-manual elements "[e]xhibiting multiple components simultaneously and adding depth to the description of a poetic scene [are] important in SL literature" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 204), i.e., it is through the interaction of these elements that the impact of an artistic text as a whole is created. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko note that, in SL literature, non-manual elements perform a broad range of functions: facial expressions render emotions, the gaze (including its direction) creates narrative perspective as well as relationships within the plot, mouth movements reinforce visual imagery, and the position of the head and the entire body contribute to the rhythm and dynamics of specific episodes. As the empirical section describes such non-manual elements in artistic LGK texts as body movements (including those of the hands, shoulders, and waist, as well as movements of smaller body parts, such as the eyelids or eyebrows, and the direction of the gaze), the theoretical section undertakes to discuss these particular non-manual elements along with their functions in SL literature.

The present thesis discusses movements of the hands and shoulders, as well as *body postures and movements*, and, therefore, this means of expression should now be discussed in more detail. First, according to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), artistic texts are usually performed with their authors standing in a 'fixed' position and moving only the upper part of the body. Of course, there are cases when a poet moves away from the fixed position – however, this full-body movement constitutes a separate means of expression. Hence, according to Sutton-Spence and Kaneko, when performing a text, artists usually employ head, shoulder and waist movements, thereby creating an aesthetic effect. For instance, it is not uncommon for rhythm to be created through continuous side-to-side swaying of the upper part of the body. In other words, body movement is employed to create a 'poetic rhythm' in artistic language, or a particular visual 'rhyme'.

Donna Jo Napoli and Sutton-Spence (2010) claim that shoulder movements, swaying and, more generally, movements of the whole upper part of the body, are employed not only as a syntactic means (for instance, to mark boundaries or topics), but also to signal changes in the roles performed by the protagonists. In other words, body movements are perceived as a means of reinforcing transitions between different characters, thus creating a greater emotional and aesthetic impact. Interestingly, movements of the body (and, notably, those involving movements of the shoulders and the waist) in artistic SL texts, according to Heidi Rose (2006), are also perceived as a tool through which the narrative structure is shaped, and greater credibility is lent to shifts in perspective. Ultimately, the aesthetics of the experience approaches that of a cinema reel. To put it otherwise, cinematographic properties (which constitute another means of artistic expression in the context of SL literature) are manifested, as body movements, together with the gaze and facial expression, can create a cinematic effect and contribute to a dynamic narrative (cf. Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). This insight is important, as it becomes evident that means of artistic expression must 'cooperate' and work jointly to produce the desired effect.

Body movements may also be employed to "<…> become the character, in other words, authors can use their own body, facial expression, eyes to show the character looking or nodding, or performing actions that show the character is frustrated or astonished and can show their reactions to a situation that indicate they want or like it" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 60). Essentially, the same can be stated about representing various phenomena and objects. For instance, rhythmically tapping a foot on the floor can be used to represent drumming. Sometimes, a combination of all these elements allows

the artist to more general developments in the life of the protagonist. Thus, the body movements of the authors of artistic SL texts can be discussed from a broad range of perspectives: as individual means of artistic expression that enhance the aesthetic and emotional impact of SL literature, and also as means that help to reveal the personality of the protagonist as a whole. Moreover, body movements involving particular directions and spatial orientation may also be employed to create metaphors. This has already been discussed above, in Section 1.5.1.

In artistic SL texts, an important function is performed by non-manual elements located around the eyes, especially the direction of the gaze and eye and eyebrow movements. In addition, movements in the area around the eyes, including *eye aperture changes* and eyebrow movements, can help structure the narrative by directing the attention of the spectator and enhancing the emotional atmosphere of the stage (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In SL literature, these elements may be employed to convey emotions, portray characters and highlight more important moments in the narrative (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Generally, facial movements in SL literature may help render not only external (i.e., physical) characteristics of the depicted individuals – such as *protuberant eyes*, *squinting eyes*, *a grinning mouth*, *shrunken lips* and similar features (cf. Li 2004: 21, quoted in Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 195) – but also psychological states, levels of intelligence or aspects of their personality, for instance, expressions of shyness, stupidity, indifference or curiosity (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 196). In this way, artists may seek to reveal the personality of the protagonist by resorting to non-manual elements, including not only physical features, related to the protagonist's appearance but also aspects of their inner world pertaining to behaviour or emotional states.

In general, facial movements in artistic SL texts may help reveal various emotions of the characters, encouraging audiences to feel happiness, sadness, anxiety, boredom, anger, fear, amazement, contempt, desire, etc. This applies not only to human protagonists, but also to cases of anthropomorphism (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 195). Facial expressions help to conveys affective information about the events or characters in the story. However, the present thesis does not undertake an analysis of facial expressions; in this context, it is sufficient to note that, alongside the previously mentioned eyelid and eyebrow movements, an exceptionally important role is also attributed to the gaze and its direction.

In artistic SL texts, what really matters is not merely the gaze as such and its direction but also its duration. As indicated by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko

(2016: 198), the gaze "<...> conveys both linguistic and non-linguistic information". The functions of the gaze have been elaborated upon by Kaneko and Johanna Mesch (2013) who distinguish gaze patterns:

1. Gaze towards the audience (*Narrator's gaze*) is present when the artist looks at the audience (or camera), thereby establishing communication, which essentially represents a direct connection with the audience. In a sense, this is a metalinguistic gaze that indicates that what is being told is addressed to the audience; it represents the presence of the artist outside the story.
2. *Character gaze* is present when the artist's gaze is directed in such a way that the scene appears to be viewed through the eyes of the character. In such a case, the performer takes over the perspective of the character, i.e., a role shift to the character's perspective takes place, and the narration is represented from the character's point of view, thus, the gaze becomes a means of showing how the character sees the environment or other characters.
3. *Spotlight gaze* is observed when the gaze directly follows signs, and thus, the artist employs the gaze to place emphasis on certain episodes/moments in the work of art, thereby drawing greater attention to them and inviting the audience to take a closer look at them.
4. *Reactive gaze* as a type of gaze is relatively close to *spotlight gaze*; however, the difference lies in the fact that the gaze does not serve to highlight a particular element but is rather a reactive act. The character may direct their gaze at the hands, or at the action being shown, thus appearing to observe what is taking place within the narrative space. In this way, the gaze becomes a means of reacting to the evolving action and helps to convey the relation between the character and the event being depicted.
5. *Panoptic gaze* is used to provide a broader, overall view of the poetic scene. In this case, the gaze complements the information conveyed manually and allows the audience to perceive the scene as a whole.
6. *Prescient gaze* is used to create inner tension within the artistic text. This type of gaze differs from the others in the sense that the gaze is directed towards the location where no signs are being produced yet, and thus, the audience is guided along the line of the narrative. The gaze is thus used to arouse anticipation and engage the audience. Here, it must be noted that the present thesis does not undertake to analyse gaze as a means of artistic expression[53].

[53] With regard to non-manual elements performing functions of artistic expression, mouth and lip movements, i.e., mouthing and mouth gestures, may also be included. Considerable attention has already been devoted to this aspect by the researchers Boyes Bream and Sutton-Spence (2001), who singled out two types of

To summarise, it can be claimed that the gaze in SL literature performs not only a linguistic function, but also important narrative and aesthetic functions: the gaze helps organise narrative perspective, differentiate between the perspectives and attitudes of the characters, highlight the key moments within the text, and create dramatic tension, thus guiding the audience throughout the narrative structure of the work (Kaneko & Mesch 2013; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016).

1.5.4 Symmetry as a means of artistic expression

Symmetry is another important means of developing artistic expressiveness. Researchers such as Valli (1993), Sutton-Spence (2005), Bauman, Nelson, and Rose (2006), and Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) have identified symmetry as a means of artistic expression. First of all, it should be noted that symmetry is common in everyday SL which is why it is also referred to as 'kitchen speech'. Sign symmetry involves the symmetrical movement of both hands (in two-handed signs), with the hands moving in an equivalent manner in relation to each another (Danielius 2004). Sign symmetry in SL poetry (as well as in SL literature in general) is classified and discussed differently from sign symmetry (and asymmetry) in analyses of the very structure of SL. Brentari (1998), Wendy Sandler (1999), Danielius (2004) and many others have already extensively explored the concept of symmetry. Two-handed signs are divided into symmetrical signs (when the shape of both palms, their position, location and movement are equivalent in those cases where both hands are active) and asymmetrical signs (when the hands move differently, i.e., when there is a main (active) hand, and the other, passive (secondary) hand (Danielius 2004: 56). Here, it must be stressed that

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mouth action; notably, mouth gestures are in no way related to spoken language. Mouth gestures are usually employed spontaneously to create a certain contrast. It is essential to note that the latter type of movement is performed not only with the mouth, but also with the lips and cheeks, involving the mouth muscles. Certain movements of this type are called onomatopoeia by David Fowler and Mark Heaton (2006), as they can be interpreted as 'sounds' related to the object or subject being shown/depicted, as well as to the action being performed by the artist. To put it otherwise, Deaf signers use mouth gestures not in an attempt to depict sounds, but, on the contrary, to creatively convey a unique sensory experience. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko also highlight that "[t]heir creative nature makes them highly relevant to poetic signing" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 201). It is also notable that, like other non-manual elements, mouth actions can operate either alone or in combination with signs. In the course of conducting the empirical research, this thesis does not focus on these elements, and, therefore, they are not covered in the theoretical section.

this rule is not applicable, as stated by Danielius (2004), to depicting signs, as, among the latter, there are signs in which both hands are active and move independently of each other (Danielius, 2004: 56). In this case, symmetry (or its absence) is a feature of SL that does not perform any function of artistic expression.

However, for Deaf authors of artistic SL texts, according to Sutton-Spence (2005), an intentional choice to render a text by employing only one or both hands, while purposefully using symmetry and balance, or deliberately avoiding them, can serve as a means of creating the desired impact on the audience. It must be noted that, initially, symmetry was discussed in the context of SL poetry, but, subsequently, it was also observed that symmetry may be present in narration (Ryan 1993), as well as in other types of artistic SL texts (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In other words, symmetry is a universal means broadly employed in the creation of various artistic SL texts. As symmetry falls within the scope of this thesis, this phenomenon is discussed in the CV and *Focus Group* analysis sections, as well as the discussion of ELAN annotations; hence, the relevant types of symmetry shall be investigated further below.

Sutton-Spence (2005) elaborates on three types of reflective (or mirror) symmetry: vertical symmetry, horizontal symmetry, and front-back symmetry. Let us explore them one-by-one in more detail. Vertical symmetry is developed on the basis of harmony between the right and left sides. It is easy to notice that this kind of symmetry is commonplace. Chris McManus (2002) notes that vertical symmetry is abundant in the real world; it involves such examples as the human face (i.e., if a central vertical line is drawn dividing the face into the left and the right sides), as well as human hands, legs, the bodies of most animals, flowers, and trees – and, therefore, it is not at all surprising that vertical symmetry is readily recognised. This essentially happens automatically (McManus 2002: 352). This kind of symmetry is ubiquitous in artistic SL works produced by the Deaf.

Meanwhile, horizontal symmetry is not as frequent. As suggested by Sutton-Spence (2005), horizontal symmetry needs to be deliberately created, unlike vertical symmetry. It is developed not between the left and the right, but, rather, in cases where the lower part of the body is linked with the upper part, i.e., as if creating a mirrored image, with the presumed line of 'collision' positioned in front of the signer, parallel to the waist. For instance, the E handshape may depict a swan's head; when the swan moves its head downwards towards the surface of the water, its reflection can be depicted using the other hand. This reflection is created with the other hand, where, the

E handshape likewise depicts the swan's head, and the two hands meet at the beaks, with the real swan represented by the upper hand.

A third type, front-back symmetry, is also distinguished. In this case, the hands move one after another, as if one hand were repeating the movement of the other hand with some delay, as can be observed in signs such as KOMUNIKUOTI (En. *to communicate*) and METAI (En. *a year*). Let us briefly note that the more frequent forms of symmetry are the first and the third types (i.e., vertical and front-back), whereas the horizontal type is extremely rare in the works of Deaf artists. It should also be noted that Deaf authors at times employ another type, namely rotational symmetry in artistic SL texts, in which symmetrical signs are shown in a circle, thus contributing not only to the artistic expression of the work but also to its deeper aesthetic impact on the audience.

Symmetry is also discussed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko in a broader context, encompassing not only the relationship between two sides, manifested through hands moving in different directions, but also phenomena that extend beyond these boundaries. Thus, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko distinguish the following categories: thematic symmetry, temporal symmetry, spatial symmetry, asymmetry, breaking and remarking symmetry, as well as symmetry and asymmetry in duets. Let us examine these key concepts in more detail.

1. **Thematic symmetry.** In this case, symmetry is perceived in a broader sense, as an opposition between two elements or aspects. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) observe that, in stories and poems, opposing or contrasting ideas are frequently employed. This is not a new insight, as various artistic texts feature contrasting characters: the young and the old, the big and the small, a human and a monster, good and evil (Olrik 1965: 135). This is also evident in artistic SL texts and may be particularly prominent when the two key characters are a Deaf person and a hearing person. As an example, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko present David Ellington's work *The Story of The Flag*[54], in which a powerful university is depicted. The university is run by hearing people and symbolically represented as a flag, whereas in contrast, Deaf students are depicted as horse-riders or knights (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 183). Similarly, literary works may feature such contrasts as an evil cold virus and a battered but determined human immune system (Donna Williams, *Red and*

[54] Link to the original work; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2VEbuB1dUk.

Green[55]), a centuries-old, motionless tree versus mortal animals (Paul Scott, *Tree*), etc. (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). In other words, Deaf authors employ the principles of mirroring and contrast, symmetrically developing the themes or main ideas of their literary works and thereby creating a strong emotional impact on the audience.

2. **Temporal symmetry.** In this case, the timing and rhythm of texts create temporal patterns of symmetry and asymmetry. In other words, authors of artistic texts structure the content in such a way as to develop symmetry or asymmetry between certain parts of the work as a whole, with the aim of creating an impact on the audience and conveying the artistic content. For instance, a cyclical structure is fairly common, where, at the end of the story, there is a seeming return to the starting point – however, the audience experiences this 'end' in a different way, in a new and different light, as some change or shift can be observed. As an example, Sutton-Spence and Kaneko provide Richard Carter's artistic SL text *Children's Park*[56], in which the story both begins and ends in a playground. However, the 'middle' of this work involves a considerable amount of intense action, and therefore, even though the end superficially appears the same as the beginning, it is experienced entirely differently by the audience (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 184). Here, it is also important to note that temporal symmetry may involve signs being shown along an imaginary visual line, or even fingerspelling produced on the left and on the right in opposite directions. For instance, Clayton Valli's *Flash*, which has achieved cult status, features an episode where the fingerspelling sequence F-L-A-S-H[57] is produced in the following order: from the left to the centre of the body, F-L-A-S-H is fingerspelled, whereas from the centre to the right, H-S-A-L-F is produced. At first glance, this may not look like a case of symmetry; however, here, it is essential to observe the full segment of the artistic work, which makes the principle evident. It then becomes readily apparent that, at the far-left edge (or, in another location, depending on the work of art) and at the right edge, the same fingerspelled letter is featured. Hence, this symmetry is not as straightforward as reflective symmetry. It is more complex and more difficult to perceive – and yet, it is another means of developing symmetric patterns.

[55] Link to the original work; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_Baj81Vr7k.
[56] Link to the original work; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hpryz9d1M5E.
[57] In the manual alphabet of SL, fingerspelled forms are reproduced in written text using capital letters with the hyphens between individual letters.

3. **Spatial symmetry.** Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) note that one of the strengths of SL literature it its capacity to represent symmetry visually and spatially, as well as thematically and temporally. Geometric symmetry is a mathematical concept involving the movement of a shape (which, in this case, is a sign with a particular handshape) so that it is in a different position, but retains the same shape and, usually, the same size (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 185). In SL, even geometric symmetry can also be created. As mentioned above, there are some types of symmetry in which two hands serve as if they were mirror reflections of each other, thereby creating bilateral symmetry. The researchers note that artists are also free to create rotational symmetry and translational symmetry, which are also commonly encountered in artistic texts. While preserving the same configurations, reflective symmetry can be developed by moving the hands in opposite directions and thereby producing an aesthetic and emotional impact on the audience.
   a) **Dilation symmetry** can also be mentioned, whereby the depicted object or subject may be enlarged augmented or reduced in size while preserving its original shape. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko remark that "[d]ilation symmetry in sign language may be achieved by flexing or extending the finger joints, by selecting more or fewer fingers, or by moving the hands closer or further apart" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 185). In other words, artists may eagerly employ handshape modifications and mutually reflective hand movements, as illustrated by the example provided (*Flight over Rio*[58] by Fernanda Machado; as discussed in Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 185–186), in which the hands move apart and the finger joints extend to show the rocks of Sugar Loaf Mountain getting larger as the birds approach them. The three types of reflective symmetry discussed above are also attributed to spatial symmetry. They are subsumed under the concept of the *planes of symmetry*, with the artist aiming to create an aesthetic and symbolic impact. As emphasised by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko, these types may serve as a means for metaphor creation.
   b) A **continuum of symmetry**. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) suggest that the reflective symmetry in SL discussed here is rarely perfect and can be seen as running along a continuum (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 187). In other words, this is not necessarily 'perfect' symmetry, and yet, it is evident that two-handed signs are usually (relatively)

[58] Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNifG_h-tDM.

symmetrical. It has been noted that spatial symmetry may be achieved sequentially, when one-handed and two-handed signs are consecutively produced in symmetrically opposite locations. As an example, the researchers refer to *Ocean*[59] by Deaf Professor and poet Johanna Mesch, in which, ships enter the ocean from the west and the east. In other words, symmetry is created not synchronously or through the correspondence between the two hands, but, instead, through the repetition of certain images, such as a ship entering the ocean from one side, and a different ship entering from the other side.

4. **Breaking and remaking of symmetry.** As noted by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), a literary work may initially create a symmetrical visual structure, whereas this symmetry may subsequently be disrupted by introducing an asymmetrical movement or some distinction between the functions of the hands, thus highlighting a particular element of the plot or creating semantic emphasis. This establishes a contrast between symmetrical and asymmetrical structures, which can be employed to convey dramatic tension, changes in significance, or artistic emphasis. Ultimately, the symmetrical structure may be restored by recreating symmetry or creating it anew. This strategy of symmetry 'breaking and (re)making' allows for the creation of a visual rhythm in the SL work of art, which allows the artist to place emphasis on more significant points as the narrative develops (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016).

5. **Symmetry and asymmetry in duets.** First of all, it is essential to explain what, in this particular case, is understood by asymmetry. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) state that asymmetry in SL literature refers to a visual structure in which hands or artists do not perform identical movements or functions, and their actions differ in form, direction, or role. In this case, one hand or one artist may perform a leading role in the action, whereas the counterpart performs a secondary or contrasting function, thereby creating visual contrast as well as dynamism, and thus helping to highlight fundamentally important moments in the work of art (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). Also, based on the insights provided by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), in SL literature, the principles of symmetry and asymmetry are particularly prominent in works performed by two artists. Sutton-Spence and Kaneko note that, in duets, visual composition may be

[59] Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7I3Fp8g-G4.

developed either symmetrically, when the two performers employ similar handshapes, movements, or spatial orientation, or asymmetrically, when the movements and/or functions they perform are diametrically different. A symmetrical structure creates visual equilibrium and compositional harmony, whereas asymmetry allows the artist to highlighting contrast, the distribution of functions or particular moment in the narrative development. The researchers note that these principles may frequently alternate in a work of art, with a symmetrical structure being deliberately deconstructed, and subsequently re(de)constructed, thereby creating a visual rhythm and dramatic tension while maintaining the audience's suspense (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). These aspects are of particular importance to this thesis, as the empirical section explores a duet in LGK.

6. **Asymmetry.** Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016) claim that artistic texts in SL commonly exhibit not only symmetry, but also asymmetry. They note that "[a] certain amount of asymmetry in a performance may be more meaningful or effective than perfect symmetry, especially when the asymmetrical images or signs work together to create an overall feeling of harmony. SL poetry that creates perfect symmetry may feel too perfect and too predictable, but asymmetry allows variety" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 189). Thus, asymmetry allows for the development of contrasts and more dynamic structures in works of art, whereas the interaction between symmetry and asymmetry helps to highlight the most significant moments in the storyline. A deliberate violation of symmetry may foreground a culmination point or a semantic turn, create an impression of imbalance, and thus enhance the artistic impact of the work of art. When illustrating different functions of asymmetry in artistic SL texts, the researchers provide two examples, specifically, Wim Emmerik's *Garden of Eden*[60] and Paul Scott's *Five Senses*[61]. In the first poem, two-handed symmetrical signs are associated with paradise, while asymmetry and one-handed signs are connected with the loss of paradise. At the beginning, when everything in the garden is perfect, the signs are symmetrical, and yet, when the serpent appears, they become asymmetrical and disharmonious. The final two signs, showing the human taking a bite of the apple and ending their time in paradise, are produced with one hand, thereby creating a stark contrast with the symmetrical or balanced use of two hands in the earlier signs

[60] This example was sourced from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 188). Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKsr9JUjVEg.

[61] This example was taken from Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 189).

(Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 189). Evidently, this example demonstrates how symmetry and asymmetry may function as meaningful structural devices in SL literature, allowing poets to highlight contrasts and emphasise key moments within the narrative. Similar functions of asymmetry are reflected in the second example, *Five Senses*, provided by the two researchers. According to the scholars, this work is inherently based on symmetry; however, at the end of the text, the symmetry is deliberately disrupted, and the artist shifts to asymmetry, for instance, through the use of a one-handed sign, which, in the context of the text, represents the deafness of the protagonist. This explicit and deliberate violation of symmetry at the end of the work reinforces the artistic impression; whereas the author's use of non manual elements (face expressions) serves to indicate that the protagonist has found peace in something that most people would find imperfect. Hence, asymmetry in SL literature may be employed deliberately, with the aim of creating contrast and enhancing the artistic impact of the work.

It has been noted that, in SL poetry, as well as in other artistic texts, the content is often rendered by employing two hands, and yet, the choice to perform a literary work with a single hand can be particularly meaningful, even though it is not very common. It should also be noted that SL poems can even create a sense of balance in the signing space when one hand (usually the non-dominant hand) holds the final part of the previous sign while the other hand articulates a new sign. Holding a sign contributes to the flow of signs and is a very common feature of artistic signing, as identified by Klima and Bellugi as early as the 1970s. In addition to being visually satisfying, this linking of two signs in time and space symbolically connects their meanings more closely than if the signs were simply produced in sequence (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 188).

In this thesis, symmetry and asymmetry are explored at two levels. First, at the macro level, they are investigated by employing CV analysis, which allows establishing symmetry (if present) in the movement of the hands or the whole body, as well as in movements involving non-manual elements, and the identification of asymmetry; this is achieved on the basis of the formal parameters of the movements. However, such analysis only indicates the structural distribution of the movements and does not always allow their artistic function to be revealed. Therefore, at the macro level, on the basis of focus group discussions and textual analysis, symmetry and asymmetry are interpreted in the broader context of the artistic text. This two-level analytical

approach allows for the identification of cases of structural symmetry and asymmetry, which are common in the organisation of SL movements, as opposed to cases in which symmetry or asymmetry is intentionally used as a means of artistic expression. In the present research, symmetry and asymmetry are explored not only as formal parameters of movements, but also as means of creating visual balance, contrast, rhythm and emotional impact in an artistic text.

2 DATA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Material

The corpus explored in the empirical section of this thesis is made up of 57 authentic and fully original artistic texts in LGK created by Deaf Lithuanian signers (yet, it should be noted that not all of the authors were resident in Lithuania at the time of the research; this was not established as a criterion for including a work in the study[62]). Each of the 57 artistic texts was accompanied by a corresponding retelling, meaning that the empirical material comprised 57 artistic texts and 57 retellings. All of these texts and retellings were used in the analysis of the means of artistic expression. The total duration of the recordings made available via the QR codes is 3 hrs. 38 mins 28 sec. This duration does not represent the total duration of the empirical material analysed in the study, since not all retelling recordings could be made publicly available. Only 26 of the 57 retellings are included in the dissertation and provided in the list of QR codes. The reasons for this selection are explained later in this section. Nevertheless, all 57 retellings were used as auxiliary material for comparative purposes, irrespective of whether their recordings are provided via QR codes. The CV analyses, by contrast, were conducted on a smaller subset of the material, as described later in this section. Therefore, the total duration of the material analysed exceeds the duration presented here.

The corpus was compiled between 2017 and 2025. Annex 1 provides a full description of the artistic LGK texts constituting the corpus, including their titles, authorship, and brief descriptions of the content. The recordings that could be made available are provided via QR codes (see Annex 1). To facilitate the connection between specific analytical cases and the artistic texts discussed, QR codes providing access to these works are also included alongside the examples presented in Tables 5 and 6. Written consent was obtained; moreover, the majority of the authors are also introduced in writing in Annex 2.

It is notable that, prior to the preparation of this thesis, no systematically compiled and publicly available corpus of artistic LGK texts had existed. Therefore, all the texts analysed in this study were collected and systemised specifically on the initiative of the author of this thesis.

[62] In total, works by 22 authors were investigated. Two of the 22 authors currently reside outside Lithuania; however, while writing this thesis, the author met these two artists in Lithuania.

All the works analysed in this study were recorded in visual form. Some works were recorded in person by the author of the thesis, whereas others were recorded by various professionals or by the artists themselves. Annex 1, in addition to providing the retellings of the works, also contains a brief outline of the context in which the works were created, as part of a project or on the initiative of a lecturer. Some texts were filmed at different times and by different individuals, and therefore two alternative recordings are available in some cases. Where alternative recordings were available, including a small number of cases in which more than two versions exist, only those used in the analyses presented in this thesis are included in Annex 1.

It should also be noted that the video frames used as illustrations in this dissertation are not necessarily taken from the recordings used in the analyses. In a small number of cases, video frames were selected from other recordings of the same artistic text when these provided better image quality or allowed the signs under discussion to be seen more clearly. The illustrated instances are either identical to those in the analysed recordings or differ only minimally in ways that do not affect the phenomenon under discussion or its interpretation. These alternative recordings were therefore used solely for illustrative purposes and did not affect the data used in the analyses or the results obtained.

It should be noted that, at times, in the course of the research, for instance, when employing the CV tool, alternative recordings were used (e.g., depending on the requirements for the application of the tool; for more on that, see Sections 2.2.2.1.1 and 2.2.2.1.2.1). This led to the use of recordings made by the author of this thesis instead of the alternative recordings produced by other video operators. For instance, in the extended study employing the CV tool, 8 of the 12 recordings used at this stage of the research had been made by the author of the thesis. The specific properties of the CV tool, along with the requirements for the research sample, are discussed in Sections 2.2.2.1.1 and 2.2.2.1.2.1.

The following inclusion criteria were applied when selecting literary works for analysis in this research:

1. Created by: a Deaf individual (in the cultural and linguistic sense rather than from an audiological perspective).
2. Created by: an adult (as defined by Lithuanian law, aged 18 or over).
3. Created by: an author whose main language is LGK.
4. Created by: a member of the Deaf community.
5. Composed as: the original work was produced in LGK; no translations were considered for this research.

6. Created by: an author whose portfolio comprises no fewer than two works of art, and/or at least one of whose works has been performed in public.
7. Recorded: live, during an in-person meeting; filmed at an event; or made available by the author, with reasonable recording quality ensured.

Also, when collecting materials for the research, the authors' experience in the field of SL was taken into account (e.g., whether the authors had previously participated in training, events, or other artistic activities). While the sample was being collected, the author of the thesis maintained close cooperation with the Deaf community and, whenever the need arose, LGK specialists and/or authors of artistic texts were contacted.

Apart from artistic texts, the corpus also contains retellings of the artistic texts in a non-artistic form. After performing their artistic texts (which were recorded 'live' and '*as-is*'), the Deaf authors were given the task of retelling them in such a way that the content of the original works and the authors' intentions would become clear, but without the use of artistic devices. This step was necessary in order to better understand the intended plot, content and layers of meaning of the artistic texts, as well as to identify differences between artistic and non-artistic forms of expression. These two groups were treated as alternatives and were subsequently analysed using CV tools (see Section 2.2.2). It is essential to emphasise that the artists approached this task differently: some artists retold their works very carefully, and in considerable detail, conveying the content of their works in another form without reproducing the artistic means of expression, while other artists primarily placed emphasis on explaining the metaphorical meanings and other semantic layers embedded in the original text.

Hence, the complete dataset comprised 114 video recordings: 57 artistic texts and 57 corresponding retellings. Of these, 83 recordings are included in the dissertation: all 57 artistic texts and 26 retellings. It is important to note that not all retellings of artistic LGK texts are presented in this dissertation. This is due to the fact that some retellings were recorded by the authors themselves in their private environments, and it was decided not to make these recordings available for reasons of discretion. Moreover, the dissertation does not aim to subject all retellings to the same analysis as they do not constitute the primary research material. Rather, all retellings are used as an auxiliary source by the author of this dissertation for comparative purposes, to support a deeper understanding of the texts and to facilitate the identification and documentation of means of artistic expression.

The authors of the texts analysed in this study were 22 Deaf native signers of LGK. All authors whose texts were included in this research gave explicit

consent to the analysis of their works and the public use of excerpts from their works for academic purposes; this consent also extended to freeze-frames from all recordings. Consent was also obtained for the identification of authorship. The Annexes to this thesis contain copies of all written consent forms. Descriptions of all the analysed artistic texts, along with details of authorship, are also presented in the Annexes to this thesis.

All video recordings were technically prepared for analysis by the author of the thesis. The recordings were edited using the *iMovie* software: specifically, in each recording, the lighting and colour palette were adjusted and fine-tuned to standardise visual conditions across all recordings, and thus to reduce the potential impact of differences in lighting and colour on subsequent analysis and ensure more precise and efficient data processing. This is of particular importance when employing ELAN, as well as when applying the CV tool. The audio tracks were removed from all recordings since they were considered to contain only background noise, which was not relevant to the objectives of this research. Therefore, audio as a source of information was eliminated, and the analysis focused exclusively on visual expression. As a next step, the recordings were converted to MP4 format using H.264 codec, thus preserving high visual quality while ensuring compatibility with further processing.

It should be noted that, at different stages of the research, different subsets of the material were investigated; i.e., the full corpus of artistic texts was not used at every stage of the research, and the selection was based on the specific objectives of each stage, as well as the applicable technical requirements. The exact number of texts used at each particular stage, along with the criteria for their selection, is presented below, in each subchapter covering the relevant methodological issues.

2.2 Methods of Analysis

A broad range of methods and tools was employed for data analysis with the aim of comprehensively addressing the issues relevant to this thesis and providing an answer in line with its overall aim, i.e., to establish what makes texts artistic. First, the analysis focuses on global metaphors encountered in artistic LGK texts, along with metaphors manifested at the phonological level. Evidently, the analysed texts contained metaphors of other types as well; however, given the current state of research in this thematic area and the limitations imposed by the scope of a doctoral thesis, the analysis was restricted to the areas of metaphorical expression. Global metaphors were selected because they embrace the entire semantic structure of an artistic text

and offer an opportunity to reveal how the overall meaning of a work of art is created. This perspective is of importance when addressing the aim of the thesis and elaborating on the factors contributing to an LGK text becoming and qualifying as an artistic text. This is primarily because global metaphors reveal the structuring of artistic expression as a whole, above the level of individual elements of artistic expression.

The research also analyses metaphors at the phonological level, since they offer an opportunity to gain insight into metaphorical expression through the use of manual and non-manual parameters (configuration, orientation, localisation, movement, and non-manual elements). Such metaphors stem from the visual-spatial modality in SL; they cannot be realised in spoken languages. It is due to this specificity that their analysis is of particular importance when researching artistic SL expression. Research in this area of SL is already being conducted at the international level; however, no systematic research has so far been conducted specifically in the Lithuanian SL context. Therefore, such analysis allows specific principles underlying the creation of artistic expression to be revealed, particularly those related to language modality. In addition, neologisms functioning as means of artistic expression are investigated. This stage of the research was conducted using the *ELAN* tool (for a more detailed discussion of this aspect, see Section 2.2.1.), and was followed by a qualitative analysis of expression.

The findings at this stage of the research led the author of the thesis to conclude that the analysis of metaphors and neologisms alone was insufficient to answer the core question raised in this thesis. Therefore, in order to obtain a broader perspective on the issue of how an LGK text becomes an artistic text, the assistance of Professor Vadim Kimmelman (University of Bergen, Norway), a prominent SL researcher, was sought. This led to the exploration of the potential of Artificial Intelligence through the application of a CV tool (to be discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.2).

First, a pilot study was conducted to determine whether the tool was applicable to the analysis of artistic LGK texts. This trial was necessary as, to the best of current knowledge, no previous attempts of this kind had been made, i.e., CV had presumably never been used to investigate artistic SL texts (see Section 2.2.2.1). After the successful trial confirmed the suitability of CV for the analysis of artistic LGK texts, the research was further expanded in search of answers to the questions of which non-manual and manual elements are employed in artistic LGK texts, and what functions they perform in turning a text into an artistic one. To answer these questions, a focus group was also used (see Section 2.2.2.1.2.3). This sequence of research stages is described in the subsections below.

2.2.1 ELAN software application

As mentioned above, this thesis initially explored metaphors and neologisms as means of artistic expression, and ELAN software was used specifically for this purpose. All 57 works included in the corpus were analysed at this stage of the research. If a specific text was found to contain no metaphors or neologisms, the work is not represented in the annotations.

ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator) is an open-source annotation tool created in 2002 at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands with the aim of standardising and facilitating linguistic analysis of video and audio recordings (Wittenburg et al. 2006). This software allows researchers to link audio (and video, if present) content with multi-tier annotations defined by the user. ELAN was developed as a professional platform for the analysis of multimodal expression, which is of particular use when researching languages in which precise annotation of nonverbal elements is essential. This tool supports various data formats while allows time-aligned annotation with millisecond precision. Annotations can be exported in standardised formats suitable for further linguistic analysis and/or archiving.

In SL research, ELAN has become one of the principal research tools, as it offers the possibility of precise and multi-tier annotation of hand movements, facial expressions, head movements as well as other nonverbal parameters, i.e., non-manual elements (Crasborn & Sloetjes 2008). Annotation is carried out by creating hierarchical annotation 'tiers,' with each tier marking a specific linguistic element. ELAN offers the capacity to annotate several levels synchronously, which allows researchers to analyse complex phenomena in SL along with the interaction between their components. Although the ELAN software is most commonly used in linguistics and SL studies, recent research shows that it can also be applied to the analysis of artistic texts, including SL poetry, and thus to the analysis of SL artistic texts more broadly, i.e., SL literature. For example, Brigitte Garcia and Marie-Anne Sallandre (2013), in their article "*Translating Poetry in Sign Language: An Embodied Perspective*", use ELAN to annotate aspects of corporeality, which are essential creative elements in conveying poetry through SL (Raniolo 2022[63]). This demonstrates that ELAN can be used not only to capture traditional linguistic features but also to document aesthetic and creative dimensions of multimodal literary expression.

[63] See also an illustration of the ELAN annotation procedure, which is also adopted in the present study: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Screen-capture-of-annotation-with-ELAN-Garcia-et-al-2011_fig3_323723420.

In the framework of this thesis, the ELAN software was employed for the transcription of artistic LGK texts and their systematic annotation. Here, it is essential to note that the analysis of artistic SL texts cannot be subsumed under a specific, universally accepted 'umbrella-level' methodology for annotating the cases under analysis. This poses a further major challenge when conducting research into the means of artistic expression in SL. Hence, the researcher is additionally faced with the need to make individual methodological decisions and select an appropriate analytical approach. Not surprisingly, the author of this thesis was also required to conduct a systematic search for the most appropriate method of annotation that would best serve the objectives of the research. This process involved consultations with Prof. Dr. Tarcisio Arantes de Leite (Brazil), who possesses extensive experience in applying ELAN in practice. Lithuanian SL experts also contributed valuable advice. On the basis of the advice received, an annotation system was developed and fine-tuned, and decisions were made on how to register the cases under analysis in a consistent and scientifically sound manner. On these grounds, the research necessarily involved the development of individualised solutions, particularly with regard to the terminology used to describe specific instances identified in the text.

Hence, each means of artistic expression discussed in this research, i.e., each level of analysis, required a separate annotation tier. First, the research analysed global metaphors along with metaphors at the phonological level. Global metaphors were marked as individual units reflecting the semantic structure of the text as a whole or of a constituent part thereof. In the course of the research, it became apparent that the basis for the emergence of a global metaphor is the topic, or thematic area. Therefore, when annotating global metaphors, reference was made to a codified list of thematic areas, as presented in the theoretical part of this thesis, Section 1.5.1.1.

The annotation distinguishes two tiers: the first tier marks the immediate topic (thematic area) of a literary work (which involves literary interpretation), whereas the second tier presents a metaphorical interpretation, in which the global metaphor is named, and the topic of the literary work is specified. In this way, the global metaphor is related to the thematic and semantic orientation of the text as a whole, which can be elucidated by analysing the literary work in its entirety.

To annotate metaphors at the phonological level, separate annotation tiers were introduced for each specific class of phonemes: configuration as a means of metaphor creation, orientation as a means of metaphor creation, localisation as a means of metaphor creation, and movement as a means of metaphor

creation; a separate tier was also introduced for non-manual elements serving as a means of metaphor creation. In this research, metaphors at the phonological level are identified according to specific elements of a sign. First, the first tier provides a literal interpretation, followed by a second tier providing a metaphorical interpretation and attributing the analysed case to a specific class of phonemes. In other words, an instance of metaphor use, i.e., a specific sign is attributed to a specific phonological element according to the basis of its creation: configuration, orientation, localisation, movement, or non-manual elements. As a result, it is possible to identify precisely which parameter of the sign provides the basis for metaphorical expression.

Both global metaphors and metaphors at the phonological level are analysed in the framework of this research by adopting the micro- and macro-level analytical approach developed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2012; 2016), which allows for the investigation of individual elements of expression along with the structure and content of the artistic text in its entirety. In this way, the analysis seeks to reveal how metaphorical meaning is created and realised at different levels of artistic texts. A generalised description of these annotation principles is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Metaphor marking in ELAN software annotations

Phenomenon	**Tier title**	**Principle of marking**
Global metaphor	Literary interpretation	The content of the work of art is indicated, i.e., what is directly depicted or narrated in the work.
	Metaphorical interpretation	The thematic area is indicated: (1) communication, language and values; (2) social prejudice and ignorance; (3) identity and cultural belonging; (4) universal and existential themes.
Metaphor (phonological level)	Configuration	The handshape is indicated (e.g., 5+, 4).
	Orientation	The orientation is indicated, e.g., fingers pointing upwards, palm facing forwards, etc.
	Location	The location is indicated, e.g., the chest area, above head, etc.
	Movement	The movement or its nature is indicated, e.g., signs are produced at a remarkably high tempo.
	Non-manual features	Facial/body expression is indicated, e.g., the gaze is directed towards a particular location.

It is appropriate to note here that, in the course of preparing this thesis, close cooperation was systematically maintained with the authors of artistic LGK texts. Their personal insights, along with recordings of the retellings of their own artistic texts, were employed to achieve the most precise possible understanding of the context of the works and the relevant aspects of their interpretation; however, the analysis of global metaphors and metaphors at the phonological level was conducted on the basis of the theoretical framework and the data collected during this research.

The ELAN tool was employed to analyse neologisms present in artistic LGK texts, which function as means of artistic expression. As discussed in the theoretical part of this dissertation (see Section 1.5.2), neologisms in SL artistic texts are most commonly classified into three types: (1) modification of an existing sign; (2) creation of entirely new signs; and (3) borrowing from spoken languages. Analysis of artistic LGK texts revealed that neologisms of all these types are characteristic of the material examined in this dissertation; they are abundant and were identified in all 57 analysed texts. However, the analysis also showed that, in SL artistic texts, neologisms occur not only as individual units but also as more complex structures – sequences of several interrelated signs that function as unified semantic and artistic units, i.e., as *multi-sign structures*. In such cases, neologisms form cohesive units referred to in this dissertation as *neologism constructs*, in which artistic meaning is created not at the level of a single sign, but through the sequential development of imagery. These constructs organise the viewing perspective: the image may be expanded, brought closer, or distanced, thereby creating dynamic and visually structured forms of expression. In other words, through such a neologism construct, a particular subject or object is foregrounded, as if in a close-up, and then shifted to a more general view. Thus, it is noteworthy that another means of artistic expression, namely, cinematographicity, also contributes to such constructs. From this perspective, neologism constructs function as a complex means of expression. Such expression enables not only the conveyance of content but also the guidance of the viewer's attention and the creation of an artistic effect.

Although individual neologisms of the types identified in the literature are an important means of artistic expression and are widely employed in artistic texts, this study focuses specifically on neologism constructs. This choice is motivated by several considerations. First, the analysis demonstrated that these complex units exhibit a higher degree of artistic expression, as they enable the creation of multilayered meaning encompassing not only lexical novelty but also novel structural organisation and perspective. Second,

neologism constructs, like individual neologisms, are highly original phenomena created within the context of a specific work. Although most of the constructs identified in this study occur in only one artistic text, the analysis also revealed two constructs, each of which recurs in another artistic text by the same author. Thus, originality in this context should not be understood as absolute non-recurrence across texts, but rather as the creation and use of a construct as a contextually motivated means of artistic expression. In addition, the analysis showed that individual elements of a construct or certain principles underlying their combination recur both within the works of the same author and across texts by different authors. In such cases, individual productive signs or similar expressive strategies and principles underlying their creation and combination may recur.

In this dissertation, a neologism is defined not solely according to the criterion of formal novelty, but primarily according to its function as a means of artistic expression. As discussed in the theoretical part of this dissertation, the use of classifiers in everyday language commonly gives rise to spontaneously created signs, i.e., productive signs. However, productive signs, which may also occur in everyday language, are considered neologisms only when they are incorporated into an artistic text and function as part of a deliberately constructed image, thereby fulfilling aesthetic and expressive functions. Accordingly, even in cases where recognisable productive signs are employed within a construct, the concept of neologism is determined not by their individual forms, but by their integration into a unified construct of artistic expression, the organising centre of which is the newly created image. It is also noteworthy that, while individual neologisms create new lexical units, neologism constructs create new visual-conceptual combinations. Furthermore, this phenomenon has not yet been systematically investigated or described in SL research, although its existence is supported by insights from scholars in the field, including those obtained through an academic consultation with Professor Sutton-Spence[64]. It is also important to note that such neologism constructs constitute a highly original means of conveying complex artistic expression and an authentic cultural worldview through artistic language, an interpretation also supported by a consultation with LGK specialist Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva[65]. Therefore, considering the scope of this

[64] Individual academic consultation conducted by the author of the dissertation (April 2026).

[65] Individual academic consultation conducted by the author of the dissertation (April 2026).

dissertation and the limits of the study, the analysis focuses on these complex cases.

For this newly identified unit of expression, a separate tier was created in the ELAN annotation scheme. This tier records instances in which artistic expression is created through the interaction of multiple signs, the development of imagery, and the organisation of visual perspective. The individual signs within such constructs are referred to as *productive signs* (see Section 1.5.2 for details), with an interpretation of their meaning also provided. A summary of these annotation principles is presented in Table 4. In the analytical section of the dissertation (Section 3), descriptions of sign configurations and constructs are provided where necessary in individual cases.

Table 4. Principles of marking neologism constructs in ELAN annotations

Phenomenon	**Type**	**Principle of marking**
Neologism	Neologism-based constructions	The meaning of the construct is indicated, e.g., a sequence of productive signs – *approaching a house*

In this context, it must be noted that, when analysing neologisms in the framework of this thesis, the retellings of the artistic texts were also taken into consideration, along with consultations with the authors of the texts themselves. The analysis of neologisms, however, was conducted on the basis of the theoretical framework outlined above and the research data collected, with additional input provided through consultations with LGK experts.

Thus, an individual ELAN document was created for each artistic LGK text, in which all means of artistic expression under analysis (i.e., metaphors and neologisms) were annotated. Figure 6 presents an example of such an ELAN annotation document (.eaf file), showing the individual annotation tiers.

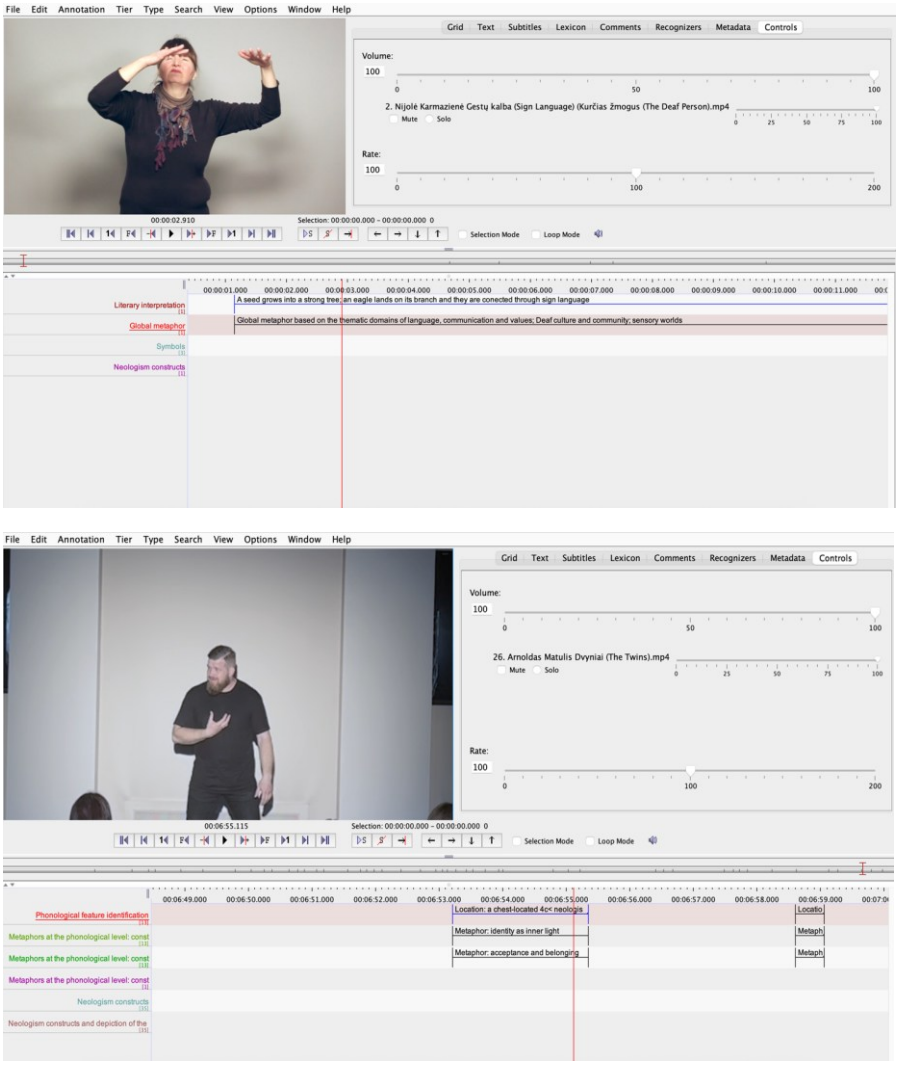


Figure 6. Example of ELAN annotation and coding for metaphors

To conclude, it should be noted that the ELAN software was selected in this research not only as a technical annotation tool, but also as a methodological platform that allowed the artistic expression of LGK texts to be systematically investigated. The selected annotation system was developed and fine-tuned in a consistent manner through the analysis of the collected data, expert consultations, and the application of principles established in previous SL research. As a multi-tier annotation system was adopted, both manual and non-manual elements were annotated, whereas specific cases of expression were registered in precise alignment with the timestamps of the recordings, from the beginning to the end of each sign. Thus, each analysed

example was linked to its specific realisation in the visual material, allowing metaphors and neologisms at various levels to be precisely identified and systematically structured. Thus, first, metaphors and neologisms were identified and annotated in ELAN. Once identified and annotated, these instances were subsequently analysed using a qualitative approach, which is discussed in the analytical section of this thesis. In this way, ELAN provided a systematic and transparent means of documenting metaphors and neologisms encountered in artistic LGK texts. The subsequent qualitative analysis seeks to answer the question of what makes a SL text an artistic text and which means of artistic expression contribute to this transformation.

All ELAN documents can be accessed via the QR code below:



2.2.2 Computer Vision as a tool of sign language analysis

The author of this thesis, in cooperation with Professor Vadim Kimmelman (University of Bergen, Norway), made a pioneering attempt to employ the CV tool in the study of SL literature. As mentioned above, the research was conducted in two stages: first, a pilot study (Kimmelman & Teresė 2023), followed by an extended study (Teresė & Kimmelman 2026, in progress). The findings of these studies are discussed in detail below; see Sections 2.2.2.1.1 and 2.2.2.1.2.

Thus, the part of the research involving the use of CV was developed in cooperation with Prof. Vadim Kimmelman. Professor Kimmelman's expert guidance was of key importance in applying the CV tool and assessing the appropriateness of its use in the research described in this section.

As mentioned above, the material of this research comprises artistic LGK texts, together with non-artistic narrative versions of these texts, i.e., their retellings. In the course of the subsequent stages of the research, it became apparent that this material was highly valuable not only for comparing the artistic texts with their non-artistic versions, but also as an interpretive resource that facilitated a better understanding of the content of the works and helped identify specific textual features of interest. The potential offered by

these parallel versions was further explored through the application of the *CV* MediaPipe Holistic tool.

The CV tool provides an opportunity to compare two video recordings according to selected cross-sections and specific parameters, such as the direction of gaze, the amplitude of hand movements, etc. In order to align and compare artistic LGK texts and the recordings of their non-artistic retellings, a key condition is the greatest possible degree of technical similarity between the recordings, including the same attire worn by the author of the work, the same environment, lighting conditions, position of the individual being filmed, recording angle and video camera, as well as identical technical preparation of the material for processing, i.e., adjustment to the same colour parameters, preservation of the same recording quality during format conversion, etc.

Considering the fact that different recording variants were available only for some artistic texts, certain compromises were necessary when selecting the material for analysis with ELAN and CV, particularly because the technical specifications of the latter required closely matched recording conditions. As the CV tool requires a high degree of technical uniformity between artistic LGK texts and their non-artistic retellings, recordings were selected in which the artistic text and its retelling had been filmed consecutively and, as far as possible, under the same conditions (for more information on decisions regarding technical aspects of the analysis, see Section 2.2.2.1.2.1).

Prior to the use of the CV tool, the research had frequently encountered the objection that differences between artistic and non-artistic texts could not be clearly identified or objectively measured; the application of this tool, however, made such analysis possible. However, as mentioned above, this was a pioneering application, and therefore a preliminary trial was required. In other words, a pilot study was necessary to assess the overall effectiveness of the methodology, test its functioning, configure the tool, establish appropriate procedures for conducting the analysis, and determine whether the method could yield precise and objective results.

Through scholarly discussions between the author of this thesis and Professor Vadim Kimmelman, it became apparent that this tool had not previously been applied to the analysis of differences between artistic SL texts and their non-artistic retellings. Since the material selected for this research appeared particularly well suited to addressing this question, and since the central question in this thesis – what makes a text an artistic text – could be

explored more extensively using this method, a decision was made to integrate this methodological approach into the subsequent stages of the research.

In recent years, advances in the field of CV, and, more broadly, in deep learning, have enabled increasingly reliable detection and tracking of human body landmarks in video recordings. In addition, many of these models are capable of reconstructing 3D information from 2D video data and estimating features such as head rotation, gaze direction, as well as other aspects of manual and non-manual behaviour. Since SLs operate in the visual modality and rely on movements of the hands, body, and facial features, CV systems are particularly well suited to their analysis. Prominent examples of models applied in this domain include OpenPose (Cao et al. 2018), OpenFace (Baltrušaitis 2018), and MediaPipe (Lugaresi et al. 2019).

Within the field of automatic SL recognition and translation, CV models are widely used for tasks such as fingerspelling recognition, isolated sign recognition, and continuous sign recognition (for an extensive overview, see Adeyanju et al. 2021). Typically, these approaches rely on the detection of relevant landmarks (e.g., the hands and fingers) and the use of their coordinates as input features for neural network-based models.

More recently, CV tools have also been applied to the linguistic analysis of SLs and co-speech gestures. A key advantage of these methods lies in their ability to automate the processing of large datasets and enable quantitative analysis. For instance, Östling et al. (2018) employed CV techniques to investigate handedness and spatial properties of signs across multiple SLs. Other studies have focused on non-manual features, including eyebrow movements (Kimmelman et al. 2020), head movements such as headshakes (Kimmelman et al. 2024), and head nods. Börstell (2023) provides an overview of the application of CV – particularly MediaPipe – to SL data, while Trujillo et al. (2019) offer methodological recommendations for gesture research.

In recent years, significant progress in CV has made it possible to reliably detect and track human body landmarks in 2D video data. One of the key developments in this area was *OpenPose*, followed by more recent systems such as MediaPipe. Given that SLs are inherently visual and are primarily studied through video recordings, the application of CV to SL research has become increasingly natural. In particular, CV methods are widely used as part of processing pipelines for automatic SL recognition and translation. In addition, several studies have demonstrated that these methods can be applied to linguistic analysis, for example, to measure the overall hand activity, hand position, and symmetry. Furthermore, research has shown that CV can be

effectively used to analyse non-manual markers, such as eyebrow movements and head tilts.

This methodological approach provided a basis for the application of CV tools to the analysis of artistic SL texts in the present study. It was assumed that these tools could be effectively employed for the qualitative analysis of video recordings of artistic LGK texts and for methodologically grounded comparisons between artistic LGK texts and their retellings based on measurable parameters.

Given the requirements of the present study, the MediaPipe Holistic tool was considered the most appropriate option. It is an open-source, multimodal CV system developed by *Google Research* that enables simultaneous detection and tracking of multiple human body components – including the full-body pose, hands, and face – and thus provides spatially and temporally coherent data for analysis (Lugaresi et al. 2019). This tool is particularly relevant to SL linguistics, as it allows for the automatic and synchronous capture of hand movements, facial expressions, and head positions. Although MediaPipe Holistic was not originally designed by its developers for linguistic research, recent studies have demonstrated its applicability to the analysis of non-manual markers, including facial expressions and head movements, which play a crucial grammatical role in SLs. Empirical evidence suggests that the system can achieve sufficient accuracy for linguistic analysis, although its performance may be affected by factors such as lighting conditions, camera angle, and video quality (Kuznetsova & Kimmelman 2024; Lugaresi et al. 2019).

It is essential to note in this context that the application of the CV tool in this research was guided by the central question of the thesis concerning the 'transition' from LGK as such to an artistic text. Therefore, the analysis focuses on potential differences between artistic SL texts and their non-artistic retellings in terms of measurable parameters of manual and non-manual expression. The next step involves interpreting the differences identified and determining whether they reveal quantifiable patterns associated with artistic expression. In other words, the analysis seeks to establish whether CV can reveal systematic manifestations of artistic expression in LGK texts and provide a methodologically rigorous basis for describing them through measurable parameters.

2.2.2.1 Application of Computer Vision for the analysis of artistic LGK texts

Parameters employed in CV analysis were selected in this research on the basis of two fundamental criteria, specifically, their linguistic significance (relevance) to the analysis of artistic LGK texts and their potential to ensure reliable documentation of the findings and rigorous processing of the collected data. The selection of the parameters was oriented towards the core channels of expression in SL, that is, hand, body, and facial movements, which, in artistic SL texts, play a key role in creating artistic expressiveness. Nevertheless, a specific set of parameters employed was not fixed across the different stages of the research. Changes were made whenever necessary, and the pilot study employed a narrower set of parameters, primarily intended to test the applicability and suitability of the tool. The extended study, in turn, employed a broader set of parameters encompassing additional aspects of expression, for instance, the gaze direction, thereby allowing a more comprehensive analysis of the structure and expressiveness of artistic LGK texts.

Given that CV tools had not previously been trialled or applied in empirical research on artistic SL texts, this research adopted a stepwise methodological approach. A proof-of-concept trial was first conducted to assess the feasibility, scalability, and reliability of applying the tool within the specific research design adopted in this study. Having established the suitability of this methodological choice, the application of the tool was subsequently scaled up to encompass a broader sample, while a second research method – a *focus group* – was introduced in parallel. It is notable that the selection of kinematic measures in this study was determined by two main factors: the technical affordances of CV tools and hypotheses regarding expressive devices in SL derived from previous research. The CV tools employed enable relatively straightforward calculation of basic kinematic parameters of the main articulators, and such measurements have been tested and applied in prior CV-based studies of SLs and co-speech gestures. At the same time, these parameters correspond to anticipated patterns of prosodic differences between literary (i.e., artistic) and non-literary texts in SLs, as discussed in the existing literature. Hence, the proof-of-concept trial demonstrated that the software was capable of distinguishing the features relevant to the research and producing data of sufficient quality for further analysis.

At the initial stage of the study, the selected parameters included movements of the hands, shoulders, torso, eyelids, and eyebrows, as well as symmetry. At the extended stage, the set of parameters was expanded to

include the analysis of gaze direction and movement. This decision was based on the recognition that gaze constitutes a significant expressive resource in SL and that it can be analysed using the CV tools employed in this study.

However, it must be acknowledged that literary texts in SLs may involve additional expressive means that are not readily captured through straightforward quantitative analysis using CV methods. Therefore, the selected set of parameters should not be considered exhaustive; rather, it represents an initial/intermediate step towards a more comprehensive analysis that may be further developed in future research.

Both stages of the research involving the use of CV to analyse artistic LGK texts are described in the subsections below.

2.2.2.1.1 Pilot (proof-of-concept) study: Application of Computer Vision to the analysis of artistic LGK texts

The pilot (proof-of-concept) study was conducted with the specific objective of determining whether the capabilities offered by the CV software provided a valid methodological approach to analysing artistic LGK texts and obtaining scientifically reliable results. In other words, the pilot study sought to establish whether the selected methodological approach was appropriate and whether the tools intended for use could reliably capture relevant visual features of expression. It was also necessary to determine whether the resulting data were suitable for further analysis. The pilot study provided an opportunity to evaluate the procedures for data preparation, processing, and analysis, and to establish a sound methodological basis for the extended study. Given the specific objective of this stage, only a small proportion of the corpus was required for the trial, and five artistic texts, together with their five corresponding non-artistic retellings, were selected for analysis. The results confirmed the suitability of the tool for further application. The five works were selected using a random selection procedure; the only qualifying criterion was that the recording quality of both the artistic and non-artistic versions met the technological requirements of the CV tool (see the next subsection for more details).

The following subsections present the data from the pilot study and describe in detail the principles of analysis applied.

2.2.2.1.1.1 Rationale for the study and data to be processed

In this pilot study, insights from linguistic research on SL literature were combined with recent advances in the application of CV for SL analysis. A

proof-of-concept approach was adopted to examine whether the phonetic properties of literary works could be measured on the basis of video recordings and whether literary and non-literary versions of the same texts could be compared using measurable features.

Since the objective of this stage of the research was to determine whether the CV tool could be effectively used to analyse artistic LGK texts, the research sample was selected on the basis of technical criteria of comparability. Thus, out of the full corpus of 57 artistic texts, five artistic LGK texts and their corresponding non-artistic retellings were randomly selected; both versions had been recorded under closely matched conditions, including the same environment (background), the same lighting, recording angle and equipment, as well as the same attire worn by the performers. In other words, the original artistic texts and their non-artistic versions were recorded consecutively in the same setting. These conditions are essential for the application of the CV methodology; otherwise, the software may detect differences arising from technical factors rather than features associated with artistic expression.

This structure of the data made it possible to compare the same units of content expressed in different forms. Consequently, visual differences between the artistic 'originals' and their non-artistic retellings could be identified. Figure 7 illustrates such differences by presenting the same event as expressed in an artistic text and its corresponding retold version.



Figure 7. Depiction of the same event in an artistic LGK text (on the left) and its non-artistic retelling (on the right)

The following five works were included in this stage of the research:

1. *Juodoji orchidėja* (Black Orchid) by Paulius Jurjonas
2. *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė
3. *Bėgantis laikas* (Time is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė
4. *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius
5. *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Karolis Pilipavičius

It can be observed that the original and the retelling differ not only in the signs used but also in body posture and facial expression. All video recordings were rescaled to a resolution of 853×480 pixels.

The pose component was used to extract the coordinates of the wrists, shoulders and body centre, while the face component was used to extract those of the eyebrows and the top of the nose. The resulting .csv files were merged into single datasets using the *tidyverse* package in the *R* environment.

2.2.2.1.1.2 Parameters of analysis and data processing

This subsection describes technical procedures and methodological decisions involved in trialling the CV tool for the analysis of artistic LGK texts. It should be noted that the decisions concerning the selection of parameters for analysis, the calculations to be performed, and the data processing procedures to be applied were made by Prof. Vadim Kimmelman, who, as part of the research collaboration, was responsible for the technical aspects of applying the CV tool and implementing the relevant methodological procedures.

In order to extract landmark coordinates, *MediaPipe Holistic* was employed, integrating pose, hand, and face components into a single system. A Python implementation of MediaPipe Holistic was used. The output consists of .csv files generated for each frame of the video recordings, with separate outputs for pose, hands, and face components.

The analysis was conducted by selecting specific body and facial landmarks, which enabled both manual and non-manual elements to be captured. The pose component was used to extract the coordinates of the wrists (landmarks 15 and 16), shoulders (landmarks 11 and 12), and the body centre (landmark 0), while the face component was used to extract the coordinates of the eyebrows (landmarks 105 and 334) and the top of the nose (landmark 8).

The .csv files obtained from the pose and face components were subsequently merged into unified datasets, retaining only the landmarks

relevant to the present analysis, using packages from the *tidyverse* in *R* (version 4.2.2) within the *RStudio* environment (version 2022.12.0.353). The resulting datasets and R scripts are available in the OSF repository at: https://osf.io/c9p7n/.

The pose component outputs include the frame number, video dimensions, landmark index, *x* and *y* coordinates (normalised between 0 and 1), *z* coordinates, as well as visibility values (ranging from 0 to 1). The face component provides analogous outputs, with the exception of visibility values.

In the course of the analysis, it was found that some of the generated coordinate values were potentially imprecise; consequently, data filtering procedures were applied. Examination of the data revealed that, although coordinate values were expected to fall within the [0,1] interval, the model occasionally generated values outside this range, particularly for the *y*-coordinate (which ranged from approximately -0.6 to 1.2 in this dataset). These deviations were found to be associated with lower visibility values (typically below 0.5). Accordingly, all measurements falling outside the frame boundaries, as well as those with visibility values below 0.5, were excluded. In addition, values falling outside ±3SD of the mean for each landmark in each video were removed to eliminate extreme outliers.

It was also observed that shoulder coordinates were not always detected consistently, with occasional extreme outliers appearing even in the absence of any actual body movement. This observation further supported the need to filter such anomalous values from the dataset.

The original pose dataset consisted of 101,175 observations (i.e., 20,235 frames × 5 relevant body landmarks), while the face dataset contained 57,321 observations (19,107 frames × 3 landmarks). After filtering, the pose dataset was reduced to 98,474 observations (a reduction of approximately 2.7%), while the face dataset remained unchanged. This reduction should not be interpreted as a limitation of the tool itself, as most of the excluded observations corresponded to frames in which the relevant landmarks fell outside the visible area and therefore could not be reliably detected.

A key stage of data processing was data normalisation, which was performed to ensure comparability across different video recordings. Since coordinate values depend on the body size and the participant's distance from the camera, normalisation was necessary to enable comparison across recordings. Following Börstell (2023), hand coordinates were centred relative to the midpoint between the shoulders and scaled by the mean shoulder distance, thus expressing hand positions as relative distances from this reference point.

A similar normalisation procedure was applied to facial landmarks: eyebrow coordinates were centred relative to the top of the nose and scaled by the mean distance between the eyebrows. As a result, the transformed coordinate values were no longer constrained to the original [0,1] interval but were centred at around 0.

This pilot study demonstrated that CV tools could be applied to the analysis of artistic LGK texts and could yield data of sufficient precision and quality for further analysis, while also offering the potential to generate novel findings and contribute to research in the field. Having established the suitability of the methodological approach, the research could proceed to the subsequent stages addressing the central aim of the thesis: to determine which means of expression contribute to transforming an LGK text into an artistic text. The pilot findings thus provided a sound methodological basis for the extended study, which sought not only to identify these means of expression but also to investigate the artistic functions they perform within artistic texts.

2.2.2.1.2 Extended study: Application of Computer Vision to the analysis of artistic LGK texts

Building on the findings derived from the pilot study, an extended study was subsequently undertaken in which the analysis of artistic LGK texts combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component involved the application of CV tools to an expanded sample of works and a broader range of expressive parameters. The qualitative component involved a specially assembled *focus group*, whose discussions contributed to the interpretation of the quantitative findings and provided participants' perspectives on the patterns identified. Thus, in this study, CV was used to measure manual and non-manual activity in video recordings, while focus group discussions were used to interpret the resulting quantitative data.

It must be noted that this stage involved an extended sample comprising 12 artistic texts and their corresponding non-artistic retellings. Specifically, two of the five works covered in the pilot stage were also analysed at this stage: *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė and *Bėgantis laikas* (Time is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė. The selection of the works included in the extended study was determined by their inclusion in an anthology selected for analysis, as explained below. At this stage of the research, a sample of 12 artistic LGK texts and their corresponding non-artistic retellings were considered sufficient, as recurring patterns had emerged in the CV

findings. This sample also made it possible to conduct the focus group discussion at an appropriate level of depth, allowing selected recordings to be reviewed repeatedly and discussed in detail.

The following two subsections present the data from the extended study and describe the principles applied in the CV analysis, while the focus group method is discussed in Section 2.2.2.1.2.3.

2.2.2.1.2.1 Research rationale and data analysed

At this stage of the research, the analysis involved 12 artistic LGK texts and their corresponding non-artistic retellings produced by the same performers.

The works selected for analysis were published in the first and, at the time of writing, only anthology of artistic LGK works published in Lithuania or elsewhere, *12 Flights through Life*, which was released in 2022. The anthology contains 12 original artistic texts created directly in LGK, without reliance on written or spoken-language source texts, by six native LGK users.

The literary pieces analysed in the current study are listed below (all durations are given in minutes:seconds):

1. *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis (1:28)
2. *Draugystės dovana* (The Gift of Friendship) by Nijolė Karmazienė (2:43)
3. *Vienatvė* (Loneliness) by Erika Jočytė (4:28)
4. *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love) by Rūta Mingailaitė (1:37)
5. *Juodoji orchidėja* (Black Orchid) by Paulius Jurjonas (1:24)
6. *Greičio skonis* (The Taste of Speed; the work was originally entitled *Ragana* (The Witch) by the author) by Erika Jočytė (00:43)
7. *Žaidimas* (The Game) by Arnoldas Matulis (4:40)
8. *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė (1:59)
9. *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė (00:41)
10. *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė (1:06)
11. *Lemtis* (The Destiny) by Arnoldas Matulis (2:33)
12. *Viltis nemiršta* (Hope Never Dies) by Arnoldas Matulis (3:32).

As noted above, all works analysed here are included in the aforementioned anthology. However, not all of the video recordings used for the CV analysis correspond to those included in the anthology (the recordings coincide for only three works: *Draugystės dovana* (The Gift of Friendship), *Lemtis* (The Destiny), and *Viltis nemiršta* (Hope Never Dies)). The artistic

texts were first recorded together with their retellings. For publication in the anthology, most of the artistic texts were later re-filmed to achieve higher visual quality, whereas the retellings were not re-recorded, as they were not intended for publication. For the CV analysis, however, the earlier recordings were used where necessary to ensure that the artistic texts and their corresponding retellings met the technical requirements for comparability.

Because the published artistic texts and their retellings were recorded under different technical conditions (lighting, video quality, setting, clothing, etc.), their direct comparison within a computational framework would introduce confounding factors that could affect the validity of the results. To ensure methodological consistency and comparability, the CV analysis relied exclusively on the initial recordings of both the originals and their retellings, which were recorded consecutively under the same conditions and in the same environment. Consequently, the visual material presented in the analysis may differ from that presented in the anthology, although this does not affect the validity of the results.

2.2.2.1.2.2 Parameters for analysis and data processing

At this stage of the research, the quantitative analysis of artistic LGK texts employed two CV tools, specifically, MediaPipe (Lugaresi et al. 2019) and OpenFace (Baltrušaitis et al. 2018). For most aspects of the analysis, data extracted using MediaPipe were employed, whereas OpenFace was used to obtain the parameters of gaze direction, which can be calculated directly using this tool.

MediaPipe enables the detection and tracking of multiple landmarks on the human body and face. The analysis focuses on the following landmarks: the left and right wrists (landmarks 15 and 16); the left and right shoulders (landmarks 11 and 12); the left and right hips (landmarks 23 and 24); the left and right eyebrows (landmarks 105 and 334), the nose (landmark 8), and the left and right upper and lower eyelids (landmarks 145, 159, 374 and 386). The landmarks selected for the analysis are visualised in Figure 8. For eye gaze, the OpenFace outputs *gaze_angle_x* and *gaze_angle_y* are employed to estimate gaze direction in terms of angular values. These values are subsequently used to compute the measures of interest.

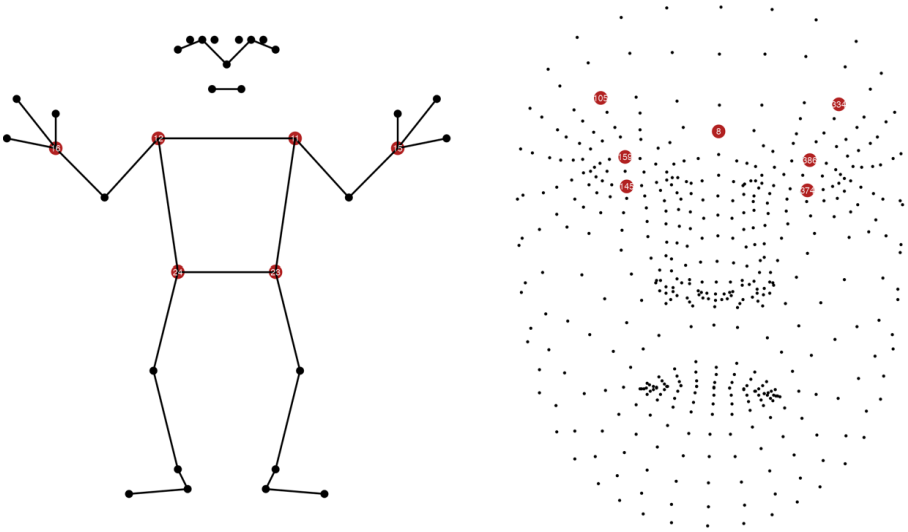


Figure 8. Visualisation of MediaPipe landmarks selected for the analysis (red dots); body and hand model shown on the left and face model on the right[66]

To ensure the reliability of the data obtained, data filtering procedures were applied. Frames for which MediaPipe returned visibility scores below 0.5 were excluded from the analysis; likewise, if OpenFace failed to reliably determine the position of the head, such frames were also deemed unsuitable and consequently excluded. In addition, outliers were discarded – this applies to values falling outside of the range of possible coordinates as well as to values beyond ±3 standard deviations from the mean. This step was implemented with the objective of minimising the impact of outlier values.

Following Börstell (2023), all measurements are normalised to account for differences in body size and distance from the camera. For hand and body landmarks, normalisation is performed relative to the distance between the shoulders, whereas for facial landmarks, it is based on the distance between the eyebrows. This allows for direct comparison across recordings.

In this extended phase of the study, the following measures are calculated to compare literary pieces and their retellings:

1. **Hand activity** is measured by calculating the SD of the horizontal and vertical positions of both hands per video recording, where higher SD values indicate greater variability in hand position and thus an increased hand activity.

[66] The images presented here were generated using a script based on https://github.com/borstell/computer_vision_landmarks.

2. **Symmetry between the hands** is calculated as the absolute difference between the distances travelled by the two hands per frame (following Börstell 2023), and the mean symmetry score is computed for each video recording.
3. **Body leans** are measured by calculating the SD of the horizontal positions of the shoulders and hips per video recording, following the same principle as for hand activity.
4. **Eyebrow movements** are measured by first calculating the Euclidean distance between the eyebrows and the nose, and then computing the SD of this distance.
5. **Eye aperture dynamics** are measured by calculating the Euclidean distance between the eyelids and then computing the SD of this distance.
6. **Eye gaze activity** is measured by calculating the SD of the gaze direction outputs.

Statistical analysis was performed by employing *R* (R Core Team 2024) and *R Studio* (Posit Team 2024), with mixed-effects linear regression models fitted using the lme4 package (Bates et al. 2015). The selected parameters were treated as dependent variables, while text type (the original artistic version versus the non-artistic retelling) was treated as the independent variable, with random effects included for individual works.

The full code used for the statistical analysis, as well as the data files required to replicate the analysis, are available in the following repository:

https://osf.io/kspn8/overview?view_only=5366a2844a784c1e8af993a6638205e1.

2.2.2.1.2.3 Focus group

At this stage, in the course of the extended study, two methods were combined: CV analysis and focus group analysis. CV analysis allowed the quantitative evaluation of manual and non-manual parameters of expression derived from artistic LGK texts and their non-artistic retellings, as well as the identification of differences in the use of these parameters between the two versions. However, CV analysis alone cannot answer questions concerning the functions performed by these means of expression in specific texts or their significance in the context of artistic expression. Hence, as in the case of employing the ELAN analysis, which was complemented by qualitative analysis, the use of the CV tool was likewise combined with an additional method.

Consequently, this provided the rationale for using a focus group at this stage of the research to provide a qualitative interpretation to the findings derived from CV analysis. The focus group provided an opportunity to incorporate the expert perspectives of SL users alongside insights derived from their personal experience, which together could contribute to identifying the functions of the means of expression analysed. As a result, the data yielded by CV analysis could be interpreted in a broader context of artistic expression, thus contributing to the answer to the central question posed, namely, what makes an LGK text an artistic text.

2.2.2.1.2.3.1 Scholarly rationale for employing the focus group method

Before providing information on the focus group employed in the framework of this thesis, it is essential to explain why this research method was considered appropriate for the present study.

The focus group is a qualitative research method in which participants are invited to share their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding a particular concept or phenomenon (Morgan 1997). As a methodological approach, focus groups are particularly suitable for investigating complex, as yet not fully defined, or insufficiently explored phenomena (Wells 1974; Goldman, McDonald 1987; Asbury 1995; Morgan 1996; Krueger, Casey 2015; Mertens 1998). They provide access to the participants' perspectives and experiences, especially in cases where the participants themselves possess relevant experiential or expert-level knowledge.

A central advantage of focus groups lies in the *interaction among the participants*. Through discussion, the participants build on each other's ideas, refine their viewpoints, and articulate nuances that might fail to emerge in individual interviews (Carey & Smith 1994; Carey & Asbury 2016, Wilkinson 1998). The process is guided by a moderator who facilitates discussion by adopting a flexible structure rather than a fixed questionnaire, allowing themes to emerge naturally and enabling clarification of implicit or ambiguous meanings (Morgan 1997; Krueger, Casey 2015). This collective dynamic supports the emergence of shared meanings and jointly constructed understandings, which are essential in qualitative research (Barbour 2007).

Focus groups are widely applied both as an independent research method and in combination with other approaches, including quantitative ones. In SL research, they have been used in a variety of contexts. For example, Kusters (2020) investigates how features of ASL emerge in International Sign within transnational settings, focusing on issues such as intelligibility and language

influence. Cuceuan (2023) applies focus groups to explore the translation of Biblical Hebrew poetry into Tanzanian Sign Language, examining both the translation process and the reception of these texts. Kipp et al. (2011) analyse Deaf users' responses to SL avatars in technological contexts, with the focus on intelligibility and acceptability. Additionally, focus groups are used to address ethical considerations in Deaf research, such as trust, informed consent, and power relations (Singleton et al. 2014), as well as to examine group dynamics and methodological design in culturally sensitive research settings (Mertens 1998).

As the findings derived from the use of the CV tool are related to quantitative parameters of specific means of expression (allowing the identification of where, i.e., in artistic texts or their non-artistic retellings, specific means of expression are employed more frequently) this method does not allow the functions performed by these means to be established. In other words, CV analysis cannot answer the question of what function specific means of expression perform in specific texts and contexts. Consequently, this research employed a focus group to assess the results of the CV analysis and supplement these findings with insights into the functions of the analysed means of expression.

2.2.2.1.2.3.2 Application of the focus group to the interpretation of Computer Vision analysis results

In the extended phase of the study, with the objective to evaluate the results of the CV analysis, a focus group was assembled. The group was presented with the research results and invited to share their insights during a structured discussion on the functions of selected expressive means in artistic LGK texts. The discussion focused on prosodic elements as potential means of artistic expression, aiming to identify their roles and functions in artistic texts. More specifically, the focus group addressed the question of which expressive features, when comparing literary texts and their retellings, contribute to the perception of a text as artistic.

The composition of the focus group reflected the specific requirements of this analysis and brought together an international team:

1. Debbie Z. Rennie is a Deaf native signer of ASL and an American-born artist who has resided and worked in Sweden for many years. She is a SL poet and literary author, as well as a theatre director and performer affiliated with *Riksteatern Crea* (Stockholm), Sweden's national Deaf-led theatre. In addition to her artistic work, she conducts workshops

internationally and is actively engaged as an educator. Her creative and pedagogical practice bridges Swedish and international Deaf cultural and artistic contexts.

2. Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva is a Deaf native signer of LGK, a SL specialist at *Vilniaus Kolegija Higher Education Institution*, an LGK methodology expert at the Lithuanian Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Centre, as well as a SL researcher and interpreter. She holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and is one of the compilers of the LGK dictionary.
3. Nijolė Pivorienė is a Deaf native signer of LGK, a SL specialist at *Vilniaus Kolegija Higher Education Institution*, and an LGK methodology expert at Lithuanian Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Centre, who participates in numerous international projects related to methodological development. She is also one of the compilers of the LGK dictionary.
4. Arūnas Bražinskas is a Deaf native signer of LGK and an active representative of the Deaf community internationally. He is currently serving his second term on the *Council of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters* (WASLI) as a Deaf Interpreter Advisor. He is a board member of the Lithuanian Deaf Association and Deputy Director of the Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreting Centre. He previously served as a committee member responsible for training within the *European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters – Deaf Interpreters* (efsliDI). He is also a pioneer of LGK poetry, a lecturer, and an author of literary texts in LGK. Arūnas Bražinskas actively and systematically participates in international and regional projects.
5. Arnoldas Matulis is a Deaf native signer of LGK, a prominent figure in LGK literature and one of its most active creators. He is a lecturer, a SL interpreter at the Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreting Centre, and a participant in numerous international and regional projects.
6. Nina Šamakova is a Deaf native signer of LGK, a poet and literary author, an interpreter at the Lithuanian Sign Language Interpreting Centre, a participant in national and international projects, and an organiser of scientific conferences.
7. Justina Čiplytė is a Deaf native signer of LGK, a younger-generation poet and literary author, and a participant in both national and international projects.

It should be noted that one of the focus group participants was also the author of some of the analysed artistic texts. The decision to include this participant was based on his status as one of the most active LGK literary creators in Lithuania, as well as his ongoing engagement in educational activities related to SL literature. The research questions were formulated and evaluated prior to the selection of participants, thereby ensuring that this inclusion would not affect the reliability of the data or ethical standards.

During the focus group discussion, one of the analysed works authored by this participant was also presented. This work had previously been publicly performed and was well known within the community, including among several participants, which supported an informed and contextually grounded discussion. Some of the focus group questions addressed the aims of retelling, while others explored strategies of artistic expression and the use of expressive devices. The author's reflections provided insights into the original creative intention and helped situate the discussion within a concrete interpretative framework, thereby contributing to the validity of the analysis.

As the group included Deaf participants using different SLs, the discussions were conducted in International Sign. At the beginning of the sessions, the nature of the study was explained, and the results of the CV-based analysis were presented and discussed. Two meetings were organised. During the first meeting, the study was introduced, selected artistic texts and their retellings were presented, and part of the CV results was discussed, with the focus on the hands and shoulders. Not all recordings were reviewed by all participants; instead, the moderator selected representative examples, including both typical and less typical cases.

Prior to the second meeting, all participants were given access to the data and recordings and had one week to review the material and reflect on the measures applied. During the second meeting, additional CV results were discussed, including symmetry, eye aperture, and eyebrow distance. The participants were again presented with selected video examples illustrating these parameters. Both meetings were conducted remotely and recorded. The analysis presented in this dissertation draws on insights and summaries derived from these focus group discussions.

The application of the focus group method at this stage of the research was particularly important, since this approach provided the researcher with an opportunity to take a broader perspective on the results yielded by CV analysis, leading to further discussions, interpretations, and identification of the functions performed by the previously identified means of expression. In other words, this constituted a further step towards answering the complex question raised in this thesis as to what makes a text artistic.

3 ANALYSIS OF LITHUANIAN SIGN LANGUAGE ARTISTIC TEXTS

In this section of the thesis, the analysis seeks to answer the core question of the thesis, i.e., what makes an LGK text artistic. The discussion focuses on such means of artistic expression as global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, neologisms functioning as means of artistic expression, as well as non-manual elements, such as hand, shoulder, trunk, eyelid, eyebrow and gaze movements, and symmetry.

3.1 Global Metaphors in Artistic LGK Texts

The analysis revealed that, out of the 57 artistic LGK texts constituting the corpus of the study, 14 works were created, developed and rendered through global metaphors. The emergence of these metaphors was found to be closely related to the topics, or thematic areas that provide the basis for their formation. In other words, topics/thematic areas provide a foundation for the creation of global metaphors. This chapter aims to answer the following question: what global metaphors occur in artistic LGK texts, and how are they related to the thematic areas discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis as characteristic of SL literature?

It is important to note that, in this dissertation, global metaphors are understood as overarching structures that organise the meaning and artistic expression of the entire artistic text. However, a global metaphor is not regarded as an indivisible whole in which no other means of artistic expression, including other types of metaphor, are present. Rather, the research has revealed that global metaphors are formed through the interaction of lower-level elements of artistic expression, where *lower-level* refers to the level of stratification rather than to their relative importance. Under certain circumstances, the interaction of these elements allows the global metaphor to be perceived as a coherent whole constructed from them. Since this dissertation deliberately limits its scope to global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, neologisms, non-manual elements, and symmetry, it was observed that these means of artistic expression, in certain cases, constitute important elements contributing to the formation of global metaphors. More specifically, the analysis established that global metaphors are, in some cases, constructed through the use of metaphors at the phonological level and neologisms. Such cases are discussed further in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

The analysis of global metaphors in artistic LGK texts revealed that they are not random but are systematically formed in relation to recurring thematic domains. In this dissertation, the analysis of global metaphors is based on the thematic categories proposed by Ben Bahan (2006) as its theoretical framework. However, in light of the research findings and the broader thematic spectrum identified in the analysed material, this framework was supplemented and expanded by drawing on the insights of subsequent researchers (Sutton-Spence, Kaneko, Rainò, Machado, Christie, and Wilkins). The findings of this research demonstrate that the formation of global metaphors is closely related to thematic domains that structure the meaning of the entire text and organise its artistic expression. The thematic domains most frequently identified in artistic LGK texts – communication, language and values, social prejudice and ignorance, identity and belonging, as well as universal and existential themes – largely correspond to those identified in the scholarly literature on artistic SL texts. The analysis identified the following thematic domains and symbols associated with the formation of global metaphors:

Table 5. Global metaphors and symbolism in artistic LGK texts

Work of art in which a global metaphor was established	**Topic(s) serving as background for a global metaphor**	**Symbols**
1.	Communication, language and values	
Šaltinis (The Water Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė and Nina Šamakova 	Communication, language and values Resistance and social struggle	Water, stone, wall
Gestų kalba (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė 	Communication, language and values Deaf culture and community Sensory worlds	Tree, eagle, eye

Work of art in which a global metaphor was established	**Topic(s) serving as background for a global metaphor**	**Symbols**
Medis (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas 	Communication, language and values Resistance and social struggle Social prejudice and ignorance	Tree, metal tool
LGK-vertybė (LGK as a Value) by Nina Šamakova 	Communication, language and values	Newton's cradle
	Deaf culture and community	
Alpinizmas (Mountaineering) by Nina Šamakova 	Communication, language and values Resistance and social struggle Deaf experience and community	Mountain
	Social prejudice and ignorance	
2. Turkio spalvos obuolys (A Turquoise-Coloured Apple) by Arnoldas Matulis 	Social prejudice and ignorance Resistance and social struggle Deaf experience and community Deaf identity and experience	Turquoise colour, apple, trees, juicer, fire
Ryšys (The Connection) by Arnoldas Matulis 	Social prejudice and ignorance Community	Plant, tree, wind

Work of art in which a global metaphor was established	**Topic(s) serving as background for a global metaphor**	**Symbols**
3.	Identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness	
Skirtingos gulbės (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė 	Identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness Deaf identity and experience	Swans
Katės ir šuo (The Cat, the Kittens, and the Dog) by Arūnas Bražinskas 	Identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness Deaf identity and experience	Cats, dog
Būti savimi (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius 	Identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness	Rainbow, jacket
4.	Deaf experience and community	
Amžinybė (Eternity) by Nijolė Karmazienė 	Deaf experience and community Deaf identity and experience Social prejudice and ignorance	Closing and opening lips, eyes and ears, heart, angel
5.	Universal and existential themes	
Trapus gyvenimas (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė 	Universal and existential themes: the cyclical nature of life, life's fragility (vulnerability)	Butterfly, wind

Work of art in which a global metaphor was established	Topic(s) serving as background for a global metaphor	Symbols
Gėlės (Flowers) by Larisa Voroneckaja 	Universal and existential themes: the cyclical nature of life, life's fragility (vulnerability)	Flowers, scissors
Bėgantis laikas (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė 	Universal and existential themes: health, the cyclical nature of life, life's fragility (vulnerability)	Clock, eye

As evident in Table 5, the grounds for the creation of a global metaphor in an artistic LGK text do not stem from a single and isolated topic or thematic area – on the contrary, they usually involve more than one area. In other words, the research data indicate that the grounds for a global metaphor may originate from a core, dominant thematic area, while others supplement it and operate in parallel, interacting with it. This does not diminish their importance, as they also significantly contribute to revealing the metaphor running through the entire work of art. In the following subsections, groups of artistic works united by a common theme are discussed; however, in cases where a work of art contains two or more interweaving themes, their interaction is explored in the analysis as well. Yet, it should be noted that, in most cases, there is no clear boundary between one thematic area that could be considered 'dominant' or 'main' and another that assumes a secondary role. In almost all works, the thematic background is complex and multifaceted, as one topic transitions into another, making it difficult to determine which topic is the main or fundamental one. Therefore, in the analysis, the *dominant* topic is understood as the one that encompasses the entire work, and, on these grounds, works of art are attributed to a specific thematic area, while other topics are also addressed in the analysis and are not necessarily merely co-existing or secondary. They may carry equal weight and significance in the text, as demonstrated in individual cases. Therefore, in this thesis, thematic areas are

treated not as strictly separate and hierarchically stable categories, but rather as overlapping, intertwining and mutually interacting fields of meaning whose relationships may evolve over the course of each particular literary work.

The analysis identified the following thematic areas in artistic LGK texts: 1. Communication, language and values; 2. Social prejudice and ignorance; 3. Identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness; 4. Resistance and social struggle; 5. Deaf culture and community; 6. Deaf identity and experience; 7. Universal and existential themes, such as the cyclical nature of life and life's fragility (vulnerability), and 8. Sensory worlds. These largely correspond to the topics already discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis, with the exception of such universal topics as love and the search for meaning in life. Notably, this does not mean that these two topics are not discussed (or are, for some particular reason, overlooked) in artistic LGK texts. Rather, they do not serve as a foundation for the creation of global metaphors in the sample investigated in the framework of this thesis.

Also, Table 5 suggests that topics in global metaphors are realised through recurring symbols and motifs which function as sense- and meaning-organising elements. Such symbols as the tree, water, or other imagery not only represent a specific topic, but also help structure the metaphorical logic of the entire work of art. Hence, global metaphors in artistic LGK texts are formed through the interaction of topics, symbols, and motifs, which reveals the general principle underlying the organisation of the meaning in the artistic work. The symbols and motifs used in literary works are discussed in the second part of each subchapter, following detailed descriptions of artistic LGK texts in which global metaphors are encountered.

3.1.1 Global metaphors based on the thematic domain of communication, language and values

Although the artistic LGK texts discussed here are classified within the thematic domain of *communication, language and values*, the analysis shows that *language* itself occupies a particularly prominent position, functioning as the central axis around which other elements, such as values and social interaction, are organised. Therefore, this subchapter presents and discusses the components of this thematic domain in this order. The analysis has revealed that this thematic domain, distinguished by Bahan (2006), is the most commonly observed thematic domain in artistic LGK texts, although the components are presented here in a different order. In total, five works were identified in which this theme is developed. The analysis of artistic LGK texts shows that this thematic domain is manifested through the promotion and

preservation of SL, highlighting its significance and value, as well as through personal experiences of communication and the related challenges.

One of the most prominent cases of creating a global metaphor based on this thematic area is the work *Šaltinis* (The Water Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė and Nina Šamakova. The pivot of this story, i.e., the overarching topic, is language, and, more specifically, the SLs of the whole world. In this particular case, the topic is developed through the *water spring* metaphor. At the beginning of the story, a tiny stream is shown. Water starts moving, yet it encounters some obstacles. Initially, physical barriers arise. The audience sees how the hands are struck and beaten. Afterwards, the stream is obstructed by further obstacles: lip reading, the enforced use of voice when speaking, hearing aids, and FM (frequency modulation) systems. Due to these obstacles, the water stream cannot follow its natural course. It is forced to deviate, branch out and overcome the barriers through ingenuity. Nevertheless, the movement is not halted. On the contrary, the stream grows stronger, and the amount of water gradually increases. This work of art features the metaphor of a dam which stops the flow of water. At this point, the audience is shown the involvement of political decisions. This is a reference to the period before 4 May, 1995, when the Government of the Republic of Lithuania passed a resolution recognising the LGK as the native language of Deaf people. While the water flow waits, it lingers right at the dam. After the resolution is passed, the dam starts breaking and collapsing, and the stream becomes even more powerful in thrusting its way forward. When the dam is in ruins, the water flow spreads into the distance, nourishing the land and bringing it into bloom. At the end of the story, SL is presented as an all-embracing force whose spirit spreads all over the world, creating life and uniting the community.

A reference to this idea is conveyed through the leitmotif jointly performed by all four authors, who repeat it together after each obstacle encountered. This can be interpreted as the *widespread distribution of SL*. This leitmotif allows the image of the water stream to be decoded as a global metaphor of SLs. In other words, the stream metaphorically represents the development of SLs in the context of politics, policies, and societal biases. Thus, the work depicts the obstacles encountered by SLs and their ultimate establishment in society.

Hence, this specific work of art illustrates how global metaphors are created in artistic LGK texts on the basis of this thematic area: SL is represented as a source of life and identity, constituting the fundamental value background of SL users, especially those for whom LGK or another SL is the

main language of communication. However, even though language is the pivot of this work of art, it also emphasises aspects of social pressure, resistance, and counteraction. These aspects enable a connection with the thematic area of resistance and social struggle. In other words, this work primarily falls into the thematic area of communication, language and values, one of the thematic domains identified in the pioneering work of Bahan (2006). However, at the same time, this work also reveals aspects of resistance and social struggle, themes identified by subsequent researchers through the analysis of specific works.

A similar logic of constructing a global metaphor can be observed in other artistic SL texts included in the corpus. For instance, in the works *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė and *Medis* (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas, the global metaphor of *language* is also rendered through imagery of growth and life. In *Sign Language* by Karmazienė, SL is metaphorically represented as a tree growing out of a tiny seed. Emphasis is placed on growth, increasing strength, and the capacity to withstand adversity. Another metaphor, manifested through the motif of an eagle, represents an important intermediary in the everyday life of the SL community – the interpreter, who contributes to the interaction between languages[67].

Thus, *Sign Language* depicts the growth of a tree. The tree gradually gets stronger and sways in the wind, while an eagle flies toward it and lands on its branch. Soon, their gazes meet and develop into sustained eye contact, creating a bond between them through SL. Through repetition, the author produces a sign denoting the swaying movement of a tree, whereas at the end of this work of art, by changing the orientation of the sign (i.e., the finger and palm direction), the author produces the sign GESTŲ-KALBA (En. SIGN-LANGUAGE). Importantly, the sign SIGN-LANGUAGE is produced after the poet has just introduced a neologism which may be interpreted as *heart*. Thus, by producing these signs next to each other, the author conveys the key idea of the global metaphor, that of *sign language as the language of the heart*. Consequently, this constitutes the foundation of the identity of a Deaf individual. Essentially, this is not merely a metaphorical motif employed by the author of this work; rather, these are central concepts through which the world – and even individual identity – is understood in the creative activity of

[67] Remarkably, the primary interpretation of this work of art, developed by the author of this thesis, was different; however, after discussions with the artist, a decision was made to adopt a different interpretation of the artistic text. This 'enhanced' interpretation shall be described in the field research part of this thesis.

Deaf signers. Sutton-Spence (2005) discusses the work *Language for the Eye*[68] by Dorothy Miles, a pioneer of SL poetry, which is grounded in exactly this motif:

> Hold a tree in the palm of your hand,
> or topple it with a crash.
> Sail a boat on finger waves,
> or sink it with a splash.
> From your fingertips see a frog leap,
> at a passing butterfly.
> The word becomes the picture in this language for the eye.
>
> Follow the sun from rise to set,
> or bounce it like a ball.
> Catch a fish in a fishing net,
> or swallow it, bones and all.
> Make traffic scurry, or airplanes fly,
> and people meet and part.
> The word becomes the action in this language of the heart.[69]

The poem presented by Dorothy Miles in ASL highlights language as being *for the eye*, and *of the heart*. In other words, this metaphor is not isolated; it has not emerged accidentally in a vacuum – on the contrary, it is one of the core metaphors present in the Deaf signing forming part of their identity, as well as their understanding of what SL means *for them* – it is the language *of the heart for the eye*. This is reflected in Nijolė Karmazienė's artistic text *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language), where the motif of eyes meeting persists. This encounter of the eyes develops into a sign standing for *heart*, and also into the sign GESTŲ-KALBA (SIGN-LANGUAGE). Although metaphorical, this clearly conveys the idea that SL is a l*anguage of the heart for the eye*. Even though the two texts discussed here are separated by decades in time and by considerable geographical distance, these works of art and their respective metaphors support the observation made in the theoretical section of this thesis that Deaf people all over the world are united by similar experiences, self-awareness, and perceptions of the world, and, as a result, constitute, in a sense, a unique nation.

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[68] Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgNAe8Rgli4. Link to the original work with a brief commentary by the author: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPbVc0nLB54

[69] This poem appears on page 243 of Sutton-Spence's (2005) work.

It is important to note that the motif of eyes in the artistic text *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė reveals a further thematic layer. This thematic field of the global metaphor, which emerges specifically in this artistic LGK text, concerns sensory worlds. The meeting of the characters' gazes plays a crucial role in establishing connection, foregrounding vision as the primary channel of language and communication. In this context, SL is conceptualised as both a 'language for the eye' and a 'language of the heart', bringing together visual perception and emotional experience. The convergence of gaze and this dual conceptualisation elevates visual experience as the central mode through which language, self-expression, and information processing are realised. At the same time, it points to a deeper form of connection realised through seeing, in which visual perception becomes the foundation of authentic relational engagement. This introduces a *sensory worlds* dimension, in which, language and communication are not mediated through sound but instead through the visual modality. While this does not constitute the dominant thematic domain, it nevertheless reinforces the broader metaphorical framework by connecting language, perception, and emotional experience.

Meanwhile, in the composition *Medis* (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas, a global metaphor centred on language, values, and communication can also be observed, but it is expressed through the motif of a growing tree. However, in this particular text, nurturing is highlighted alongside threat. The tree is looked after by a mother and father, who water it and care for it in every possible way. This tree represents SL, which unites all the people who come to it. Yet, the tree, and, by extension, SL, faces a threat when woodcutters approach it. They carry sharpened tools in their hands. This can be interpreted as a general threat 'from outside', i.e., as the persistent medical perspective, accompanied by technologies, from which pressure on SL arises. As a result, the Deaf signer also comes under threat. Notably, *Medis* (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas also reveals another topic, or a secondary metaphorical layer, that of resistance and social struggle, *accompanied with social prejudice and ignorance*, as outlined among the topics listed in Table 5.

In this text, this thematic layer is revealed through the episode in which threatening people with ominous sharp tools gather around the tree. Moreover, they use spoken language for communication. This imagery may be interpreted as a reference to historical coercive practices targeting the linguistic and cultural community; it may also be understood as an expression of disregard and contempt for the Deaf community. Thus, metaphorically, the text depicts practices associated with the tradition of *oralism*, in which spoken

communication was considered the only acceptable form of communication, whereas SLs were marginalised. These deplorable practices also extended to physical interventions and a broader ambition to 'normalise' deafness (Lane 1992; Lane, Hoffmeister, Bahan 1996). What is more, such practices were also intertwined with the phenomenon of language deprivation and its impact on the development of personality and experience(s) of Deaf individuals (Glickman 2009). Consequently, this work of art implies a position of power assumed by hearing society, based on the perception of SLs as second-rate means of communication and of deafness as a condition requiring correction.

Thus, in the works of both Karmazienė and Bražinskas, language is established as the central axis, along with communication and values, but these works also reveal other topics of equal importance: as already noted, in *Medis* (The Tree) by Bražinskas, these are resistance and social struggle, along with social prejudice and ignorance, whereas in *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Karmazienė, these are Deaf culture and community. Evidently, the creation of global metaphors usually involves the interweaving of several topics of high relevance to the SL community, which provide the thematic basis for the metaphors developed in the texts.

This trend is also observed in the work *LGK – vertybė* (LGK Is a Value) by Nina Šamakova, where SL is reconsidered through the prism of time using the image of Newton's cradle. The text begins by representing Isaac Newton as an outstanding historical figure, who is given the sign name[70] Gasiūnas. This is a reference to an important historical figure, Petras Gasiūnas, the President of the Lithuanian Deaf Association, who made a significant contribution to the above-mentioned resolution adopted by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, which recognised LGK as the native language of Deaf people. Then, Newton's cradle is shown, whose relationship with LGK is skilfully revealed by showing the letter L of the LGK alphabet on the balls on one side of the cradle, the letter G on the other side, and then the letter K on the first side (*LGK* in Lithuanian is an equivalent of *LGK* in English). Lithuanian signs are shown, followed by Russian signs, and then International Sign. While presenting the work, the performer's gaze is regularly directed towards the cradle, and, at the end, the performer makes a threatening movement towards the cradle, as if preparing to strike it. This work highlights the status of LGK in relation to its preservation and fostering. Code-switching

[70] This is a common cultural phenomenon in the Deaf signing community, whereby an individual is given a specific sign name – this can be based on specific aspects of appearance, behaviour, or particular situations – and the name of that individual is mouthed.

is also involved through the insertion of international signs or signs adopted from Russian Sign Language into LGK, thereby revealing the interaction among different SLs in a broader socio-cultural and political context. This work also reveals the aforementioned topic of Deaf culture and community, yet language remains the foundation not only of this artistic LGK work but also of the community itself.

The artistic LGK text *Alpinizmas* (Mountaineering) by Nina Šamakova also uses a global metaphor centred on communication, language and values, whereas the background to the emergence of this metaphor in the text derives from other thematic areas, those of social prejudice, resistance, and social struggle. The storyline begins with the protagonist arriving at a railway station, where at the ticket counter, she uses signs to ask for two tickets. The hearing cashier is taken aback by this request. The protagonist attempts to make herself even clearer, but the cashier shrinks further into his chair. A metaphorical mountain starts growing between the protagonist and the staff member. The protagonist grabs some mountaineering carabiners, rubs magnesium powder into her palms, and begins the arduous climb, during which she experiences anxiety and various dangers. Ultimately, she reaches a great height, and when she finds herself at the summit, she takes out her phone and writes out her request. She swiftly passes the phone to the cashier, who responds positively and immediately. The author concludes her work by directing her gaze towards the audience, reflecting on the experience and seemingly inviting the audience to reconsider such situations. This metaphor developed by Nina Šamakova reveals the Deaf experience of encountering disregard from society in everyday situations and the resulting social struggle. Thus, the text clearly interweaves three thematic areas through which recurring negative experiences of the Deaf community are explored.

As shown in Table 5, in the artistic works discussed in this subchapter, the symbols of a tree, water, an eagle, an eye, sharp tools and Newton's cradle were identified. In artistic LGK texts employing metaphors, the symbol of a tree embodies LGK (or SL in general). It serves to demonstrate the growth of this language, its strength and deep roots within the community. The symbol of water was also detected, and, in artistic LGK text, acquired a specific meaning associated with flow, obstacles encountered, and the ability to overcome them, thereby representing the development and validity of language, its relationships and influence in the context of ongoing social and political processes. This allows the identification of previously undocumented symbolic motifs that have not been attested in international research either. One of them is Newton's cradle, which, in the text by Nina Šamakova *LGK* –

vertybė (LGK Is a Value), serves to represent the development of LGK over time. This image reveals the interaction of different signs along with shifts in the perception of this language, its use, and even its value. In *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Nijolė Karmazienė, the motif of eyes can also be observed and is frequently encountered in artistic LGK texts more generally. Here specifically, the meeting of the gazes of the eagle and the tree creates a sense of vitality and conveys coherence, connection, and a shared perspective emerging through SL.

The analysis of global metaphors in artistic LGK texts indicates that one of the thematic areas underlying their creation is communication, language and values (cf. Bahan 2006). The works of art discussed above clearly suggest that in global metaphors stemming from this thematic area, SL is presented as a foundation for life, identity, and community. These global metaphors commonly also incorporate the thematic areas of Deaf culture and community as well as resistance and social struggle. Notably, in the view of the author of this thesis, when signers discuss language as the core of an artistic text, it is virtually impossible to separate it from issues of Deaf culture, community, and identity, since these points are so intertwined. This cluster of issues contributes to grounding metaphorical expression in recurring symbols, such as a tree, which is particularly common in artistic SL texts, as well as a spring; at the same time, artists also employ entirely novel symbols, such as Newton's cradle.

3.1.2 Global Metaphors based on the thematic domain of social prejudice and ignorance

The analysis of artistic LGK texts revealed that, alongside the thematic domain of *language, values and communication*, another thematic area singled out by Bahan – that of *social prejudice and ignorance* – was commonly observed. Two works were identified in which the topic of social prejudice and ignorance serves as the overarching thematic foundation.

A striking example representing this thematic field is the work *Turkio spalvos obuolys* (A Turquoise-Coloured Apple) by Arnoldas Matulis, which depicts extraordinary trees on which surreal, turquoise-coloured fruits are growing. The author masterfully shows how a fruit carries within itself the culture, identity, art, history and sport of Deaf people, thereby embodying the entire world of the Deaf community. However, this world is represented as dangerous, and the figure of Aristotle, who represents authoritative knowledge, makes a statement that "The turquoise-coloured apple is perilous", which subsequently spreads throughout society. The author names

the year, specifically, 1880, and shows a crowd considering a decision, and, next to it, three individuals, perplexed and lost. Soon, the motif of a juicer is introduced by the author. A turquoise-coloured apple is thrust into the juicer, and it is squeezed to make juice. This triggers a chain reaction, and trees bearing such fruit are exterminated. First, they are uprooted, and then burnt down. However, the work of art concludes by depicting the cyclical changes in nature, as, despite the soil having been ravaged and abandoned, it nevertheless gives rise to a shoot of a 'newborn' tree.

The global metaphor in this artistic text is created through a systematically developed metaphorical structure, in which turquoise-coloured fruits represent Deaf culture, whereas their extermination depicts historical and social violence targeting it. This metaphor refers to specific historical events, such as the *Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf* held in Milan in 1880, which is associated with the marginalisation of Deaf culture and its persistent exclusion from education. The work of art highlights mechanisms of social bias, ignorance and disregard: an authority establishes a discourse of 'dangerousness', this discourse spreads throughout society, and it leads to collectively legitimised violence against otherness. In this context, marginalisation is understood as a process through which a community is systematically excluded from equal participation in terms of its linguistic and cultural expression (Lane 1992; Padden & Humphries 2005). At the same time, this work clearly develops the *resistance and social struggle* dimension, as, even after the complete annihilation of all the trees, their offspring emerges, thus metaphorically embodying the resilience and continuity of the community.

An important symbolic detail in this work is the turquoise colour which is associated with the identity of the Deaf community and is internationally used as a representative colour of the Deaf culture. Therefore, turquoise-coloured fruits in this context function as a 'condensed' symbol of cultural identity, which is closely related to the *Deaf experience* and *community* dimensions. The symbol of the apple is also of great importance, as, in Western culture, it is associated with cognition, possession of knowledge, but also with 'forbidden knowledge'. This symbolism contributes to conveying the tension arising between knowledge and the prohibition of knowledge in the context of this work of art, whereas the characterisation of the apple as 'perilous' can be interpreted as an attempt to impose control, resulting in the delegitimisation of an alternative form of the cognition of the world, namely, that of Deaf people. Another inseparable thematic field within *Turkio spalvos obuolys* (A Turquoise-Coloured Apple) by Arnoldas Matulis is Deaf identity, which has

been shaped through the painful collective experience represented in this artistic text. Hence, both Deaf identity and Deaf experience are overarching thematic areas unifying this text, along with social prejudice and ignorance, which is also foregrounded.

At a broader and more generalised level, the topic of *social prejudice and ignorance* is also revealed in the work by Arnoldas Matulis entitled *Ryšys* (The Connection). Here, a newborn shoot attempts to establish a relationship with the mighty oak growing in the vicinity; however, the oak rejects any interaction. This expression of disdain is based on prejudice as well as a position of power. Initially, such a stance seems logical, and yet, later, it turns out to be misplaced since, in the course of a tempest, the giant tree is uprooted. Still, this story suggests an alternative: had a connection been established previously, the young tree would have grown stronger, its root system would have been firmer and more widespread, and it would have formed a system of mutual support with the oak – and this would have allowed them to withstand the rage of the elements. In this way, the poetic piece not only demonstrates the consequences of rejection, but also invites the audience to acknowledge diversity and develop bonds as a source of strength, which can then be linked to the dimension of *community*.

Consequently, in this work, social bias, rejection and disregard are expressed not through explicit violence, as seen in *Turkio spalvos obuolys* (A Turquoise-Coloured Apple), but rather through the refusal to establish a connection and acknowledge another individual as one's equal. Hence, despite employing different means of expression, both works reveal the same thematic background, that of social relationships characterised by power asymmetry, disregard and the marginalisation of anything that is deemed different.

The artistic LGK texts analysed above revealed not only thematic patterns, but also recurring symbols and motifs reinforcing the expressiveness of global metaphors. One of the key symbols in this thematic field is the turquoise colour which is associated with the identity of the Deaf community and is widely used as its representative colour. In the international context, this colour has been incorporated in the symbolic Deaf flag, in which a system of colours conveys the core aspects of the Deaf culture and identity. Turquoise blue is associated with the Deaf community and SL, as well as with pride and unity. Yellow, in turn, is linked to light, an enlightened spirit, life, and 'thriving in unison'. Dark blue is associated with the earth, humanity, and living in harmony with the world, and is widely recognised as representing Deaf communities globally, including in the visual identity of the *World Federation of the Deaf* and in practices such as the use of blue light during the

International Day of Sign Languages[71]. Therefore, in the storyline of *Turkio spalvos obuolys* (The Turquoise-Coloured Apple), the turquoise colour specifically acquires a highly condensed semantic meaning and functions as a symbol of the Deaf culture. Remarkably, similar symbols and motifs were not identified in other artistic SL texts, which may be explained by the relatively recent establishment of this symbolism (specifically, in 2023).

The symbol of an apple is no less important in this specific work. In Western culture, the apple has traditionally been associated with cognition and knowledge, while also evoking associations with forbidden knowledge, which is particularly prominent in the biblical tradition. The apple may also represent evaluation and making choices, and, in certain cases, may be associated with danger or something forbidden (Cirlot 2001; Tresidder 2004; Hall 2008). The symbolism of the apple is also reflected in the universally known legend of Isaac Newton, who, upon observing a falling apple, developed an insight leading to the discovery of the law of gravitation, which further strengthened the symbolism of the apple in the domains of cognition and perception. In this way, the turquoise-coloured apple depicted in the artistic work may be interpreted as a condensed representation of the Deaf culture and identity, which, despite embodying the potential of cognition, is constructed in the dominant societal discourse as unneeded, unsuitable, inappropriate, or even outright 'dangerous'.

It is essential to highlight that the author himself did not select the *apple* for this work randomly, as the original symbolism associated with the apple, stemming from the biblical tradition and presenting it as dangerous, served as inspiration for the artist. The apple has an uncommon colour, which makes it stand out, and is presented to *hearing people* as a danger – perhaps it is poisonous – and something that must therefore be destroyed. At this point, the motif of the juicer is introduced. It serves to crush the apple and destroy its original shape. This motif is completely new – and highly symbolic at that – in the artistic SL literature.

In this context, another symbol, that of fire (used to burn the trees), must be considered. Fire is an extremely powerful symbol, and, in this work, it marks not only outright physical destruction, but also the conscious and ideologically grounded elimination of cultural and linguistic identity. Unlike the elements representing the forces of nature, fire here represents a human-initiated action reflecting a position of power and desire to control, purge or

[71] Information on this colour being enshrined as one of importance to the Deaf community and its symbolic value can be sourced from https://wfdeaf.org/deaf-flag/.

even eliminate those perceived as ‘different’, thus exterminating ‘otherness’. Hence, fire acquires, in this specific context, the function of a motif representing the destruction of whatever is different and whatever does not fit within the framework imposed by the hearing people, as well as the legitimisation of violence. Consequently, the global metaphor is expanded, revealing not only the vulnerability of the community, but the mechanisms underlying its systematic marginalisation and destruction. In other words, fire in this context becomes a sign of ultimate destruction, emphasising the dimension of irreversibility, along with the pursuit of the complete erasure of cultural as well as linguistic diversity; thus, fire functions as a symbol of ideological violence. Remarkably, this human-initiated destruction, manifested through the motif of fire, can also be observed in other artistic texts, although through different symbolism. For example, in Larisa Voroneckaja *Gėlės* (Flowers), as discussed in Section 3.1.4, humans also disrupt the cycle of life. However, unlike in the work of Larisa Voroneckaja, in this text, the intervention acquires a more radical form, as it is directed not at a specific stage of life but at the destruction of the entire system. Hence, in this case, the combination of symbols reinforces the global metaphor, while revealing the operation of the mechanisms of social prejudice and ignorance.

In the work *Ryšys (The Connection)*, as well as in *Medis* (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas, great significance is attributed to the symbolism of the *tree* and the *plant*. Here, the tree is associated with strength, stability, and a position of power, whereas the tiny plant is viewed from a position of growth, vulnerability, and potential. An important part of the work is the presentation of an alternative situation: if the bond had been established from the very beginning, the young plant would have grown stronger, it would have taken firm root, and, together, with the imposing and majestic, mature tree, it could have withstood the tempest. Thus, the symbols used represent not only the difference but also interdependence, implying that the creation of relationships and the acceptance of diversity are actually sources of strength.

Thus, in the works discussed here, the symbols of the turquoise colour, the apple, the tree, and the plant act as units of concentrated meaning which allow complex social and cultural experiences to be rendered while reinforcing the semantic structure of global metaphors. It should be highlighted that, even though some motifs are commonly found in artistic SL texts, some aspects of their use and their novel application substantially contribute to the analysis of artistic SL texts.

3.1.3 Global metaphors based on the thematic domain of identity and cultural belonging

This subsection is dedicated to discussing global metaphors related to the thematic field of *identity* and *experience*, which serves as the main thematic area of a work of art and provides the basis for the development of a global metaphor. Three literary pieces were identified as falling into this category. Remarkably, identity is explored here as a multi-layered phenomenon, revealed through various experiential dimensions, such as difference, belonging, and opening up. In other words, identity is perceived here not as a directly represented concept, but rather as a phenomenon grounded in experience, which manifests itself through situations involving belonging, experiencing difference, and getting to know oneself. Importantly, this thematic field in artistic LGK texts embraces not only Deaf identity, but also broader experiences of individuality, being different, and belonging, which are commonly investigated in metaphorical contexts. Therefore, this subsection discusses global metaphors based on a broader understanding of the concepts of identity and experience. The analysis indicates that identity in artistic LGK texts is frequently construed through the tension between difference and belonging. Authors tend to use their texts to metaphorically explore the diversity of identities and cultural belonging, as well as in-betweenness. This is revealed through relationships with the environment and various characters.

One of the most prominent examples in this thematic field is the work by Justina Čiplytė entitled *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans), which tells the story of two swans experiencing rejection in two different environments because of their otherness. One of them is represented as a Deaf swan, whereas the other is of a different colour. The Deaf swan looks for a community which could be spiritually close to it, but it encounters an environment where other swans *use their voices* to communicate and therefore cannot feel that this could be a community to which it truly belongs. The swan incessantly changes environments. It dives underwater and rises above the surface again, yet consistently fails to find company which would feel the right place for it. This experience runs in parallel with such questions such as “Why am I different? Why am I Deaf? Why?” At the same time, we get to witness another swan which also experiences loneliness, but, this time, the loneliness is caused by physical differences. Both protagonists engage in similar reflections on their identity and their place among other swans. Ultimately, they meet each other

in the depths of a body of water, they see each other, and their differences become the basis for their bond.

In this work, a global metaphor is created through personification and movement. Different swans represent different identities, and their movement from one space to another stands for their lack of belonging, as well as the process of searching. The depths of the water become a place where they come to recognise their identities, acknowledge them, and, ultimately, accept them. Coming back to the surface, in turn, is a symbol of liberation and growing stronger. When the artist depicts how the two swans rise to the surface and embrace each other, this is further reinforced by the sheer force with which the surrounding trees start swaying, while the water sets in motion as well. This outcome may be interpreted as the acceptance of diversity – when one is at peace with being different, this has a major impact on the changes taking place around them. This metaphor can be interpreted as a representation of the identity of a Deaf individual, especially as it highlights linguistic separation and the search for a community. However, this metaphor also reveals a broader meaning – that of experiencing otherness, diversity, and self-acceptance, which is not restricted to the Deaf community.

Another literary work falling into this field is the poem *Katės ir šuo* (The Cat, the Kittens, and the Dog) by Arūnas Bražinskas. This text employs an allegorical story of an animal family in which a mother cat is rearing her children – three kittens and a puppy. She teaches them the indispensable skills of daily life, such as drinking milk, climbing a tree, and saying 'meow'. The kittens acquire these skills naturally, and yet, they are completely alien to the puppy. It repeatedly slips down when attempting to climb a tree, it cannot stand milk, and its attempts to say 'meow' turn into barking. In this work, the mother cat is depicted as diligent and patient. She relentlessly teaches the puppy to adapt to an environment which may seem unnatural to it. However, one day, the puppy spots other dogs in the vicinity, and spontaneously joins them. When the puppy finds itself among others of its kind, it immediately experiences a clear sense of belonging and naturalness – it can move without any restrictions, play and behave in ways that come naturally to it. Nevertheless, the puppy is promptly invited to return to its family, and this situation triggers internal tension between belonging to two different spaces. In this work, a global metaphor is created through the use of various animals representing different identities and experiences. The failure of the puppy to develop the skills of a kitten reveals the experience of only partially belonging to, or even of not belonging at all to, that *community* of cats, whereas the opportunity to encounter other dogs represents a moment of recognising one's

identity. At the same time, the puppy maintains its connection with the family, creating a tension between closeness and difference.

While Deaf identity is not explicitly articulated in the text, the representation may nevertheless be interpreted as reflecting experiences commonly associated with Deaf identity. Hence, this global metaphor can be perceived as a representation of the experience(s) of Deaf children being raised in hearing families. Research indicates that the vast majority of Deaf children are born into hearing families, and, therefore, their early experiences are frequently associated with language (sign) deprivation and a sense of cultural non-belonging with their immediate family environment. However, this work also extends into a broader field. It addresses identity as a process of experience, where importance is attributed not only to difference but also to the instinctive recognition of one's community. This metaphor can be situated within a broader demographical context, as approximately 90–95% of Deaf children are born into hearing families (Mitchell & Karchmer 2004; DesGeorges 2016). Therefore, the early experience of a Deaf child is usually shaped in an environment dominated by hearing people, where spoken language and hearing culture predominate, resulting in experiences of difference and non-belonging and reinforcing a sense of being different.

A further example of this thematic area is the work *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius. The global metaphor of this literary work is not related to Deaf identity, as we observed in the cases discussed above; nevertheless, *Būti savimi* can also be discussed and analysed at a variety of levels. The poem depicts a protagonist who tightly presses the sides of his jacket against his chest, as if hiding his identity. Passers-by incessantly hit him and brush against him, trying to discover what is being hidden under the jacket, until the protagonist himself dares to open it. Upon opening the jacket, a rainbow is revealed on his chest. In this text, the global metaphor is created through the covering and uncovering of the bodily surface – covering it symbolises hiding, whereas uncovering the body stands for revealing one's identity. The rainbow here functions as a symbol representing a multi-layered experience of identity. The metaphor can be interpreted at a variety of levels. On the one hand, rainbows contain seven colours, and they may be perceived as a symbol of diversity, encompassing a broad range of identities and experiences, while also linking this work to *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė, which was already discussed above. On the other hand, the rainbow can be associated with the LGBTQ+ community, where it acts as a universally recognisable symbol of identity.

It is highly relevant that, in this literary work, identity is not represented in a declarative manner; rather, it is revealed through the unveiling of the body (the physical, as well as the metaphorical one), and the consequences stemming from this act. Initially, the protagonist experiences external pressure and faces hostile glances; however, soon, he is joined by others who also reveal their identities. In this way, an individual act of revealing oneself evolves into an experience of belonging and community. This metaphor visualises identity as a process in which it is not only getting to know oneself that matters, but also the creation of bonds with others, and being different does not result in separation, but, on the contrary, provides a basis for belonging.

Considering the works discussed above as a whole, it can be seen that, within this thematic field, identity is revealed in artistic LGK texts not merely as self-recognition, or belonging, but also as an experience of being between different spaces, i.e., *in-betweenness*. The protagonists experience tension as they find themselves between different communities, identities, or states of self-perception – that is, between non-belonging and belonging, between hiding and opening up, between being alien and experiencing a sense of commonness. In this way, identity is construed in this context as a process in which importance is attributed not only to the final state of belonging, but also to the intermediate state that shapes the artistic meaning.

The artistic LGK texts explored here reveal not only thematic patterns, but also recurring symbolic motifs. One of the most prominent of these is the motif of *journey* which, in all cases, is related to the search for one's identity, as well as identity formation. It is this motif that permeates the works attributed to this thematic area. In the text *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė, it is manifested through movement between different spaces on the surface and underwater; in the composition *Katės ir šuo* (The Cat, the Kittens, and the Dog) by Arūnas Bražinskas, the gradual discovery of the puppy's identity, followed by its experience of belonging to a community with which it identifies, takes place through walking, i.e., while going for a walk. Similarly, in the story of *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius, this process unfolds as the protagonist moves along the street and experiences the process of opening up. In this respect, identity is construed as a dynamic process rather than a static state.

Another motif of great importance is that of animals. This motif has already been extensively covered in SL literature research, and it was also singled out in the theoretical section of this thesis. It is used in the artistic text *Katės ir šuo* (The Cat, the Kittens, and the Dog), and also in the storyline of *Skirtingos*

gulbės (Different Swans). The trends observed here have also already been covered in the theoretical section. Generally, a global metaphor is rendered by using animals as protagonists – whether swans or kittens, their mother cat, and a puppy. The use of such symbol-laden motifs allows complex experiences of identity and difference to be rendered through visually transparent and easily recognisable imagery. Overall, images of animals serve as a means of discussing human experiences, especially those related to being different, belonging somewhere, and searching for a community.

Also, in this thematic field, specific symbolic motifs can be identified, among which the rainbow is of considerable significance. Even though it occurs only once in the work *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius, the rainbow constitutes the semantic centre of the entire piece. The rainbow functions as a multi-layered symbol, which embraces diversity, different identities, and, along with them, the concept of their coexistence, i.e., harmony. At the same time, an equally important symbolic function is assumed by the act of wrapping oneself in a garment, which is repeatedly emphasised by the author, as well as by holding the garment tightly against the body and, ultimately, revealing oneself. The covered body and tightly pressed lapels of the jacket symbolise the concealment of one's identity, control, and detachment from the environment, whereas opening up can be perceived as self-revelation accompanied by a transition into a communal space. In this way, the garment comes to represent not only a visual object, but also a metaphorical boundary between the internal 'self' and the external world, between one's tightly concealed and explicitly revealed identity. The interaction between these symbols demonstrates that the global metaphor of the work of art is constructed not only through action but also through concentrated visual signs which encapsulate and foreground the main artistic idea.

3.1.4 Global metaphor based on the thematic domain of Deaf experience and community

This subchapter analyses a global metaphor pertaining to the thematic field of *Deaf experience and community*; however, the specific artistic texts discussed here do not allow this thematic field to be clearly separated from the *Deaf identity* dimension, which is interwoven with the theme of *social prejudice and ignorance*. Within the corpus, one case falling into this category was identified, namely, *Amžinybė* (Eternity) by Nijolė Karmazienė.

Remarkably, even though this work of art reflects on the context of political power and ideological pressure, as the author metaphorically discusses the pressure imposed by the Soviets in Lithuania, in this particular

case, the analytical focus is not on the form of pressure as such, but rather on its impact on the Deaf community, and, specifically, on its experiences, ordeals, and self-consciousness. Unlike the cases in which social intolerance or the dominance of hearing people constitutes the central aspect, the experience explored here originates from a broader institutional as well as ideological context. Therefore, the global metaphor primarily foregrounds the dimension of Deaf experience(s). In this work, a recurring visual leitmotif is developed through the covering and subsequent uncovering of the lips, eyes, and ears, and opening them again. This motif denotes not physical or physiological limitations imposed on the senses, but rather a much broader restriction of experience, including restrictions on seeing the world, communicating and participating in an authentic social reality. Instead, severe and short-sighted isolation is imposed. Notably, this symbolism is presented from the perspective of a Deaf individual. Even though the lips and hearing do not serve as channels of language and self-expression for the Deaf community, their covering nevertheless assumes metaphorical significance as a more universally exercised restriction on experience. In this way, the image conveys not some kind of sensory deficiency, but, instead, social and cultural separation.

This piece also develops several other images, such as the globe, the use of signs drawn from SLs of different generations, and interaction through signs with both an elderly person and a baby, thereby expanding the horizons of experience to a global level and simultaneously highlighting the vitality and continuity of SL. This literary work also features a symbolically powerful figure – an angel who acts as the guardian of SL and is depicted at the cross. Later on, the angel starts flapping its wings. This image can be interpreted as symbolising the protection of SL, i.e., the angel protects and looks after those in need of guardianship. The angel is a symbol of life that can be associated with the role of SL as a means of self-expression that brings life and light to the Deaf community.

Hence, in this work, the global metaphor is construed through a reflection on Deaf experience, with the political context providing the background, while the artistic focus is placed on the experiences of the community, its reality and its relationship with language. In this way, the work of art addresses not only historical circumstances, but also their impact on the development of the identity and cultural self-consciousness of the Deaf community. Global Metaphors based on universal and existential themes

Analysis of artistic LGK texts has revealed that not all works of art can be deemed to fit neatly within the thematic areas outlined by Ben Bahan (2006).

The analysis has thus identified global metaphors which are based on universal, and, in the opinion of the author of this thesis, existential topics embracing life experiences, the fragility of life and health, changes, being and coming into existence. Such topics have also been detected in other research on SL literature, which has highlighted that artistic texts tend to reflect general(ised) human experiences, such as love, life, death, time, or the cyclical nature of life (Sutton-Spence 2005; Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016; Rainò 2004). Therefore, this subsection explores three artistic LGK texts in which global metaphors are grounded in universal and existential topics. The analysis indicates that these topics are frequently revealed through a cyclical pattern, which is rendered by employing various symbolic images and their transformations.

This thematic direction is most prominently manifested in the work by Erika Jočytė entitled *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile), where life is visualised through a global metaphor as an eternal cycle involving growth, decay, and inevitable change. The protagonist of this story is a butterfly which moves through a changing environment. Flowers fade, leaves fall, and the wind and rain grow increasingly intense. This change unfolds rhythmically through slowed-down sequences which highlight the experience of transience and fragility, together with the feelings experienced by the butterfly. The movement of the butterfly in this environment serves as a metaphorical analogy for human life, which is incessantly affected by external forces and is vulnerable, yet encompasses the full cycle from life to death.

A similar logic of cyclical processes is manifested in the composition by Larisa Voroneckaja entitled *Gėlės* (Flowers), in which the cycle of life is represented through a tulip growing from a seed, coming into bloom, having its stem cut with a pair of scissors, being carried in a bouquet as a present, and finally dispersing its mature seeds. However, here, unlike in the storyline of *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė, human intervention enters this cycle, thus interrupting the natural flow of life. At the level of the global metaphors, this allows the cycle of life to be interpreted not only as a natural, self-sustaining process, but also as a fragile one that is vulnerable to external interventions. This results in the emergence of tension in the composition between the natural course of life and human factors capable of altering the course of life, halting it, or reshaping it. Hence, in this literary piece, the global metaphor is expanded – it now encompasses not only the cyclical nature of life but also the human relationship with life, with humans represented as an active and transformative power.

This thematic field is developed in a different way in the story *Bėgantis laikas* (Time is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė, where the cyclical nature of life takes the form of a metaphor centred on a mechanical clock. In this storyline, the clock initially operates perfectly, then gradually slows down and, ultimately, comes to a grinding halt. A key element linking the two contrasting parts of the story – the clock functioning perfectly and its subsequent breakdown – is the image of a human eye. Tears start flowing from the eye. They seem to wash everything away. In this text, the global metaphor emerges from the interplay between the human body and clockwork: the clock becomes a symbol of the human condition, health, and the continuity of life. When the clock stops and resumes ticking some time later, these shifts signify not only fragility, but also cyclical transitions from life to decay, from disease to recovery. The eye motif forms the central axis of the story, bringing these images together into a coherent structure in which emotional and physical experience becomes inseparable from the passage of time.

The artistic LGK texts analysed here indicate that global metaphors can be created through the employment of various symbols that acquire considerable – or even fundamental – significance in these texts. One of the most prominent examples in this regard is the image of a butterfly in *To a Deaf Child*, as analysed by Rachel Sutton-Spence (2005). Here, the butterfly appears only as a fragmentary comparison, a simile which refers to the lightness and fluidity of movement ("lifts like a butterfly"). However, in the artistic LGK text *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė this image evolves into a central symbol whose meaning changes substantially: it becomes associated with the fragility of life, its transience and cyclical nature. This is determined at the macro level by the context of this work: the onset of autumn, when butterflies become an uncommon sight, plants decay, and the elements grow increasingly harsh. This implies the end of a cycle of life. Similar symbolic expression can be found in other works, for instance, in *Gėlės* (Flowers) by Larisa Voroneckaja, where plant imagery, including the seed and the tulip flower, as well as the processes of growth and decay, jointly symbolises the cyclical nature of life and renewal. In the composition *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė, the symbolic structure is developed through a clock and its mechanical body, its machinery, which embodies the flow of time, the course of life and its disruption.

The incorporation of the image of an eye in this work is of particular interest as, similarly to the butterfly in the text explored by Sutton-Spence, at first glance, it may appear fragmentary. However, unlike the fleeting comparison in Sutton-Spence's example, here, the eye evolves into a major

component of the central axis of the storyline. It is imbued with the visual of the world characteristic of Deaf people and is related to visual perception as the principal channel of perception. This image can be aligned with the motif of the eye, as discussed in other academic research (for instance, in *Language for the Eye* discussed by Sutton-Spence (2005)), which is connected with visual language, knowledge, and identity. A connection can also be drawn with the thematic area of sensory worlds, as described by Ben Bahan (2006). It is worth bearing in mind that, in Nijolė Karmazienė's *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running), the eye acquires an additional meaning, symbolically representing the 'washing away' of suffering and hardship and leading to transformation – an intermediate state between health and disease, life and its cessation. In this way, even though some symbols may initially appear fragmentary, in artistic LGK texts, they frequently evolve into structural elements that organise the meaning of the entire work of art.

3.1.5 Global metaphors based on universal and existential themes

The analysis of global metaphors in artistic LGK texts demonstrates that thematic domains constitute the foundation for their formation. The research revealed that global metaphors are not a random means of artistic expression but are systematically developed within thematic domains which organise the metaphorical structure of the entire artistic text. It was established that, in artistic LGK texts, global metaphors draw on the following thematic domains: language, communication and values; resistance and social struggle; Deaf culture and community; sensory worlds; social prejudice and ignorance; Deaf experience and community; Deaf identity and experience; identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness; and universal and existential themes. The findings also indicate that global metaphors are most often created by drawing on not one but several overlapping thematic domains which complement one another, develop from one another, and together form a coherent and multilayered metaphorical structure.

The analysis also identified the recurrence of the motif of SL as 'the language of the heart for the eye', originally articulated by Dorothy Miles. This finding further supports the observation that artistic LGK texts share recurring conceptual motifs and broader conceptual themes with artistic texts in other SLs. The research also revealed that the expression of global metaphors is based on recurring symbols and motifs. It was established that the symbols of trees, water, animals (eagles, dogs, cats, swans, and butterflies), a plant, flowers, sharp objects, a clock, an eye, the closing and

opening of the lips, eyes and ears, a mountain, a rainbow and a jacket, the turquoise colour, an apple, fire, wind, Newton's cradle, and angels acquire consistent symbolic meanings in artistic texts and become important elements in organising the artistic meaning of the entire work. Furthermore, alongside symbolic motifs already discussed in the international SL literature, artistic LGK texts also introduce symbolic solutions that have not yet been described in the scholarly literature, such as the symbols of Newton's cradle and the juicer.

This stage of the research demonstrated that global metaphors in artistic LGK texts function as an organising principle for the artistic structure of the entire text. Their expression is grounded in the interaction between thematic domains and symbols, which enables the creation of multilayered artistic meaning and the representation of linguistic, cultural, and universal experiences, as well as experiences and themes of particular significance to the Deaf community.

3.2 Metaphor at the Phonological Level

The analysis established that metaphors at the phonological level occurred in 12 of the 57 artistic texts comprising the research sample. These metaphors involved different phonemes, i.e., elements of signs. Therefore, this subsection aims to answer the following questions: what metaphors at the phonological level occur in artistic LGK texts, how are they created, and what metaphorical meanings do they convey?

The analysis of artistic LGK texts identified metaphors created through orientation, location, movement and non-manual elements. Among these, metaphors involving location were the most frequent type of metaphor at the phonological level. The research also showed that the sample contains no metaphors employing configuration as a means of artistic expression. The following metaphors at the phonological level were identified:

Table 6. Metaphors at the phonological level in artistic LGK texts: features and interpretation

Work of art in which a metaphor at the phonological level was established	**Phonological parameter**	**Features and interpretation**
1.	Movement	
Knygnešiai (Book Smugglers) by Arūnas Bražinskas 	Movement	Movement speed contrast: fast vs. slow encodes brutality vs. care and protection
Bėgantis laikas (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė 	Movement	Movement speed contrast: slowing vs. rhythmic movement encodes illness versus vitality and well-being
Judėjimas (Moving Forward) by Larisa Voroneckaja 	Movement	Circular movement: metaphor for the passage of time
Dvyniai (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis 	Movement	Movement contrast: dynamic vs. slow encodes vitality versus suppression, lack of recognition, and diminished self-worth

Work of art in which a metaphor at the phonological level was established	**Phonological parameter**	**Features and interpretation**
2.	Sign location	
Būti savimi (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius 	Location	Modification of the sign VAIVORYKŠTĖ (RAINBOW) at the chest: metaphor for identity
Gestų kalba (Sign Language) by Karolis Pilipavičius 	Location	A sign produced at the chest: the metaphor for SL being language of the heart
Dvyniai (TheTwins) by Arnoldas Matulis 	Location	A sign produced at the chest: the metaphor for SL being language of the heart
Šaltinis (The Water Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė and Nina Šamakova 	Location	The sign SPRING is raised from neutral space towards the chest while maintaining its position in front of the signer, encoding the strengthening of SL and the Deaf community

Work of art in which a metaphor at the phonological level was established	**Phonological parameter**	**Features and interpretation**
3.	Non-manual features	
Būti savimi (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius 	Non-manual elements	Turning the face away, Clasping lips encodes emotional Withdrawal and vulnerability
Nekaltinkit manęs (Don't Blame Me) by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė 	Non-manual features	Body movement, repeated directional shifts: metaphor for internal conflict and confusion
4.	Orientational	
Šaltinis (The Water Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė and Nina Šamakova 	Orientational	Forward-directed hand orientation: metaphor for continuity, persistence/perseverance and forward movement of SL
5.	Handshape	
Dvyniai (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis 	Handshape	Handshapes 4c < / >: the expanded handshape encodes acceptance, belonging, and self-worth, whereas the contracted handshape encodes suppression, lack of recognition, and diminished self-worth

As can be seen from Table 6, metaphors at the phonological level in artistic LGK texts display considerable variation: movement is employed through variations in tempo or through circular or semicircular patterns. Location is involved when the location of a conventional sign is modified; neologisms are created through specific changes in location that allow metaphorical meaning to emerge; and changes in location may add figurative meanings to an already existing metaphor. Facial or body movement may contribute to the creation of metaphorical meaning in an artistic LGK text; similarly, the position of the fingers and palm may serve as a means of developing metaphorical meaning. The research has also shown that some metaphors manifested at the phonological level are encountered in the same works that have already been discussed in Section 3.1 above as works grounded in the use of global metaphors. In other words, global metaphors in literary works may overlap or co-occur with metaphors at the phonological level. Furthermore, as mentioned in the methodology section, all cases involving metaphors, including metaphors at the phonological level as well, may be analysed by employing the micro- and macro-level approach, as developed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016). In other words, the analysis presented in this subsection, as in other parts of the thesis, takes into account both the content of the work of art and the specific instance of metaphor use. These constitute different but interrelated levels that are inseparable when identifying metaphors in SL in general and, more specifically, when analysing artistic LGK texts. In the subsection below, these cases are discussed in more detail.

3.2.1 Metaphors constructed through location

The analysis of artistic LGK texts established that, in four works, metaphorical meaning is created through the phonological parameter of location. In each of the literary pieces discussed below, one such case was identified.

When presenting the theoretical background of this thesis (see Section 1.5.1.2.3), it was established that location may serve as a means of creating metaphors in artistic SL texts. Location at the chest was singled out, as it can be used by authors to metaphorically represent certain emotions, identity, or the true *Me*. Importantly, in this thesis, individuality or being oneself is understood as an internal, experiential aspect of the Me, intimately related to social and cultural identity. In the artistic LGK texts analysed here, the categories of the true *Me* and identity are not strictly differentiated, as individual experience is expressed through collective linguistic and cultural identity. It is this metaphor of identity and the true *Me* that is created through

the modification of location at the culmination of the events depicted in the text *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius, which has already been examined above. Here, the protagonist reveals his body, on which a rainbow can be seen (Figure 9). Later on, the author further specifies this sign by producing it again, this time in its conventional location. In other words, the conventional location of the sign VAIVORYKŠTĖ (RAINBOW) is above the signer's head, which would be a natural position for actually seeing a rainbow. *This sign is also attested in the LGK dictionary* (Figure 10). Thus, as noted in this analysis, the conventional production of a sign may be modified considerably in artistic stories, poetry and other artistic texts. Authors may thereby pursue greater clarity for the viewer of the artistic work, and therefore, they may subsequently produce the sign in its conventional location above the head once again, even though it was initially produced at the chest. Since text category classification is beyond the scope of this thesis, such cases are not explored in more detail. However, it should be noted that additional clarification of the sign by the author does not diminish the metaphorical value of this text, especially since the modified sign is presented first and is of considerable importance to the work of art. Evidently, the metaphor at the phonological level becomes a central element of a work that also involves a global metaphor, with the former created through modification of the sign's location.



Figure 9. Illustration of a metaphor created through location. The modified location of the sign VAIVORYKŠTĖ (RAINBOW) metaphorically represents identity. Artistic LGK text: *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius



Figure 10. The conventional sign VAIVORYKŠTĖ (RAINBOW) in the LGK dictionary

It is important to note that producing a sign at a specific location frequently serves a grammatical or syntactic function. Localisation operates in SL as a means of positioning objects and/or characters in space, so that a coherent narrative could be developed while maintaining a clear identification of referents and the relationships between them. In other words, producing signs at different locations may simply serve to distinguish different referents or systematically position them in discourse, rather than to convey metaphorical content. This can be seen in the case of the conventional sign VAIVORYKŠTĖ (RAINBOW). However, as discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis, location may also contribute to metaphor creation, as demonstrated in the specific case of the work *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself), where, at the climax of the story, a conventional sign is produced at a modified location, namely, the chest. The author modifies the location while also slightly altering the handshape (compared to the example provided in the dictionary) – and yet, the latter modification bears no metaphorical value, and it does not change the essence of its interpretation. In other words, the handshape may be regarded as a variant of the sign, whereas the change in location serves a different function. In this work, it is precisely the location that assumes particular significance: the sign VAIVORYKŠTĖ (RAINBOW) is produced in the chest area, which, as discussed in the theoretical part (specifically, in Section 1.5.1.2.3.), is associated with aspects of self-perception and individuality, as well as inner experience. This particular location directs the interpretation towards the inner, experiential level, and reinforces the metaphorical connection with identity. In this way, the metaphor is represented by the sign both at the individual and collective levels. Thus, the phonological parameter of location, in this particular case, contributes to the construction of metaphorical meaning and supplements the global metaphor discussed in Section 3.1.4.

In the artistic text *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Karolis Pilipavičius, again, at the climax of the text, a neologism is produced at the chest, thereby further emphasising this pivotal moment. It is important to note that this work does not constitute an example of a global metaphor – unlike the text discussed immediately above – and yet the climax is likewise conveyed through a metaphor at the phonological level. This sign acquires metaphorical meaning not only at the micro level (that of the phonological level), but also at the macro level, through the content and the overall concept of the work, where the recurring motif discussed in Section 3.1.1 can be recognised: SL as a language from the heart for the eye, first articulated by Dorothy Miles. This artistic text tells the story of a Deaf tourist who encounters challenges after

arriving at an unfamiliar place. The tourist cannot reach his destination, and soon, his watch breaks down as well, and, consequently, he loses track of the time. When he attempts to ask passers-by for help, he is outright rejected. Soon, the protagonist starts reflecting: *Are they treating me differently from other tourists because I'm Deaf?* He places his palm 5+ handshape at the chest (Figure 11), in the area of the heart. Soon afterwards, he is recognised by other passers-by who are Deaf and begin communicating with him.



Figure 11. Illustration of a metaphor created through location. This neologism metaphorically represents SL as the language of the heart. Artistic LGK text *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) by Karolis Pilipavičius

The location of a sign at the chest is a powerful resource for creating salient metaphorical meaning and has therefore been employed by numerous authors of artistic LGK texts. However, some artistic texts reveal more complex phonological metaphors, in which a single metaphor is constructed through the interaction of several phonological parameters. Arnoldas Matulis' artistic text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) represents one such example. The artistic text develops two parallel narrative lines. Two Deaf children are born into two different hearing families. One family accepts the child's deafness as an integral part of the child's identity, learns SL, and embraces Deaf culture. The other family rejects SL and Deaf culture and attempts to raise the child exclusively through spoken language. The central metaphor of the text is realised through a neologism produced at the chest (Figure 12). Throughout the artistic text, the same neologism produced at the chest is repeatedly employed to depict the development of the protagonists' identities in response to these contrasting life experiences. The contrasting development of this sign through modifications to handshape (see Section 3.2.5.) and movement (see

Section 3.2.2.) is discussed in the respective sections. Although the present section focuses on location, this metaphor should be understood as arising from part of a broader interaction between several phonological parameters.



Figure 12. Illustration of a metaphor created through a neologism produced at the chest. From the artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis

At the macro level, the location of the neologism functions as a metaphor for identity. Thus, by employing a neologism produced at the chest, the author metaphorically represents the authentic identity of a Deaf individual. At the end of the artistic work, the two protagonists recognise one another as Deaf, and the metaphor gradually transcends the individual level to represent mutual recognition, relationships, and community. In a favourable environment that recognises SL and Deaf culture, identity develops and becomes fully realised, whereas in an environment where SL is not recognised, identity gradually becomes suppressed and remains socially unrecognised. Hence, the location of the neologism at the chest functions as the principal metaphorical axis linking identity, personal experience, and its recognition – or lack of recognition – within the social environment.

It is important to note, that Arnoldas Matulis, the author of *Dvyniai* (The Twins), explains this neologism as a metaphor of Deaf identity conceptualised as an *inner light*. This interpretation was developed together with the author through extensive discussion and reflection, providing an important point of departure for the present analysis. According to the author's interpretation, the narrative may be understood through this metaphor: in the protagonist whose Deaf identity is recognised, accepted, and nurtured through SL and Deaf culture, the inner light develops and grows, whereas in the protagonist whose Deaf identity is ignored and whose linguistic and cultural needs remain unrecognised, the inner light gradually diminishes. By the end of the artistic work, the protagonist with a strong Deaf identity shares this inner light with

the other protagonist, symbolising mutual recognition and the possibility of identity development. The motif of light is not unprecedented in SL literature. As observed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), thematic motifs frequently involve the opposition between light and darkness, with light associated with knowledge and understanding. In their analysis of Paul Scott's *Macbeth of the Lost Ark*[72], Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016: 153) note that different manifestations of light collectively construct a coherent metaphorical system representing the search for knowledge and understanding:

"In Paul Scott's Macbeth of the Lost Ark, there is reference to a glimmering light, a cigarette lighter, making fire by rubbing two sticks together, and the light from a lantern. Although the signs are all different, each one contributes to the overall 'light' motif in the poem that is about a metaphorical search for the light of knowledge and understanding" (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016: 153).

In Scott's work, different sources of light function as a coherent metaphorical system representing the search for knowledge and understanding. This perspective also provides a broader conceptual framework for interpreting the metaphor identified in *Dvyniai* (The Twins), relating it to conceptual metaphors such as KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING. Given the visual nature of SLs, light becomes a condition not only for cognition but also for perception: it enables seeing, while seeing facilitates understanding and recognition. Consequently, the motif of light may also be understood as connecting perception, cognition, identity, and recognition, illustrating how metaphorical expression in artistic LGK texts frequently functions as a network of interconnected meanings.

Unlike Scott's work, however, Matulis never explicitly identifies what the sign metaphorically represents. Although the author himself explains this neologism as a metaphor of Deaf identity conceptualised as an *inner light*, the artistic text never explicitly reveals whether the metaphorical referent is indeed light or something else. Discussions with Deaf signers, SL artists, and other SL experts demonstrated that the same metaphor was interpreted differently. Some described it as a flower that blossoms or withers, others as a beating heart, while still others interpreted it as fire. These interpretations do not contradict one another but rather reveal different metaphorical realisations of the same conceptual domain – identity.

[72] Link to the original work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePj7Vwt80DQ.

Following (methodological) approaches adopted in SL literature, the present dissertation deliberately avoids restricting the interpretation of such complex artistic metaphors to a single reading. The possibility of multiple interpretations constitutes one of the essential characteristics of artistic texts. For this reason, throughout the present dissertation the metaphor is referred to in terms of its underlying conceptual domain – identity – while recognising that the artistic expression itself is intentionally broader and inherently polysemous. The same principle was adopted in the ELAN annotation, where the sign is glossed as IDENTITY, acknowledging that this annotation represents the central conceptual domain of the metaphor rather than an exhaustive interpretation of what it metaphorically represents. The author's own explanation (the inner light) is referred to only when discussing his intended artistic conception. This methodological choice does not imply that the author's interpretation is the only possible reading of the metaphor but rather ensures analytical consistency while preserving the openness inherent in artistic interpretation.

Another important case can be observed in the artistic LGK text *Šaltinis* (The Water Spring). In this work, one of the four authors depicts a water spring waiting behind a dam while the Lithuanian government deliberates and delays its decision to recognise LGK as the native language of the Deaf. While representing the waiting spring (see Figure 13), the author slightly raises the two-handed sign to a higher location (see Figure 14).



Figure 13. The two-handed sign representing the water spring in its initial location. From artistic LGK text Šaltinis (The Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė, Nina Šamakova



Figure 14. Illustration of a metaphor created through a change in location. The two-handed sign representing the water spring is produced at a higher location. From artistic LGK text Šaltinis (The Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė, Nina Šamakova

In other words, although the general area of articulation remains the same, the precise location of the sign is subtly altered. This phonological modification metaphorically conveys the strengthening, growth, and increasing vitality of the spring, which symbolises LGK, during the period of waiting. In other words, despite political deliberations and delays, LGK continues to spread and develop; through its use, the community grows, becomes stronger, and develops, while the language itself becomes increasingly rich and fully developed.

3.2.2 Metaphors constructed through movement

The analysis of artistic LGK texts established that, in three works, metaphorical meaning is created through the phonological parameter of movement. In each of the three works, one case of this type was identified, and these cases can be classified into two groups: (1) involving variation in speed, including contrasts and changes in tempo, and (2) circular movement. The two groups reveal different principles underlying the creation of metaphorical meaning and convey different types of meanings.

First of all, cases involving contrasts and changes in movement speed as a means of creating metaphorical meaning are discussed. Although the theoretical part of this thesis (see Section 1.5.1.2.4) has already demonstrated that the speed and rhythm of movement may express various emotional states, with rapidly performed signs representing joy, self-confidence, or even overconfidence, in contrast to slow movement representing tiredness, old age, or lack of courage (but also relaxation or joy); see Jackson (2006, as cited in Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016), the analysis of artistic LGK texts in this regard reveals somewhat different semantic dynamics. As discussed above, the work *Knygnešiai* (Book Smugglers) by Arūnas Bražinskas provides a prominent example of contrasting movement speeds. Calm and steady movement is employed to represent the activity of book smugglers as well as situations in which SL is used, for instance, when a child starts producing their first signs within the family – to their father and mother. Such episodes are characterised by fluidity and a slower tempo, which may be interpreted as expressing care, value, protection and guardianship. By contrast, in those episodes where violence is shown, e.g., when books are torn, or when SL is suppressed in a Deaf school (which is vividly depicted by the author through a SL representation of the classroom, with the chairs and desks arranged in a semi-circle, exactly as they are in schools for the Deaf) and students' hands are struck, movements become sudden, jerky and intense; they clearly disrupt the general rhythm of the work of art. This rapid shift in both the tempo and

character of movement creates metaphorical meaning: rapid and 'sharp' movements are associated with brutality, violence and aggression directed against languages with the intention of suppressing or eliminating them.

Remarkably, even such imagery as blazing flames, in which books are destroyed, is presented at a slower tempo within the text, whereas the destruction of the books unfolds at a somewhat faster tempo. Of course, this may reflect the dynamics of a real-life situation, and yet, in the above-mentioned episodes, a strong rhythmic break is observed, allowing these episodes to be interpreted as intentionally highlighted instances of violence. A similar pattern of movement recurs at the end of this piece of art, when SL is suppressed and the characters are urged lower their hands and avoid using SL. This intensity of movement once again reinforces the metaphor of violence. Thus, in this work of art, the movement speed and contrasts in tempo become a means of creating metaphorical meaning, as rapid and sharp movements denote brutal destruction, whereas slow and steady movements represent care, value, and protection. In this respect, it is essential to note that expression of this nature can be interpreted either as metaphorical or as symbolic, as noted by Sutton-Spence while in a discussion of this particular case[73].

A similar – yet structurally different – use of movement can be observed in the work *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė, which has also been discussed above as a case involving a global metaphor. In this work, regular and rhythmic movement dominates, reflecting the operation of the clock mechanism. However, this rhythm is disrupted when the mechanism begins to break down, as the movements become slower and lose their regularity and consistency. Later on, when the mechanism has recovered (i.e., the human has rested), movement gradually regains speed, and the initial rhythm is restored. In this way, rhythm and speed acquire metaphorical significance: rhythmic and fluid movement is associated with health, vitality and well-being, whereas the disruption or slowing down of the rhythm is associated with disease, weakness, and deterioration of essential biological and physiological functions. In this particular case, metaphorical meaning is created not through a contrast between different episodes, but rather through the internal transformation of the movement. It should again be noted that this artistic text is structured around a global metaphor and is therefore *already* metaphorical; the metaphor at the phonological level discussed here contributes to and reinforces this broader metaphorical structure.

[73] Regarding this particular point, the author of this thesis discussed the interpretation with Professor R. Sutton-Spence in April 2026.

The metaphor discussed in Section 3.2.1 in the artistic text *Dvyniai* (The Twins), which is primarily created through location, is further conveyed through handshape (see Section 3.2.5.), and also systematically developed through movement. Throughout the entire artistic text, whenever the author produces the metaphorical sign – whether referring to one protagonist or the other – different movement speeds are employed, creating a consistent contrast in movement. The metaphor which, when analysed in conjunction with handshape as representing *acceptance*, is conveyed through faster movement, whereas the metaphor associated with *lack of recognition* is conveyed through slower and/or gradually slowing movement.

Importantly, the author introduces a certain gradation of movement, particularly in the sign associated with *lack of recognition*: the movement gradually diminishes over the course of the work. This may be interpreted as a contrast between lively, dynamic movement, representing life and vitality, and slower, progressively diminishing movement, which metaphorically conveys a lack of vitality. At the macro level of the artistic text, the latter is directly associated with the suppression of one's authentic identity and its lack of recognition and nurturing by the surrounding environment.

Thus, this case reveals the same contrast in movement characteristic of artistic LGK texts as that observed in Karmazienė's work discussed immediately above: rhythmic movement symbolises vitality, happiness, and *acceptance*, whereas slow or progressively slowing movement symbolises a lack of vitality and *lack of recognition*. This case therefore extends the preceding observations by introducing additional meanings that become apparent at the macro level of the work – *acceptance* and *lack of recognition*.

In another text under analysis, metaphorical meaning is created not through changes in the speed of movement or rhythm, but rather through circular movement. In the artistic LGK text by Larisa Voroneckaja *Judėjimas* (Moving Forward), a specific neologism is repeated as a leitmotif: the author traces circles in the air, from which she moves her index finger upwards. The author explains this imagery as representing male erection and ejaculation in the context of the thematic focus of the work – that of relationships between a woman and various men, resulting in an unplanned pregnancy. Nevertheless, from a purely biological perspective, the process of erection and ejaculation discussed by the author is not cyclical, whereas considering the macro level of the entire composition, the protagonist's experience can evidently also be interpreted as the course of life or a process interrupted by a turning point. In such a case, circular movement can be interpreted as associated with the metaphor of the passage of time, as discussed in SL literature research.

3.2.3 Metaphors constructed through non-manual features

In the theoretical part of this thesis (specifically, in Section 1.5.1.2.5), it was established that different non-manual features may contribute to the creation of metaphorical meaning. Such elements include facial and body movements. Two cases of this type were identified in artistic LGK texts.

In the composition by Karolis Pilipavičius *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself), when the protagonist tightly presses the garment against his body and a passer-by crashes into him and sees what is revealed on the protagonist's body, the protagonist turns his head at an angle of about 30–45°, i.e., the head and neck are rotated laterally, creating a profile view (see Figure 15). This head movement can be described as a partial turn or a slight lateral turn. Even though this movement does not reach the maximum possible amplitude (which would involve a turn of approximately 90°), in the overall context of this artistic text, it acquires a prominent semantic function. This movement is further reinforced by a pause introduced by the author, during which the head remains turned away rather than returning to a more natural position, and the lips are pressed together. By turning the head away, a state of shame, insecurity, and vulnerability is represented, which is not expressed in any other way.

A similar case is observed in the LGK artistic duet *Nekaltinkit manęs* (Don't Blame Me) by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė; however, here metaphorical meaning is created through a broader range of body movements. This composition draws on the autobiographical experience of the main author, while the co-author stands behind her and interacts with her throughout the entire performance. She does so by moving, bending in various directions, raising her hands upwards, etc., allowing her signs to remain visible; thus, the story is visually expanded. At the centre of the storyline is a Deaf girl who is raised in a hearing family. She is taught to use her voice for communication and to read lips. She is also made aware that she is the only Deaf person in the entire extended family. Later on, as she reaches adulthood, she creates a family, and a Deaf daughter is born. At that moment, the protagonist faces a crucial choice regarding language. This inner conflict, manifested through doubt and tension surrounding identity, is metaphorically rendered through body movements. The inner tension is visualised by both authors acting together: the second author stands directly behind the first and reaches around as if to grasp her by the chest and pull her in different directions, whereas the first author leans with almost her entire body to the left and right (Figure 16).



Figure 15. A metaphor created through non-manual elements. The body movement denotes *shame and humiliation* experienced by the protagonist. From artistic LGK text *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself) by Karolis Pilipavičius





Figure 16. A metaphor created through non-manual elements. The body movement denotes *inner doubt* and *a sense of inner conflict*. From the artistic LGK text *Nekaltinkit manęs* (Don't Blame Me) by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė

The first author turns at an angle of approximately 60–80° (thus reaching a near-profile orientation), bends to one side, and produces the sign GESTŲ-KALBA (SIGN-LANGUAGE). In this way, an inner dilemma is rendered metaphorically: one part of the protagonist's inner identity is related to the acquired (i.e., learnt) mode of communication used in hearing culture, whereas the other part of her inner identity is associated with her natural, innate SL. However, these cases are not as explicit as those discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, such as Paul Scott's *I Know Who (Stole My Heart)*, where the author sharply turns his entire body approximately 90 degrees to the side. Nevertheless, when both micro and macro levels are considered, these instances can be identified as cases of metaphor use.

3.2.4 Metaphors constructed through orientation

The analysis has revealed that the orientation of the fingers and palm is only rarely employed as a means of creating metaphorical meaning in artistic LGK texts; only one example of this type was identified in the corpus of 57 works examined in this thesis. Specifically, this case was detected in the artistic text *Šaltinis* (The Water Spring) by Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Nina Šamakova, and Justina Čiplytė.

This work has already been discussed as an instance of a global metaphor; in addition, it is essential to note that, throughout the entire performance, the non-human protagonist, i.e., the water spring (representing SL), is maintained in the foreground. The water spring is consistently rendered with the fingers directed downwards and the palms oriented forwards. Remarkably, even though in some cases movement follows diagonal trajectories, the forward palm orientation is nevertheless maintained. Therefore, it may be argued that the forward orientation persists throughout the entire composition, whereas the diagonal movement trajectory functions as a variation within this pattern rather than an independent orientational schema.

When considering the macro level, which is essential in analyses of this nature, this orientation may be interpreted as a metaphorical expression of movement in a particular direction, firmness, and vitality. Despite the challenges reflected in this work of art, such as the prohibition of SL, lack of recognition, the dominance of the medical model or ever-ongoing political debates, the spring is never truly stopped – on the contrary, it grows and becomes stronger. In this context, obstacles function as factors shaping the course of the spring, but not as elements capable of completely disrupting its flow. In this way, forward orientation acquires conceptual meaning related to determination, continuity, and resilience. This principle corresponds to a broader conceptual metaphorical pattern in which forward direction is associated with positive development and goal-directed action. This case can also be interpreted in terms of the conceptual metaphor PROGRESS IS FORWARD MOTION, whereby forward motion is metaphorically associated with development, continuity, and persistent progress despite obstacles encountered along the way. Although the relevant phonological parameter in this case is palm orientation rather than movement, the persistent forward orientation evokes the same spatial conceptualisation and thereby reinforces the association between forward direction and progress. Hence, this work of art not only sustains the global metaphor but also subtly enforces it by

adopting an element at the phonological level, that of palm orientation, which functions as an additional layer in the construction of metaphorical meaning.

3.2.5 Metaphors constructed through handshape

As discussed in Section 3.2.1., the central metaphor of the artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) is realised through a neologism produced at the chest, whose location functions as a metaphor for identity. Although the metaphor is primarily established through the chosen location of the sign, its metaphorical meaning is further elaborated through systematic modifications of handshape. Thus, the same neologism acquires different metaphorical meanings through changes in handshape while maintaining the same location. As already mentioned, the artistic text portrays the lives of two Deaf protagonists: one whose deafness is accepted and recognised as an integral part of his identity, and another whose deafness is ignored. The author consistently develops the parallel narrative lines of these two protagonists and, following each significant event or situation, reveals the protagonists' inner states through the use of different handshapes in the same neologism.

Thus, when the parents communicate with the first protagonist in SL, the author produces the neologism using the 4c< handshape, whereas when the parents communicate with the second protagonist through spoken language, and spoken words are metaphorically depicted as tangible objects flying towards him and bouncing off his eyes before falling to the ground, the author produces the same neologism using 4c> handshape. According to the author's interpretation, the gradually opening handshape – 4c< (Figure 17) – represents the development of Deaf identity (conceptualised as an *inner light*), whereas the contracting handshape - 4c> (Figure 18) - represents its suppression. The author develops this metaphor consistently throughout the entire artistic text, later reinforcing it through a third phonological parameter - movement - as discussed in Section 3.2.2. Therefore, in the protagonist whose Deaf identity is recognised, accepted, and nurtured through SL and Deaf culture, the handshape gradually opens and expands. This pattern recurs when the protagonist is addressed in SL at school, when he sees his parents signing at the dinner table, and when he himself communicates with them in SL. In contrast, the protagonist whose Deaf identity is denied and whose linguistic and cultural needs remain unrecognised is represented through the gradual contraction of the handshape. This pattern recurs when his school experience is depicted as entirely speech-based, when he is forced to undergo speech therapy involving the use of voice and metal tools (an experience drawn from the author's own childhood), and when, at the family dinner table, he can only

observe the moving lips of his parents without having access to SL. Based on this artistic text, its retelling, and discussions with the author, the metaphor of the *inner light* fading while the parents communicate orally at the dinner table can be interpreted as a reference to the so-called *Dinner Table Syndrome*[74], experienced by the Deaf child. Throughout all these experiences, the child's inner light becomes progressively weaker and fainter; it shrinks and flickers, and the child withdraws into itself.



Figure 17. Illustration of the handshape 4c< - a neologism produced at the chest, representing the development of identity. Artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis



Figure 18. Illustration of the handshape 4c> - neologism produced at the chest representing the suppression of identity. Artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis

David R. Meek (2020) observes that, in such situations, hearing communication norms predominate, and, consequently, the Deaf member of the family, who is usually a child, is typically "lost in the ongoing dialogue" (Meek 2020: 1677). This experience is defined as "loved, yet disconnected" (Meek 2020), and is associated with emotional disconnection and communication barriers that hinder the formation of social bonds. These barriers stem from the predominant norms of hearing people, restricting opportunities for social interaction. Research indicates that such situations may have a long-term impact on self-awareness and relationships with others (Hallett 2025); they may also manifest not only within the family, but also in other informal settings (Peña 2023). Based on the data provided by Mitchell and Karchmer (2004), approximately 90–95% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents; consequently, this experience is particularly widespread

[74] In the analysed work, the so-called *Dinner Table* situation is observed, in which the Deaf members of the family suffer from information deprivation and are unable to participate spontaneously in interactions among hearing people.

within the Deaf community. In this context, Arnoldas Matulis draws on this common Deaf experience in constructing the artistic text.

These contrasting modifications metaphorically represent acceptance, belonging, and self-worth on the one hand, and suppression, lack of recognition, and diminished self-worth on the other. Although the author's interpretation refers to Deaf identity while, as discussed above, allowing for its broader conceptual meaning and alternative interpretations, the present analysis treats these handshape modifications as metaphorically representing the development and suppression of identity rather than as referring to a single fixed metaphorical object.

3.2.6 Summary of the section

The analysis of metaphors at the phonological level in artistic LGK texts revealed that metaphorical meaning is created through location, movement, non-manual elements, orientation and handshape. This demonstrates that metaphors in artistic LGK texts are created by employing all the phonological parameters examined in this study, although such metaphors are relatively infrequent within the analysed corpus. The analysis was conducted following the methodology proposed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), whereby cases at the micro level – in this study, metaphors at the phonological level – were analysed together with the macro level, namely the content and context of the artistic text. Only the interaction between these two levels allows the metaphorical meaning created by a particular phonological parameter to be identified.

The analysis further established that metaphors at the phonological level may co-occur with global metaphors. In such cases, they supplement and reinforce the metaphorical structure of the artistic text. The findings also revealed that, in some artistic LGK texts, a single metaphor is constructed through the systematic interaction of several phonological parameters. Only one such case was identified in the analysed corpus. In this case, the primary metaphor (the metaphorical axis) is constructed through location, while the remaining phonological parameters systematically supplement, expand, and develop it.

The analysis of location revealed that metaphorical meaning is created in two ways: by modifying the location of a conventional sign or by creating a neologism at a particular location. The findings demonstrated that the chest area, more specifically, the centre of the chest or the heart area, is systematically employed in artistic LGK texts to create metaphorical meaning. At this location, authors metaphorically represent identity, the authentic self,

inner experience, feelings and emotions, belonging to the Deaf community, and recognition or, conversely, the lack of recognition. The analysis also identified a case in which the same general location is maintained, while a two-handed sign is produced higher than in earlier episodes of the artistic text. At the macro level, this modification of location metaphorically represents the strengthening of SL. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that D. Miles' metaphor *Language from the Heart for the Eye* is manifested in artistic LGK texts not only as a global metaphor (see Section 3.1.5), but also through a metaphor at the phonological level, specifically through location. One such case was identified in the analysed corpus.

The analysis of movement revealed that metaphorical meaning is created through contrasts in movement speed, gradual changes in movement speed, and circular movement. Rhythmic or dynamic movement metaphorically represents vitality, well-being, and acceptance; rapid and abrupt movement represents violence and aggression; slow or gradually slowing movement represents the absence of vitality, suppression, and lack of recognition; whereas circular movement metaphorically represents the passage of time.

The analysis of non-manual elements identified two metaphorical cases. The findings demonstrated that facial expressions and body movements may function as distinct means of creating metaphorical meaning. In one case, a slight turn of the head, a sustained pause, and pressed lips metaphorically represent shame, insecurity, and vulnerability. In the other, the movement of the entire body from side to side, coordinated with the movements of the second performer, metaphorically represents inner doubt, identity tension, and a sense of an inner conflict. Although these cases are less explicit than the metaphor in Paul Scott's *I Know Who (Stole My Heart)*, in which metaphorical meaning is created through a pronounced turn of the entire body, analysis at both the micro and macro levels allows them to be identified as metaphors at the phonological level.

The analysis of orientation also identified one metaphorical case. It was established that metaphorical meaning may be created through the orientation of the palm and fingers. Macro-level analysis revealed that a consistently maintained forward orientation metaphorically represents directionality, continuity, determination, and resilience. This case may be related to the conceptual metaphor PROGRESS IS FORWARD MOTION and supplements the global metaphor by adding an additional layer of metaphorical meaning at the phonological level.

The analysis of handshape identified one metaphorical case and demonstrated that metaphorical meaning is created through the systematic

modification of the handshape of the same neologism. In the artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) the contrast between the handshapes 4c< and 4c> represents the strengthening and suppression of identity. The findings also demonstrated that this phonological parameter does not create an independent metaphor but systematically develops the metaphorical meaning established through location.

Finally, the analysis revealed an especially complex case of a metaphor at the phonological level in the artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins). In this work, a single metaphor is constructed through the systematic interaction of several phonological parameters. The primary metaphor is established through location – a neologism articulated at the chest – – which functions at the macro level as a metaphor of identity. This metaphor is subsequently developed through handshape, representing the strengthening or suppression of identity, and through movement, representing vitality, acceptance, the absence of vitality, and lack of recognition. The author explains this metaphor as Deaf identity conceptualised as an inner light. This interpretation may be related to the conceptual metaphors KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING discussed by Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), while the motif of light itself constitutes an important feature of artistic SL literature. Unlike Paul Scott's *Macbeth of the Lost Ark*, however, Matulis does not explicitly identify the metaphorical object, leaving the metaphor open to multiple interpretations. Discussions with Deaf signers, SL artists, and SL experts revealed that this metaphor was interpreted as light, a flower, a heart, or fire. These findings suggest that complex metaphors at the phonological level in artistic LGK texts are characterised not only by the systematic interaction of several phonological parameters but also by semantic polysemy, which becomes apparent only when the micro level is analysed together with the macro level of the artistic text.

3.3 Neologism Constructs as Means of Artistic Expression

This section proceeds with the analysis of neologism constructs as means of artistic expression, examining their concept and structure, the ways in which they organise visual perspective through cinematographic expression, their interaction with embodiment and metaphor, and their role in representing the worldview and shared linguistic and cultural experience of Deaf signers.

3.3.1 Neologism constructs: Concept and structure

In the present thesis, neologisms have been selected as one of the objects of interest since scholarly literature treats them as one of the key means of artistic expression in artistic SL texts (cf. Sutton-Spence 2005, Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). As already mentioned in the methodological section of this thesis (see Section 2.1), although scholarly research has generally analysed neologisms as individual means of artistic expression rather than from a broader structural perspective, the analysis conducted in the present study has revealed that, in artistic LGK texts, they frequently occur in sequences of several interrelated signs that function together as a single unit of artistic expression.

The analysis has also revealed that such sequences of neologism constructs display structural variety. They can be made up of: 1) new classifiers only, i.e., neologisms (in Section 1.5.2, it has already been discussed that the term 'neologisms', within the framework of this thesis, is applied to entities derived through the use of classifiers (and/or depicting signs); however, this thesis does not undertake the task of classifying these signs into separate categories in this respect – thus, it suffices to refer to them as productive signs, and, generally, in the context of artistic SL texts, to use the umbrella term *neologisms*); 2) combinations of neologisms with conventional signs. Nevertheless, despite this structural variety, in all cases, the organising and semantically principal element within the construct is always the neologism. It is the neologism that initiates the creation of imagery, gives rise to the construct, and provides it with innovative artistic expression, while performing functions commonly associated with means of artistic expression.

The analysis demonstrates that, within such a construct, new signs are combined with recognisable ones, which allows ambiguity, as is common in artistic language, to be maintained while simultaneously directing the attention of the experiencer – thus helping the experiencer to identify the represented imagery. In this way, neologism constructs function as a means of combining artistic expression with clarity of perception, i.e., the viewer is provided with an opportunity to precisely reconstruct the intended meaning without losing the artistic thread of the narrative.

The research has demonstrated that a chain of several interrelated signs, including neologisms, allows the complexity of artistic expression to be revealed more clearly – such groups transcend the level of a single neologism and create multi-layered, visually organised sense/meaning. For this reason, the two types just mentioned are treated and referred to in this thesis as

neologism constructs. It should also be noted that the *neologism constructs* analysed in the empirical part of this thesis, and specifically in this subchapter, share visual approaching-distancing expression, i.e., a cinematographic element. Only neologism constructs exhibiting this feature are explored in this thesis.

Thus, in the course of this research, it was established that, out of the 57 artistic LGK texts analysed, neologism constructs of this type were identified in 15 texts. A total of 20 distinct neologism constructs were identified. Two of these constructs occur in two different artistic texts by the same author, resulting in four recorded instances across different texts; however, each construct is counted only once among the 20 distinct constructs. Some of the constructs also recur multiple times within the same artistic text, in some cases more than ten times. These repetitions are either identical or exhibit only minor variation that does not affect the essential form or meaning of the construct; they are therefore treated as repetitions of the same construct. Thus, although 20 distinct neologism constructs were identified, the total number of recorded instances is higher when repetitions are included. In the following subchapters, selected cases that illustrate the characteristics and use of neologism constructs in LGK artistic texts are discussed in greater detail.

3.3.2 Visual expression organisation methods and functions in neologism constructs

This research suggests that the neologism constructs analysed in the framework of this thesis are characterised by the systematic development of imagery and the organisation of visual perspective. In this context, the attention of the spectator may be directed towards a specific subject, object or detail:

1) an image may be **visually elaborated**, **brought into closer view (elaborated)** or **shifted into a more distant view**;
2) closer and more distant views may alternate, with the image **brought into closer view (elaborated),** or **shifted into a more distant view, and then brought into closer view again, or vice versa**, i.e., thereby creating dynamic and visually structured expression;
3) a subject or object may be **systematically presented from closer and/or more distant perspectives, followed by a return to the initial perspective**.

In other words, neologism constructs employ cinematographic expression – which, as mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, is another means

of artistic expression commonly observed in artistic SL texts. In this way, neologism constructs not only convey the content but also create an aesthetic and emotional impact.

This analysis has also revealed that neologism constructs are characterised by functional diversity. It has been observed that neologism constructs are frequently associated with expression of *embodiment*. In such cases, the artist not only creates or develops a new image but also embodies the subject, object, or phenomenon being depicted. In the present subchapter, this aspect is discussed only briefly in the analysis of neologism constructs, insofar as it is relevant to their analysis, while a more detailed discussion is provided in Section 3.5.

This research has also revealed that neologism constructs may function in two ways: independently or as a means of creating metaphors. Remarkably, by employing neologism constructs, authors of artistic LGK texts also create metaphors that fall outside the scope of this thesis; thus, these are discussed only briefly in the following analysis, insofar as they are relevant to the analysis of specific neologism constructs.

This analysis has also revealed that neologism constructs may be employed to foreground a significant image or symbol, to create aesthetic and emotional tension, to organise visual perspective, or to reveal a specific worldview of a Deaf signer. In some cases, such constructs also occur at the climactic episodes of the artistic work, towards which the artistic tension builds, thus constituting the culmination of the work.

It is important to note that, in the course of the analysis, certain recurring or related features and patterns were identified among these cases. Nevertheless, considering the fact that this phenomenon has not previously been systematically described in scholarly literature, this thesis does not attempt to propose a strict typological classification of neologism constructs. Instead, for analytical purposes, the constructs are grouped according to the ways in which they are visually organised, while highlighting various patterns of image creation. This grouping makes it possible to systematically demonstrate how neologism constructs function in artistic texts, while maintaining a focus on their analysis as an integral means of artistic expression. In specific cases, where it is necessary to define the form or function of a specific sign as precisely as possible, neologisms are also referred to as *productive signs*, whereas established and lexicalised signs are referred to as *conventional signs*. It should also be noted that, since the analysis focuses on neologism constructs, examples are presented below as

illustrations, and the images are numbered in groups rather than individually in order to maintain the internal logic of the construct under discussion.

Remarkably, neologism constructs in artistic LGK texts convey a specific semantic idea, i.e., a certain propositional structure, for instance, *coming closer to a house*, *diving into water and sinking to the bottom*, etc. However, this idea is not expressed through conventional LGK forms – it is created by employing the analysed neologism constructs, i.e., by developing a sequence of neologisms, or by combining neologisms with conventional signs, as discussed above. When such cases are addressed in this thesis, it should be borne in mind that spoken language is used only to convey the semantic essence of the construct. In other words, this thesis does not undertake to present the form of neologism constructs in spoken language. Instead, the aim is to convey only the intended content of the construct, without representing the process through which this content is expressed. The form of the neologism construct itself is conveyed through its description. Considering this point, in this thesis, the meanings of neologism constructs are presented in *italics*, indicating that these formulations provide an interpretative rendering of the semantic idea rather than a direct representation of the meaning expressed by the neologism construct in the artistic text.

In the following subchapters, a more detailed analysis of neologism constructs is presented, with the constructs classified according to the ways in which their visual expression is organised, i.e., through visual approaching, alternating approaching and distancing, distancing, and a return to the initial perspective.

3.3.2.1 Visual approaching by employing neologism constructs

First, those cases of neologism constructs in which artistic expression is created through the principle of visual **approaching** are discussed. In such cases, the depicted objects or subjects are not presented statically; rather, their visual representation is progressively elaborated through a sequence of several interrelated signs, thus gradually bringing them into closer view for the viewer of the text. This can be illustrated by the artistic text *Drakula* (Dracula) by Adas Aužbikavičius, in which having turned into a bat, is flying towards a house. In this artistic text, *coming closer to a house* is presented in an unconventional manner. One of the more conventional ways of representing this would be to modify the location of the sign in signing space, i.e., by moving it closer to the artist, for instance, towards the body or the face. The image could also be represented less artistically by showing the subject approaching the house, with the sign depicting the subject moved closer to a specific reference point, following conventional use of signing space. In the

artistic text, however, the author employs a systematic sequence of signs constituting the neologism construct. Initially, the house is presented as small, and its outline is defined very vaguely, using handshape 1; subsequently, its shape gradually becomes clearer, using handshape N, followed by handshape III, until, ultimately, a complete and clearly perceptible image of the house is produced using handshape B^ (Figure 19). The latter is actually a conventional sign with a slight modification of the handshape.

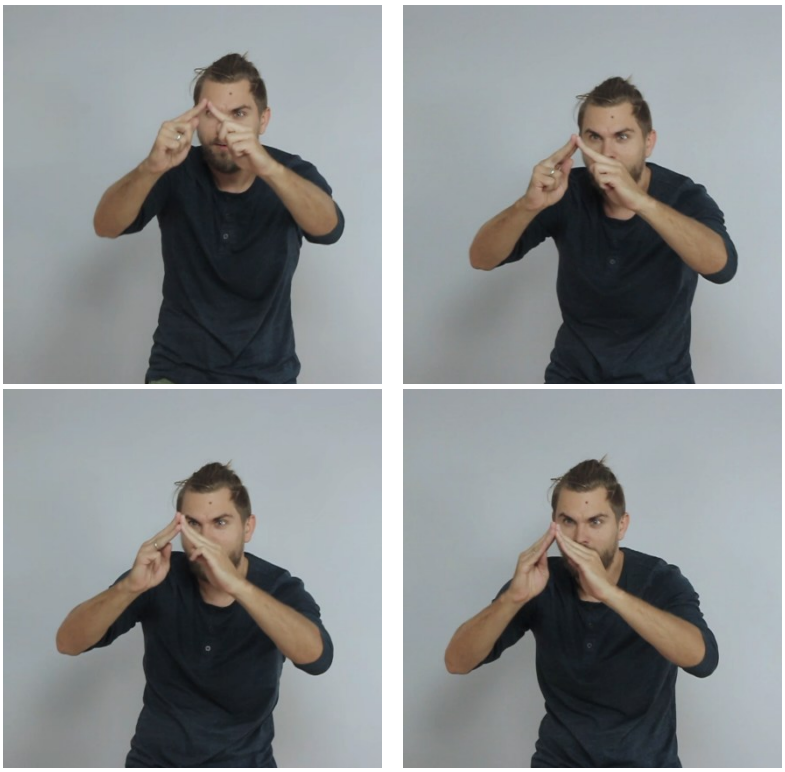


Figure 19. Neologism construct representing *approaching a house.* Artistic LGK text *Drakula* (Dracula) by Adas Aužbikavičius

In this way, the effect of approaching is not only created but also contributes to the viewer's visual and aesthetic engagement with the text: the viewer is drawn into the movement, as if invited to 'come closer' to the depicted object and experience the action of flying from a close perspective. It should be highlighted that this construct is presented at the beginning of the artistic text. This specific example clearly demonstrates the expressive potential of cinematographic expression: the image is created as a sequence of 'approaching frames', which gradually draws the viewer into the scene and the content of the text.

A similar principle of visual approaching can be observed in the artistic text entitled *Amžinybė* (Eternity) by Nijolė Karmazienė. In this case, the image of a *flying angel* is represented and gradually elaborated through a systematic sequence of signs. The sequence begins with a tiny silhouette of an angel – handshape 1, which gradually increases in size and becomes more clearly defined, progressing to handshape N, then B, until, ultimately, the image develops into an expansive movement that occupies the entire space, depicting the figure of a flying angel (Figure 20).



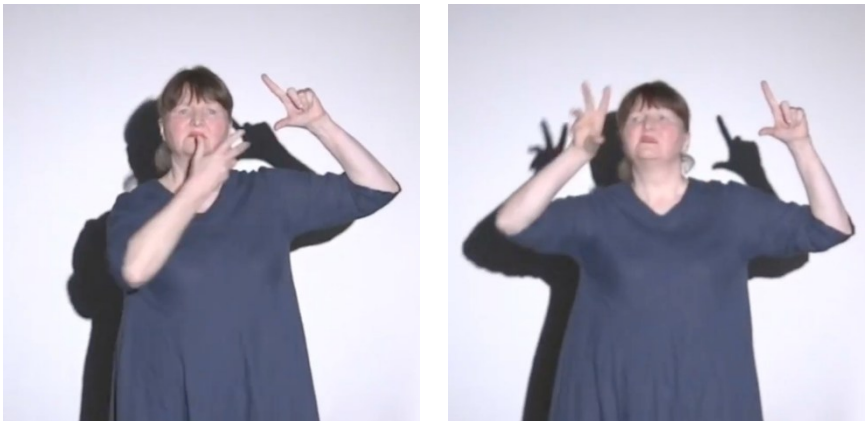


Figure 20. Neologism construct representing a *flying angel coming into closer view*. Artistic LGK text *Amžinybė* (Eternity) by Nijolė Karmazienė

As already mentioned in Section 3.1.4, in the present work, the angel should be interpreted as a metaphor for the guardian of SL. Therefore, when the image increases in size and expands, this carries not only visual, but also symbolic meaning, as it may be perceived as signifying the strengthening and increasing resilience of SL and its ability to survive despite political or ideological oppression. Remarkably, such a metaphor is created, in this particular case, through the neologism construct discussed here. Unlike in the previous text by Adas Aužbikavičius, in this case, visual approaching serves not only to create engagement and/or emotional and aesthetic tension but also becomes one of the focal episodes of the artistic text, in which artistic tension is concentrated. In this way, the same principle of expression – in this case, visual approaching created through a neologism construct – may fulfil different functions. In one case, it may function as a means of engaging the viewer, whereas in another, it may constitute the climax of the narrative. Hence, these examples demonstrate that neologism constructs, through a systematic sequence of signs, can create the effect of visual approaching, which not only conveys a change in spatial perspective but also shapes the aesthetic and emotional impact of the artistic text.

In this section of the thesis, it is essential to highlight that, in some cases involving neologism constructs, embodiment is employed. Scholarly research has shown that embodiment may be realised in two ways: through non-manual elements that convey the emotional state of the depicted subject or object while the manual elements are articulated at some distance from the body, and through the use of the entire body, with signs articulated on or close to the body. The first case is illustrated by the above-discussed artistic text by Nijolė Karmazienė, where, in the second illustration of the neologism construct, the artist clearly uses non-manual elements to represent the state and emotions of

the angel, whereas in the final illustration she uses her entire body to depict the angel's flight, as if becoming the angel herself. Another example illustrates a different realisation of embodiment. This is a neologism construct representing *a spinning globe*, also found in Nijolė Karmazienė's *Amžinybė* (Eternity). Initially, the image of the globe is created through manual elements, with the globe shown spinning in signing space from different perspectives. In this sequence, the author also produces the conventional sign KURČIAS (DEAF) and then points to different locations on the globe, thereby indicating that Deaf people are present in different parts of the world. However, this image is transformed, and the globe is as if 'transferred' onto the author's body and begins to spin around her neck. In this way, the author herself becomes part of the depicted object, with her head functioning as the centre of the image. In this case, the image is not only visually brought closer; the artist herself becomes incorporated into the embodied representation, as the image no longer exists as a separate object but is instead realised through the body. Unlike in the previous example, from *Drakula* (Dracula), the distance between the artist and the depicted object disappears through embodiment (Figure 21). Thus, as can be seen in this example, the neologism construct combines newly created classifiers with the conventional, readily recognisable sign KURČIAS (DEAF).





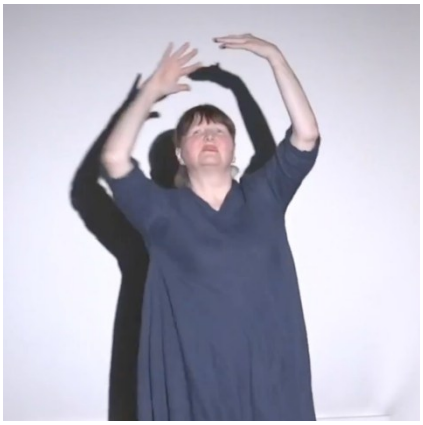


Figure 21. Neologism construct representing *the world*. Artistic LGK text *Amžinybė* (Eternity) by Nijolė Karmazienė

Remarkably, the development of this neologism construct proceeds not only through manual elements, but also by employing non-manual components. An important role here is played by the gaze: immediately before embodiment occurs, several signs are produced, shown in images 5, 6 and 7 of the sequence, in which the artist's gaze is directed towards the depicted object, i.e., the globe. Even though the signs remain the same, the direction of the gaze creates an additional effect of proximity and signals a shift in visual perspective. In this way, the viewer is drawn more closely into the created image and invited to experience the depicted object from close proximity. Hence, this case demonstrates that neologism constructs can be developed not only through a sequence of manual elements, but also through complex expression in which non-manual elements play an important role. It is the interaction between manual and non-manual elements that creates increasing visual proximity, ultimately leading to full embodiment. This particular case provides a clear example of a systematic transition towards embodiment.

3.3.2.2 Visual approaching and distancing by employing neologism constructs

It is noteworthy that, in neologism constructs, there are cases in which visual approaching and distancing do not develop in a consistent linear sequence but involve more pronounced internal dynamics. In such cases, the same construct may involve visual **approaching, distancing** and an alternation between the two **(variability between approaching and distancing)**. In other words, an image may initially be brought spatially closer, then moved further away, and subsequently brought closer again, or vice

versa. Even though such constructs are characterised by considerable internal dynamics, the ultimate outcome remains the same, as the image is finally expanded and 'magnified', thereby allowing the spectator to clearly identify the depicted object or subject.

Such a **dynamic** principle of visual approaching and distancing can also be observed in the artistic text *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė. At the beginning of the story, the author creates the image of a *bird* – one of the two protagonists of the work – *descending from the heights of the sky into water*. This image is rendered through a longer sequence of neologisms than in the previous examples. Thus, in this case, the construct is extended. Initially, a small silhouette of a bird, which is very difficult to identify, is shown. This difficulty is further supported by the fact that, during a consultation, even an SL expert did not immediately recognise the image as a bird. Later, another image is introduced in which the bird is flying. Here, embodiment is involved, i.e., the bird is represented from close proximity, from the protagonist's perspective. Notably, a conventional sign is also involved, namely, *SKRENDA-PAUKŠTIS* (BIRD-FLYING). This sign is complemented by non-manual elements which convey the difficulty the bird experiences while flying. Then, the artist returns to the initial neologism, followed by the use of the more readily recognisable H handshape, which allows the viewer to identify the referent as a bird and recognise its action. The image is then further developed by depicting a bird that has already landed, using the neologistic 1u/1u handshape. The sequence continues with even more complex neologisms which depict the shape of a swan, brought progressively closer with each successive representation. At this stage, the expression of the construct involves not only the hand, but also a greater part of the arm (up to the elbow). Subsequently, both hands interact in the production of a two-handed sign (still representing only one protagonist), creating a complete visual image of a large and powerful swan (Figure 22). Thus, the construct creates an image that develops from a fragmentary and indistinct silhouette into a clearly recognisable and visually elaborated representation of the protagonist; however, this development does not proceed in a linear and gradual manner but through a dynamic alternation of visual perspectives.



Figure 22. Neologism construct representing *swans landing on and swimming on the surface of water.* Artistic LGK text *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė

It is important to note that this construct is based not on a steady, gradual process of approaching, but on a certain cycle of 'distancing and approaching': initially, the image is presented from far away, then brought closer, and ultimately develops into the final, fully elaborated image. Such dynamic creates ambiguity and invites the viewer to participate in the process of meaning-making, since the initial indeterminacy encourages active interpretation, whereas the later expansion provides clarity and a more detailed perception of the protagonist of the artistic text. It should also be

emphasised that this dynamic combination and alignment of perspectives in the use of different neologisms are not accidental but reflect the semantic structure of the idea being conveyed. In other words, the neologism construct is organised according to the sequence of the depicted event — *the bird flies, struggles to flap its wings, and lands on the* water— and the sequence of signs therefore reflects this structure. This also determines the choice of specific signs: alongside newly introduced vocabulary, i.e., neologisms, conventional signs are incorporated, helping the viewer follow the development of the image. In addition, it should be noted that the same sequence of neologisms is employed for the two main protagonists – the two different swans – thereby creating visual and semantic parallelism and balance between the depicted subjects. Such repetition of an identical sequence within the construct is extremely rare – indeed, it is the only instance identified in the analysed texts – and may be regarded as a deliberate artistic strategy.

It should also be noted that this construct manifests the above-mentioned embodiment, as the artist not only construes an image from an external perspective, but also, at certain points, embodies the depicted protagonist, as when the flying bird is shown from close proximity – SKRENDA-PAUKŠTIS (BIRD-FLYING) – thereby rendering its movement and state. Hence, in this example, a neologism construct functions as a multi-layered means of artistic expression, in which visual dynamics is intertwined with ambiguity, engagement, and embodied experience.

It is also notable that the artistic text by Justina Čiplytė is metaphorical. The protagonists are introduced through a neologism construct, which functions metaphorically, referring to a Deaf person, i.e. someone who is different. Hence, the neologism constructs serve as a means of constructing this metaphor.

The same dynamic expression of approaching and distancing, involving a neologism construct and embodiment, is also manifested in other artistic texts considered in the analysis as well. For instance, in Greta Damševič's artistic text *Indėnas* (The Native American), the action of *drawing a bow and releasing an arrow* is represented in the course of the narrative. This action is realised through a two-handed neologism, the handshapes of which vary throughout the development of the construct, while embodiment is also incorporated into the construct when the protagonist is depicted holding the bow. The drawing of the bow and release of the arrow are represented through systematic changes in handshape, developing from the preparatory phase, through gradually increasing tension, to the final release of the arrow, as expressed by the handshape combinations 1/C, 1/1 and 1+/1 (Figure 23).



Figure 23. Neologism construct representing *drawing a bow and releasing an arrow.* Artistic LGK text *Indėnas* (The Native American) by Greta Damševič

While developing the construct, the image is not only 'magnified', but also dynamically transformed. Notably, in this example, the neologism construct is closely related to embodiment, since the artist embodies the protagonist (in this particular case, a hunter), and depicts the protagonist's hand drawing the bowstring and, ultimately, releasing the arrow. Thus, in the presently discussed example, dynamic approaching and distancing operate not merely as a means of organising visual perspective, but also as a way of representing the progression of the event, the increasing tension, and the culmination of the artistic text. In this case, the neologism construct makes it possible to combine the development of the image and embodied experience within a single unit of artistic expression.

The research has revealed that, in the cases discussed above, as well as in several cases to be examined below, gradual *transition* is commonly observed, i.e., the selected neologisms are employed to create a gradual development of the image as it is visually brought closer or moved further away. In the artistic work by Greta Damševič, the neologism construct reveals a different kind of dynamics, since no consistent transition can be observed in this narrative. The author either presents the image from an extremely close-up perspective, as illustrated by the first photo of the sequence, or from a markedly distant perspective, as illustrated by photos two, three, and four. This does not necessarily mean that this case does not belong to this group of constructs; rather, it reveals a different, individual(ised) stylistic approach. Remarkably, considering this specific feature – the presence or absence of transition in a neologism construct – it is worthwhile to examine its emotional and aesthetic impact on the viewer of this artistic text.

3.3.2.3 Visual return to the initial perspective by employing neologism constructs

In the course of the research, cases were identified in which the authors of neologism constructs represent not only visual approaching and distancing in relation to an object or subject, but also a **return to the initial perspective**, from which the image originated. Such a structure allows for the creation of a cyclical visual composition, in which the attention of the viewer is initially directed towards a specific subject or object, and finally returned to a broader context, i.e., to the initial image. For instance, in the artistic work *Knygnešiai* (Book Smugglers) by Arūnas Bražinskas, the historical context of the ban on Lithuanian publications in the Latin (and other non-Cyrillic) script during the period of Tsarist rule is visualised, and a neologism construct is employed to develop the *image of a flag*. Initially, the conventional sign VĖLIAVA (En. FLAG) is employed, whereas later the construct is developed through a

sequence of classifiers, i.e., neologisms, progressing from a more abstract silhouette, which is harder to recognise – represented by the 1⌐/1⌐ handshape combination – towards a more developed image. Through a neologism produced with the hands extended to the sides, depicting the symbol of a flag, the image is brought as close as possible to the viewer; subsequently, it appears to move farther away through another neologism produced with the 5/5 handshape combination, while, at the end of the construct, the artist returns to the initial sign VĖLIAVA (FLAG) (see Figure 24).

It should be highlighted that, when returning to the initial perspective, the author does not strictly reproduce the original sequence used to bring the image of the flag closer, and the neologism produced with the 1⌐/1⌐ handshape combination is substituted with another sign produced with the 5/5 handshape combination. However, this does not disrupt the sequence or the transition; the new neologism (5/5) provides a slightly different visual representation and perception of the symbol of the flag, presenting it as somewhat larger and broader, as though viewed from slightly closer than in the construct presented in the second picture. Thus, the neologism construct not only magnifies and emphasises the image of the flag, but also returns it to the initial semantic field, thus creating a clear and coherent whole that functions as a complete and well-rounded means of artistic expression.



Figure 24. Neologism construct representing *a flag bearing the image of a bird*. Artistic LGK text *Knygnešiai* (Book Smugglers) by Arūnas Bražinskas

Remarkably, it is not accidental that the author renders this image of the flag through a neologism construct. Even though this artistic text unambiguously depicts a historical event in Lithuania, specifically, the ban on Lithuanian publications in the Latin script from 1864 to 1904 under Tsarist Russian rule, the text depicts symbols of the Russian Empire, including its flag as well as coat of arms featuring a two-headed eagle. This image functions not only as a direct historical reference, but also as a metaphor for imperial power, imposed control, and oppression. In this case, the neologism construct is not an independent unit of artistic expression – it is employed to create and further reinforce the metaphor. When the artist opts to employ not a single neologism but a developed construct, the attention of the viewer is focused on the image, creating a stronger interpretative effect. The viewer is invited not only to recognise the image, but also to relate it to a broader historical and cultural context. This strategy serves to place an emphasis on the importance of this historical period and its place in the collective experience.

The research has revealed that such cyclical visual compositions are commonly observed in artistic LGK texts. In the artistic text entitled *Judėjimas* (Moving Forward) by Larisa Voroneckaja, the performance begins with the sign *LYTI* (5+/5+) (TO RAIN). This is a conventional sign which provides the viewer with a wider visual perspective. Later, the author employs a neologism produced with the O->4^/O->4^ handshape combination, which represents *immense raindrops and water spray falling onto the ground* and shifts the spectator to a wider perspective, in which Later on, the artist produces another conventional sign LYTI (A~/A~) (TO RAIN), while slightly modifying it (instead of being symmetric and synchronous, the sign is produced symmetrically but asynchronously), and accompanies it with a non-manual element, specifically, a downward gaze. This may be interpreted as embodiment of a cloud from which the rain is falling[75]. At the end of the neologism construct, the artist returns the viewer to a perspective close to the initial one: the gaze is directed straight ahead, thereby indicating that the focus has shifted back to the protagonist. However, the sign is no longer *LYTI* (5+/5+) (TO RAIN), as it was at the beginning of the construct, but, instead, a variant of *LYTI* (TO RAIN) produced with the A~/A~ handshape combination (Figure 25).

[75] This interpretation emerged during a discussion with Lithuanian Sign Language expert Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva.



Figure 25. Neologism construct representing *falling rain*. LGK artistic text *Judėjimas* (Moving Forward) by Larisa Voroneckaja

Thus, it may be argued that a cyclical visual composition does not necessarily involve strict correspondence between the beginning and end of a neologism construct but also allows for variations and deviations. In this particular case, it is also essential to note that the construct consists of four signs, only one of which is a neologism, whereas the three remaining are conventional signs. This example illustrates the observation made at the beginning of this subchapter that the neologism remains the pivotal element of the construct even when the majority of its elements are conventional signs. This innovatively employed classifier lends the construct artistic originality while simultaneously contributing to its emotional and aesthetic impact. It is for this reason that the entire construct is regarded as a construct of neologisms, providing sufficient grounds for including this case within the scope of the present research.

3.3.2.4 Visual distancing by employing neologism constructs

The analysis has also revealed cases in which neologism constructs are employed to create artistic expression through the visual **distancing** of an image, with a subject or object presented from an increasingly distant perspective with respect to the viewer. This principle is observed, for instance, in the above-discussed artistic text *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė. In one episode of this artistic text, *a swan diving and sinking to the bottom* is depicted. Initially, the image is presented from a very close perspective, highlighting the long line of the neck and the downward bend of the head. Later, the field of view is expanded, revealing the entire body of the swan as it sinks, while, ultimately, the artist transitions to a distant perspective, in which the body of the swan is visible as if from far away, sinking into the depths of the body of water, with its legs extending upwards (Figure 26).



Figure 26. Neologism construct representing *swans diving into the water*. Artistic LGK text *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans) by Justina Čiplytė

This distancing is created by systematically developing a neologism construct, combining a newly created sign with the recognisable classifier N, followed by the conventional sign *SKĘSTI* (2/Bn handshape combination) (En. TO SINK/TO DROWN), which helps the viewer identify the depicted image. It should be noted that this construct is repeated twice in this artistic text – once for each of the two protagonists – and is produced on different sides of the signer's signing space. Hence, this expression maintains

symmetry between the two protagonists, thus creating visual balance and parallel structuring. In the subsequent part of the sequence, the artist shows how both bodies sink deeper and deeper, until, ultimately, a distant view is presented in which the legs are oriented upwards, while the movement itself is slowed down. At that point, the author combines the two images, as shown in the final picture of the illustration, where not one but two sinking birds are depicted. Unlike the cases involving visual approaching, here, the image is not returned to its initial perspective, and the distant perspective is maintained in order to create a powerful emotional effect and a dramatic view. In this way, the neologism construct makes it possible not only to organise the spatial perspective, but also to shape the mood of the artistic text: the slowing movement, the increasingly distant perspective, and the gradual 'dissolution' of the image in the distance reinforce the impression of the tragic outcome amid the all-embracing tension. Furthermore, by combining novelty achieved through the use of neologisms, along with recognisable classifiers, a certain semantic tension is created. The viewer is invited to recognise, interpret, and jointly experience the image, which further enhances their engagement with the artistic text.

3.3.3 Neologism constructs and depiction of the worldview of the Deaf signer community

The analysis has revealed that neologism constructs in artistic LGK texts are occasionally employed to render a specific worldview of a Deaf signing individual. This insight was corroborated during a discussion of the cases analysed in this research with LGK expert Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva. In quite a few texts from the corpus analysed in this research, a recurring neologism construct structure is observed, in which the silhouette of a human body is rendered using the handshape A, extending from the palm to the elbow, thereby creating a representation of the entire body or a part of it. This visual schema is related to signs denoting spoken communication, which creates a semantic opposition between SL(s) and spoken communication.

Such constructs were identified, for instance, in the artistic text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis, in the duet composition *Nekaltinkit manęs* (Don't Blame Me) by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė, as well as in the composition *Medis* (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas, among other works. In these texts, neologism constructs operate as a uniting leitmotif, through which the experience(s) of Deaf individuals and their relationship with their environment are revealed. For instance, in the literary work *Dvyniai* (The Twins), the above-mentioned configuration A extends up to the elbow, and it

is systematically used to depict all the characters involved in this work of art – a physician, parents, the baby, and, later on, the growing child. In other words, this neologism is dominant in the constructs of this text, and all the imagery of this composition pertaining to the characters involved is based on this neologism. At the moments when this configuration starts to change and is modified into a movement associated with spoken communication, it acquires an additional meaning as it becomes a reference to the dominance of hearing communication norms, while also referring to the segregation and alienation experienced by Deaf individuals. Such a human silhouette is also rendered in the part of the text depicting a physician who communicates through speech, the parents leaning over the newborn, and the father who uses his voice while refusing to accept SL and the needs of the child (Figure 27).



Figure 27. Neologism construct representing the *approaching physician*, *physician communicating through speech*, *parents leaning over the newborn, and father communicating through speech*. Artistic LGK text *Dvyniai* (The Twins) by Arnoldas Matulis

Cases of this type have also been detected in the composition *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans). In this case, the construction of the image of the swans may also be related to the worldview of a Deaf signer: as outlined in Section 3.3.2.2, the subject is rendered not randomly but by emphasising the distinctive features of the character that are readily recognisable to the authors from their personal experience and that reflect the worldview of the particular character. In specific artistic texts, this is achieved by employing personification.

Similar expression is also observed in the composition by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė called *Nekaltinkit manęs* (Don't Blame Me), where the artistic text starts with a sign produced by the protagonist, with her ears covered, whereas the second author, standing right behind the first author, shows above her head the sign sourced from the LGK dictionary *KALBĖTI-ŽODŽIU-[E]* (SPEAK-IN-VOICE-[E], a directional verb). Remarkably, this is an extremely archaic sign, which has essentially already fallen out of use, and its origins can be traced back to gesturing, as well as the need for using

gestures when Deaf children were growing up in a hearing environment[76]. Thus, even though this sign is presented in the dictionary (and, by extension, should be classified as conventional), in the context of the artistic text, it rather represents gesturing along with a clearly (or at least more clearly) recognisable sign, that of speaking through voice. As a next step, the image is brought closer, by highlighting the movement of the lips, which is achieved by showing a neologism. This neologism is later reused in a text by Arnoldas Matulis, whereas finally, an exceptionally non-standard neologism is employed, which is made up of a moving index finger and thumb, which symbolise the movement of the lips (Figure 28). Thus, this neologism construct is made up of three signs, creating an image of spoken communication surrounding the protagonist. The image is gradually narrowed from a more general representation to an extremely specific one, whereas the cyclical repetition of the construct throughout the text reinforces the impression that the artistic work seeks to create.



Figure 28. Neologism construct representing *people communicating through speech*. Artistic LGK text *Nekaltinkit manęs* (Don't Blame Me) by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė

In these examples, neologism constructs also (re)present authentic experience of constant exposure to spoken communication, which, as discussed in the preceding subchapters, is related to experiences of social isolation (and thus, essentially, segregation), exclusion, or marginalisation. Here, the first author *is catching* these sounds and trying to *place and insert* them in her vocal cords, which is a metaphor based on subjective experience of a Deaf individual being forced and encouraged to speak using voice. As this metaphor falls outside the scope of this thesis, it is only briefly mentioned. Thus, in this case, neologism constructs become a means of rendering the

[76] These insights have been provided by LGK expert Ieva Pečiulytė-Silaeva.

identity of a Deaf person, their relationship with the hearing world, and the specific, unique way in which a Deaf signer experiences the world.

A similar visual and semantic principle is observed in the artistic LGK text by Arūnas Bražinskas called *Medis (The Tree)*, already discussed in Section 3.2.2, where a person approaching the experiencer from a distance is depicted, and the same configuration is used as in the text by Lijana Čiplienė and Justina Čiplytė, i.e., 1 (this is also a generally recognisable form used in other contexts as well). Later, this image transitions into embodiment as the author takes over the role of the protagonist, whereas speaking through voice is rendered through an extremely original construct of neologisms. In this particular case, configuration 5+/5+ is used, depicting moving lips, and, by additionally modifying a one-handed configuration, the impression of the tongue moving inside the mouth is created. This kind of expression was not identified in any other text analysed, and, therefore, is considered exceptional (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Neologism construct representing *an approaching person communicating through speech*. Artistic LGK text *Medis* (The Tree) by Arūnas Bražinskas

This specific case, as well as other recurring cases, indicates that neologism constructs may function as carriers of cultural meaning. Visual solutions recurring across different texts, such as the construction of a human silhouette, emphasis on spoken communication, and the highlighting of the movement of the lips (or the tongue) allow a shared model of how Deaf signers perceive the world to be identified. Consequently, these neologism constructs not only create individual(ised) artistic expression, but also reveal experiences shared by different Deaf artists and articulate the collective experience and perception of the Deaf community and its worldview.

3.3.4 Summary of the section

Having conducted the analysis of neologism constructs in artistic LGK texts, it can be stated that neologism constructs function as a complex means

of artistic expression that extends beyond the level of a single neologism and creates multilayered meaning. The research revealed that neologism constructs may consist of only a few signs or develop into substantially longer sequences of signs that create continuous, dynamic, and visually structured images. The analysis also revealed that neologism constructs are created in two principal ways: (1) from neologisms (classifiers) only, or (2) by combining neologisms with conventional signs. In both cases, signs are combined in such a way as to preserve the ambiguity characteristic of artistic language, which strongly engages the viewer while simultaneously facilitating a clearer understanding of the artistic idea of the text.

The research also revealed that neologism constructs systematically employ cinematographic expression, which organises visual perspective. The analysis identified three recurrent patterns of cinematographic expression organising visual perspective: (1) *an image may be expanded, brought closer or taken into the distance*; (2) *an image is brought closer, then farther into the distance, and then closer again, or vice versa*; and (3) *a systematic shift of the object or subject by taking them closer and/or farther is observed, which concludes with the object or subject returning to the initial perspective*. Such organisation of visual perspective engages the viewer, contributes to the creation of tension and climax, highlights symbolic meaning, and, in certain cases, functions as an independent means of artistic expression. Neologism constructs may also function as the focal point of an artistic text, where tension, climax, or symbolic meaning is concentrated, thereby creating aesthetic and emotional impact. In some cases, they may also function as a means of creating metaphors.

The research further revealed that embodiment is frequently employed in neologism constructs. It constitutes an important means of artistic expression in artistic LGK texts, as it enables the creation of an alternative perspective that differs from everyday communication and strongly immerses the experiencer in the artistic dimension of the text. As demonstrated by the subsequent analysis presented in this dissertation (see Sections 3.5.2.1, 3.5.2.1.2, and 3.5.2.1.4), embodiment is one of the essential means of artistic expression in artistic LGK texts and may be regarded as one of the factors contributing to making a text artistic. Thus, neologism constructs may also serve as a means of creating embodied artistic experience. The analysis also established that the recurring principles underlying the construction of neologism constructs – including the construction of the human silhouette, the emphasis on spoken communication, the highlighting of lip movement, and the approaching and distancing associated with these objects or subjects –

allow a broader model of how Deaf signers perceive the world to be identified and demonstrate that neologism constructs are not merely individual stylistic solutions but also convey the shared linguistic and cultural experience of Deaf signers.

Thus, neologism constructs in artistic LGK texts emerge in this thesis as one of the most significant and complex means of artistic expression, integrating visual dynamics (cinematographic expression), embodiment, and the shared linguistic and cultural experience of Deaf signers.

3.4 Application of a Computer Vision Tool: A Pilot Study

In this chapter, two stages of the study are described in detail: the pilot stage and the extended stage, the latter additionally incorporating a focus group. This part of the research, carried out using a CV tool, was conducted in collaboration with Prof. Vadim Kimmelman. Accordingly, the analysis presented in this chapter is based on the joint work of the author of this thesis and Prof. Kimmelman. It should be noted that both stages of the study have been described in scientific publications (see Introduction), and the analysis presented below is grounded specifically in these publications.

As outlined in the methodological part of this dissertation (see Chapter 2), a pilot study was first conducted to determine whether a CV tool was suitable for the analysis of artistic LGK texts. In both stages of the study, CV was employed to analyse not only artistic LGK texts, as in previous research (conducted using ELAN), but also their retellings. It should be noted that all retellings, like the artistic texts, were recorded in a studio setting; therefore, their inclusion in the analysis was methodologically appropriate.

Thus, at this stage, it was decided to focus on selected phonetic aspects of SL production that are potentially associated with artistic texts and can be measured using the available CV tools. Accordingly, measurements were taken for general hand activity, symmetry, body leans, and eyebrow movements. For each of these parameters, individual original works were compared with their corresponding retellings. These parameters are described in detail below.

3.4.1 Hand activity

To measure hand activity, the x- and y-coordinates of the two hands are analysed separately. Note that the z-coordinates in the MediaPipe pose output (unlike those in the face component) have not been tested or calibrated by the

creators, so they are not useful for phonetic analysis. This means that the actual hand position in 3D space is not measured, but only its projection onto the 2D plane of the video recording. While this is a substantial drawback in general, as all information along the z-axis is lost, it is considered acceptable for the purposes of this analysis. First, the signers in the videos all stand facing the camera and therefore the loss of information is expected to be similar across all videos. Second, because individual recordings are compared with each other, the x- and y-coordinates already provide very large numbers of data points that can be analysed. However, if the artistic texts and their prose retellings differ in the extent to which the hands move along the z-axis, this difference cannot be detected using the current method. In Figure 30, the x-coordinates (normalised and centred) are plotted for each artistic text and its retelling as boxplots. It can be observed that, for each piece, the original has a wider distribution of the coordinates. This means that the hands move further to the right and to the left in the original than in the retelling. In other words, the horizontal amplitude of the hand movements is larger in the original.

Because the differences lie not in the mean position of the hands but in their distributions, Figure 31 presents the Standard Deviations (SDs) of the x-coordinates for both hands in each artistic text. It can also be clearly observed that the SDs are consistently larger in the original than in the retelling. The only case where there is almost no difference is the left hand in the last artistic text. The left hand does not, in fact, move much in either the original or the retelling.

It was tested whether the difference in SDs between the original and the retelling was significant using Levene's test for equality of variances, and the difference was found to be significant overall and for each individual artistic text for both hands, except for the single case described above. Note, however, that significance testing is not very informative in this case because the datasets contain a very large number of data points, so even very small differences easily reach significance. Graphical exploration is therefore considered more informative here.

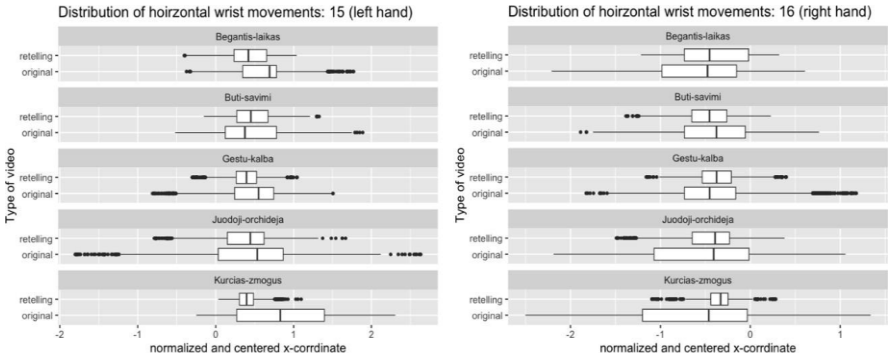


Figure 30. Distributions of horizontal hand movements in the individual artistic texts

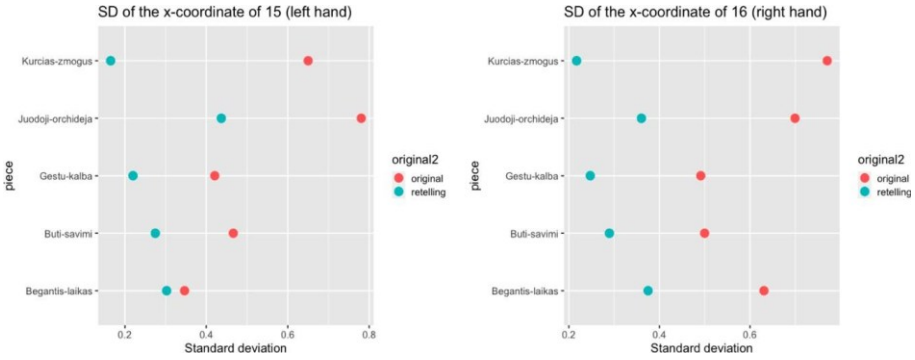


Figure 31. Standard deviations of horizontal hand movements in the individual artistic texts

In Figure 32, the y-coordinates (normalised and centred) are plotted for each artistic piece and its retelling. It can again be observed that, for each artistic text, the original has a wider distribution of the coordinates. This means that the hands move further up and down in the original than in the retelling. In other words, the vertical amplitude of the hand movements is larger in the original.

Figure 33 plots the SDs of the y-coordinates across the pieces. Again, it can clearly be observed that in each case the SD is higher in the original than in the retelling, even though in some artistic texts the differences are relatively small (albeit statistically significant).

To sum up, it is very clear that, in the dataset, the hands move across a larger space in the originals, both horizontally and vertically. In the retellings, the hand coordinates show less variation and less extreme values.

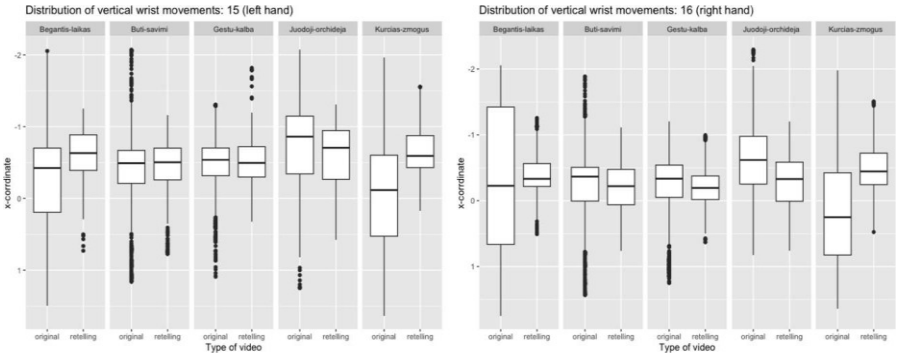


Figure 32. Distributions of vertical hand movements in the individual artistic texts

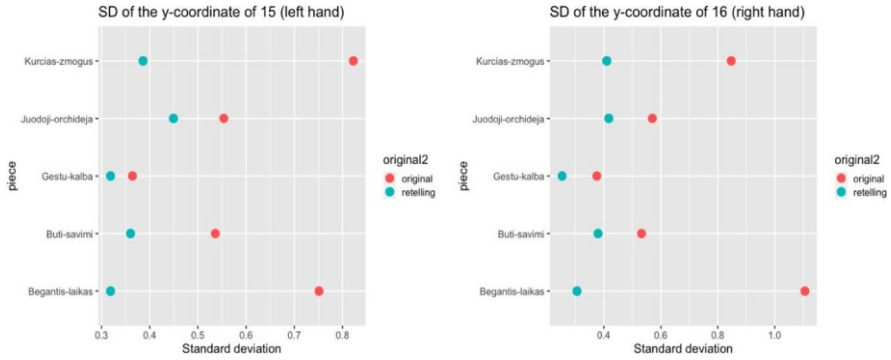


Figure 33. Standard deviations of vertical hand movements in the individual artistic texts

3.4.2 Symmetry

As discussed above, symmetry can be used in literary texts in SL as a means of artistic expression. In order to quantify symmetry, the insights (and the specific measure) proposed by Börstell are followed. Börstell's purpose was to classify signs according to handedness based on the relative activity of the two hands. The measure of relative activity was calculated in the following way: the Euclidean distance between the coordinates of each wrist in consecutive frames was calculated. The absolute difference between the distances travelled by the two wrists is the measure used to analyse symmetry. The larger the difference, the more asymmetric the movement is (larger values mean that one of the hands is moving considerably more than the other). Börstell has shown that this measure can be used very effectively to classify

isolated signs as one-handed, two-handed symmetrical, or two-handed asymmetrical.

For the purposes of this study, this measure is calculated for each frame, and the averages and distributions are compared between the original and the retelling of each artistic text. The results (mean symmetry values) are presented in Figure 34.

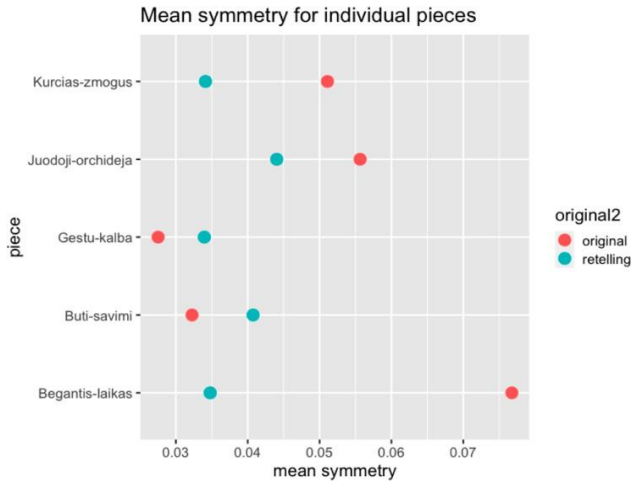


Figure 34. Symmetry measurements in the individual artistic texts. Larger values indicate lower symmetry

It can be seen that symmetry is not used consistently to differentiate the originals and the retellings. In one artistic text, the symmetry measure is much higher in the original, which means that there is considerably less symmetry in the original than in the retelling. Of the other four artistic texts, two have higher symmetry and two have lower symmetry in the originals, but the differences are small.

The results thus indicate that symmetry is not used as a literary device in the artistic texts analysed. This is consistent with the qualitative analysis of the data: no marked symmetry used for artistic purposes was observed in these texts.

3.4.3 Body leans

Not only the hands, but also the body can move more in artistic texts (recall also Figure 7). Sideward body leans were specifically measured by examining the distributions of the x-coordinates (normalised and centred) of the two shoulders. As with the hand coordinates, the caveat is that measurements along the z-axis are not available. In this case, the y-coordinates are also not

considered, as body leans are conceptualized as primarily sideward movement of the shoulders. While this is reasonable for a dataset where the signers face the camera, it is clearly not applicable to videos filmed at a different angle, and so other measures should be used. The resulting distributions of the x-coordinates of the shoulders can be seen in Figure 35. It is clear that, in four of the five artistic texts, both the left and the right shoulder move to much more extreme points in the original than in the retelling. In one piece (the last one in the Figure), the difference is small, and it is in the opposite direction: the shoulders move more in the retelling. This is in line with the observations from that recording: the signer moves their body more in the retelling than in the original, where the body is very still. Figure 36 presents the same data by comparing the SDs of the horizontal shoulder coordinates between the original and the retelling.

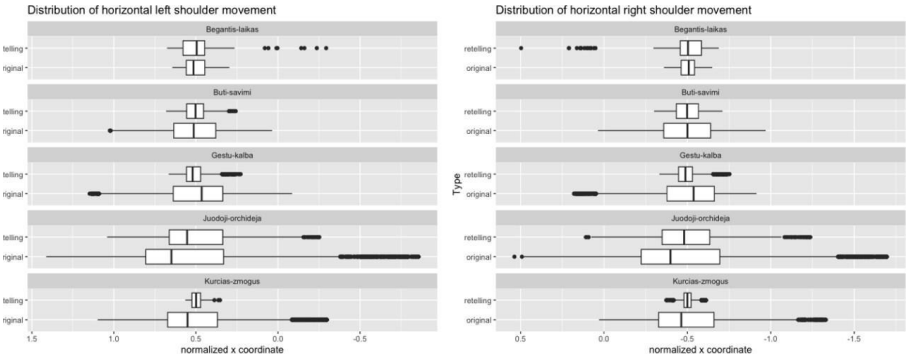


Figure 35. Distributions of horizontal shoulder movements in the individual artistic texts

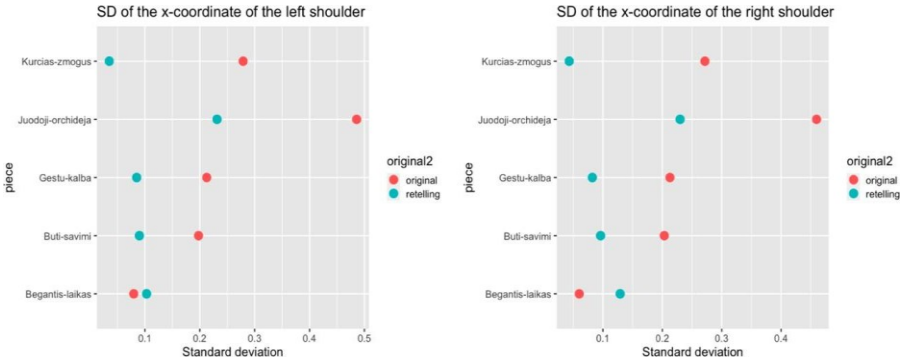


Figure 36. Standard deviations of horizontal shoulder movements in the individual artistic texts

In sum, in four of the five artistic texts a much more pronounced use of sideward body leans is indeed found, as reflected in the more extreme and varied coordinates of the two shoulders. However, even in this small dataset, in one of the literary pieces the signer barely moves their body, so large body movements are not a universal feature of artistic texts.

3.4.4 Eyebrow movements

It is also hypothesised that more pronounced facial expressions can be used as literary devices. Because facial expressions are complex, this pilot study focuses only on eyebrow movement. Eyebrow position is operationalized as the Euclidean distance between an eyebrow landmark and the landmark on the top of the nose. This time, the z-coordinates are also used because they are a stable output of the face component of MediaPipe Holistic. The distance between an eyebrow point and the top of the nose is a rough measure because, as has been shown in considerable previous research, including on signed languages, the inner and outer parts of the eyebrows move partially independently. For the purposes of this pilot study, this rough measure is used, but in future, more detailed measurements can be conducted. When the results are examined, it can be seen in Figure 37 that, for the most part, the mean eyebrow distance is larger in the original, and also that the variation in the original is clearly larger. The differences are less pronounced in the left eyebrow compared to the right eyebrow, which is not surprising as eyebrows often move asymmetrically [16]. As with the hands and body movements, the relevant feature to focus on is considered to be variation rather than mean positions, as variation reflects how much the eyebrows move, rather than their average position. It can be seen in Figure 38 that, in all the artistic texts, the SDs of the eyebrow distance measures are larger in the original than in the retelling. In one piece, the differences are tiny, but still in the same direction. In sum, the evidence suggests that, in the dataset, facial expressions as manifested by eyebrow movements are used more actively in the original artistic texts. However, future work should include more detailed measures of eyebrow position, and also of other facial articulators.

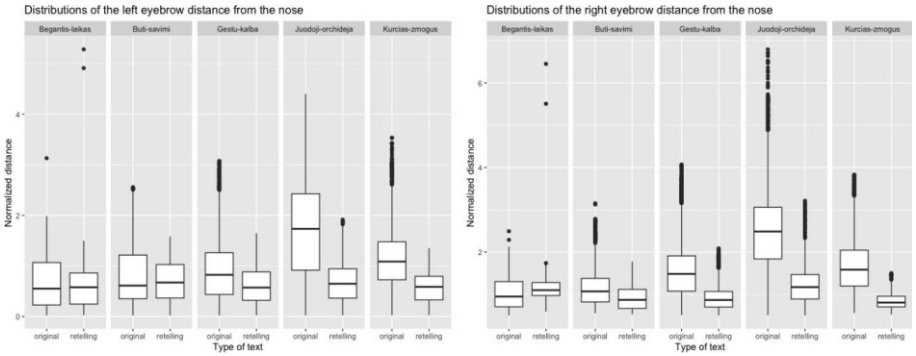


Figure 37. Distributions of eyebrow distance in the individual artistic texts

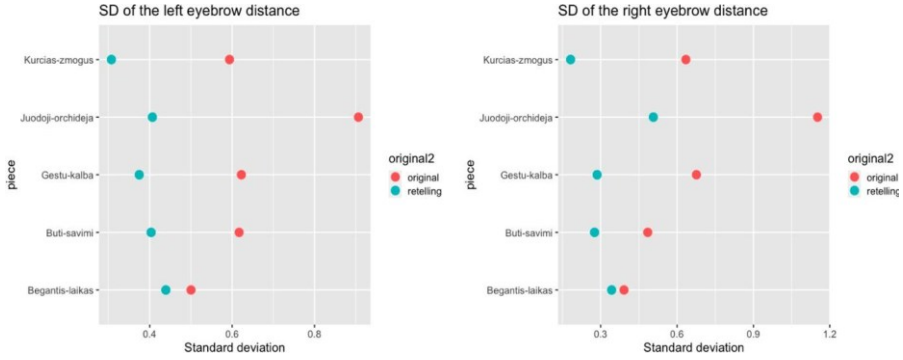


Figure 38. Standard deviations of eyebrow distance in the individual artistic texts

3.4.5 Summary and discussion of the section

In this analysis, a proof of concept for the use of CV (specifically, MediaPipe Holistic) in the analysis of artistic texts in a signed language is presented. It has been demonstrated that some phonetic features that are used as means of artistic expression can be measured using CV outputs, and these measurements can be meaningfully compared across text types. Specifically, using a dataset of five artistic LGK texts and their prose retellings by the same authors, it was found that the originals contain more hand activity (larger and more varied hand movements), larger and more varied lateral movements of the body (as measured by shoulder position), and more eyebrow movement. At the same time, no clear differences in symmetry between the originals and the retellings were found, even though symmetry can sometimes be used as a means of artistic expression.

There are a number of limitations to the use of CV for the analysis of SL data. First, MediaPipe Holistic and other CV solutions may produce errors in

their outputs. It is always necessary to check for clear outliers in the data and to remove measurements that are clearly erroneous, as well as cases of low visibility. However, if the measures are used to explore longer videos rather than to analyse the data on a frame-by-frame basis, these errors are unlikely to cause any serious problems. At the level of individual videos, measures such as average positions or SDs will be quite reliable due to the large number of measurements.

Second, at least for the pose component, MediaPipe Holistic does not provide reliable 3D reconstruction. Because SLs employ 3D space for many linguistic purposes, this limits the analytical possibilities offered by these tools. For the purposes of the current study, this limitation does not play a major role, but in many other scenarios, the lack of depth information may constitute a significant drawback.

Third, the measures developed to compare the artistic texts and their retellings are quite rough, and further improvements are clearly possible. One direction for future improvement is to segment the videos into smaller units, such as utterances or individual signs. Segmentation into individual signs can potentially be done automatically. It may be insightful to measure symmetry, as well as hand activity, at the level of individual signs, and to measure body leans at the level of utterances. This would enable a more subtle and detailed comparison of the use of these phonetic features for artistic purposes.

Despite these limitations, this study clearly shows that CV solutions such as MediaPipe can be used to measure and quantify certain phonetic features in SLs, and these features can subsequently be used further to answer a wide variety of research questions in linguistics and even, as in this case, in the analysis of artistic texts.

3.5 Computer Vision and Focus Group: Extended Study

3.5.1 Computer vision results

3.5.1.1 Hand activity

To compare hand activity between the originals and the retellings, the standard deviations of the x- and y-coordinates of the right and left wrist landmarks were calculated and visualised for each artistic text. The underlying assumption is that the wider the movements, the greater the variation in the x- and y-coordinates, corresponding to horizontal and vertical movement. The results are presented in the graphs in Figure 39.

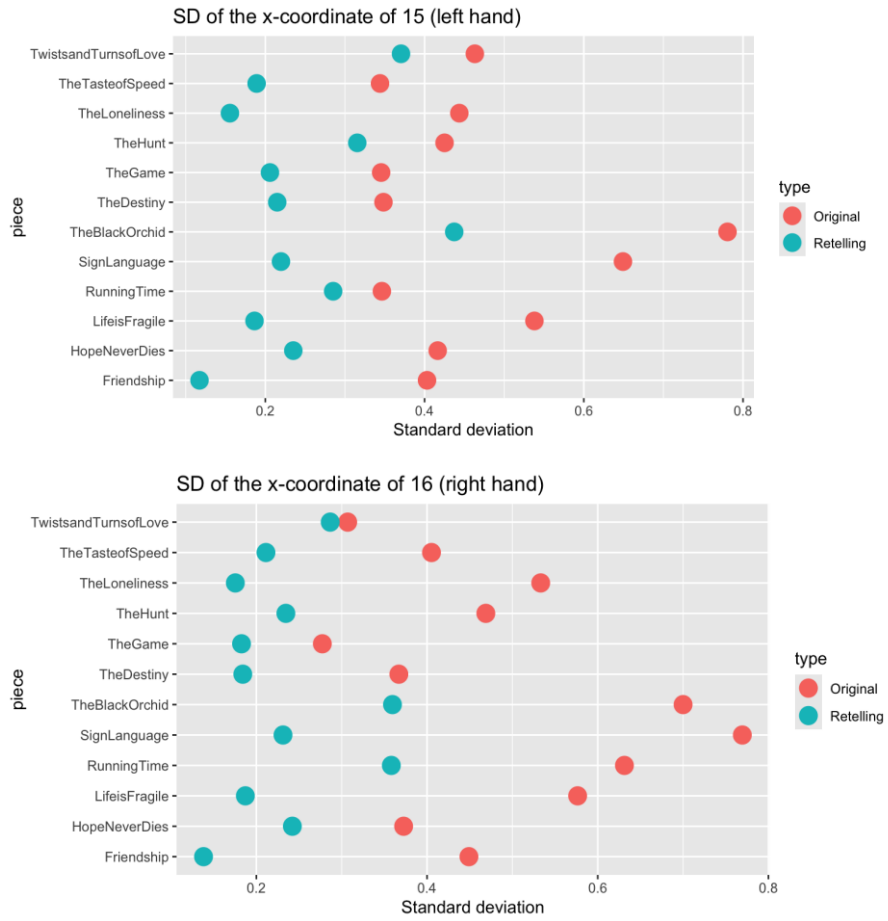


Figure 39. Standard deviations of the x-coordinate for landmarks 15 (left wrist) and 16 (right wrist) in each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values indicate greater variation in hand movement

It can be observed that, for both hands, across all the artistic texts, the SD of the x-coordinate in the original is higher than in the retelling, although in *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love) this difference is very small, and the gap between the originals and the retellings generally varies. The differences between the originals and retellings in the SDs of the hand coordinates are highly significant for both the left and the right hand.

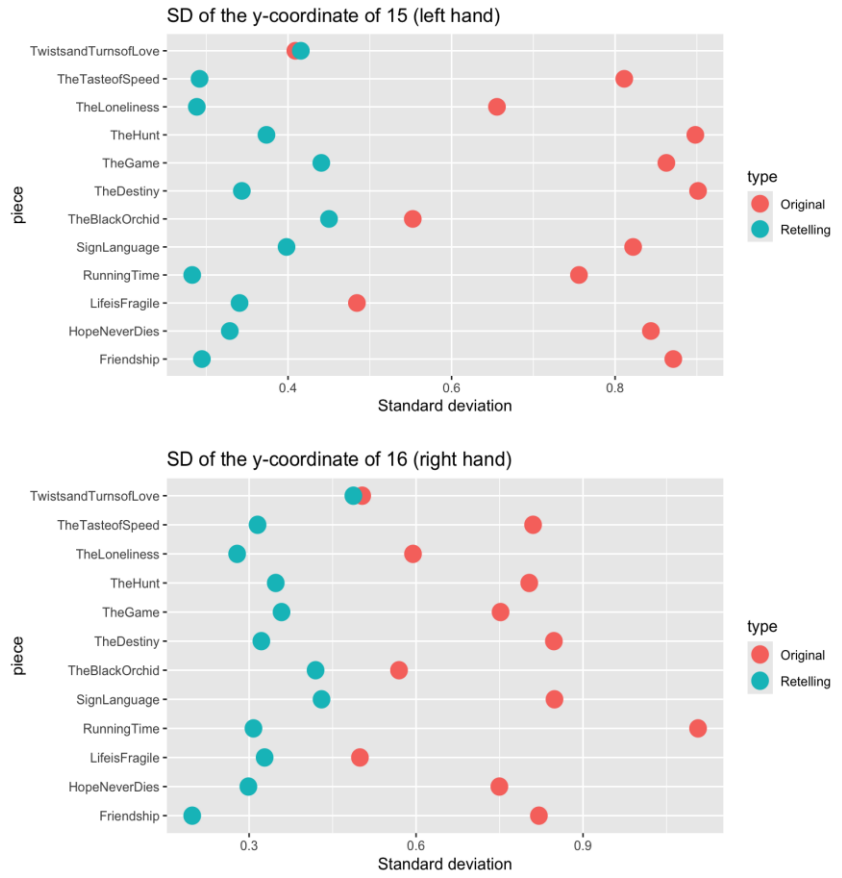


Figure 40. Standard deviations of the y-coordinate for landmarks 15 (left wrist) and 16 (right wrist) in each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values reflect greater variation in hand movement

Similarly, for the y-coordinates (Figure 40), it can be observed that, for both hands, in almost all the artistic texts, the SD in the original is higher than in the retelling, although in *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love) the difference is very small, and the gap between the originals and retellings generally varies. The differences between the originals and retellings in the SDs of the hand coordinates are highly significant for both the left and the right hand.

3.5.1.2 Symmetry

It was hypothesised that originals would exhibit greater symmetry than the retellings. Symmetry was measured as the relative activity of the right and left

hands (following Börstell 2023). Note that higher values mean greater symmetry.

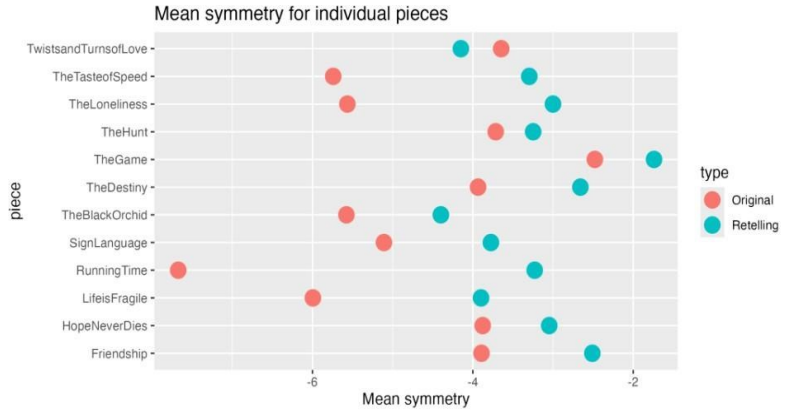


Figure 41. Symmetry estimates for each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values reflect greater symmetry

The pattern here is more varied (Figure 41). For most of the artistic texts, the original is actually slightly more asymmetric than the retelling, contrary to what was expected. *Draugystė* (Friendship) is the only artistic text in which the original is much more symmetric. In *Žaidimas* (The Game), both the original and the retelling are highly symmetric. The difference in symmetry between the originals and the retellings is statistically significant.

3.5.1.3 Body movements

It was hypothesised that the body would exhibit greater sideward movement in the originals than in the retellings. This was operationalised by measuring the SDs of the x-coordinates of the shoulders, and, separately, those of the hips.

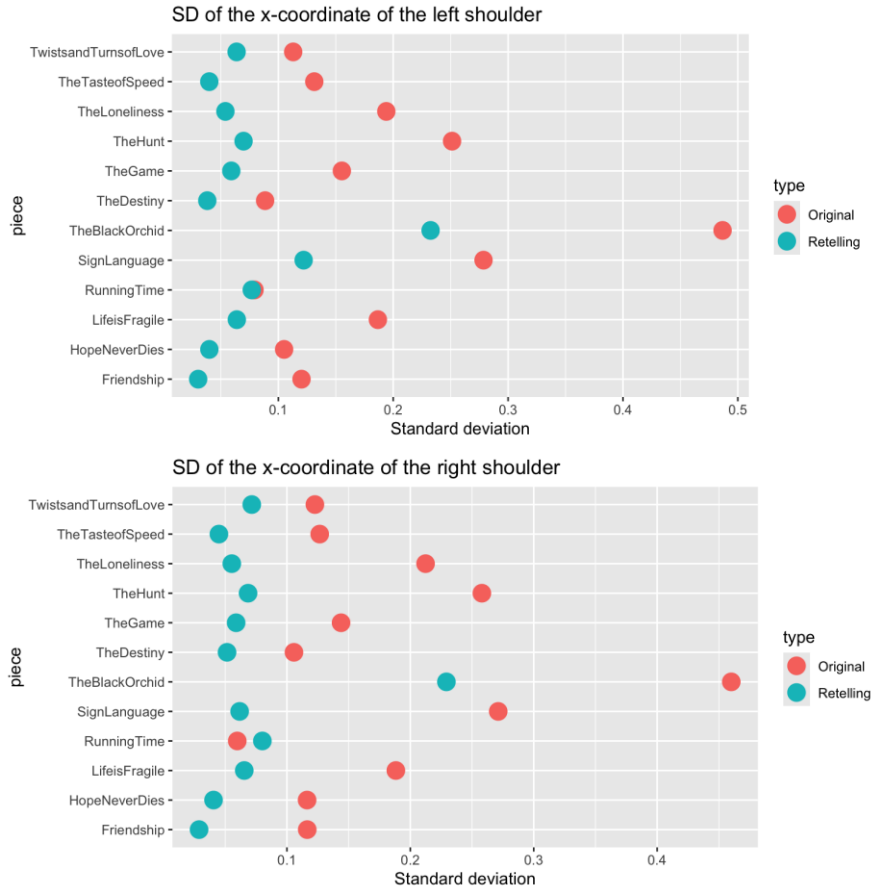


Figure 42. Standard deviations of the x-coordinate for landmarks 11 (left shoulder) and 12 (right shoulder) in each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values indicate greater variation in shoulder movement

In all but one text (with the exception of *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running)), the original has higher SDs of the x-coordinate of the left and right shoulders, confirming the hypothesis (Figure 42). The differences are highly statistically significant.

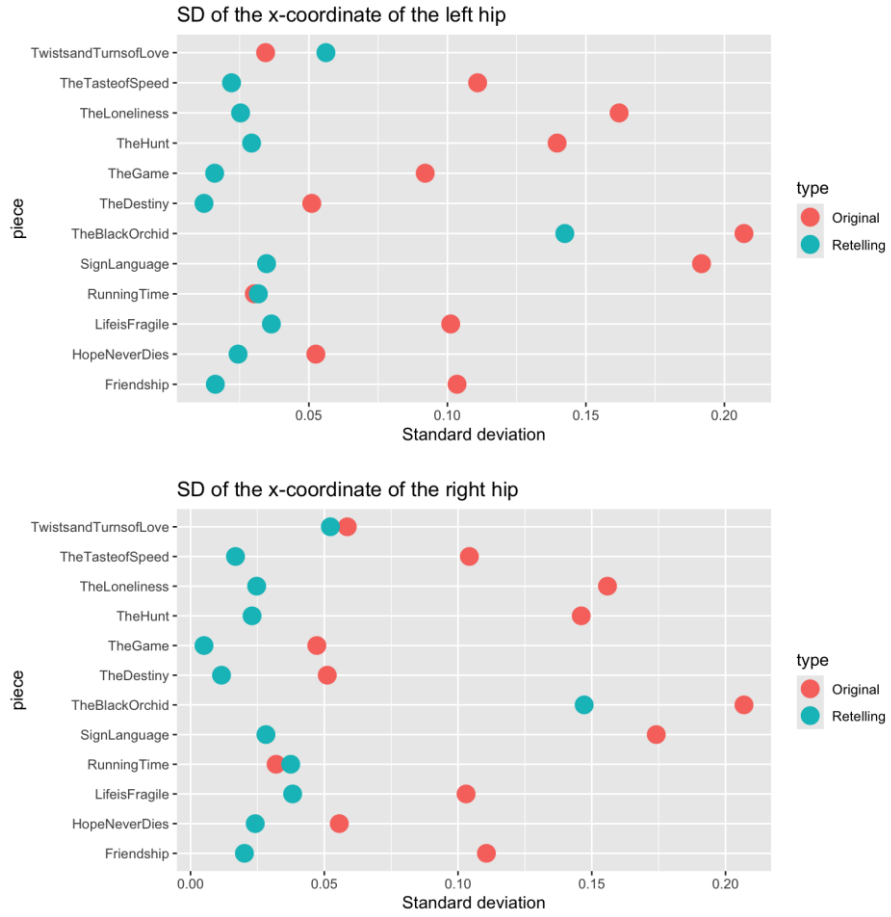


Figure 43. Standard deviations of the x-coordinate for landmarks 23 (left hip) and 24 (right hip) in each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values indicate greater variation in hip movement

In all but two artistic texts (except for *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) and *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love)), the original has higher SDs of the x-coordinate of the left and right hips, confirming the hypothesis (Figure 43). The differences are highly statistically significant.

3.5.1.4 Facial expressions

It was hypothesised that facial expressions would be more varied and prosodically stronger in the originals than in the retellings. Specifically, eyebrow movements are examined (by measuring the SD of the distance between each eyebrow and the corresponding eye), eye aperture (by

measuring the SD of the distance between the eyelids), and eye gaze (by measuring the SD of the eye-gaze rotation outputs from OpenFace).

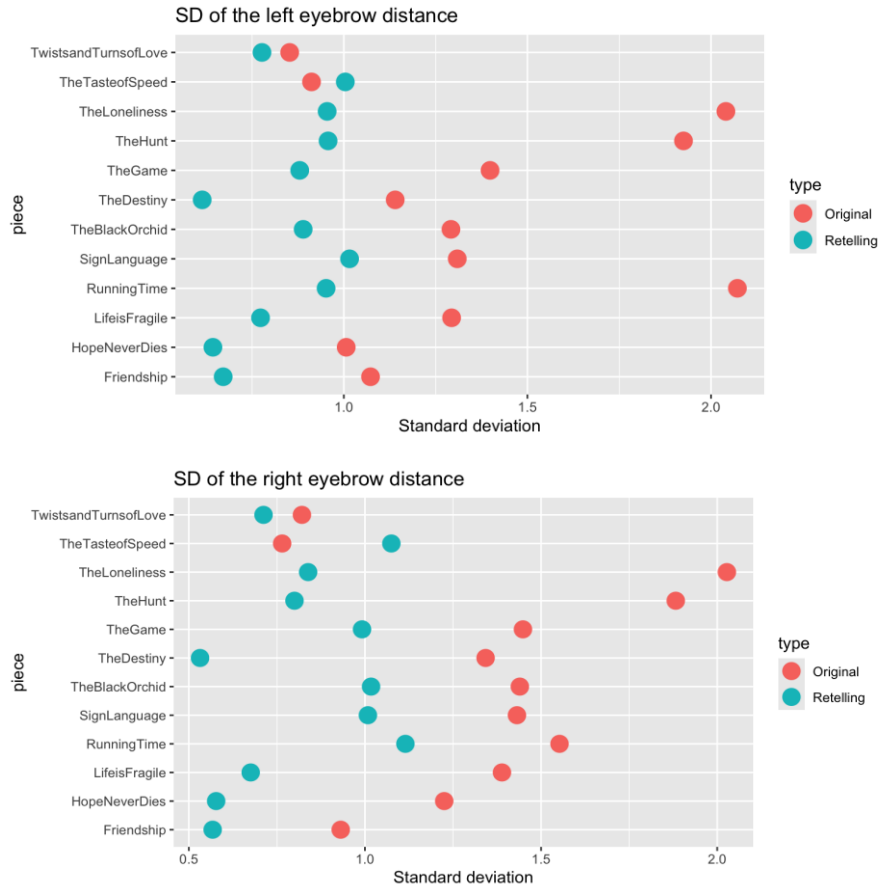


Figure 44. Standard deviations of the eyebrow distance in each piece, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values indicate greater variation in eyebrow movement

For most of the artistic texts, the original has a higher SD than the retelling (Figure 44). For *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love) and *Greičio skonis* (The Taste of Speed), the values are nearly identical. The differences between the originals and the retellings are highly statistically significant.

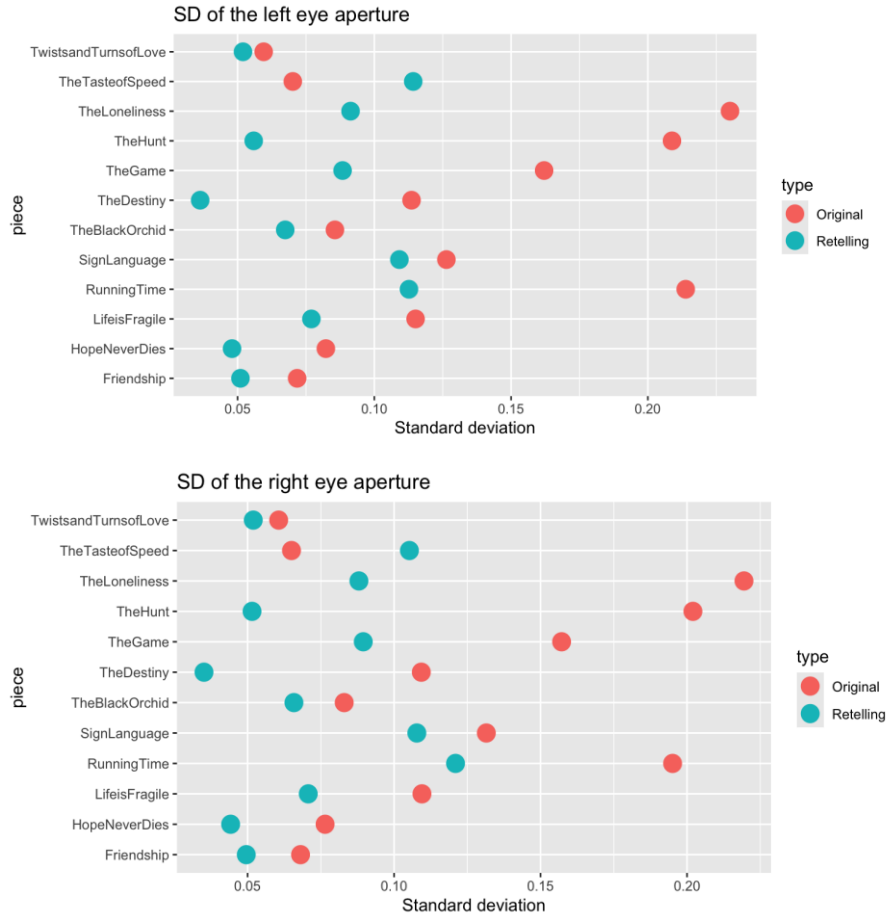


Figure 45. Standard deviations of the distance between the eyelids in each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values indicate greater variation in eyelid movement (i.e., greater variation in eye aperture)

The pattern here is more varied than for eyebrow position, but the overall tendency is for the originals to have a higher SD of eye aperture, even though for several artistic texts the difference is very small (Figure 45). The overall differences between the originals and the retellings are highly statistically significant, albeit small.

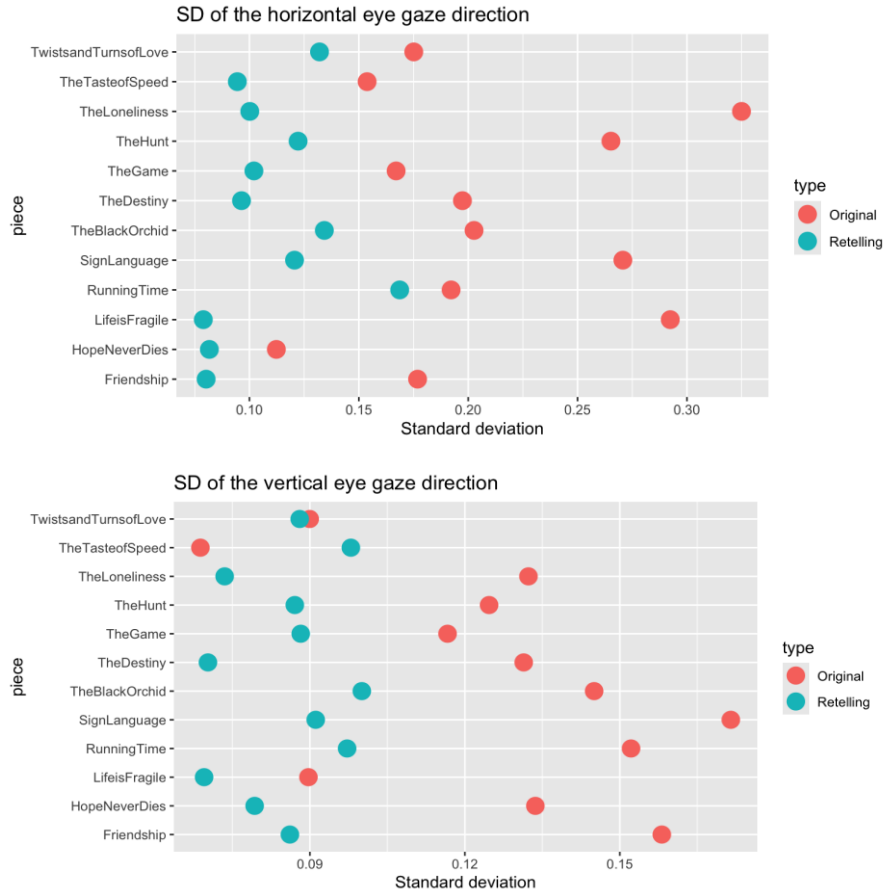


Figure 46. Standard deviations of the eye-gaze direction (vertical and horizontal) in each artistic text, comparing the original with the retelling. Higher values indicate greater variation in eye-gaze movement

For most of the artistic texts, the original has a higher SD than the retelling (Figure 46). For *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love) the values are nearly identical, while for *Greičio skonis* (Taste of Speed) there is more vertical (but not horizontal) eye-gaze movement in the retelling. The differences are highly statistically significant.

3.5.1.5 Summary of the quantitative analysis

Having conducted the quantitative analysis of artistic LGK texts and their retellings, it can be stated that the originals and retellings indeed differ in manual and non-manual prosody. The quantitative analysis confirmed the

hypothesis and revealed the following differences between the original artistic texts and their retellings:

- The originals show greater variation in the horizontal and vertical positions of the left and the right hands, resulting in a wider amplitude of hand movement;
- The originals show greater variation in the horizontal positions of the left and the right shoulders, indicating more frequent sideward body leans. They also show greater variation in the horizontal positions of the left and the right hips, indicating more frequent sideward body and hip movements;
- The originals show greater variation in the distance between the left and right eyebrows and the corresponding eyes, indicating greater eyebrow movement;
- The originals show greater variation in the aperture of the left and right eyes;
- The originals show greater variation in eye-gaze direction, both horizontally and vertically.

These differences were found to be statistically significant. However, the analysis also revealed that, in some individual artistic texts, the differences between the original and the retelling were very small and/or occurred in the opposite direction.

Contrary to the initial expectations, the originals were not found to be more symmetrical than the retellings according to the measure of manual symmetry based on the distance travelled by the two hands. With two exceptions, the retellings demonstrated a higher degree of symmetry.

3.5.2 Focus group results

The CV analysis results described in the previous sections were presented to the focus group, after which the moderator invited participants to discuss the key findings. Several prototypical video samples were shown, clearly representing the results, as well as a few atypical cases selected from the corpus – for instance, Arnoldas Matulis's *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) and its retelling, and Erika Jočytė's *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life is Fragile) and its retelling. The moderator guided the discussion around three main themes: (1) the function of hand and body movements, (2) the role of eyebrow movements, and (3) the role of symmetry in artistic versus retold texts.

Throughout this section, the perspectives and insights presented reflect the views expressed by the focus group participants. While more extensive analytical interpretations, case elaborations, and illustrative clarifications are provided by the authors of this research, these remain grounded in and guided by the conceptual directions articulated by the participants.

Importantly, although the CV analysis and subsequent discussion distinguished between specific components of movement – such as hand movements and movements of the shoulders and hips – in order to achieve analytical precision, participants consistently perceived these movements as an integrated whole. In their reflections, these coordinated dynamics were often described more broadly as body movement, reflecting the holistic nature of embodied expression in artistic SL texts. Thus, while individual movement components are examined separately in the analysis, they function perceptually and expressively as a unified bodily configuration.

3.5.2.1 Body movement as a tool of embodiment

3.5.2.1.1 Defining embodiment

Focus group participants consistently emphasised that the amplitude and spatial dynamics of left- and right-hand movements – captured as horizontal and vertical shifts – as well as movements of the shoulders and hips play a central role in artistic SL texts. While movement is an inherent component of SL grammar and non-manual expression in general, in artistic texts it becomes more extensive, systematic, and aesthetically and emotionally structured. Rather than serving merely grammatical or referential functions, movement in artistic texts operates as an integral expressive resource.

Members of the focus group note that a comparison between the original artistic text *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) and its retelling reveals systematic differences in the amplitude of left- and right-hand movements, as well as movements of the shoulders, hips, and torso. The retelling is characterised by a reduced amplitude of hand movements and movements of the shoulders, hips, and torso. These contrasts are particularly evident, though more subtly, in the depiction of the fawn's running in the original text (left) and in the retelling (right, Figure 47), and more clearly in the representation of the flower bending under the force of its movement at the beginning of the work in the original text (left) and in the retelling (right, Figure 48) as well as in the depiction of a falling wounded deer in the original texts (left) and in the retelling (right, Figure 49). In the artistic version, movement is broader and more spatially dispersed, whereas in the retelling it is comparatively restrained.

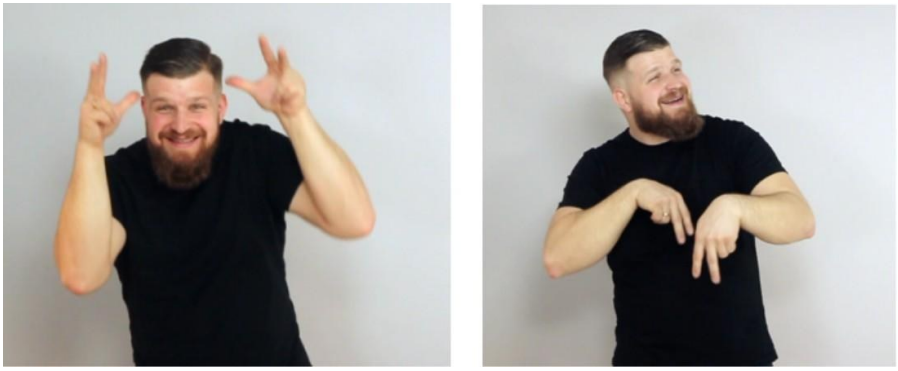


Figure 47. Comparative video frames from the original artistic LGK text (left) and its retelling (right), depicting the same event – *the fawn leaping*. From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis



Figure 48. Comparative video frames from the original artistic LGK text (left) and its retelling (right), depicting the same event – *the flower bending*. From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis



Figure 49. Comparative video frames from the original artistic LGK text (left) and its retelling (right), depicting the same event – *the wounded deer falling after being shot*. From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis

Thus, as can be seen in the video frames provided, a comparison of the original artistic text and its retelling reveals what the focus group participants identified as an essential function of hand movements and movements of the shoulders and hips in SL artistic texts, as well as a specific phenomenon that has been described using several different terms. The group members themselves suggested that this could be called *character transfer*, or, in other words, *personation*, as defined by Sutton-Spence (2005). The researcher herself mentions that the term *personation,* which she defines as taking on the role of a person other than the narrator, may not be familiar to everyone (Sutton-Spence 2005: 146), and she explains it through *role shift* – a common SL concept, which "<...> is used in everyday signing as well as in poetry" (Sutton-Spence 2005: 146). The latter is a narrower concept: it is related to anaphoric reference, whereby the upper part of the body (or at least the head) is turned to one side or the other depending on the reference point. When discussing role shift, participants observed that in retellings referents are typically introduced through indexing or pointing, whereas in artistic texts characters are presented through body orientation and spatial rotation: the signer physically turns, repositions the torso, and "becomes" the referent. It is contended that the concept of *role shift* may be conceptually limited in the context of artistic texts, as its semantic framing emphasises the moment of transition into a role rather than the sustained state of character embodiment. *Personation* is a broader concept, encompassing the adoption of the characteristics of a person or animal. This is characteristic of SL artistic texts, but in this context, the concept remains narrower than what was discussed by the participants. An even broader concept is *embodiment*, whereby a character,

animal, object, phenomenon, or abstract concept can be embodied (for instance, time, which will be discussed in the further analysis of the work *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running), as well as Death, Mechanism, etc.). The term *embodiment* is adopted as it offers a broader and more analytically adequate framework for capturing the expressive strategies discussed here[77].

Thus, as indicated by the focus group participants and evidenced in the illustrative pictures, embodiment constitutes a defining feature of artistic texts. It is also clearly observable in retellings; however, it is important to emphasise that in retellings, such instances of embodiment are episodic, serving to clarify which part of the work is being discussed, as if conveying an excerpt from the work, before quickly returning to non-embodied retelling. Thus, although elements of embodiment occur in retellings, they mostly perform a different, quotational function.

There are also cases in which embodiment is absent from the retelling. One such case can be observed in the artistic text *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running). In the original artistic text, the author immediately embodies the main lyrical referent, time (on the left), employing a range of expressive strategies (including variations in vertical symmetry and productive signs) (in the middle) as well as asymmetry (on the right, all in Figure 50). In contrast, in the retelling, she immediately uses the conventional sign CLOCK (Figure 51) and does not employ embodiment as an expressive strategy elsewhere in the text. A similar case is observed in the example discussed below, the artistic text *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) (right, Figure 61).

[77] It should be noted that other related terms have been proposed in the literature, including *enactment* and *anthropomorphisation*. The concept of *enactment* is often used to refer to the taking on of a role; however, it may imply a discrete or momentary shift into that role, rather than the sustained and structurally integrated embodiment characteristic of artistic texts. *Anthropomorphisation*, in turn, generally refers to attributing human characteristics to non-human entities without actually becoming them, which may leave unclear what precisely is being embodied. Moreover, this term inherently limits analysis to non-human referents. A detailed examination of these concepts is not the aim of this thesis; therefore, the broader term *embodiment* is adopted as a more adequate analytical category for the expressive strategies examined here.

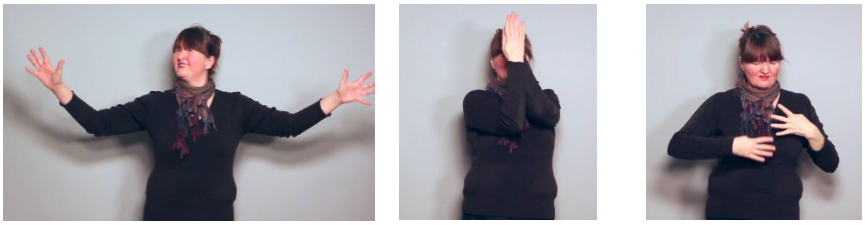


Figure 50. Comparative video frames from the original artistic text and its retelling. Original artistic text: productive signs meaning a *running, working clock that breaks down*. From *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė



Figure 51. Retelling: conventional sign LAIKRODIS (CLOCK). From *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) by Nijolė Karmazienė

It is therefore evident that embodiment functions as an expressive device characteristic of artistic texts; however, it is also employed in retellings, where it serves different functions. Differences are also visible in spatial coordination: in artistic texts, hand movement extends more distinctly to the right and left within the signing space, demonstrating greater amplitude and spatial expansion, whereas in retellings the upper body leans forward, reflecting an explanatory mode. Spatial organisation and amplitude thus index differing communicative purposes. Participants consistently emphasised that artistic SL texts differ from retellings not only in form (through broader movements associated with embodiment) but also in communicative orientation as well. Retellings prioritise clarity of information transmission and foreground the sequence of events – what happens and how – seeking to ensure that the viewer understands the narrated content without necessarily entering the experiential dimension of the text. Artistic texts, by contrast, foreground affect and experiential intensity, aiming to engage the viewer perceptually and emotionally.

This divergence is reflected in the organisation of expressive resources. Participants observed that artistic texts employ broader and more dynamic

hand movements as well as movements of the shoulders (and sometimes hips) in order to embody each lyrical subject or narrative element, whether human, animal, stone, flower, or another entity.

Responding to the question of what such expansive movement contributes to the artistic text, focus group participants explained that "this provides more information while using fewer concepts." In other words, wide-ranging body and hand movements enable the signer to convey semantically rich content without increasing the number of discrete lexical units. Participants noted that this effect results from the interaction of several expressive resources, with hand movements and movements of the shoulders and hips among the dominant ones. Meaning is therefore distributed across hand movement amplitude, movements of the shoulders and hips, spatial configuration, gaze, facial expression, and visual rhythm rather than accumulated lexically.

3.5.2.1.2 Embodiment and productive signs

As noted earlier, although the term *neologism* is frequently used in the literature on artistic SL texts, the present dissertation adopts the term *productive signs*. As noted by Sutton-Spence (2005: 48), "[t]he poetic neologism is presented once, then explained or elaborated upon, and then is repeated to allow the audience to enjoy it further." In the present study, however, the forms under discussion function not as individual poetic neologisms introduced and reiterated for aesthetic emphasis, but as structurally integrated productive resources. Since the texts examined here do not centre on exceptional or one-off lexical innovations, the term *productive signs* is considered more appropriate for describing the observed patterns. By contrast, the term *conventional signs* refers to established signs in LGK that are typically attested in the LGK dictionary. Where a sign is not recorded in the dictionary, this is explicitly indicated.

This contrast becomes particularly visible in *Medžioklė* (The Hunt), for example in the representation of objects such as stones or the flower. In the artistic text, the referent is constructed through a coordinated construct of productive signs: a productive sign SMALL, a productive sign FLOWER, and a productive sign indicating that the flower bends or is blown (Figure 52) are realised as an integrated movement sequence. Rather than fragmenting meaning into separate lexical units, the artistic version embeds size, delicacy, and movement within amplitude and spatial modulation. The coordinated configuration of hand movements and movements of the shoulders thus functions simultaneously as a semantic and aesthetic resource.

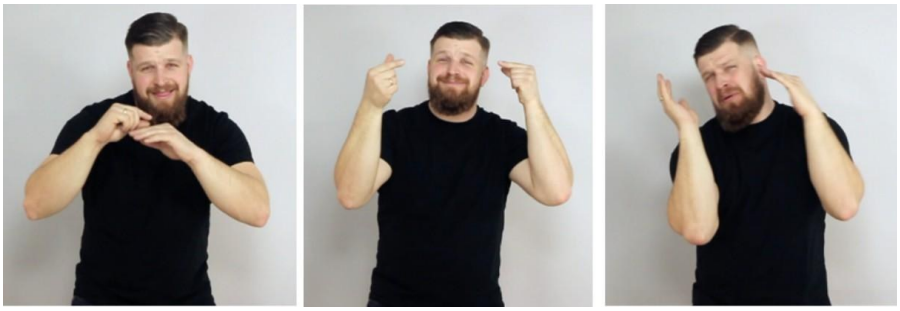


Figure 52. Comparative video frames from the retelling and the original artistic text. Original artistic text – productive sign SMALL (diminutive form); productive sign FLOWER; productive sign CL-B+ meaning *flower is bending - a small flower is bending*. From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis



Figure 53. Retelling – conventional sign FLOWER; productive sign SMALL (diminutive form); conventional sign NICE; repeated productive sign SMALL (diminutive form): *a small, cute flower.* From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis

In the retelling, by contrast, the same referent is specified through a combination of conventional and productive signs: the conventional sign FLOWER is followed by the productive sign SMALL, then by the conventional sign NICE, and again by the productive sign SMALL (all Figure 53) – effectively conveying *small, cute, small (again) flower* through discrete adjectival elements.

In this way, the contrast illustrates how, in artistic texts, embodiment operates as a structural principle of multimodal meaning construction. Expansive movement amplitude, full constructed action, and productive formations interact to generate semantic density without lexical proliferation, with body movement functioning as one of the dominant compositional resources within the multimodal organisation of the text.

Furthermore, although lexical economy was not an explicit focus of the focus group discussion, a few participants identified it as a characteristic feature of artistic SL texts. According to this observation, artistic texts tend to minimise reliance on separate lexical items, integrating descriptive features into embodied expression. For example, one participant noted that in the artistic version, distinctions such as those between a tall deer (in the left, Figure 54) and a low fawn (right, Figure 54) are conveyed through bodily scale and movement dynamics rather than through discrete adjectival units. By contrast, a retelling may explicitly employ conventional signs such as TALL (left, Figure 55) and LOW (right, Figure 55) to express these differences. In the retelling, size is articulated through separately produced lexical elements, whereas in the artistic text these distinctions are embedded within spatial amplitude, physical positioning, and coordinated non-manual features, forming an integrated expressive configuration rather than a sequence of discrete signs.



Figure 54. Comparative video frames from the retelling and the original artistic text. Original text: signs and movement indicating a tall deer (left) and a low fawn (right). From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis

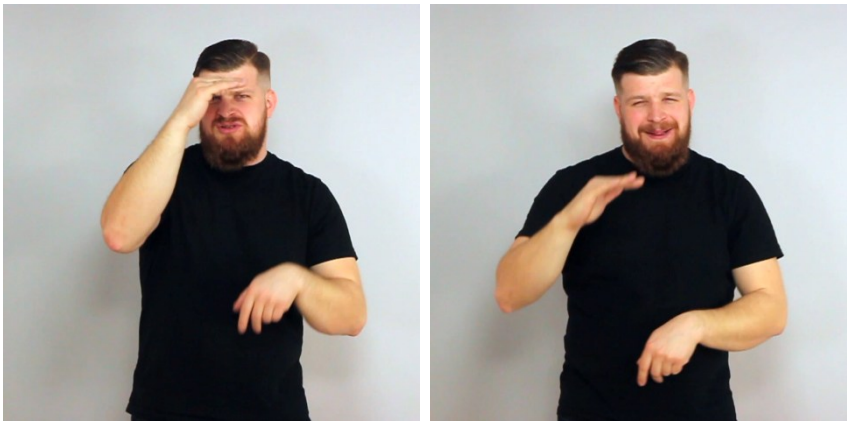


Figure 55. Retelling: conventional signs TALL (left) and LOW (right). From *Medžioklė* (The Hunt) by Arnoldas Matulis

As illustrated in the figures, hand movements together with movements of the shoulders and hips as tools of embodiment are systematically coordinated with facial expression, gaze direction, and other non-manual elements. They function as part of an integrated multimodal configuration rather than in isolation.

Participants further interpreted body movement as a performative resource. They pointed out that artistic SL texts are inherently oriented towards performance and share affinities with theatrical and choreographic traditions. In this sense, body movement functions not only as a descriptive or prosodic device but also as a performative strategy that shapes the expressive intensity and spatial organisation of the text (Sutton-Spence 2005: 130).

Overall, these observations suggest that wide-ranging hand movements, as well as movements of the shoulders and hips, in artistic SL texts operate as a strategy of embodiment that contributes both to semantic density and to artistic value. Through embodiment, the signer does not merely refer to characters but physically enacts and becomes them. In this sense, embodiment shapes the prosodic and structural organisation of the text and supports visually integrated meaning construction. Participants identified expansive hand movements together with movements of the shoulders as one of the defining features of artistic SL texts, describing them both as a constitutive element of this text type and as a performative resource. In other words, such movement functions as a criterion of artistic expression, contributing to the qualities that make an artistic text recognisably artistic. It was emphasised that these movements, as a means of artistic expression, do not operate in isolation from the other means of artistic expression discussed in this study.

3.5.2.1.3 Body movement as a tool of visual sonority

During the second focus group meeting, one of the participants compared the wide range of hand movements, as well as movements of the shoulders and hips, used by creators of artistic SL texts to the vocal range of opera singers, whose voices also differ from casual speech and have a different effect. In other words, opera soloists have a wide vocal range, modulate their timbre, and control dynamics, thus creating a particularly strong aesthetic and emotional impact, comparable to the wide-ranging and otherwise expressive dynamics of body movement employed by creators of artistic SL texts. This greater amplitude of hand movements and movements of the shoulders, hips, and torso has a similar effect on the audience – an extremely strong aesthetic, emotional, and mesmerising impact.

Importantly, one of the focus group participants further noted that such expressive capacity is not equally accessible to all signers. Drawing on the comparison with opera, the participant suggested that, just as not all hearing individuals are able to sing – particularly to master operatic vocal techniques – so too not all Deaf signers are able to master and control the expressive resources described here at an artistic level. In this sense, the use of expanded movement amplitude and its coordination with other expressive means may be understood not only as a feature of artistic texts, but also as an indicator of artistic competence. The ability to deploy these resources effectively requires a high level of embodied control, aesthetic awareness, and performative skill. At the same time, the analysis of the works shows that this expressive resource

is realised differently across authors: it may be used more extensively and expressively, or more subtly and economically, depending on individual style as well as the content and theme of the work. Nevertheless, it remains one of the key resources shaping artistic expression in SL texts.

It was further emphasised by focus group participants that, in the experience of an artistic work, the amplitude of hand movements and movements of the shoulders and hips – together with other non-manual elements such as eyebrow movement and shifts in gaze direction – functions as a means of drawing the viewer/experiencer into the text on both emotional and, as interpreted here, aesthetic levels. These resources facilitate embodied and affective engagement with the work, while full conceptual understanding of its content may emerge only subsequently.

The focus group participants further supported the position that the dynamics of body movement contribute significantly to the perception of artistic quality. More specifically, broader, more expansive, and rhythmically organised body movements were identified as characteristic features of artistic texts. Participants also described broader body movement as one of the "rules" of artistic SL texts, while retellings are not bound by such rules. Importantly, although hand movements and shoulder movements were discussed separately in the analysis, focus group participants approached them as parts of an integrated whole, referring to this coordinated movement as a single expressive phenomenon associated with SL intonation. In this sense, hand movement amplitude, together with coordinated movements of the shoulders and their controlled variation, operate not merely as an expressive device but as a component of the artistic text's structure, whose deliberate use signals artistic intentionality and contributes to its aesthetic organisation.

According to one of the participants, the artistic text is inherently dynamic, and this dynamism is achieved through a coordinated interplay of expressive means, among which hand movements and movements of the shoulders and hips occupy a particularly salient role. Building on this observation, focus group participants further suggested that the expanded amplitude of movement in artistic signing may be understood as a form of SL "intonation." They agreed that the increased amplitude and differentiated expression of movement reflect not only artistic quality but also a distinct intonational modulation. For example, in the artistic text *Juodoji orchidėja* (The Black Orchid) analysed in the CV study, the poet, having introduced the lyrical subject – a charming woman – repeats the action of riding a motorcycle that was introduced at the beginning of the text. The poet leans sharply with his entire upper body, first to (his) right (Figure 56) and then to the left (also

Figure 56). In the retelling, however, the same passage is presented with a much smaller tilt to the side (Figure 57). It is important to note that the journey introduced at the beginning of the work is depicted in both the artistic text and the retelling as through leaning to the sides; however, in the retelling the leaning is less pronounced.



Figure 56. Comparative video frames from the original artistic text and the retelling. Original text: leaning the body to both sides to simulate *riding a motorcycle*. From *Juodoji orchidėja* (The Black Orchid) by Paulius Jurjonas

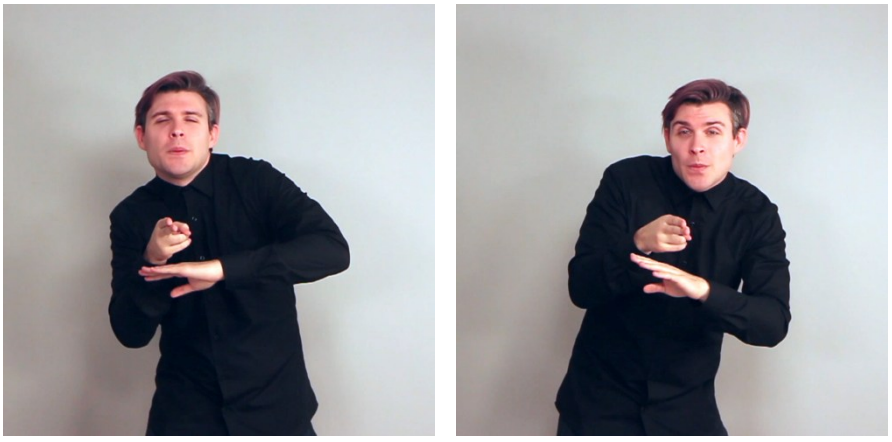


Figure 57. Retelling: leaning the body to both sides (with a smaller amplitude) to simulate *riding a motorcycle*. From *Juodoji orchidėja* (The Black Orchid) by Paulius Jurjonas

In other words, as these insights are interpreted, the participants were effectively referring to what has been termed *visual sonority*. This concept was first explicitly articulated by Klamt (2018), who analysed artistic texts in

Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). She describes visual sonority as the achievement of rhythm, resonance, and aesthetic intensity through visual and kinetic expressiveness – analogous, though not identical, to acoustic sonority in spoken-language poetry. Crucially, visual sonority does not arise from a single expressive resource in isolation, but from the coordinated interaction of multiple expressive means. The degree of visual sonority increases with the layering of these means: hand movements alone may produce a moderate effect, while the integration of hand movements with movements of the shoulders and hips results in a significantly stronger aesthetic and perceptual impact. In this sense, visual sonority can be understood as a scalar and multimodal phenomenon grounded in the interaction of expressive means rather than in the amplification of any single parameter. Importantly, in the present study, this notion is not restricted to poetry alone, nor is it understood as a direct transfer of spoken-language intonation to the visual modality. Rather, visual sonority is approached as a broader aesthetic principle of visual–spatial structuring, emerging through the coordinated interaction of multiple expressive means, and applicable to artistic SL texts more generally.

In this sense, the expanded and rhythmically coordinated movements of hands, shoulders and hips identified in the CV analysis may be interpreted as contributing not only to poetic structure narrowly defined, but also to the overall aesthetic dynamism and compositional intensity characteristic of artistic LGK texts. From this perspective, visual sonority can be seen as the fabric from which artistic SL texts are woven.

3.5.2.1.4 Eye aperture, eyebrow movement and eye gaze as supportive components of embodiment and emotional expression

Another analytical focus of the CV analysis concerned the eye region, specifically right and left eye aperture, eyebrow movement, and gaze direction. During the focus group discussion, participants immediately emphasised that eye gaze behaviour should be treated as an essential analytical parameter. They argued that eye gaze constitutes an integral component of character embodiment, contributing not only perspectival information but also affective nuance. Gaze direction was described as signalling shifts in (narrative) perspective, indexing the embodied subject position, and shaping the viewer's interpretation of the narrative dynamics. These insights align with Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), who describe gaze as an important artistic resource in SL and distinguish six types of gaze, including character gaze, which was also implicitly reflected in the focus group discussion.

With regard to eye aperture, the quantitative analysis revealed variation across the original artistic texts and their retellings. In Erika Jočytė's artistic text *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile), wider eye aperture occurred more frequently and appeared to contribute to the heightened emotional tone and experiential intensity of the narrative. Participants interpreted this broader aperture not merely as an expressive feature but as a stylistically motivated device aligned with the performative construction of tension. For example, at the beginning of the text, when raindrops begin to fall on the protagonist – a butterfly – the artistic version employs the aforementioned expressive means to convey emotion and tension (left, Figure 58). In the retelling, however, the same passage is presented more neutrally, with the protagonist's eyelids and eyebrows remaining almost unchanged (right, Figure 58); consequently, the emotional charge is absent or considerably less pronounced than in the artistic text.

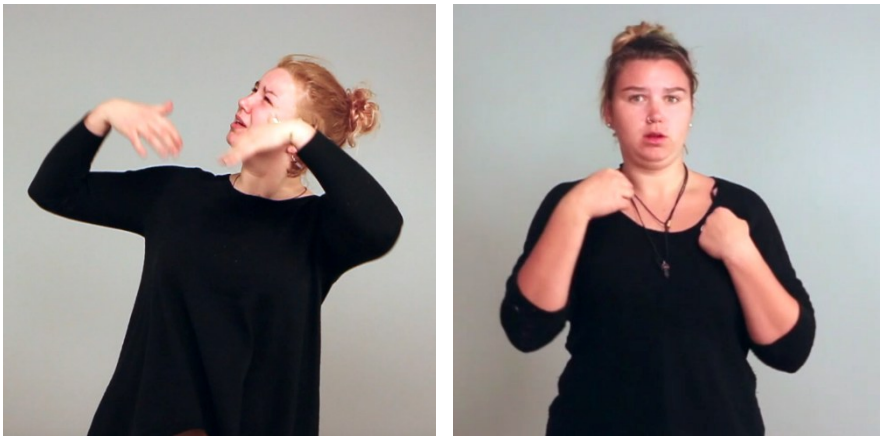


Figure 58. Comparative video frames from the original artistic text (left) and the retelling (right). From *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė

As can be seen in the illustrative video frames, these expressive means interact with other resources discussed in this research, such as body posture, which in the artistic text reveals the embodied state of the character, whereas in the retelling this embodiment is not realised. Thus, once again, it becomes evident that the expressive means under discussion do not function in isolation but operate in coordination with other multimodal resources.

Although the CV analysis indicates that eyebrow movement, eye aperture variation, and vertical gaze shifts occur more frequently in the retelling than in the original artistic text *Greičio skonis* (The Taste of Speed), focus group participants interpreted this contrast differently. They noted that in the artistic text the poet deliberately uses a markedly reduced range of eye aperture

relative to eyebrow movement, which they associated with her individual stylistic approach. Importantly, when considered at the macro-level of the text – that is, in relation to the overall narrative content and structure of the artistic work – this restraint functions as an expressive strategy: a relatively stable and deliberately restrained facial expression helps to maintain narrative tension and guide the viewer through the unfolding structure of the text. As one participant suggested, such consistency – rather than frequent variation, as observed in the retelling – prevents the dispersion of attention and supports a more sustained experiential engagement, a view that was echoed by other participants. Thus, while facial movements are quantitatively more prominent in the retelling (as indicated by the CV analysis), their increased frequency does not produce the same cumulative emotional effect as the controlled and restrained use observed in the artistic text, particularly in sequences characterised by tension. This difference becomes particularly evident in specific moments of the text. In the original artistic text, eyebrow movement and eye aperture are more restrained, with fewer instances of widening or narrowing of the eyes. For example, in a scene where the protagonist flies past birds, the author maintains a consistent eye configuration, with slightly narrowed eyes and furrowed eyebrows (left, Figure 59). In the retelling, by contrast, the eyes are more open at the corresponding moment (right, Figure 59), and this more variable pattern continues throughout the retelling. Although such variation is more frequent, it does not produce the same cumulative emotional effect as the controlled and restrained use observed in the artistic text.



Figure 59. Comparative video frames from the original artistic text (left) and the retelling (right). From *Greičio skonis* (The Taste of Speed) by Erika Jočytė

Overall, the data indicate that this expressive resource is more characteristic of the original artistic texts and functions as one of the mechanisms of embodiment. However, even in cases such as the one discussed here, where the CV analysis suggests a greater frequency of this feature in the retelling, its presence alone does not determine its expressive function within the text.

Participants noted that modulation of eye aperture and gaze could function as a prosodic device contributing to the expression of meaning. In other words, it allows the author to convey more information within a shorter span of time. Thus, this expressive resource performs an informational function in the artistic text, particularly given the tendency to avoid reliance on fixed conventional units. At the same time, focus group participants emphasised its emotional dimension, noting that its deployment in artistic texts is more closely connected to embodiment and affective intensity, thereby enhancing the audience's engagement.

At the same time, participants stressed that such dynamics should not be treated as universal conventions of artistic signing. Rather, their deployment is shaped by individual stylistic tendencies. While in Jočytė's artistic text broader aperture and rhythmic regulation were associated with sustained narrative tension, the extent and manner of such modulation remain author-specific. In this respect, eye aperture, gaze, and temporal pacing operate as stylistic resources whose artistic effect depends on the author's aesthetic strategy. Collectively, these elements contribute to the perceived quality of the work, yet their configuration reflects the distinct expressive signature of each creator.

When discussing the unique stylistic strategies employed by creators of artistic LGK texts, a similar case can be observed in the works of Nijolė Karmazienė. During the focus group discussion, the artistic text *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) was analysed as an example in which non-manual elements, such as gaze, eye aperture, and eyebrow movement, display greater variability in the original artistic version. Participants noted that throughout most of the original work, the author maintains a narrowed eye aperture. Her facial expression differs markedly from that in the retelling, a difference attributed to the thematic content of the piece. The sustained modulation of facial parameters contributes to the embodiment of the narrative and reinforces its emotional coherence. The overall facial configuration (including the eyelids and eyebrows) – largely static and minimally varying – reflects the mechanical theme of the work, creating a deliberate alignment between form and content. Rather than diminishing expressivity, this specific configuration

of eye aperture, eyelids, eyebrows, and gaze, as noted by the focus group participants, functions as one of the principal emotional strategies of the work and, as observed by the authors of this analysis, also as one of its aesthetic strategies.

It is also noteworthy that a similar configuration of eye aperture, eyelids, eyebrows, and gaze can be observed in other works by the same author. For this reason, focus group participants identified it as a characteristic feature of her individual stylistic signature.

On the basis of the CV analysis and the insights provided by the focus group participants, it is concluded that the elements discussed in this section are employed in artistic texts to fulfil the aforementioned functions and are not limited solely to expressions of individual style. These observations further support the conclusion that eye aperture, eyebrow movement, and gaze function as coordinated expressive resources contributing to embodiment and emotional intensity in artistic texts.

3.5.2.1.5 Symmetry and asymmetry: artistic functions

As shown in the CV analysis below, symmetry emerged as one of the elements producing results somewhat different from the initial expectations. While it was anticipated that artistic texts – typically characterised by broader and more expressive movement – would also display greater symmetry, the data revealed a more nuanced picture, with a tendency towards the opposite direction.

During the focus group discussion, when comparing artistic texts and their retellings, participants observed that symmetry in artistic texts is used deliberately to create aesthetic and emotional effects. In contrast, symmetrical signs in retellings tend to appear frequently simply because many two-handed signs in SLs are naturally symmetrical, yet they do not serve an artistic or expressive function.

For example, in a retelling, a symmetrical sign may appear as part of ordinary discourse, serving only its lexical purpose. However, in an artistic text, symmetrical movements – particularly productive signs such as the sign with a meaning *falling leaves* (left, Figure 60), *is raining* (on the right, Figure 60)*, grass* (produced symmetrically with both hands), etc. – gain poetic meaning. When considered in the macro-context of the artistic text, such signs evoke not only the imagery of autumn but also the metaphorical end of the lyrical subject's life, producing a deeply aesthetic and affective resonance for the viewer. The focus group participant noted that in artistic SL texts, authors

use existing, established iconic (motivated) signs and often modify them for artistic purposes – for example, by producing them symmetrically with both hands. It is important to note that repetition is also characteristic of artistic texts and may contribute to the increased occurrence of symmetrical signs in such texts. This was also noted during the focus group discussion of this artistic text by Erika Jočytė.

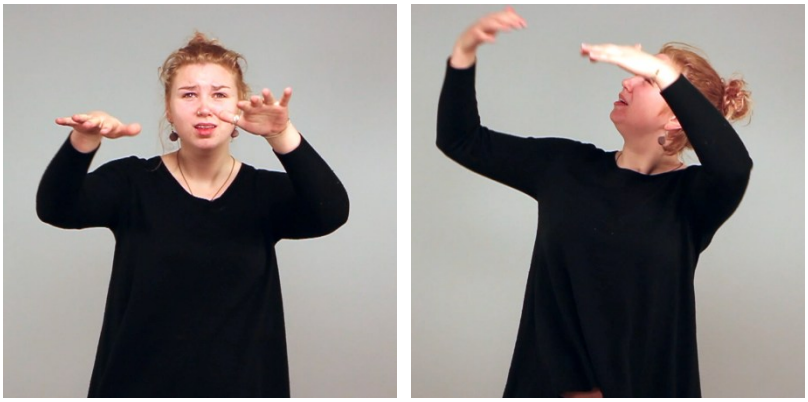


Figure 60. Original artistic text: symmetrical signs meaning *falling leaves* and *it is raining on me.* From *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė

As can be seen, in the same artistic text *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile), the original artistic version repeatedly employs the sign SKRISTI–PAUKŠTIS (FLY–BIRD), a symmetrical two-handed configuration, to embody the butterfly as the lyrical subject (left, Figure 61). Through this symmetrical construction, the artist enacts the subject's movement, perceptual stance, and experience. In the retelling, the narrative relies primarily on the conventional sign for DRUGELIS (BUTTERFLY) (right, Figure 61). Importantly, symmetrical forms occur in both versions. This naturally raises the question of whether symmetry in itself constitutes an artistic device in every instance.

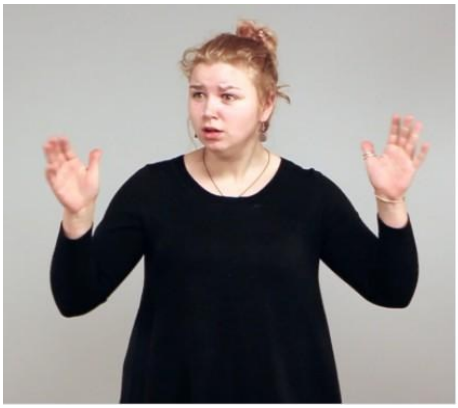
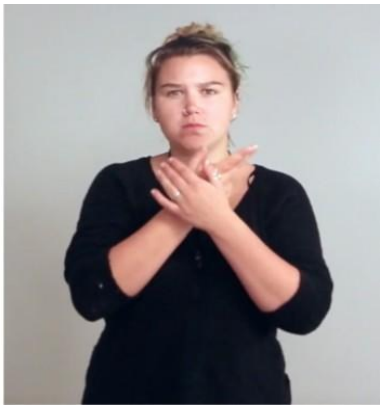



Figure 61. Comparison of embodiment and conventional representation: SKRISTI-PAUKŠTIS (FLY-BIRD) in the original text (left) and DRUGELIS (BUTTERFLY) in the retelling (right). From *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė

In many cases, symmetry is structurally motivated – for example, when a full-body configuration represents a symmetrical entity, as in the case of the sign SKRISTI–PAUKŠTIS (FLY–BIRD). Determining whether symmetry performs an artistic function therefore requires interpretation and analysis at both micro and macro contextual levels. At the micro level, attention is directed to the specific case. At the macro level, the analysis considers the broader textual context: how the sign functions within the overall narrative, how frequently it is employed, how it interacts with other artistic devices, and what communicative purpose the text serves.

In the present example, the symmetrical sign in the artistic text is accompanied by broader body movement, sustained embodiment, and coordinated non-manual elements, including facial expression that conveys the protagonist's emotional experience. At the macro level, the sign is recurrently employed throughout the artistic text more frequently than in the retelling, contributing to the continuity of the embodied perspective across the narrative. It is through this combined contextual interpretation that symmetry, in this case, may be understood as functioning as a device of artistic expression rather than merely as a structurally motivated form.

More broadly, during the focus group discussion, it was explicitly noted that, when viewing the recordings, artistic texts appeared to employ symmetry more prominently as an artistic expressive resource, contributing to poetic balance and emotional and aesthetic resonance, than retellings. This perceived difference with the CV results is partly related to the specific features of CV analysis, in which symmetry is identified primarily on the basis of formal

parameters – such as mirrored two-handed configurations – rather than interpreted in relation to its artistic function.

For example, as noted, in the same text *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile), the retelling of the episode in which rain unexpectedly begins to fall upon the protagonist is performed facing forward, with both hands produced in a largely mirrored configuration (on the left, Figure 62). In terms of the CV analysis, this instance is symmetrical. In the artistic version, the same episode is conveyed with a symmetrical sign, but with the body turned to one side (right, Figure 62). This shift in bodily orientation alters the configuration and its expressive framing. In the artistic text, the turn of the body contributes to embodiment: the protagonist gazes upward toward the sky from which the unexpected rain descends, a moment that marks the realisation of the approaching end of life.

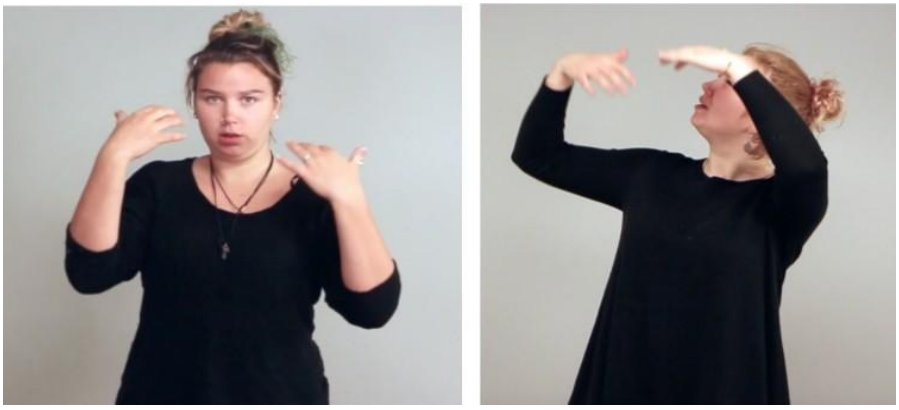


Figure 62. Comparative video frames from the retelling (left) and the original artistic text (right). Sign LYTI-ant manęs (RAIN-on me). From *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile) by Erika Jočytė

Thus, while the retelling may register as symmetrical in formal terms, the artistic version mobilises symmetry within an embodied and contextually integrated configuration that carries emotional and aesthetic significance. In contrast, in the retelling, the symmetrical two-handed form functions primarily as a structural configuration and does not assume the same artistic role.

At the same time, when analysing body lean dynamics, participants also highlighted the role of bodily asymmetry and hand dominance. As one member noted, differences in movement amplitude and spatial distribution may be influenced by the dominance of the primary signing hand. It was further observed that the division of the body into two functional sides enables the simultaneous or contrasting expression of meaning, whereby each hand

may articulate distinct semantic elements. An example unrelated to the artistic text discussed in the study was provided: one hand represents a person running away from a group of five people represented by the other hand. In this case, the asymmetry between the body sides is visible. At the same time, participants emphasised that lateral dynamics are not purely physiological but also content-driven. It was pointed out that in Matulis' work, for instance, the deer's fall is directed towards one side of the signing space, visually marking the narrative climax. In such cases, increased amplitude and spatial emphasis on a particular side (i.e., asymmetry) correspond to moments of heightened narrative intensity.

The observations made by the focus group participants can also be illustrated by another work examined in this study, *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love), although this example was not discussed with the focus group. This work has not been presented in detail above. At the climax of this artistic text, the creator depicts a motorcyclist swerving off the road in an attempt to avoid a fatal accident. At this moment, the creator leans her entire upper body distinctly to the right (left, Figure 63). In the retelling, however, the same episode is conveyed with only a slight inclination to the same side (right, Figure 63).



Figure 63. Comparative video frames from the original artistic text (left) and the retelling (right) – sign VAIRUOTI-MOTOCIKLĄ (TO-RIDE-A-MOTORCYCLE). From *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love) by Rūta Mingailaitė

This contrast further supports the previously discussed findings concerning increased bodily amplitude and the dominance of one side of the body, resulting in spatial asymmetry in the artistic version. Such an asymmetrical configuration intensifies the experiential dimension of the work and enhances

the viewer's emotional engagement. In this case, asymmetry likewise performs an artistic function.

During the discussion, each element represented in the CV analysis – the left side, the right side, and overall body symmetry – was addressed separately. Participants noted that, in general, one side of the body tends to be more active than the other, a phenomenon commonly observed in SLs. For example, when depicting two entities, such as in the previously mentioned example of a person running away from a crowd, signers naturally orient and activate one side of the signing space more prominently. This asymmetrical activation was seen not as an artistic deviation but as a linguistically grounded characteristic of SLs themselves. At the same time, in artistic texts, such asymmetries also acquire expressive and compositional functions, aligning with the previously discussed aesthetic and emotional roles of body movement.

3.5.2.1.6 Discussion

3.5.2.1.6.1 Interpretation of the quantitative results

The results of the CV-based analysis of the artistic texts and their retellings largely correspond to the expected patterns, based both on previous research on SL literature and on visual observation of the data. It was generally expected that the original artistic texts would be prosodically more varied and would employ larger movements (of the hands, the body, and the facial articulators) than their retellings, and this expectation was confirmed.

When hand activity is examined, it is found that, in the original artistic texts, the hands move both horizontally and vertically more than in the retellings, for both the right and the left hands. The pattern is very strong: for horizontal hand position, the original has more variability than the retelling in all artistic texts (although the differences vary between them, and in one case, there is almost no difference; see below). For vertical hand position, the differences are, on average, even larger, with only one artistic text (the same as for horizontal movement) being the exception. In general, the retellings are all quite similar to each other in terms of the measures of hand movement (see Figures 39 and 40 above), while the originals also vary much more among themselves.

This means that, in the original artistic texts, the signers use larger hand movements and a larger signing space than in the retellings. The signers consciously or unconsciously use this expanded signing space as an artistic device, with a high degree of consistency.

The one artistic text that constitutes an exception to the pattern described above is *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love). When this text is visually inspected, it can be observed that, impressionistically, it is the original, rather than the retelling, that is exceptional here. The signer produces the original with relatively small movements, not dissimilar to those in the retelling of the same text or in the retellings of the other texts. In this case, it seems that the signer chose not to employ a larger signing space as an artistic device but focused on other artistic devices instead.

It was also expected that the body would move more in the originals than in the retellings, and to measure this, the variation in the horizontal positions of the shoulders and hips was examined, reflecting the side-to-side movement of the signers' torsos. It could also be expected that the signers would also move their bodies forward and backward, and that such movements would be more pronounced in the originals, but they are not easily measurable in 2D video recordings captured from the front.

As with hand activity, it was indeed found that, with a few exceptions, the shoulders and hips move more to the sides in the originals than in the retellings (see Figures 42 and 43 above). Here again, the retellings are relatively similar to each other, while the originals are more variable. This means that, generally, the signers employ sideward body movements in artistic texts as a means of expression. This device appears, however, to be separate from the larger signing space, as it is related to the functions of body movements in SL.

First, as described in some studies (Nespor & Sandler 1999, Prozorova 2009), periodic body movements are used to rhythmically/prosodically organise signed speech into smaller chunks. Second, sideward leans can be used to express contrast (Wilbur & Patschke 1999, Van der Kooij et al. 2006, Kimmelman 2019). Concerning the former function, producing rhythmic leans with larger amplitude leads to a more rhythmic, poetic signing. Concerning the latter function, contrast itself can be an artistic device, and so larger leans might indirectly reflect the use of contrast as a means of artistic expression as well. Finally, as extensively discussed in Section 3.5.2, body leans can be part of embodiment, which was identified as one of the most important hallmarks of artistic texts by both the focus group participants and previous research on SL literature.

When individual artistic texts are examined, some interesting patterns can also be observed. First, *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running) is exceptional because the signer hardly moves her body sideways at all, either in the original or the retelling. For the retelling, this is normal, but in the original, the lack of body movement is quite striking, so this might represent a creative use of the

lack of body movement, contrary to the more general pattern. Second, *Juodoji orchidėja* (The Black Orchid) has an exceptionally high degree of sideward body movement, so much so that its retelling is comparable to the originals of many other artistic texts, and its original has considerably more body movement than any other artistic text. This might be explained by both the subject matter (much of the story involves driving) and the fact that the signer very deliberately uses leaning towards the two sides for the purposes of contrast.

It was also expected that the signers would use more facial expressions in the originals, operationalised by examining eyebrow movements, eye aperture, and eye gaze. In general, greater variability in eyebrow position and eye aperture was indeed found in the originals (see Figures 44, 45 and 46 above). However, there are some exceptions where the differences are very small. In addition, and in contrast to hand and body movements, considerable differences can be observed between the artistic texts when their retellings are examined.

This can be interpreted as follows: eyebrow movements and eye aperture have a wide variety of functions in SL. Grammatically, eyebrow movements and eye aperture are used to mark topicalisation, focus, questions, different types of embedded clauses, and the reference status of noun phrases (Pfau & Quer 2010, Wilbur 2021). Eye gaze is used for reference tracking and marking person distinctions; it is used differently with different verb types and as a marker of turn-taking (Liddell 2000, Alibašić Ciciliani & Wilbur 2006, Thompson et al. 2006, Ferrara 2019). All these functions are present both in artistic texts and in non-artistic texts (retellings). While emotional facial expressions are likely to be exaggerated in artistic signing, grammatical non-manuals are probably less likely to be modified this way, leading to a less clear prosodic difference between the originals and the retellings.

Finally, the only measure that did not conform to the expected pattern was symmetry, for which the originals were expected to be more symmetrical than the retellings, but mostly the opposite pattern was observed (see Figure 42 above). Symmetry was measured as the difference in activity (the path travelled) between the right and the left hands. For most artistic texts, the retelling turned out to be more symmetrical than the original. Two possible explanations can be proposed here. First, the measure of symmetry might be too rough, as it was developed to identify symmetry at the level of a single sign, not at the level of whole texts (Börstell 2023).

Second, and more likely, this measure of symmetry does not correspond to the definition of symmetry as an artistic device. Symmetry in the formal sense

used in the CV analysis simply compares the activity of the two hands at each frame transition; if the hands, for example, move in alternation in a sequence (e.g. showing trees on the sides of the road one by one), the signs in the sequence would receive a very low symmetry score. However, the same sequence can be analysed as highly symmetrical at the level of artistic analysis, because a balance is created between the right and left sides of the video frame.

To sum up, this CV-based analysis shows that, with very few exceptions, original artistic texts are signed in a more prosodically varied and prominent way than the retellings. Specifically, the hands move more vertically and horizontally, creating a larger signing space; the body moves more to the sides for contrastive and rhythmic purposes; and the facial features (eyebrows, eyelids, and eye gaze) also, on average, show greater movement, possibly to emphasise emotional facial expressions.

In addition to the implications for the analysis of SL literature, this study also has several methodological implications and raises several points for discussion. First and foremost, as previously demonstrated using a smaller sample in the pilot study (proof of concept), the present study adds validity to the use of CV tools (specifically, MediaPipe and OpenFace) for the analysis of kinematics in SL data. It can be observed that the CV-based measurements generally agree with the visual observations of the video data.

Methodologically, using CV tools in these contexts has at least three advantages (see also Eve 2022 for a useful discussion of the digital humanities approach to literary studies). First, the measures remove the annotator's subjectivity from the analysis (although it is clear that CV models, which are trained initially on human annotations and specific datasets, are also biased; see also De Meulder 2021). Second, the measures offer the possibility of detailed statistical analysis beyond what is possible using manual annotation. Third, and most importantly, the CV-based analysis can scale to much larger datasets. The dataset in the current study is relatively small, but many SL corpora contain thousands of videos and hundreds of hours of video recordings, so automating kinematic measurements offers a very promising avenue for studying these datasets, for example in the prosodic domain, as in the current study.

Another methodological point for discussion is how the prosodic measures under consideration here are operationalised. One such measure is Börstell's (2023) measure of symmetry. As discussed above, this measure was developed for individual signs, and it is thus necessary to further explore whether it is also valid at the text level. The other measures include the

standard deviation of the x- or y-coordinates of a landmark representing some articulator (a hand, a shoulder), the standard deviation of the Euclidean distance between two landmarks (e.g. an eyebrow and the nose, or between the eyelids), and the standard deviation of eye-gaze angle. A higher standard deviation reflects greater variability in the measured variable, and thus larger and/or faster movements and greater use of a certain articulator. While these measures seem to lead to interpretable results, it is clearly necessary to explore other and more advanced measures, such as combining the x- and y-coordinates, using maxima and minima, etc. It is also worth exploring whether splitting texts into smaller units and measuring kinematics within these smaller units can provide further insights.

3.5.2.1.6.2 Discussion of the focus group findings

The focus group discussion proved to be a valuable methodological component of this study, as participants were invited not only to observe the artistic video material but also to examine the results of the quantitative CV-based analysis. This combined approach enabled a dialogue between data-driven measurements and expert interpretation: participants viewed the recordings, engaged with the CV results, shared their insights, and reflected on how the identified features function within the texts, in particular by addressing the question of what functions the expressive means detected through CV analysis perform.

Overall, there is a clear convergence between the CV results and the observations made by the focus group participants. As discussed in the preceding sections, both approaches point to systematic differences between original artistic texts and their retellings, particularly in terms of movement amplitude, variability, and the use of non-manual elements. At the same time, the focus group provided a conceptual framework for understanding these differences, most notably through the notions of embodiment and visual sonority. While these concepts do not emerge directly from the CV analysis, they help explain many of the observed quantitative patterns and how they function within artistic texts. Importantly, even in cases where the CV analysis indicates a greater frequency of certain expressive features in retellings, the focus group participants emphasised that such features do not necessarily perform artistic, emotional and aesthetic functions in the same way as in the original texts. Thus, the analysis highlights that frequency alone does not determine artistic function and that expert interpretation is necessary for a deeper analysis of artistic texts.

Importantly, the combination of quantitative CV-based analysis and qualitative focus group discussion proved to be mutually beneficial. Not only did the focus group provide expert insights into the interpretation of the CV-based analysis, but the CV-based results themselves also served as a foundation for further analytical reflection and the conceptualisation of expressive strategies.

It is also important to note that certain artistic devices can be analysed from additional perspectives that were beyond the scope of the present focus group discussion. For example, gaze or head movement may function as a metaphorical resource, and similar observations can be made with regard to other expressive means. Likewise, symmetry in artistic texts may be conceptualised more broadly than in the CV-based analysis. In SL literature, symmetry has been described not only in formal spatial terms (e.g., horizontal, vertical, and front–back symmetry (Sutton-Spence 2005)), but also in broader dimensions such as thematic, temporal, and spatial structuring, as well as through the deliberate use of asymmetry (Sutton-Spence & Kaneko 2016). These aspects were not systematically addressed in the focus group, as they require a more specialised theoretical framework. More generally, this suggests that the expressive resources discussed in this study can be approached from multiple analytical perspectives, some of which are not captured by the current CV methodology and were therefore not included in the focus group discussion.

Summary of the section

Having conducted the extended computer vision analysis of artistic LGK texts using the MediaPipe Holistic tool, it can be stated that original artistic texts systematically differ from their retellings in both manual and non-manual expression. The analysis revealed that original artistic texts are characterised by greater variation in the horizontal and vertical positions of both wrists, greater variation in the horizontal positions of both shoulders and hips, greater variation in the distance between the eyebrows and the eyes, greater variation in eye aperture, and greater variation in eye gaze direction, both horizontally and vertically. It was established that, across almost all analysed parameters, original artistic texts exhibit greater variation in manual and non-manual expression than their retellings, and that most of these differences are statistically significant. The only exception was observed in the analysis of manual symmetry, where greater symmetry was more frequently identified in retellings than in original artistic texts.

The subsequent focus group analysis complemented the quantitative findings by providing an interpretation of the artistic functions of the systematically identified differences. The research revealed that *embodiment* constitutes one of the principal means of artistic expression in artistic LGK texts and is created through the coordinated interaction of manual and non-manual expressive resources. The participants emphasised that hand, shoulder and hip movements, eye gaze, eye aperture, eyebrow movements, and other non-manual elements function as an integrated system; therefore, analysing these expressive resources in isolation does not always explain their artistic function. This coordinated interaction of expressive resources was conceptualised as *visual sonority*, which creates the aesthetic and emotional impact of the artistic text and facilitates the experiencer's understanding of its artistic idea.

The focus group discussion also revealed additional principles of artistic expression that had not been predetermined as separate objects of analysis. The participants observed that *productive signs* constitute an integral part of embodiment and systematically contribute to the creation of artistic imagery. These observations complement the concept of productivity discussed in the theoretical part of this dissertation (Section 1.5.2) and confirm the role of productive signs identified in the analysis of neologism constructs (Section 3.3), thereby demonstrating the interrelationship between different parts of the research. The artistic function of symmetry and asymmetry was also clarified. Although the CV analysis demonstrated greater symmetry in retellings, the focus group participants explained that symmetry itself is not a feature of artisticity, since many signs in SLs are inherently two-handed and symmetrical as part of the linguistic system. In artistic texts, symmetry and asymmetry acquire an artistic function only when they are deliberately employed to create aesthetic, emotional, or symbolic meaning within the broader artistic structure of the text.

Having completed this stage of the research, it can be stated that the combination of quantitative CV analysis and qualitative focus group discussion made it possible not only to identify systematic differences between original artistic LGK texts and their retellings, but also to explain the artistic functions of these differences. While the CV analysis objectively identified recurring kinematic patterns, the focus group analysis provided a broader artistic interpretation of these findings. The interaction of these complementary methods enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how the coordinated use of manual and non-manual expressive resources contributes to artistic expression in artistic LGK texts.

CONCLUSIONS

The present thesis focused on exploring, based on the analysis of artistic LGK texts, how global metaphors, metaphors at the phonological level, neologism constructs, non-manual elements and symmetry emerge in LGK texts, how these means are created, what meanings they convey, and what functions they perform.

Having conducted the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Out of the 57 texts included in the research sample, 14 artistic LGK texts were found to contain global metaphors. It has been established that the core precondition for their emergence is a thematic area of relevance to the Deaf signing community, which structures the metaphorical meaning/sense of the entire artistic work. It has been determined that, in these texts, global metaphors do not occur by chance – on the contrary, they systematically arise from recurring thematic areas – those identified in the pioneering research in this field by Bahan (2006) and further developed by other researchers, notably, Christie and Wilkins (2007), Sutton-Spence and Kaneko (2016), as well as Sutton-Spence and Machado (2023). Specifically, these thematic areas are as follows: language, values and communication; social prejudice and ignorance; identity and cultural belonging / in-betweenness; resistance and social struggle; Deaf culture and community; Deaf identity and experience; sensory worlds; as well as universal and existential themes. The persistent recurrence of these thematic fields indicates that they are not local or randomly occurring, but rather constitute a broader field of artistic SL expression shared by SL communities across different countries.

The research has also established that global metaphors are most commonly grounded not in a single isolated theme/topic but rather in the interaction of several thematic layers. This interweaving of thematic layers creates a coherent, multilayered artistic structure.

In addition, it has been established that global metaphors in artistic LGK texts are created by employing recurring symbols and motifs, among which the tree and water can be mentioned. This research also identified other symbols and motifs, including the *eagle, dog, cats, swans, a butterfly, flowers, sharp tools, a watch, a rainbow, Newton's cradle,* and *an angel*. They act as elements that organise sense and meaning, thereby allowing the structure of

an artistic work to be developed and maintained visually and semantically. In this way, a global metaphor in artistic LGK texts functions as a principle of meaning organisation that embraces the entire artistic work and allows both community-level and universal experiences to be conveyed. The analysis has also revealed that, in artistic LGK texts, global metaphors convey various phenomena also identified in artistic SL texts worldwide. That is, through global metaphors, it is possible to reveal such concepts as SL as the *language of the heart for the eye*, its perception as a value, as well as societal prejudice against SL and public disregard, which may give rise to communication difficulties – metaphorically expressed as, for example, a *mountain*. Other thematic areas that form the foundation for a global metaphor also align with the themes identified in artistic SL texts worldwide. This suggests that texts in various SLs, including LGK, tend to revisit the same thematic areas. Even though certain concepts are conveyed through different artistic means and in authentic and original ways, they preserve the same underlying semantic meaning.

This research has also found that a global metaphor in an artistic text is formed through the interaction of smaller-scale elements of artistic expression, which, in certain cases, allows the global metaphor to be perceived as a whole constructed from these elements. For this purpose, artists also employ other means of artistic expression explored in this thesis, notably metaphors at the phonological level, neologism constructs, and non-manual elements.

2. The research has also established that metaphors *at the phonological level* were identified in 9 out of 57 artistic LGK texts included in the research corpus, with 12 cases identified in total. It has been established that metaphorical meaning at this level is created through the use of *movement*, *location*, *non-manual elements, orientation* and *handshape*. It has been found that metaphors at the phonological level in artistic LGK texts are created through contrasts and variations of movement speed, circular movement, modification of conventional sign location, the selection of a specific localisation for a neologism, the employment of non-manual elements, the direction of the hand and fingers, as well as the use of a specific handshape and its systematic variation throughout the artistic text. Metaphors created at this level may convey the meanings of brutality, care, protection, illness, vitality, identity, the inner self, belonging, power relations, emotional withdrawal, vulnerability, inner conflict, confusion, continuity, persistence, and the course (i.e., flow/running) of time.

It has been established through this research that *location* may operate as the primary means of creating metaphorical meaning, while, in some cases, this meaning is further reinforced by other phonological parameters, particularly *handshape* and *movement*. It has been determined that metaphorical expression at this (phonological) level may also be created by modifying an already established sign or by employing a neologism. The examples analysed indicate that, in artistic LGK texts, the phonological parameters of a sign function as independent resources of artistic expression, contributing to identity, inner experience, the relationship with the community, and other meanings of high significance in the artistic discourse of SL.

Furthermore, the analysis has established that metaphors *at the phonological level* in artistic LGK texts serve as a means for their authors to metaphorically address some important concepts that are commonly represented in artistic SL texts worldwide. Among them, the identity of a Deaf individual, its formation and development, may be mentioned. This metaphorical concept can be associated with the concept of light. Light is highly significant in artistic SL texts, as it is identified as a concept of cognition, visibility, access to language, and freedom of expression. Artistic texts also convey the idea of SL as the *language of the heart for the eye*, a message found in artistic SL texts worldwide and also identified in artistic LGK texts.

3. The research has also concluded that not only separate and individual neologisms occur in artistic LGK texts (as previously outlined in scholarly literature), but that *neologism constructs* are also encountered – a pioneering finding of this thesis – representing a sequence or group of several mutually related signs operating as a unified entity of artistic expression. It is these constructs that were selected as the focus of investigation in this thesis. Such constructs are formed through different combinations of new classifiers, recognisable classifiers or depicting signs, and conventional signs. These combinations of expressive means make it possible to maintain ambiguity, which is commonly observed in artistic language; however, they also help the viewer recognise the developed image and reconstruct its meaning. Neologism constructs in artistic LGK texts are characterised by functional variety: they serve to organise the visual perspective, as they may represent an object being brought closer or moved farther away, variations on these principles, or the outright return to the primary image. They create an aesthetic and emotional impact, highlight symbolic meanings, and, in some cases,

become means of metaphor creation, whereas in other cases, they function as independent means of artistic expression. In addition, some neologism constructs overlap with the manifestation of *embodiment* and provide an opportunity to convey not only visual but also embodied experience. Beyond these artistic functions, neologism constructs also serve as culturally grounded means of expressing the Deaf worldview and conceptualising Deaf experience. Therefore, neologism constructs emerge as one of the most complex means of artistic expression in LGK texts, integrating visual dynamics, symbolic meaning, embodiment, and culturally grounded conceptualisations of Deaf experience.

4. While conducting the research for this thesis, the appropriateness and suitability of CV for research on SL artistic texts were tested for the first time. Although CV tools had previously been applied to SL data, their suitability for the analysis of artistic SL texts had not previously been investigated. In the pilot study, *MediaPipe Holistic* was tested in practice and successfully employed for the analysis of artistic LGK texts. The research revealed that this tool allows the reliable identification and quantitative analysis of specific kinematic parameters, such as the *hand movement amplitude*, *variation in hand movement*, *sideward body leaning* (shoulder position), *eyebrow movement*, *eye aperture variation*, as well as *symmetry*. The findings obtained using CV tools suggest that artistic LGK texts, in comparison with their retellings, are characterised by a greater variation in these parameters and greater movement amplitude, which allows systemic differences in expression between different types of texts to be identified. It has also been established that the data obtained using *MediaPipe Holistic* are sufficiently reliable and informative for analysing longer recordings, despite some technological limitations related to potential measurement errors and the limited feasibility of *3D reconstruction*. Nevertheless, these limitations do not prevent the reliable analysis of general movement patterns and their variability. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that CV methods are appropriate and valid for the analysis of artistic LGK texts, and can be applied when researching the peculiarities of SL expressiveness in a broader context. Notably, within the framework of this research, the initial pilot study demonstrated the suitability of CV for the analysis of artistic LGK texts. These findings suggest that CV tools may also be suitable for the analysis of artistic texts in other SLs. Building on the

results of the pilot study, an extended quantitative analysis was conducted using MediaPipe Holistic and OpenFace and subsequently complemented by a qualitative approach through focus group discussions. This methodological combination enabled the interpretation of the quantitative data obtained using the CV tools and provided a conceptual understanding of the identified phenomena, particularly non-manual elements and their interaction in the context of artistic expression. It further demonstrated that the parameters under investigation do not operate in isolation but rather function as components of an integrated multimodal system of artistic expression.

5. In the framework of this thesis, specific parameters of non-manual and manual expression in artistic LGK texts were investigated using CV tools, such as *hand movement amplitude*, *movement variation*, *shoulder movement*, *sideward leans*, *hip movement*, as well as *eyebrow movement*, *eye aperture* and *eye gaze direction,* and *symmetry*. The research revealed that, across almost all analysed parameters, artistic LGK texts exhibited greater variation in non-manual and manual expression than their retellings, with most of these differences being statistically significant. The only exception was (manual) symmetry, which was more frequently identified in retellings than in original artistic texts. The analysis of the focus group discussions indicated that these expressive elements do not function independently of one another but, instead, are systematically employed to fulfil specific functions of artistic expression. One of the key phenomena of this type is *embodiment*, observed in cases where the artist not only represents the characters or events, but also embodies them by employing movements of the entire body as a structural and performative element of expression. In this way, body movements act not only as prosodic or descriptive means but also as a principle that organises the entire text, shaping its expressiveness as well as its experiential impact. It is important to highlight that these elements function as an integrated multimodal system, in which the functions of specific components overlap, and therefore, they cannot be precisely separated from one another. Based on the insights yielded by the quantitative analysis and the focus group discussions, it has been determined that coordinated *hand movement*, *shoulder movement* and *hip movement*, along with facial expression and gaze dynamics, constitute a shared axis of expression, which, in the framework of this thesis, is conceptualised as *visual sonority*. This form of expression is derived not from a single

element, but, instead, from the interaction of several means of expression. It acts as a core principle in creating an aesthetic and emotional impact. In the opinion of the author of this thesis, it is specifically *visual sonority* that represents the most significant means of artistic expression, allowing artistic texts to be distinguished from non-artistic texts in LGK, since it is systematically employed only in artistic texts, and is one of the key factors by which a text can be recognised as artistic.

6. The CV-based research revealed that symmetry is employed less frequently in artistic LGK texts than in their retellings. The focus group discussion and its further analysis enabled this finding to be interpreted qualitatively and revealed that symmetry frequently arises from the system of SL itself, especially due to the abundance of symmetrical two-handed signs, which do not inherently perform any artistic function. In other words, quantitatively registered symmetry is not directly related to artistic expression, but rather tends to reflect the general structure of SL. The research has established that in artistic LGK texts, symmetry and asymmetry are consciously and deliberately employed as means of artistic expression whose function is revealed at the macro level, through their interaction with the content, structure, repetition, and other means of expression. In such cases, the presence of symmetry reinforces the aesthetic effect, whereas asymmetry creates tension, highlights spatial emphasis, and enhances the dynamics of the narrative. Thus, symmetry and asymmetry in artistic texts tend to function as significant means of artistic expression whose impact is revealed only in the context of the entire artistic text.

7. The means of artistic expression employed in artistic LGK texts – notably, metaphors (both at the global and the phonological levels), neologism constructs, non-manual elements, and symmetry – are consistent with the trends identified in previous research on SL literature. It has been established that the means of artistic expression described in research on SL literature are also systematically employed in artistic LGK texts. The recurrence of the same thematic areas across different SLs suggests that artistic LGK texts form part of a broader cross-linguistic tradition of SL literature. At the same time, the present research demonstrates that this shared conceptual foundation is realised through original artistic expression specific to LGK. This study is the

first to systematically analyse neologism constructs. In the author's view, similar constructs may also be identified in artistic texts of other SLs. This observation provides a basis for further research involving artistic texts in different SLs and the analysis of neologism constructs.

8. The present research can be considered a pioneering step towards the systematic analysis of artistic LGK texts and their expressiveness. However, the research has also established that the field under investigation is extremely vast and multilayered; therefore, despite the ambitious scope of the present research, this thesis could not encompass all aspects of artistic expression encountered in artistic texts, which constitutes one of its limitations. Even though the 57 artistic texts under analysis constitute a solid foundation, this number is nevertheless insufficient for broader and more generalisable conclusions, especially considering that no national corpus of artistic LGK texts had been compiled in Lithuania at the time of completing this thesis. Thus, to obtain more accurate results, it is necessary to continue and expand the research in order to identify additional patterns. In the course of this analysis, it became evident that some metaphors remained beyond the scope of the research conducted in this thesis because they did not fall into the analytical categories of global metaphors and *metaphors at the phonological level*. Symmetry analysis also requires further research, involving different types of symmetry, such as *temporal symmetry*, *spatial symmetry*, and other forms. In addition, the research conducted made it possible to identify other means of artistic expression that were not systematically analysed (such as repetition, ambiguity, etc.) and therefore remained outside the scope of this research. During the preparation of the thesis, it also became evident that an artistic text is formed not by a single means of expression, but rather by the interaction of multiple means. In this context, another significant aspect that has not yet received academic attention also came to light. It emerged from fruitful discussions with Professor Sutton-Spence, an expert in the field: in each artistic work, there is an exceptional moment of expression, a key point that can be defined as the *golden moment*. This moment is realised differently in each artistic work through various means of artistic expression and may constitute the focal element that lends the text its artistic quality. This pivotal element of an artistic work, its cornerstone, which may be termed the *golden moment*, requires in-depth analysis. In an attempt to answer the question of what makes a

text artistic, comprehensive research is required, embracing various means of artistic expression and their interaction, and such research would benefit substantially from the analysis of a broader sample. A major insight derived from this research is that the analysis of artistic LGK texts demands a comprehensive approach grounded in collaboration. While preparing this thesis, the authors of the analysed texts regularly advised the author of the thesis, whereas the data were checked with the support of experts in this field, sign researchers, and linguists. In this context, the involvement of the focus group proved to be an effective means of strengthening the reliability of the analysis and providing a solid foundation for interpretation. This interdisciplinary practice should be considered a basis for further research in this field.

One of the focal directions for further research is the collection and systemisation of artistic LGK texts, along with the enhancement of their accessibility. The first anthology of artistic LGK texts was prepared in the course of this research, and this collection demonstrates that this type of activity is of considerable importance for further research in this field. The systematic collection of texts, their systemisation and the quality of their presentation (including video recordings and accessibility solutions) would create the necessary conditions not only for scholarly research, but also for their broader recognition and application. In view of international practice, it is possible to consider even more ambitious initiatives, such as the development of anthologies spanning an entire continent. Such collections would also offer opportunities to explore different ways of presenting such works to a broader audience, for instance, by combining visual expression with an original musical soundtrack accompanied by subtle and concise verbal interpretations (functioning as references), while preserving the original work as the artistic core.

Artistic texts are characterised by a rich variety of means of artistic expression, complex structures, and multifaceted forms of expression, and therefore they can be significant not only in the context of language use but also in that of cultural experience. The findings of this research may be of relevance to scholars, educators, developers of educational and/or cultural policy, translators, interpreters and other specialists, as well as to signers, and even those who do not know SL.

A separate direction that has not yet received scholarly attention is the bibliotherapeutic potential of artistic LGK texts. In the course of preparing this thesis, during screenings and discussions of the artistic texts with their

authors, community representatives, and experts, the impact of these texts on the participants became apparent. These artistic works prompted reflection, created opportunities to speak openly about and articulate personal experiences, mitigated feelings of loneliness, and fostered a sense of shared experience. This suggests that artistic LGK texts may have a therapeutic impact on the SL-using community. Considering the fact that this aspect has never been systematically investigated in academic research, this direction opens up opportunities for further interdisciplinary research as well as practical application.

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ANNEXES

Annex No. 1

1. Nijolė Karmazienė *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

Nijolė Karmazienė, in the artistic text *Bėgantis laikas* (Time Is Running), tells the story of a watch. At first, the watch functions properly, but then it breaks down. The author metaphorically depicts a human eyelid opening and tears appearing in the eye. The tears begin to flow down, washing over the gears of the watch mechanism. Afterwards, the watch begins ticking again.

The watch serves as a metaphor for human health and life. Its malfunction represents deteriorating well-being, illness, and death. Conversely, when the mechanism begins working again and the hands start moving, this symbolises recovery, improved health, and renewed vitality.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. It was also filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

2. Nijolė Karmazienė *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language) / *Kurčias žmogus* (The Deaf Person)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

As the author herself changed the title, both titles of the work are provided. In this dissertation, following the author's decision, the work is referred to by its second title *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language). The work depicts a powerful tree that has grown from a small seed. The tree sways in the wind. In the distance, an eagle sits and watches the tree. Strong and majestic, the bird flies down toward the tree, circles around it, and finally lands on one of its branches. The eagle admires the tree and singles it out from all the other trees. The work conveys that both the tree and the bird experience strength, fulfilment, and joy through their encounter. The author employs metaphors throughout the text: the tree represents the Deaf community and sign language, while the eagle symbolises highly qualified sign language interpreters. It is important to note that the author has provided two interpretations of this work. In her earlier interpretation, she focused on the threats and pressure on sign languages associated with cochlear implants, the forced use of spoken language, and lip-reading. The interpretation presented in this dissertation follows the later version, as confirmed with the author.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. The work was also filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

3. Nijolė Karmazienė *Draugystė* (Friendship)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

This artistic text portrays a lifelong journey of friendship between a human and a dog. The text begins with a detailed moment in which the protagonist travels along a winding road in nature and meets a puppy that grabs hold of his shoelace. Taking the puppy gently into his arms, the protagonist continues on his journey, now no longer alone. As time goes by, their shared road becomes a story of friendship unfolding against the backdrop of everyday life

and the changing seasons – the puppy grows into a strong, energetic dog, while their relationship remains unchanged. The work features a motif of constant movement – the protagonist's rhythmic steps, an uphill road, and natural landscapes. At the climax, when the protagonist reaches a small cabin, the rhythm of movement is interrupted: the protagonist is left with the memory of the dog, symbolised by a collar hanging on the wall. In the final scene, the protagonist, now old and bearded, sits in an armchair, gazing at the sky, and at that moment his heart stops.

The work was filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

4. Arnoldas Matulis *Viltis nemiršta* (Hope Does Not Die)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The work begins with the colours yellow and blue reflected through motifs of nature. The narrative depicts civilians suffering from explosions, destruction, and loss; the author presents intimate and emotionally charged moments – clinging to loved ones, worry, and fear. Both the physical consequences of war and the accompanying psychological tension are portrayed, highlighting their strong emotional dimension. The motifs of light, the blue sky, and purity contrast with the images of the chaos of war. At the end of the work, all destructive elements – weapons, explosives, and tanks – begin to disappear and dissolve into light. The work concludes with a prophecy of the end of the war.

The work was created for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

5. Arnoldas Matulis *Medžioklė* (The Hunt)

Artistic LGK text (the recordings were used for the study with the ELAN tool)	
Artistic LGK text (the recordings were used for the study using a CV tool)	Retelling

The work portrays a dynamic story about a deer and its offspring running through plains, meadows, and a forest, where the tranquillity of nature is suddenly disrupted by danger – a hunter with his son lurking nearby. By employing slow-motion and large-scale artistic visuals, the power of the running deer, the bond between them, and details of the environment are revealed. The dramatic climactic moment is constructed from the perspective of the bullet as it pierces the air and reaches the deer's heart, while the offspring's reaction is conveyed through a heightened emotional image – an enlarged tear that falls slowly and breaks into fragments. The progression of the story is halted and then rewound, creating an alternative resolution: the deer stands up, the bullet returns to the gun, and instead of shooting, the hunter hugs his son. In the final scene, the deer and its offspring calmly walk away, as the hunter and his son watch them.

Several recordings of this work exist. The recordings presented first via the QR codes were filmed by the author of the dissertation and were used in the analysis with the ELAN and CV tools. In addition, the artistic text was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis for the publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (*12 Flights through Life*). This recording was used in the analysis with the ELAN tool.

6. Arnoldas Matulis *Lemtis* (The Destiny)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The work opens with the image of a motorcycle leaning into a turn on the road taking the viewer back into the past. There, a man, full of joy, rides along a winding road, followed by a flying stork. This bird is a recurring motif throughout the work. Intercut visual sequences reveal moments from the man's life – starting a family, the closeness he shares with his wife and children, and the joy of everyday life. In several scenes, the motif of dandelion fluff reappears. At the climax of the work, the man's peace is interrupted by the arrival of an ambulance, conveyed through a slowed, fragmented rhythm. When resuscitation fails, the man's life leaves his body in the form of a bird and dandelion fluff, which appear first beside one hand, then the other, before drifting away. The final image shows a fading light bulb and a frozen speedometer needle.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis for the publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

7. Arnoldas Matulis *Žaidimas* / *Beždžionė* (The Game/The Monkey)

Artistic LGK text (the recording was used for the study with the ELAN tool)	
	
Artistic LGK text (the recordings were used for the study using a CV tool)	Retelling
	

This text depicts a person searching for a specific place using a map. The story begins with a gravel road running along a steep mountainside, lined with ominous, tangled trees. The protagonist arrives by car, checks the map to confirm the direction, and continues on foot through dense vegetation toward a monkey bridge. Crossing it is portrayed as a risky and dangerous experience – swaying planks, a sense of height, and unexpected hazards create constant tension. On the other side, the protagonist reaches a rock face with a massive, locked door. This is the place he has been searching for a long time. He pries the door open with a crowbar. As the door opens, a swarm of bats bursts out, and inside the dark cave, he encounters a huge, menacing beast, shown in a close-up to emphasize its physical scale and frightening features. It is revealed to be a monkey. Terrified, the protagonist runs back and shuts the door, but the beast breaks it down and pursues him. The story continues with a tense

escape sequence as the protagonist flees from the monkey, runs across the bridge, cuts the rope, causing the monkey to leap off the cliff. A visual contrast between the beast's size and the human's fragility is maintained throughout the work. The protagonist runs desperately, jumps into his car, and drives chaotically along the uneven road, eventually crashing. In the end, the beast catches up with him, briefly touches him, and then turns back toward its cave. In the final scene, the protagonist, overwhelmed with fear and physically exhausted, clutches his heart as his pulse gradually slows.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis for the publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life). This recording was used in the analysis with the ELAN tool. The work (both the original artistic text and the retelling) was also filmed by the text's author. These recordings were used in the analysis with the CV tool.

8. Erika Jočytė *Vienatvė* (Loneliness)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The work begins with a scene in which a woman with perfectly styled, sleek hair gives birth to a baby, but upon seeing it, she rejects the child; the child experiences the same rejection from their father. As the child grows up, they repeatedly try to establish a connection with their mother, father, and brother, but each time experience rejection. When the child becomes a young person, unable to endure the constant sense of exclusion, they gather their belongings, put a bag over their shoulder, and, after a final look at their childhood home, slam the door and set off along a winding road. The artistic text rhythmically alternates between different cinematic shots – different frames, i.e. close-ups and wide shots showing the protagonist's walk and the way they carry the bag; the author also presents the walking protagonist from a distance. During the journey, the protagonist sees a fox that briefly approaches them, and later a stork that appears and disappears. The

protagonist then begins to run, with trees rushing past them. The young person's journey continues to a fast-flowing river, then to a hill where they fall asleep; upon waking during the night, they continue along the road. Upon reaching a town with distinctive roofs, juggling clowns, and children playing football, they enter a bakery. Not having enough money, they are helped by a woman with lush red hair, who gives them the missing amount in coins. After buying bread, they share it with beggars. Later, they search for the woman in the square and throughout the town, but cannot find her. Everything begins to dissolve in the falling rain. This is a recurring leitmotif of the work. Continuing along a highway, they try to hitchhike but are unsuccessful; a passing truck splashes them with dirty water. They lose patience and hope and, dropping their bag, start running forward. Suddenly, they find themselves on a bridge and decisively leap down. In the final episode of the work, the young person meets the woman with red hair they have been searching for and asks: "Am I alive?" The woman extends her hand; the protagonist takes it, and they walk away together, their receding silhouettes gradually fading into the distance.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. The work was also filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

9. Erika Jočytė *Greičio skonis* / *Ragana* (The Taste of Speed/The Witch)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

The author initially titled this text *Ragana* (The Witch), but when the anthology *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life) was being prepared, the artistic text was titled *Greičio skonis* (The Taste of Speed). The work depicts a witch with a prominent wart on her nose, wearing a pointed hat and a wide, slightly flared skirt. She sits astride a broom, firmly gripping its

handle with both hands. At the beginning of the text, she flies at a slow, steady pace, passing identical houses. As she gradually increases her speed, she begins to enjoy the sensation of flying and playfully rushes forward. Birds fly past her at great speed, but when she turns to look at one of them, she suddenly notices the wall of a house directly in front of her and crashes into it. Following the impact, her face sticks to the wall, and her body slides downward through the floors of the house. The author conveys this sequence through changing perspectives and productive signs. The direction of movement then reverses as the witch rises back toward the roof until she regains her flying position. The sequence is then replayed in reverse: the witch flies past the same birds and houses in the opposite direction. Finally, her flight returns to its original calm, slow pace. She passes the birds once again, watching them, and, as she approaches the house she had previously crashed into, successfully avoids it with a manoeuvre. At the end of the work, the witch ascends and disappears into the sky.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. The work was filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

10. Erika Jočytė *Trapus gyvenimas* / *Drugelis* (Life is Fragile/The Butterfly)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The author initially referred to this text as *Drugelis* (The Butterfly), but when the anthology *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life) was being prepared, the artistic work was titled *Trapus gyvenimas* (Life Is Fragile). This work was part of a series of four works on the seasons; however, the other three have not survived.

The text depicts a butterfly fluttering its wings in the distance, while flowers blossom one after another around it. Soon, they begin to wither – heavy blooms bend downward, while the butterfly watches in fear. From both sides, tree leaves begin to fall one by one. Their fall is depicted as a sequence of cinematic frames, creating a slow-motion effect. The fluttering of the butterfly's wings is rhythmically synchronised with this slowed movement. Later, a young woman appears, quickly collects the fallen leaves, admires them, poses, and photographs autumnal scenes. The butterfly observes these actions with a sad gaze; everything is presented as a sequence of still frames. Suddenly, a strong, cold wind rises, tossing the butterfly in different directions. Seeking shelter, it vigorously flutters its wings and briefly finds refuge in the tree canopy. However, a gust of wind bends the tree, and the butterfly is once again swept into the air, making its flight increasingly difficult. A raindrop falling onto one wing causes it to tilt downward. The butterfly lifts its gaze to the sky and sees the raindrops growing heavier. Soon, heavy rain begins. The image gradually slows down, and the butterfly's fluttering wings are shown from a distance.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. The work was filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

11. Paulius Jurjonas *Juodoji orchidėja* (Black Orchid)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

This artistic LGK text is about love. It tells the story of a man whose memories return when he sees a motorcycle. In his memories, the protagonist gives a ride on his motorcycle to a long-haired, seductive woman (*a femme fatale*) with full lips. He symbolically offers her his heart, but she repeatedly pierces it. The author's imagery then returns to the motorcycle. As the

memories fade, the protagonist is shown again in the present, his heart now black.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. The work was filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

12. Rūta Mingailaitė *Meilės viražai* (Twists and Turns of Love)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

The work depicts a woman with long, wavy hair, striking lashes, full lips, and a graceful figure. Wearing high heels, she walks along the roadside, calmly passing by the trees. The wind, rendered as if in slow motion, gently lifts her hair. Her gaze is directed forward, and she radiates self-confidence. In the distance, a motorcyclist appears – he is well-built, broad-shouldered, dressed in protective gear, and wearing a helmet with the visor lowered. His motorcycle is shown moving at high speed, yet slow motion emphasises the wheel gliding along the road surface. The man's attention is drawn to the young woman walking along the roadside, whose steps and wind-blown hair are likewise depicted in slow motion. The young woman stops the motorcycle, takes a seat behind the motorcyclist, and wraps her arms around his waist. The motorcycle pulls away slowly; its speed gradually increases. They race along a winding road. The narrative then shifts to a truck travelling ahead, driven by a bearded man wearing a low-cut T-shirt, with hairy armpits and a hairy chest. He appears relaxed, chewing gum and holding an unlit cigarette in his mouth. Soon, he lights the cigarette and notices the motorcycle manoeuvring behind him in the rear-view mirror. Suddenly, upon noticing danger ahead, the truck driver loses control of the truck – it begins to skid. The scene slows down, highlighting the manoeuvres of both the truck and the motorcyclist. Finally, the truck overturns onto its side, a cloud of smoke rises, and the cigarette falls from the driver's mouth. Alarmed, yet gripping the handlebars firmly, the

motorcyclist tries to avoid a collision, while the young woman behind him clings tightly to his waist. However, the motorcycle loses stability, falls onto its side, and slides along the road. Above the motorcyclist and his passenger, a heart symbol appears, which soon fades away.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. The work was filmed for cinematographer Linas Miskelis' publication *12 skrydžių per gyvenimą* (12 Flights through Life).

13. Arnoldas Matulis *Ryšys* (Connection)

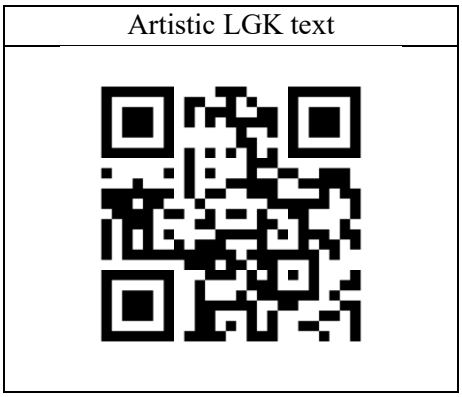
Artistic LGK text


The work tells a story about a tiny plant stem and a sturdy, hundred-year-old oak growing beside it. The stem extends a small branch and says, "Let's be friends". The ancient oak disagrees and rejects the stem. A mild storm strikes, shaking the small plant, seemingly confirming the oak's decision. However, soon the sky darkens with black clouds, lightning flashes, and the centuries-old oak breaks and falls to the ground. The text raises a question: if we were to return to the beginning and the oak had made a different, more favourable decision, would they have become friends? Perhaps the growing plant would have grown stronger, intertwined its roots with those of the oak, and together they might have withstood the fateful storm.

It should be noted that this work was inspired by a literary source, which is relatively rare. Nevertheless, two such cases are documented in this dissertation and this is one of them: the written artistic text *Le Chêne et le Roseau* (The Oak and the Reed) (*Fables* I.22, 1668) by the French writer Jean de La Fontaine.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

14. Arnoldas Matulis *Turkio spalvos obuolys* (A Turquoise-Coloured Apple)



This work is about trees that stand out for their form and for bearing unusual, previously unseen turquoise fruit – apples. The text makes a reference to the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Soon, one of the fruits is examined; the philosopher cuts it open, and from it emerge dust-like particles and visual images. The author of the text lists what is contained within these fruits: "[…] Deaf culture, Deaf identity, Deaf art, Deaf history, Deaf sports." The two halves of the apple are then reassembled, and all the images disappear.

Aristotle begins to write: "A turquoise apple is dangerous." This inscription is rolled up into a parchment scroll, in the manner of ancient times, and delivered to the people by a messenger. The trees bearing these dangerous fruits are brutally destroyed. The author then refers to the 1880 Milan Congress – applause, a turquoise apple being pressed in a manual juicer, and, among the crowd, three concerned observers (a reference to the three Deaf participants among more than 160 hearing attendees at the congress). The trees are uprooted, and when this proves insufficient, they are burned. After the entire plantation is destroyed, people celebrate; silence falls, and time passes. The work concludes with a resolution: a new sprout emerges from the destroyed trees in an empty field.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

15. Arūnas Bražinskas *Knygnešiai* (Book Smugglers)

Artistic LGK text



This artistic text presents two narrative strands that compare phenomena from different historical periods: the ban on the Lithuanian language and the suppression of LGK, as well as negative attitudes towards LGK in Lithuania. In the first narrative, the author depicts book smugglers who carry and pass on books, thus protecting and nurturing the Lithuanian language. The second narrative focuses on a couple expecting a baby; once the baby is born, the parents communicate with the child in sign language. The overall rhythm of the work is calm but intensifies in scenes depicting the brutal suppression of language – books are confiscated, torn apart, and burned, while, in the case of the Deaf community, the child, now older and attending school, is addressed in spoken language, struck on the hands, and forbidden to use their native language at school – LGK is taken away from them.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

16. Justina Čiplytė *Skirtingos gulbės* (Different Swans)

Artistic LGK text



This text depicts swans descending from the sky onto the water. One of them stands out – its wings are different, and it appears withdrawn and lacking in confidence. Soon, another swan descends from the sky; it too is different. The first swan looks around – it sees the wind, the rain, and the falling drops. Being Deaf, it perceives sound visually. Before long, it begins to seek connection: it approaches a flock of swans, but they communicate through voice, while it cannot hear. It dives beneath the water, resurfaces elsewhere, and continues its journey. It swims toward stately, graceful white swans, yet once again feels out of place. It is overcome by anxiety, pain, and loneliness. The swan begins to question: "Why am I different? Why am I Deaf? Why?" It dives into the water. Meanwhile, the other swan, also unable to find its place, feels pressure in its chest, experiences anxiety and loneliness, and asks: "Why am I different? Why is my colour different? Why?" Their bodies sink to the bottom, where they finally see one another. As they draw closer, they realise that, despite their differences, they are alike. On the surface, they had been judged negatively, but now both choose to let go of others' opinions. Their hearts begin to beat in unison. They start to make their way back to the surface. They feel mutual respect. The swans nestle closely together, overwhelmed by a powerful shared feeling. The text concludes with an image of swaying trees and water, as all the swans turn toward the two protagonists, who remain pressed closely together, holding firmly to one another.

As mentioned earlier, SL texts are typically created directly in SL without reference to spoken languages or written literary works. However, in this case, Čiplytė was inspired by a Lithuanian poem written approximately 20–30 years ago by the hearing mother of a Deaf child. The poem, entitled *Aš – gulbė nebylė* (I Am a Mute Swan) was written by G. Sutkuvienė.

Gamtos garsų simfonijai nurimstant,

Kai saulė leidžias. Mėnuo kyla. Tik įsižiebus mano žvaigždei. Likime, kam skyrei man tylą?

Kam atėmei lietaus šnarėjimą,

Ir paukščio čiulbesį ir vėjo raudą. Garsų, dainų, giesmių skambėjime – Aš – gulbė nebylė. Man širdį skauda.

Beribiuose tylos verpetuose plaukiu ir skęstu. Vėl plaukiu.

Manose dienose ir mano metuose

Man tik padeda šiluma suprantančių akių.

Tada širdis vėl laisvės šokį šoka, Ir siela vėl nušvinta viltimi.

Kai sutinku aš žmogų, kuris moka Matyt, girdėt, kalbėt širdimi.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. The video frames used in the dissertation are taken from two different recordings: one recorded by the artist herself and one recorded at the Presidential Palace.

17. Justina Čiplytė ir Lijana Čiplienė *Nekaltinkit manęs* (Do Not Blame Me)

Artistic LGK text


The narrative of this artistic text is conveyed by two characters – the authors themselves, a mother and a daughter (the latter standing behind the mother). The work tells the story of a young mother who, in her hearing parents' home, had to use spoken language and rely on lip-reading. She wishes to communicate in sign language, but this is not permitted; her hands are roughly pushed down. She uses spoken language and rhetorically asks, "Is this normal?" Throughout the work, the mother repeats the leitmotif: "Do not blame me. Such was the time." She communicates in sign language with her friends and feels liberated as a result, yet she is deeply convinced that she must use spoken language. "Is this the right way?" asks the author. The text later shows how the protagonist falls in love, starts a family, and gives birth to a baby daughter who is also Deaf. She is reminded of the past: "You are the only Deaf person in the entire family." However, she no longer feels alone – there are now more Deaf people in her family than hearing people. Still, she experiences anxiety and doubt: should she speak to her daughter as her own family once spoke to her, or use sign language instead? As the daughter grows up, she says she does not want to communicate in spoken language. The protagonist is torn and struggles with these questions.

The scene is interrupted, and the leitmotif returns, this time altered: "Do not blame me. Such is the time." Two figures are shown side by side – a grandmother and a granddaughter. The protagonist stands between them. The

grandmother admits, “Why did I not learn sign language earlier? I will start to learn it now.” On the other side, the granddaughter attempts to maintain their connection by using spoken language, although she does not want to; she prefers sign language. Everything dissolves into a cacophony of communication – spoken language and signs intertwine. The artistic text concludes with a shortened leitmotif: “Do not blame me.”

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

18. Nina Šamakova *LGK – vertybė* (LGK Is a Value)

Artistic LGK text


The work begins with an image of Newton’s cradle, also known as a kinetic pendulum. At one end, the author shows the letter L in fingerspelling, at the other end G, and in the first position K. Thus, a metaphor for LGK is created, with the language being shaped and affected by time. In the text, the author introduces the name sign of Petras Gasiūnas. Later, in Šamakova’s artistic text, the sign SIGN LANGUAGE is produced. A desire to use sign language more broadly for communication is expressed, but there is no response – this is not permitted. Time passes, and the focus returns to Newton’s cradle. Later in the text, signs from other sign languages appear alongside LGK: *interesno* (a Russian sign), *interesting* (an international sign), *mnenije*, and a sign meaning *to laugh*. These signs increase in number, and their use intensifies. At the end of the work, the protagonist raises their fist against Newton’s cradle.

The text raises the question: do we consider LGK to be a value? Do we protect it, nurture it, and do we understand what we are doing to it?

Although the text does not provide detailed information about the mentioned figure, Petras Gasiūnas, the reader should be aware of the broader context. P. Gasiūnas was the first democratically elected chairperson of the Lithuanian Deaf Association, who brought the organisation into the

international family of Deaf communities. This marked an important step after the geopolitical isolation of the Soviet Union era. He led the association in independent Lithuania. At his initiative, in 1995, a resolution was adopted recognising LGK as the native language of Deaf people in Lithuania. This laid the foundations for the compilation of the LGK dictionary, the training of sign language interpreters, and the development of research. P. Gasiūnas also strengthened Deaf cultural identity, defining Deaf people as a cultural minority. After his death, he is remembered by the community as one of the most important people who contributed to LGK acquiring a widely recognised status in Lithuania.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

19. Vilius Glušokas *Aš – kurčias* (I Am Deaf)

Artistic LGK text

The author poetically says in the text:

I am Deaf. I hear nothing. Not the murmur of the sea,

nor the crash of the waves, nor the clatter of stones. Neither the bird's flight nor its song.

Nor the rustle of a tree – not a sound. Silence. No!

I can see it all.

A sun rises above the shimmering waves of the sea – I see it. This fills my heart with a sense of fulfilment.

I see birds flapping their wings; I see their song. It touches me.

I see a tree gently rocking and swaying from side to side.

The wind catches its crown and starts to rock the tree more and more. The branches are tossed about, the trunk groans. The crown thrashes wildly until the wind settles.

The tree rustles gently.

I see it.
And this fills my heart. I am.

The artistic text was recorded by its author. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

20. Vilius Glušokas *Liudytojas* (The Witness)

Artistic LGK text


I am Deaf.
Am I bad? No.
Am I worthless? No.
Am I voiceless? No.
Am I blind? No.

Lithuania has recognised sign language. I can communicate freely.
The Deaf have their own culture. I am worthy of respect. Signs.
I CAN
Live and feel through signs. I am filled with joy.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

21. Nijolė Karmazienė *Amžinybė* (Eternity)

Artistic LGK text


The work begins with the protagonist's walk and signs symbolising covered eyes, ears, and mouth. This leitmotif is repeated three times in succession and reappears throughout the work. A path paved with small and large stones is shown, with grass gently moving in the wind. The path winds through the hills and stretches into the distance. A bright sky and a distant cross standing in a halo of light are depicted. An angel with large wings lowered downward stands upon it. The light surrounding the angel spreads like grace, enveloping the protagonist, who seems to be bathed in it. Life seems to pulse from the light, accompanied by the rhythm of a heartbeat. Time passes, and the Earth turns – this is shown from different perspectives through neologisms and cinematic expression. The sign DEAF appears, followed by an image of a baby being held in someone's arms and communicated with in signs from infancy and throughout the child's development. The author intensifies this phenomenon by presenting the sign SIGN LANGUAGE in increasingly expansive, abundant, forceful, and active ways. The signs slow down, and she shows a sign meaning old age. Within the leitmotif of covered eyes, ears, and mouth, the movement and orientation change: the author shows the eyes, ears, and lips opening. This leitmotif is repeated. The author presents the sign ETERNITY. The angel appears alongside strong, rhythmic heartbeats, rendered through various cinematic techniques and an abundance of neologisms. From a distance, the author shows the flight of the angel; as it approaches, the image grows larger and is brought very close to the viewer. Feathers and a wide, slow-motion flight are visible. The walking action returns, and crying is depicted. The work concludes with a modified sign ETERNITY.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

22. Arūnas Bražinskas, Arnoldas Matulis, Justina Čiplytė, Nina Šamakova *Šaltinis* (The Spring)

Artistic LGK text


This work is performed by an artistic quartet in which the authors sequentially construct a shared artistic metaphorical narrative. The work opens with a collective prologue expressed simultaneously by all four creators, meaning: *sign language spreads widely*. A small stream flowing from a spring is then depicted. It flows forward but soon encounters a wall. The creator interrupts this image and shows hands being struck, thus continuing a metaphor of the spring, in which the spring symbolises sign language, while the wall symbolises political decisions that restrict and disregard the Deaf community and deprive it of its language. The spring moves forward and encounters another obstacle – the creator depicts this by focusing on the lips and spoken language. Unable to flow straight ahead, the spring branches out, flows around the obstacles, and continues on its way until it encounters yet another barrier – hearing aids and FM systems. Nevertheless, the spring naturally grows stronger, developing into a swift flow and gaining increasing force.

After this part, all four authors again collectively repeat the leitmotif of the work – *sign language spreads widely*. Then, as if beginning the second act of the work, the second creator continues the narrative. A wide spring is now depicted, encountering a large dam. The spring observes the high obstacle and slowly ripples. Here, people are visible leaning together in deliberation. Meanwhile, people are shown gathered together in collective deliberation, while the spring waits patiently. However, it slowly rises, gaining increasing strength and power. Finally, a decision is made. After that, the dam begins to crack – the creator presents this moment cinematically, in slow-motion and in

a highly dramatic manner. The dam collapses, and the spring surges powerfully forward.

The leitmotif of this work is repeated again – *sign language spreads widely.* The spring flows onwards and waters distant lands. They become saturated with water and soon begin to sprout and bloom, and the entire landscape turns green. The leitmotif of this work is repeated once again – *sign language spreads widely.* After this repetition, the final act of the work begins. The creator depicts a large crowd of people gathered together. They communicate freely and joyfully in sign language; sign language spreads throughout the world, while the entire Earth pulses with the rhythm of the heart, unity, and connection. The work concludes with the leitmotif as an epilogue – *sign language spreads widely.*

The structure of the work is based on cyclical composition, in which the repeated collective statement, "sign language spreads widely," functions as a refrain. This refrain frames individual narrative segments and operates as a choral element reminiscent of dramatic structure. At the beginning of the work, it functions as an introductory prologue and, at the end, as a summarising epilogue, gaining additional semantic weight after all the main themes have been developed.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Arnas Dambrauskas.

23. Arūnas Bražinskas *Medis* (The Tree)

Artistic LGK text

The work tells the story of a tiny tree sapling. A woman and a man take care of it – they bring a watering can and water the sapling. Warmed by the sun, the sapling grows, stretches upwards, and becomes stronger. As time passes, it grows into a tree with a thick trunk and a wide crown, becoming a gathering place for people who feel a strong connection to it. The tree responds to them warmly and shows the LGK sign to LOVE and international *heart*

symbols. Soon, the tree sees people speaking; they bring a large metal tool and prepare to cut the tree down. It experiences pain, rejection, and brutal destruction.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis.

24. Nijolė Karmazienė, Vilius Glušokas, Marija Rimkutė, Marius Andrijauskas *Meilė* (Love)

Artistic LGK text


This work is performed by a quartet of performers and combines artistic texts with elements of theatrical form. First, two young people are presented in the work – a Deaf heroine and a hearing protagonist. They are unable to communicate with each other because of differences in language and hearing and instead express themselves through internal monologues. Soon, the young man starts learning LGK and learns the signs HI, CARE FOR, NURTURE, PROTECT, as well as how to say *how are you?* in LGK and other signs. The young woman turns to her mother and says that she has fallen in love with a hearing person. In the work, the mother poetically tells her that this choice is wrong and imagines a possible future for her daughter in which a child is growing up and she is able to communicate freely with the child in sign language. However, the daughter cannot be persuaded and meets the young man again, and the mother finally allows her to do so. Upon meeting the young man, the Deaf heroine is surprised when he starts to speak in sign language. The work concludes with the signs merging – their moving hands intertwine, as if connecting them both through sign language.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. The work was created during the 2025 project of the Lithuanian Deaf Association, under the supervision of lecturer Jurgen Endress.

25. Arnoldas Matulis *Egiptas* (Egypt)

Artistic LGK text


The work is about the journey of a tourist group, revealing the experiences of hearing and Deaf couples. The action starts at the Egyptian pyramids and the Great Sphinx of Giza, where visitors are surrounded by a bustling crowd, camera flashes, and the emotions of tourists. At this site, tourists are invited to take a motorboat ride and go diving. The characters get on the motorboat and later, accompanied by an instructor, begin diving. The hearing couples communicate only through spoken language, and whenever they want to agree on something or communicate underwater, they have to surface, remove their mouthpieces, and have a brief conversation. Meanwhile, a Deaf couple, using sign language, can smoothly and continuously share their impressions and emotions underwater, indicate to each other that it is time to turn back, or draw attention to a fish swimming nearby, a seahorse, a turtle swimming among the remains of a sunken ship, and other images of the underwater world. The two forms of communication are contrasted – spoken language, which is limited and impractical while diving, and sign language, which maintains its functionality and adaptability even in extreme conditions. The work concludes with the Deaf couple completing their dive on time and without additional interruptions, while the hearing couple feels that they have missed out on a great deal, because their underwater journey has had to be interrupted several times, preventing them from sharing their impressions smoothly throughout the journey.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. This recording was used for analysis using the ELAN tool. The work was also filmed by cinematographer Vytautas Katkus. The Artistic LGK text was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

26. Arnoldas Matulis *Dvyniai* (The Twins)

Artistic LGK text


The two narrative lines in the work explore the different life trajectories of Deaf children, shaping their personal development and identity formation. The text starts with sperm cells rushing forward. The womb and the birth of two different children into two different families are shown. Both children are Deaf, as the doctors inform the parents. The first narrative line depicts parents who, at first, are anxious about this news, but soon they hug their baby. They start learning sign language early and consistently use it in their communication with their child. This communication strategy is symbolically associated with the child's glowing internal "light", which, as the child experiences connection through language and interaction with the community, expands and grows stronger. The child grows within a rich visual language environment, experiences a positive learning environment, and achieves good academic results, symbolised by a scene of a university graduation ceremony.

The second narrative line depicts parents who are also anxious about the news of their child's deafness; they turn away from each other even at the hospital. After arriving home and as they raise their child, they reluctantly browse online and show little interest in sign language – they consider it a strange form of language. They then close the laptop and choose dominant verbal communication, avoiding sign language. Parents ignore cultural specificity – when wishing to draw attention, they do not switch the light on and off or use similar visual strategies but throw a small object whose flight through the air the author portrays through cinematic techniques and neologisms. Sometimes parents start speaking aloud, and words are depicted as real objects flying through the air, bouncing off the child's eyes and falling to the ground. Such a decision by the parents results in limited access to language, communication barriers, and a gradual fading of the internal "light",

ultimately manifesting as academic failure – the child fails their school-leaving exams.

Both children are depicted at school – one communicates in sign language, while the other uses spoken language in a limited way. The latter child is depicted in a special class where they are taught to speak and lip-read. The author depicts a violent scene in which various metal tools are inserted into the child's mouth, and the tongue and other articulators are positioned so the child can pronounce words correctly. The author concludes this scene with a fading and weakening inner light, representing identity or the inner self. At the climax of the work, both narrative lines intersect – the two grown young people meet by accident and form a connection through sign language – this moment symbolically revives and strengthens the fading internal "light" of the second young person.

The work also features a particularly sensitive family dinner scene. The first young person, while eating, communicates with their family members in sign language and smiles – their internal "light" expands and is alive. The second young person, who experiences the so-called Dinner Table Syndrome and informational exclusion, cannot participate in family conversations or understand them.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. This recording was used for analysis using the ELAN tool. The work was also filmed by cinematographer Vytautas Katkus. The artistic LGK text was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Erwan Cifra. The video frames used in the dissertation are taken from a different version recorded by the author of the artistic text himself.

27. Arūnas Bražinskas and Arnoldas Matulis *Genocidas* (Genocide)

Artistic LGK text

In this artistic text, performed by a duo, a leitmotif is repeated in which the authors cover each other's eyes and mouths; the one whose eyes and mouth are being covered abruptly and forcefully pushes the hand down. Attacks, destruction, a flying bullet, and cries for help are depicted, all of which are silenced.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Vytautas Katkus. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed).

28. Justina Čiplytė *Šokio ritmu* (In the Rhythm of a Dance)

Artistic LGK text



The work *Šokio ritmu* (In the Rhythm of a Dance) depicts the experience of a young Deaf person seeking to become part of a hearing dance community. The narrative begins with an image of the sky, then shifts to a young person walking towards a dance school in the distance. Once inside, the person enters a space of intense music and dance where hearing dancers move in sync, and the young person joins the shared rhythm. The visual metaphor portrays a change in the attitudes of hearing people – they begin to recognise that the Deaf can feel the rhythm and dance. The teacher's explanation contributes to this change. At the teacher's initiative, both groups come together as the strong vibrations of the music unite them, allowing the Deaf person to fully participate in the dance. Soon, the person invites their Deaf friends. Dance classes and dancing together follow.

However, this acceptance is not sustainable. The members of the Deaf group sense it, noticing judgmental looks and feeling uneasy. Their concerns are later confirmed when the hearing group begins to doubt the skills of the Deaf group and rejects them, and the group of Deaf dancers gradually diminishes, leaving only one Deaf person. They make a determined effort to become part of the shared team but are repeatedly rejected.

The work concludes with the image of closing doors and returns to the initial misty, fog-filled image, which gradually closes in. The work uses cinematic images, episodes of repeated acceptance and rejection, and a rhythmic structure that convey the efforts of the Deaf to participate in the cultural activities of the hearing.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Vytautas Katkus. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Erwan Cifra.

29. Lea Milašauskė *Mokykla* / *True Story* (The School/True Story)

Artistic LGK text


The author initially titled the work *True Story*, later *Mokykla* (The School).

The work depicts a classroom situation in which pupils first sit in groups, and their linguistic expression varies from a highly articulated pronunciation (characteristic of oralist education), which is also used by the protagonist of the artistic text, to a loud or neutral spoken language. Once a teacher enters the classroom, depicted with a strict straight hairstyle and a blazer with an emblem, the pupils' behaviour becomes synchronised: they stand up one by one, and then sit down again, following the example of the pupil sitting in the first row. All sit down in rows.

Once the teacher starts speaking, words are visually materialised as slowly moving visible objects that travel through the air, reach the hearing pupils, and are written down by them. This process continues through all the rows until the whole class, except for the protagonist, synchronously lowers their heads to begin to write. The protagonist remains the only one who has not written anything yet. She sees the words floating in the air and tries to catch them but to no avail. The floating words she tries to "catch" and transfer to her exercise book remain incomprehensible to her. Her frustration over information she cannot understand and the unsuitable way in which it is presented to her is conveyed visually.

However, soon she looks over at a nearby exercise book and sees a multitude of words written down neatly and clearly. She begins copying them into her exercise book. However, soon her classmate turns the page, and the protagonist is left with no information again. Turning away, she starts looking out the window.

The teacher notices this immediately and firmly walks up to her. The teacher overwhelms her with words. As she does not respond, the teacher becomes even angrier and repeats the same action with greater intensity. A fellow pupil tries to raise their hand and explain the situation, but the teacher stops them and continues to "shower" the protagonist with words. They splatter and fly towards the protagonist, bounce off her eyes, and slide down her face. The teacher's intensifying articulation and emotional tone contrast with the protagonist's understanding that she has no choice but to "survive" by distancing herself from the situation, even though it is very unpleasant and at the same time comical. After this climactic scene, the teacher finally allows the pupil who previously raised their hand a chance to speak: "Teacher, she is Deaf," says the pupil. The teacher is clearly confused; she opens her mouth, and the emblem on her blazer falls off.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. This recording was used for analysis using the ELAN tool. The artistic LGK text was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

30. Nina Šamakova *Alpinizmas* / *Kalnas* (Mountaineering/The Mountain)

Artistic LGK text

The author initially titled the work *Kalnas* (The Mountain), but when preparing the text for publication, the title *Alpinizmas* (Mountaineering) was recorded.

The work depicts a Deaf woman at a railway station ticket office who indicates through signs that she wants “two tickets”. The cashier is confused and does not respond at all, nor does he try to clarify or find a way to establish communication. The Deaf woman repeats her request, indicating that she is Deaf. The cashier becomes even more confused, and a metaphorical mountain emerges between them.

The protagonist takes carabiners, special climbing chalk, puts on her helmet, and starts climbing the mountain. The entire scene is depicted slowly and theatrically. At one point, she slips and becomes very frightened; a stone flies past her, but she eventually reaches the summit. After looking around, she returns to the real situation, takes her phone, types her request, and hands it to the cashier. He reads the text, brightens up, and soon begins doing his job – preparing the tickets. Deep in thought, the protagonist turns to the audience and maintains eye contact for a long time.

The work was filmed by the team of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie. The work was also filmed by cinematographer Vytautas Katkus.

31. Nijolė Karmazienė *Sapnas* (The Dream)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

This text is full of images of nature and the hunter and depicts a person preparing for the hunt – he dresses, puts on a hat, adjusts it, takes a gun, and leaves. While walking along a road, he sees the distant landscape swaying, grass, and small and large hares running through it. The hunter begins to take aim at them. Before firing a shot, a thought comes to him, like a vision of the future – the hares die. He reconsiders, does not fire, and puts away his gun.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

32. Karolis Pilipavičius *Gestų kalba* (Sign Language)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

The creator tells the story of a Deaf tourist who is joyful and eager to explore a new city. However, he soon faces challenges: when he asks for directions in sign language, he receives no help, and when he asks for the time, he is met with confusion. The protagonist is confused by this and begins to wonder why he is so different from the other tourists. Is it because he uses sign language? This thought breaks his heart. Another person approaches the protagonist and communicates with him in sign language. Soon, more sign language users gather around the Deaf tourist to help him. He feels happy, understood, accepted, and safe.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

33. Karolis Pilipavičius *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

In *Būti savimi* (Being Yourself), creator Karolis Pilipavičius portrays a man clutching the folds of his jacket tightly against his chest. People approach the man one by one, touching him as if wishing to see what lies beneath the

jacket. The author constructs a metaphor: the jacket represents the man's identity, his inner world. At a certain point, a passerby touches the protagonist, revealing his body. Ashamed, the man wants to hide, but he decides to reveal himself. A multi-coloured rainbow appears on his chest. This is also a metaphor. On the one hand, the multi-coloured rainbow symbolises diversity and otherness, on the other hand, it symbolises the LGBT+ community. Ultimately, the protagonist sets an example for others by encouraging them to reveal themselves and be open to the world, themselves, and others. Such openness signifies a sense of community, freedom, and inner peace.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

34. Larisa Voroneckaja *Judėjimas* (Movement)

Artistic LGK text

The work starts with a circular motion symbolising a cyclical movement – a rise and fall. According to the author, this leitmotif is an artistic metaphor for male erection. The text portrays a pretty, short-haired young woman with a strict hairstyle, wearing stylish clothes. She walks down a rainy street. A car stops beside her, and the driver invites her to get in. The young woman closes her umbrella and gets into the car. They take a selfie together. Once the car starts moving, the above leitmotif of circular motion is repeated – the man's arousal and erection are portrayed through an outward burst of circular motion, referring to ejaculation and the movement of sperm cells. This part incorporates an anecdote popular in the Deaf community: once sperm cells are called out to by voice, those carrying the hearing gene turn towards the sound and move towards it, while those carrying the deafness gene move straight ahead. This expresses the idea that Deaf people want children who are also Deaf and want to pass on sign language and Deaf culture from generation to generation.

Then the sperm cell's entry into an egg cell is depicted, along with the beginning of a new life. The beginning of a new life is portrayed through the image of a beating heart: one hand depicts the child's heart in the uterus, while the other depicts the mother's heart, resulting in an image of two beating hearts, of which the protagonist knows nothing yet; only the viewers experiencing the work are aware of the new life. Meanwhile, the protagonist continues with her usual life: she dives into a pool, swims, and enjoys the water, an experience unknowingly shared by her, as yet unborn, child. Later, she gets out of the water, has a drink, but feels some discomfort beneath her chest. The leitmotif of the work reappears: ejaculation.

This episode transitions into a dream scene in which abortion is portrayed: the arms, legs, and head of a developed foetus are portrayed; they are cut and severed from the body. The protagonist's emotions are vividly portrayed – anxiety, a rapidly beating heart, and awakening from the dream. She consults a doctor who shows her that there is already life in her womb. Then the protagonist scrolls through photos on her phone, trying to determine who the father of her child is, and the work concludes with images of anxiety and darkness.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation. It should be noted that the work's ending was changed when the work was being prepared for a project curated by Dovilė Baliukevičienė. This latter recording is not included in the research material of the dissertation.

35. Larisa Voroneckaja *Gėlės* (Flowers)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The text starts with an image of a person lying in bed, comfortably pulling up the duvet, with a bookshelf nearby. The person takes a book, turns the pages but feels bored. The protagonist wants to close the book, but suddenly it will not close, and a tiny character starts waving on an open page. They greet each

other, and the tiny character invites the person to explore a poem entitled *Gėlės* (Flowers). The person becomes immersed in the work, which depicts a smartly dressed man in a blazer and tie walking rhythmically while carrying a large bouquet of tulips. He hands the flowers to a woman; she smells them, and the tulips themselves also experience the sensation.

The role shift is conveyed through changes in cinematographic perspective. The tulips continue their journey, their blossoms sway, and a seed falls from one of them, lands on the ground, and stays there. The rain moistens the soil; the seed begins to take root and stretch upward, while a new tulip gradually grows. This process is portrayed through alternating perspectives – close-up and distant views – that rhythmically convey the dynamics of growth. A grown tulip reaches the height of the other tulips and becomes part of the group; it sways in the wind in the meadow together with them, and they all enjoy the fragrance they give off. Soon, they sense a person leaning over them. Their stems are pierced by pain – the person cuts the tulips with scissors and carries them away. The remaining tulips witness this action, and the perspective shifts once again: the person carries a bouquet of tulips, and the tulips in the bouquet sway anxiously. Meanwhile, new seeds scatter through the air, land on the ground, and begin a new cycle of growth.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

36. Arnoldas Matulis *Pasaulio pabaiga* (The End of the World)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

The artistic work begins with the image of a flag fluttering in the wind. A soldier gazes at it and presses a fateful button. A missile is launched. Its ascent is depicted from different perspectives through the use of neologisms and cinematic techniques. A flag bearing a star is shown, and the launched missile is portrayed moving towards and approaching this area. It is met with determination by others: military aircraft take off and another missile is

launched. The missiles begin to move towards one another, observed by the same soldier who initiated the first launch. The work concludes with the collision of the missiles and a wave of fire spreading across the sky.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

37. Arnoldas Matulis *Grobis* (The Prey)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The artistic work depicts a predatory bird soaring through the air, trying to catch a fish swimming in the water. The bird extends its sharp talons and snatches the prey. The hunt is depicted in slow motion from different perspectives. The fish, which had previously been peacefully swimming underwater, begins to writhe and resist, but eventually surrenders.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

38. Andžėjus Voroneckis *Našlaitė* (The Orphan)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The text portrays a girl's life journey, her experiences at school, and her relationship with her guardian. The narrative starts with a photo motif, which

evolves into images of childhood: a baby being rocked, then a school where the girl experiences rejection, bullying, and a continuous flow of incomprehensible words. The words are portrayed as material objects flying through space. The words bounce off the protagonist's head; some of them penetrate, but only a few are memorised.

Later, scenes unfold in which the protagonist sees herself as if from the side, reads a book, and rhetorically asks herself whether she could be in the place of the book's heroine. The book describes a woman who leads a promiscuous life, who is also an orphan and whose appearance resembles that of the girl. The book describes the environment of a brothel and life within it. This book becomes a turning point for the protagonist: she identifies with the character in the book, and this recognition enables her to act differently in reality. From that moment, she opens up to learning and internalising knowledge and begins applying this knowledge in communication. In other words, the protagonist consciously chooses a different life journey and makes different decisions.

The work portrays different perspectives: the girl grows up, watches herself from the side, and understands her connection with school, peers, and her guardian. The idea emerges that her life could have been different from early childhood if the family environment and her guardian had been more supportive. Before the text concludes, the author shows an image in which the guardian compares two photos: in one, the girl is young, and in the other, she is shown in the present. The guardian sees a significant difference and rejoices in it, but the girl herself still feels the same: the external changes depicted in the photos do not reflect her ongoing inner struggle.

Throughout the work, the guardian appears only twice: once when she sternly takes the girl to school, and again when she waits for the results, expecting her expectations to be fulfilled. As a result, the girl experiences pressure, suffering, and bullying at school.

At the end of the work, the photo motif reappears, but this time the photo is not displayed to the viewer and remains invisible.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

39. Andžėjus Voroneckis *Medis* (The Tree)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The work begins with the image of trees and a forest: a multitude of trunks and crowns, slowly swaying in the wind. The creator shows a small tree seed that sprouts, breaks through the surface of the soil, gathers strength, spreads its roots in different directions, and begins to radiate life. The plant grows into a sturdy tree with leaves unfolding on its branches, and it develops a thick crown, as do the surrounding trees. This process is accompanied by a circular movement symbolising the passage of time. New sprouts appear next to the tree.

Another storyline is developed in parallel: people, while travelling in a car, approach the tree, touch its trunk, and the protagonist carves their own initials and those of their loved one into it. This action causes pain to the tree, which is portrayed through the role-shift method. The people leave, but soon they are involved in a serious car crash. The tree watches this event and cries. At the same time, the person receives emergency medical assistance – an ambulance is shown arriving, along with its flashing lights. The passing of time is depicted through changing images of rain, lightning, thunder, and the sun.

After the crash, the person starts learning to walk with crutches. It is difficult for them as they lost a leg in the crash. Meanwhile, the tree's wide crown is swaying in the wind and gradually shedding its leaves. When the annual cycle is repeated, time moves forward. The person gets used to the crutches, comes up to the tree once again, and finds the spot in its trunk where their own initials and those of their loved one are carved – their symbol of love. However, a fragment of bark breaks away. The person tries to secure it with tape while the tree watches their actions with compassion.

In parallel, one of the tree's four offspring separates and goes its own way, while the remaining three remain at the tree's side. The annual cycle, highlighting the passage of time, is portrayed once again – rain, snow, sun,

and lightning. The work concludes with a scene of the person hugging the tree and the tree experiencing bliss, the flow of life, and a sense of merging into one.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

40. Auksė Šidlauskė *Kristaus trilogija: Tyra širdis* (The Trilogy of Christ: Pure Heart)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

This is the first work from creator A. Šidlauskė's trilogy about Christ.

Christ descends from heaven surrounded by light. He descends into a crowd of people, who frown and turn away from Him. In the crowd, He sees a beating heart. It is my heart, and I look at Christ. I frown because of the inner shame I feel; I wanted to avoid meeting His eyes, but Christ sees me. He becomes sombre because He sees my sins. Tears begin to roll down Christ's face. I smile at Him, but He wipes His tearful face and looks away. When He looks at me again, He says, "Give me your heart, sell it to me." I reply, "No, absolutely not." Once again, He asks me to give Him my heart. "I will not pay You any money," I say. "I certainly do not need money. Your heart is full of sins," He replies.

I reach out my hand to Him, and we hold hands. I close my eyes, and when I open them, I see an infinite light. Christ washes my heart and cleanses it of sins. He gives it back to me and places it in my chest – there it begins to beat, light spreads, and the Holy Spirit descends upon me. Christ and I meet each other's gaze once again, but I cannot look at Him for long – His eyes are burning with fire. He sees that this prevents me from looking at Him, and soon His pure, broad, radiant light and the fire in His eyes diminish.

We look at each other, my soul leaves my body, and Christ takes me with Him. He leads me by the hand, and we move forward. Before long, we enter a cave where the moon and stars are visible. We move at great speed. Upon

leaving the cave, we enter the light, walk together, and reach a throne on which God is seated. I am overcome with emotion and lower my eyes; later, I raise them again. At God's command, an angel takes a large book containing long lists. God leafs through it and, joyfully raising His eyes, says, "Yes, your name is on this list!"

Christ approaches and rejoices: "You are accepted, my child!" I feel that I am accepted and blessed by the Holy Spirit. Christ and I both raise our eyes to heaven.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

41. Auksė Šidlauskė *Kristaus trilogija: Kristaus meilė ir prisikėlimas* (The Trilogy of Christ: Christ's Love and Resurrection)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

A crowd of people has gathered and is talking heatedly among themselves: "He is bad, they have already caught him, now he is going to prison, hooray!" In the distance, Christ can be seen approaching the crowd – His hands are tied, and His hair is blowing around His shoulders. He is met by an enraged, shouting crowd that spits in His face. Christ endures this calmly, in silence. Soon, He is imprisoned and finds Himself behind bars. Christ begins a conversation with His Father.

Soon, a captured criminal appears in the same crowd – he moves through the crowd with a conceited expression, looking down on everyone. The crowd greets him in the opposite way to Christ: "Good, he is good, hooray! Good!" The criminal responds with a mocking smile. Watching this, Pilate orders Christ to be brought to the square. A Roman soldier carries out the order. The prison door is opened, Christ stands up and walks through it. When Christ approaches Pilate, Pilate looks Him up and down, and when he raises his eyes, he sees a pure light – light is emanating from Christ. He understands how pure

He is (Pilate understands His innocence, but feels unable to stop the people's hatred, even though he understands that the crowd is wrong. He steps back and leaves the decision to the soldier).

Christ feels the ground trembling – it is the crowd howling outside the prison door. He raises His eyes, and tears well up in them (He is saying farewell to the earth). Christ leaves the prison and walks across the square while the crowd howls in His face. As before, Christ accepts this humbly. The criminal is nearby, and everyone greets him with joyful, supportive shouts. Christ and the criminal meet each other's gaze; the criminal looks at Christ mockingly and arrogantly, while Christ looks at him humbly and restrainedly, tears still in His eyes. His face is spat on again. Soon, the criminal is set free – his hands are free. Christ watches this calmly, a tear rolling down His face.

The crowd continues to shout: "Kill him, cut off his head, drive nails into his palms and crucify him. You, you!" Christ accepts this and remains steadfast in His love for these people. Your hearts are stained with sin, but I will gather all of this, and all of it will fit within me (a reference to "Forgive them, God, for they do not know what they are doing"). The soldier who brought Christ to the square binds Him for torture. Christ is whipped, and pieces of skin and flesh fly from His body. One piece of skin and flesh lands on the face of a mother standing in the crowd – the woman looks at Christ with compassion and wipes her face.

Blood pours down Christ's face as He raises His eyes upwards. The soldier binds thorny branches together to form a crown and places it on Christ's head – the thorns pierce the skin of His head, and blood begins to flow. Tears and blood stream down His face from the pain. His body continues to be whipped mercilessly. He does not make a sound; He endures all this inhuman suffering and pain in complete silence. Christ continues to love the crowd; He accepts everyone into His heart and, raising His eyes upwards, falls to the ground, exhausted.

A person in the crowd asks, "Who wants to help?" Another responds, "I can," and hurries to help Him – Christ has fallen while carrying the cross. The man takes over the cross, and Christ walks beside him, blood streaming down Christ's entire face (His body is completely exposed and lacerated). They climb the mountain and find themselves between two other crucified men. Christ is laid on the cross, and His hands are nailed to it with long nails. Christ expresses the pain of His palms being pierced with a cry. His other hand is also pierced, and the cross is raised.

The man on the left says to Christ, "Look, I am nailed just like you." The man on the right begins to repent before Christ: "I made a mistake, I am

guilty." Christ looks at him with happiness in His eyes: "You are accepted, you are forgiven." Soon, a crow flies towards the man on the left, lands beside him, grips one of the criminal's eyes with its beak and tears it out. Christ sees this and responds with a painful cry towards heaven – this is a conversation with the Father.

A tear begins to run down the Father's face. It falls to the ground, and when it lands, the entire globe shakes and the earth cracks. The soldier is left speechless by what he sees (he realises Christ's greatness) and, repenting, kneels before Christ. The soldier understands that Christ is the King; He rules the earth. Rain begins to pour from the sky, washing Christ's face. Christ's blood flows onto the ground. From the mountain, Christ's blood flows all the way to the prison where Christ Himself had recently been.

A sick man sitting in the prison repents and begs Christ for forgiveness. He scoops up the blood flowing along the ground and washes his face and body with it. Soon, he sees that his illness has left him – the skin on his hands becomes smooth and radiant. "Christ," is all he says happily. Christ sees this and closes His eyes – Christ has died.

Mary approaches Christ, wiping away her tears. The cross is lowered to the ground, and the men use pliers to pull the nails from His palms – holes remain in them. Mary takes Him into her arms, wipes Christ's face with her veil and kisses His face. She wraps Him in the veil, and the men carry Him in their arms towards a cave. When they reach the cave, a huge stone is rolled away, Christ is laid inside the cave, and Mary watches and then steps away. The men roll the huge stone back into place. Mary watches.

Three days later, Mary wants to visit Christ and carries a small parcel for Him in her hands. When she arrives, she sees that the stone has been moved aside. She hurries inside but sees only the veil left behind; Christ's body is no longer there. Mary turns towards the entrance of the cave and sees the living Christ standing in the light – there are holes in His hands, His whole body is strong; He is alive. Mary is filled with blissful joy!

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

42. Auksė Šidlauskė *Kristaus trilogija: Kristaus laukia vaikai* (The Trilogy of Christ: Children Await Christ)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

The work begins with the gates opening. The children look up and see Christ walking through the gates. On His head is a crown of thorns (a symbol of all suffering and human sins), which Christ soon removes and throws away. The children look at one another joyfully and enthusiastically and say to each other, "Christ, it is Christ!"

The group of children starts running towards Christ (this is depicted using cinematic techniques – the action is shown in slow motion), and Christ welcomes them all into His embrace. He opens His arms wide and embraces all the children. He gently strokes their heads. One of the children marvels at Christ's greatness: "I am so small, and You are so tall!" Christ responds by drawing them all close to Him once again.

One of the children begins to touch Christ's forehead – it is covered in scars, and when the child tries to take Christ by the hand, the child's hand disappears into the hole in the middle of Christ's palm. The child reacts with concern, but Christ once again responds with a smile and warmth; He draws the children close to Him.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

43. Greta Damševič *Indėnas* (The Native American)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The text begins with imagery of Native American life: a typical settlement with tipis and a fire, where a woman is cooking a meal, while a man, who, as evening approaches and the weather cools, assumes his duty to go hunting to bring back food and furs for the community. He prepares for the hunt, takes his arrows, mounts a horse, and departs.

The hunter sees a huge animal with a thick coat and striking horns that curve downward and then sweep upward. This animal can be interpreted in two ways: as a bighorn sheep (if the action takes place in North America, the Rocky Mountains, or the margins of the Great Plains) or as a musk ox (*Ovibos moschatus*) (if the action takes place in the Arctic). Based on the shape of the horns depicted by the creator, the author of this dissertation identifies the animal specifically as a musk ox – a vital source of subsistence for the Native American community. Concentrating intently, the hunter shoots an arrow at the animal, which soon falls. At the climax of the text, the protagonist pulls the arrow from the body of the killed animal, and blood starts to flow from the wound. Although the animal briefly shows signs of life – its body is shaken by convulsions – the protagonist ends its life with a single kick. The work concludes with a peaceful image of the setting sun.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

44. Greta Damševič *Trauka* (Attraction)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The text tells a story about a man riding a motorcycle and having a chance encounter on the road. Having stopped at a red light, the motorcyclist notices a female driver in a car next to him, and behind her, a female passenger drawing. The man, wishing to make contact, winks at the passenger, inviting her to communicate. However, the woman responds negatively to such a gesture, writing an insulting word on a piece of paper and showing it to the motorcyclist. Still, he continues to pay attention to her, and she responds once again, this time making a culturally indecent gesture commonly known as showing the middle finger.

After this event, the car drives away, while the man, impressed by the woman, starts chasing it. A pursuit follows, but realising that he will not be able to catch up with her, he stops to buy coffee. At a café, he suddenly sees the same woman. Walking up to her, he tries to strike up a conversation, but she shows little interest and finally walks away. The man still admires her beauty and attractiveness and watches her leave. Soon, he finds a note with her phone number. He immediately gets on his motorcycle and continues on his journey.

On the way, he sees a kissing couple and, further on, mating animals. These images intensify his emotional engagement and attraction to the young woman. He sends her a message and soon receives a reply, and their communication begins to develop rapidly. The author portrays a parallel plot line by expressing the motif of the passage of time with one hand – one day follows another, and time is constantly passing – while another hand depicts continuous texting. These two motifs intertwine, showing that time passes in parallel with their developing communication, until, finally, the two plot lines merge.

A bit later, the couple meets. The woman arrives elegantly dressed, which makes an even bigger impression on the man. His behaviour becomes too intrusive, and she slaps him across the face as a warning that he should not behave this way. Despite this, they set out together on a motorcycle journey to the mountains.

The author uses a subtle form of personification: some objects associated with a motorcycle (e.g., a helmet) are depicted as having a sensory experience. It is as if the helmet "feels" the touches, which are portrayed as unpleasant sensations.

Arriving in the mountains, the protagonists kiss, and a romantic feeling finally develops between them. The work concludes with a universal symbol – a heart shape formed by the hands, symbolising love and falling in love.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

45. Gabrielis Katakinas *Šaukimas* (The Draft Notice)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The text is about the inevitability of war and forced separation within a family. The text opens with an idyllic image of a family life: a woman prepares a meal, a man approaches her, they kiss, their eyes gently meet, he tastes the food she has prepared, and soon a child runs up to them and is hugged by the father. This peaceful scene symbolising harmony and love is suddenly interrupted by a loud knock on the door. Soldiers enter the house to deliver a military draft notice – the man must go to war.

Then, the daily life of war is depicted: he is among other soldiers, puts on his military uniform and his gear, flies in a military helicopter with them, and sees how comrades die one after another after jumping with parachutes. He manages to save himself and lands on the ground, where he engages in combat as one monotonous, dangerous day follows another. One day, he leans against a tree and briefly relaxes, returning to his family in his thoughts: he remembers

his wife and child, how he taught the child to ride a bicycle, and the joy they shared. This vision, just as before, is disrupted by the reality of war – hunger, fatigue, loneliness, longing, and forced separation from loved ones.

Overcome by anger and helplessness, he begins shooting at the enemy and is seriously wounded in the leg. He is saved by medical personnel and taken to a hospital, where he sees doctors filling in paperwork and is connected to an IV drip. Turning his head, he sees his wife and child. However, this vision remains fragile; he soon loses consciousness.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

46. Adas Aužbikavičius *Drakula "Red Bull"* (Dracula)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling

The text opens with a scene in a cemetery, where a coffin begins to move. Dracula is lying inside. Suddenly, he snaps his fingers and gets up: his cloak, sharp teeth, and the moon outside the window are depicted. Shortly afterwards, he transforms into a bat. The imagery of flying is conveyed using cinematic techniques: he flies low above the ground, then above the surface of the water, and finally reaches a house with its door ajar.

Music is playing inside the house, and the scene resembles a Mexican celebration. A bartender walks by, a man is eating, musicians are playing, and a tired woman in high heels passes by. She asks the bartender for a "Red Bull". She is given the drink, and a sip gives her energy and joy. At that moment, Dracula, transformed into a bat, bites her on the neck and begins feeding on her blood, which turns out to have an unexpected taste.

Having returned to the cemetery, Dracula lies down in the coffin but cannot rest peacefully: his cloak is crumpled behind his back, causing discomfort and disturbing his sleep. Finally, thinking that a whole day has passed, he gets up and flies away. However, as soon as he takes off, he sees the sunlight, which

instantly destroys him – Dracula dissolves and disappears; neither his body nor his fangs remain, but only a photograph reminding us that a vampire once lived here.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

47. Adas Aužbikavičius *Olimpinė šviesa* (The Olympic Flame)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The artistic text depicts Olympic symbols. The first image is of a person carrying the Olympic torch. Their head is adorned with a traditional laurel wreath, evoking Ancient Greece and the symbolism of victory. The torchbearer runs towards a mountain. A crowd of spectators follows them with their gaze. During the opening ceremony, the main Olympic cauldron is lit, symbolising the official beginning of the Olympic Games.

The narrative then depicts sporting events. The athlete performs a pole vault. These images convey the height of athletic intensity reached during the Olympic Games. Finally, the athlete receives the highest score, takes first place, and is awarded a gold medal.

The work concludes with the motif of a photograph – the moment of victory is captured, becoming not only a symbol of personal triumph but also part of collective memory.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

48. Donatas Kolosovas *Išgyvenimas* (Survival)

Artistic LGK text	Retelling
	

The text opens with a neologism representing a pulsing heart. The heart rhythm turns into a prologue framing a dramatic narrative. The action then moves to a bar, where the protagonist consumes a large amount of alcohol and chats with friends. Images change in sequence: the protagonist sees a spinning striptease dancer to whom banknotes are thrown, orders beer, and is served by a waiter, toward whom they start to feel affection. The heart beats faster, the head starts to ache, and the protagonist goes out for some fresh air, but the pain does not subside. It starts to rain outside. They light a cigarette, and the smoke gradually spreads through the air. Through the image of smoke, the author transports the viewer to another space – the protagonist's home where their family and parents are. The protagonist opens up about themselves, revealing who they are, but their mother responds critically; she does not understand or accept them, and the bond is broken, leaving the young person feeling rejected.

The plot then returns to the present: the protagonist stands on the roof of a tall building, having decided to take their own life. Their eyes follow a bird flying by and cars moving in the parking lot below. Finally, they decide to jump. Their body hits the roof of a car, and they die. The narrative then moves to a funeral scene: green trees, a church, and crying friends and relatives. At the centre is an urn with their ashes, surrounded by burning candles. The protagonist is now a soul who understands that these are their ashes, and that life has ended. In this *post-mortem* state, the central idea of the work is revealed – the protagonist realises the magnitude of the mistake and wishes to return, continue living, and not end their life.

The work was filmed by the author of the dissertation.

49. Arūnas Bražinskas *Katės ir šuo* (Cats and a Dog)

Artistic LGK text



The text uses a global metaphor depicting an animal family in which a mother cat raises her offspring – three kittens and a puppy. The mother teaches them essential life skills: drinking milk, climbing trees, and meowing. The kittens learn these skills successfully, but the puppy struggles – it slides down while trying to climb a tree, it does not like the milk, and its attempt at meowing ends in whining and barking. The mother cat's response is depicted as wise and forgiving – she watches the puppy's failures with compassion but patiently continues teaching it.

One part of the work depicts the family walking in a single file. Then the puppy sees other puppies nearby and, after joining them, feels a sense of belonging – it can play, romp, and be among its own kind. However, the mother cat soon calls it back to her, and the puppy experiences inner conflict: a wish to stay with those like it and the need to return to the family with which it shares a bond. The puppy turns around and follows its family.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis.

50. Nina Šamakova *Post facto* (Post Facto)

Artistic LGK text



The work narrates the experience of a Deaf person during the night, when the recurring lack of air in the stuffy room where they sleep causes them to have intense, suffocating dreams. They dream of the heat of a tropical island, the desert heat, and a scorching rocket flight. Each time the protagonist wakes up, they are surprised to find that the window they had previously opened has been closed again, and this increasingly irritates them.

In the morning, upon encountering a family member, the protagonist vents their anger in sign language, but the true situation soon becomes clear. The storm that raged during the night had forced the family member to close the window again and again – as many times as the protagonist had opened it. This explanation resolves the conflict, and the protagonist feels ashamed and begins to view the situation with self-irony.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project Mes taip nesitarėm (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

51. Lukas Gužauskas *Universiteto biblioteka* (The University Library)



The work portrays a contrast between the experiences of hearing and Deaf people in the academic environment. In a library, two students – one hearing and one Deaf – sit together at a desk. The hearing student focuses on their notes and ignores a friend's invitation to look out the window at a wonderful landscape. Meanwhile, the Deaf student, after briefly admiring the surroundings, also starts working. The noise of the library – intense keyboard typing and slamming doors – increasingly disturbs the hearing student, disrupts their focus, and makes them nervous. In contrast, the Deaf student remains calm, focusing on their task as if isolated from the noise. Eventually,

the hearing student, unable to tolerate the auditory overload, retreats into a private room but is met with a different kind of sensory interference – visual stimuli: a flickering old lamp and uncomfortable surroundings. These visual stimuli, unlike sounds, disturb their inner balance and cause anger, which is expressed through an aggressive action – breaking a pen.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

52. Lukas Gužauskas *Universiteto auditorija* (University Lecture Hall)

Artistic LGK text



The artistic text depicts an academic setting in which the lecturer's speech is interpreted into LGK, enabling the Deaf student, who is the protagonist of the work, to understand the lecture. After the lecture, the action moves to a noisy university hall. The Deaf student enters a state of calm and falls asleep on a lounger, while the hearing student, surprised by their calmness, sits down beside them.

The Deaf student invites the hearing student through signs to experience silence and offers them earplugs. After inserting the earplugs, the hearing student experiences the complete disappearance of noise and soon has a metaphorical vision: silence opens up as a world filled with light, space, and nature, providing a sense of freedom and inner peace. However, this experience is temporary – once one earplug falls out, the familiar noise of the hearing person's world returns, and the "space of silence" created by temporary deafness falls apart.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

53. Justina Čiplytė *Muzikos skonis* (The Taste of Music)

Artistic LGK text



This artistic text depicts a contrast between how music is experienced by a hearing person and a Deaf person, as well as the relationship between them. The scene takes place in a space filled with light, sound, and a moving crowd. The pace is constantly changing: movements and lights slow down, stop, and later return to the same rhythm. This effect is created through rhythm, cinematic techniques, and neologisms.

Two characters stand out in the crowd: a hearing person listening to music through headphones, and a Deaf person holding a vibrating speaker against their body. The Deaf person expresses the musical experience through bodily sensations and physical vibration, which substitutes for sound. The hearing person initially experiencing the music only through their sense of hearing is surprised to discover a different, bodily dimension of experiencing music when they hold the speaker to their body.

The two characters' exchange of ways of experiencing music reveals different ways of perceiving music, but also mutual recognition and respect for these differences. Wearing headphones, the Deaf person does not hear the music, as their musical experience is conveyed through physical vibrations. Meanwhile, the hearing person, holding the speaker to their body, discovers rhythm and other nuances of music, which they begin to experience with their whole body.

At the end of the work, both characters move synchronously to the rhythm, blend into the crowd, and the narrative ends with the same image of a house with which it began.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

54. Justina Čiplytė *Kaubojus* (The Cowboy)

Artistic LGK text

The work depicts a wandering cowboy on his journey through the desert. The scorching sun beats down on him. He takes off his hat, wipes the sweat from his forehead, puts the hat back on, and straightens his moustache. He passes desert vegetation, notices a small lizard hiding among the rocks, and a tumbleweed carried by the wind. The narrative is constructed through slow motion, rhythmic repetition (step by step), and changes in time (regular speed, slow motion, and reverse motion). Upon noticing a town in the distance, he quickens his pace towards it.

Arriving in the town, he approaches a bar. Before entering, an image comes to his mind in which a thought evokes a feeling – an unpleasant experience – and the thought merges with the feeling.

He enters through the door, where people are raising beer mugs, eating, and playing games. Upon noticing the newcomer, everyone becomes uneasy and lowers their heads. The breaking point occurs when the only Deaf visitor sitting at the far end of the bar continues sipping his drink. He behaves this way not because he is rude or wishes to demonstrate his superiority, but because he is Deaf. The conflict reaches its climax when the hearing man grabs him roughly and reacts furiously. However, the situation is resolved when the Deaf cowboy uses signs to indicate that he is Deaf. The tense atmosphere soon becomes friendly – the hearing man orders drinks, they clink their beer mugs together, drink, look at one another, nod, move closer together, and continue raising their mugs. Their relationship at the end of the work becomes an expression of brotherhood and solidarity.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

55. Arnoldas Matulis *Persijungimas* (Switching Off)

Artistic LGK text


The work depicts a factory environment full of constant noise, the sounds of metal processing, and the supervisor's instructions. The protagonist – a hearing employee – is constantly disturbed by various voices and sounds that exhaust and drain them. They are contrasted with their Deaf colleague, who is not troubled by the noise and remains calm and focused on their work. Observing this contrast, the hearing employee experiences an ever-growing auditory overload, and, finally, upon receiving headphones from the Deaf person, as an invitation to relax and distance themselves from their surroundings, attempts to escape the noise-filled environment.

The hearing employee retreats to another room, closes the door, and, putting on the headphones given to them, immerses themselves in a vision in which they have transformed into a deer running through nature: the state of silence opens up an experience of space, beauty, and freedom. However, this idyllic vision soon turns into a threatening scene – the stones rolling down the mountains symbolise tension and anxiety returning to real life. The work ends when the protagonist opens their eyes and understands that their moment of silence has been interrupted in the real world – people are knocking on the door, bringing them back to an environment full of noise and control.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

56. Lea Milašauskė *Karma* (Karma)

Artistic LGK text



The work depicts a young hearing man walking along a road wearing his headphones and rhythmically immersed in music, so he does not notice an obstacle ahead – a banana peel lying on the road. As he slips, but before he falls, a vision appears to him: he recalls seeing two Deaf people communicating in sign language. Instead of respecting their way of communicating style, the protagonist mocked them by imitating their signs and comparing them to monkeys. The Deaf people disapproved of this behaviour – they looked him over and gestured for him to leave. Once the vision ends, the young man falls to the ground, his headphones slip off his head, and the banana peel lands on his face. This scene is depicted in slow motion, giving the viewer a chance to empathise.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis. It was created during the project *Mes taip nesitarėm* (Not What We Agreed) under the supervision of lecturer Debbie Z. Rennie.

57. Arūnas Bražinskas *Kalnai* (The Mountains)

Artistic LGK text



This work portrays a journey to the mountains. The narrative starts with an image of vast plains and a helicopter standing nearby. It is shown from different perspectives using cinematic techniques; it soon takes off, with the ground receding below and glaciers, rocks, and settlements visible.

Once the helicopter lands, the passengers get off and form a line, and start their hike towards the mountains. Their physical exertion and the challenges they face are depicted: breathing becomes increasingly laboured, the sun shines brightly, and special climbing equipment, such as protective goggles, is used. One person looks at the mountain and greets it in sign language. The majestic mountain is personified: it appears to speak, inviting them to climb, and offering its support.

The hikers continue climbing, and their ascent is depicted from various perspectives, highlighting the rhythm and repetition of movements. The protagonist stops and looks at another group of hikers climbing in the distance. One person stands out and asks, “Are you Deaf?” “Yes!” the other person replies. A huge chasm separates them; they are climbing different mountains, but even such a large distance does not prevent them from communicating. Meanwhile, other hikers communicating in spoken language try to understand the dialogue between their companion and the distant person from the other group. They are surprised that the two can actually communicate and try to speak to the distant person, but realise that their voices will not reach the other side of the chasm. The work ends when they reach the summit.

The work was filmed by cinematographer Linas Miskelis.

Annex No. 2

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Nina Šamakova

Vardas, pavardė

Parašas

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Justina Čiplytė



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Lijana Čiplienė



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.



Arūnas Bražinskas

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.



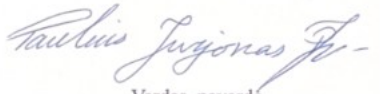
Arnoldas Matulis

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.



Vardas, pavardė

Parašas

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.



Marija Rimkutė

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Lea Milašauskė

Vardas, pavardė

Parašas



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Karolis Pilipavičius



SUTIKIMAS

2019 m. rugsėjo 18 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijos / *vizualinio vernakulo* atvejai atvejai būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Greta Damševič

SUTIKIMAS

2019 m. rugsėjo 18 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijos / *vizualinio vernakulo* atvejai atvejai būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Gabrielis Katakinas



SUTIKIMAS

2019 m. rugsėjo 18 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijos atvejai būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Adas Aužbikavičius



SUTIKIMAS

2019 m. rugsėjo 27 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijos / *vizualinio vernakulo* atvejai būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Andžėjus Voroneckis



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Lukas Gužauskas



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.



Vilius Glušokas

SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Auksė Šiaudkulienė



SUTIKIMAS

2019 m. rugsėjo 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos poezijos / *vizualinio vernakulo* atvejai būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Donatas Kolosovas



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.

Rūta Mingailaitė



SUTIKIMAS

2025 m. gegužės 20 d.

Vilnius

Sutinku, kad moksliniais tikslais mano lietuvių gestų kalbos meniniai tekstai (kūriniai) būtų filmuojami, analizuojami, aptariami moksliniuose darbuose ir viešinami internete.



Larisa Voroneckaja

SANTRAUKA

Summary in International Signs:



ĮVADAS

Šioje disertacijoje aprašomo tyrimo dėmesio centre – lietuvių gestų kalbos (LGK) meninių tekstų raiškos priemonės. Gestų kalbų (GK) meniniai tekstai yra svarbi gestakalbių kurčiųjų bendruomenės kalbinio ir kultūrinio paveldo dalis (Peters 2000). Tai – įvairiomis pasaulio GK kuriami ir atliekami kūriniai (Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016: 4). GK meniniai tekstai gali būti įvairių kategorijų: pasakojimas, poezija, Vizualinis Vernakulas (VV) ir kt. Tačiau šioje disertacijoje nekeliamas tikslas skirstyti kūrinius į kategorijas, dėmesys sutelkiamas į LGK *meninių tekstų* raišką. *GK meniniais tekstais* šioje disertacijoje laikomi įvairūs GK kuriami ir perteikiami meninės kūrybos tekstai, kuriuos kuria gestakalbiai kurtieji, o tiems tekstams būdinga daugiasluoksnė prasminė struktūra ir meninės raiškos priemonės. Šių tekstų visuma laikoma GK *literatūra* (sutinkama ir su *GK meno* samprata šiame kontekste).

Pirmieji dėmesį į GK poetinį ir kūrybinį potencialą atkreipė tyrėjai Edward S. Klima ir Ursula Bellugi (1979), o GK meninių tekstų tyrimų srities pradininku laikomas Clayton Valli (1993). Vėliau tokius tekstus, jų raiškos priemones analizavo Brianne Brown (2001), Michiko Kaneko (2008, 2011), o daugiausia – Rachel Sutton-Spence (2001, 2003, 2005), publikavusi darbų ir su kitais kolegomis: su Kaneko (2007, 2012, 2016), su Donna Jo Napoli (2010), su Ronice Müller de Quadros (2005), su Fernanda de Araujo Machado (2023), taip pat su Fernanda de Araujo Machado, André Luiz Maciel ir Ronice Müller de Quadros (2020) ir kt. Pirmiausia tyrėjai siekė palyginti GK meninius pasakojimus su GK poezijos tekstais ir bandyti rasti tarp jų skirtį – šis klausimas išlieka aktualus ir dabar. Taip pat analizuotos meninių kūrinių temos, struktūra, lyriniai subjektai, meninės raiškos priemonės: simetrija,

pasikartojimai, neologizmai, dviprasmybės, metaforos, nerankiniai elementai, pasitelkiami kaip meninės raiškos priemonės. Pastaraisiais metais daug dėmesio sulaukia ir VV (Brandwijk 2018, Asmal, Kaneko 2020, Asmal 2021, Monteiro 2023) – diskutuojama apie jo raiškos ypatumus ir vietą GK literatūros bei meno erdvėje. Tyrimų laukas pamažu plečiasi nuo pavienių kūrinių ir jų raiškos priemonių analizės prie platesnių klausimų – meninio gestų kalbos vartojimo sampratos (Peters 2000, Bauman, Nelson, Rose 2006, Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016, Sutton-Spence, Machado 2023), kūrinių kategorijų, raiškos formų radimosi ir jų ribų (Valli 1993, Bahan 2006, Sutton-Spence 2005, Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016) bei meninės raiškos priemonių įvairovės ir funkcijų tyrimų (Sutton-Spence 2005, Kaneko, Mesch 2013, Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016, Klamt 2018 ir kt.). Taip pat dėmesys sutelkiamas į nacionalinių GK literatūros ir meno raidos bei ypatumų dokumentavimą, sisteminimą, kūrinių antologijų sudarymą ir tyrimus (Machado 2017, Sutton-Spence, Machado 2023, Sutton-Spence, Machado, Maciel, Müller de Quadros 2020). Nepaisant sukauptų žinių, vis dar siekiama geriau suprasti, kokie požymiai lemia, kad GK sukurtas tekstas būtų suvokiamas kaip meninis. Prie šios tarptautinės mokslinės diskusijos prisideda ir ši disertacija, siekianti nustatyti, kokie požymiai LGK tekstą daro meniniu.

Pabrėžtina, kad GK meninių tekstų tyrimų pasaulyje vis dar nėra gausu, o Lietuvoje ši tyrimų sritis tebėra ankstyvojoje raidos stadijoje. Pirmasis žingsnis nagrinėjant LGK meninę raišką buvo žengtas šios disertacijos autorės magistriniame darbe (Teresė 2018). Todėl galima teigti, kad ši disertacija yra pirmasis išsamus darbas, kuriame nagrinėjama LGK meninių tekstų raiška. Šis tyrimas yra **naujas ir aktualus** dėl šių priežasčių:

1. LGK meniniai tekstai iki šiol nebuvo sistemiškai analizuoti ir aprašyti moksliniu požiūriu. Todėl LGK meninės raiškos atskleidimas yra svarbus platesniame GK meninių tekstų tyrimų kontekste. Skirtingų gestakalbių bendruomenių kultūros nėra tapačios, todėl įvairių GK tyrimai leidžia nustatyti, kokios meninės raiškos priemonės ir požymiai yra universalūs ir bendri skirtingoms GK, o kokie – unikalūs ir būdingi konkrečiai kalbai bei jos kultūriniam kontekstui (Sutton-Spence, Kaneko 2016). Šiuo tyrimu į tarptautinį GK meninės raiškos tyrimų lauką pirmą kartą sistemiškai įtraukiama LGK.
2. LGK meninių tekstų tyrimai atskleidžia autentiškas gestakalbių kurčiųjų patirtis, pasaulėžiūrą, istoriją, kultūros ypatybes, taip pat jie padeda išsaugoti, susisteminti ir perduoti bendruomenės bei krašto tradicijas. Sistemingo šių kūrinių rinkimo ir analizės stoka gali lemti neišsamų Lietuvos gestakalbių kurčiųjų bendruomenės pasaulėžiūros, kultūros ir

autentiškų patirčių supratimą. Tokių tekstų tyrimai padeda geriau pažinti gestakalbių kultūrą ir mažinti jos supratimo sunkumus. Šis ir panašūs tyrimai gali prisidėti prie visuomenės mąstymo apie gestakalbius ir LGK paradigmos kaitos. Taip pat jie gali stiprinti LGK prestižą, atkreipti dėmesį į gestakalbių bendruomenę bei jos poreikius ir skatinti tolesnius šios srities bei apskritai LGK tyrimus.

3. Disertacijos naujumą lemia ir taikomas metodologinis požiūris: LGK meninių tekstų analizei pasitelkiami *Computer Vision* (CV) įrankiai *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace*. Šio metodo tinkamumas pirmiausia patikrintas atliekant bandomąjį tyrimą tarptautinio mokslinio bendradarbiavimo su prof. Vadim Kimmelman (Bergeno universitetas, Norvegija) metu, o vėliau jis pritaikytas išplėstiniame tyrime. Jame CV pagrįsta kiekybinė analizė derinama su kokybine diskusijų grupės analize, taip prisidedant prie GK meninės raiškos tyrimų metodologijos plėtojimo.

Šioje disertacijoje aprašomo tyrimo objektas – LGK meninių tekstų raiška.

Tyrimo **tikslas** – remiantis LGK meninių tekstų analize ištirti, kaip juose reiškiasi globaliosios metaforos, fonologinio lygmens metaforos ir neologizmai, taip pat nerankiniai elementai ir simetrija, kaip šios meninės raiškos priemonės kuriamos ir kokias reikšmes jos perteikia bei kokias funkcijas atlieka.

Šiam tikslui pasiekti buvo iškelti tokie **uždaviniai**:

1. Sistemiškai apibendrinti ankstesnius GK meninės raiškos meniniuose tekstuose tyrimus ir suformuoti teorinį LGK meninių tekstų analizės pagrindą.
2. Sudaryti tyrimo medžiagos imtį iš 2017–2025 m. gestakalbių kurčiųjų, LGK gimtakalbių sukurtų ir atliktų LGK meninių tekstų bei šių tekstų perpasakojimų.
3. Parengti tyrimo medžiagą analizei, suvienodinant vaizdo įrašų vizualines sąlygas ir pašalinant šiam tyrimui nereikšmingus garso elementus.
4. Pasitelkus ELAN programą atlikti kokybinę LGK meninių tekstų analizę ir identifikuoti globaliąsias metaforas bei nustatyti, kas lemia jų atsiradimą.
5. Pasitelkus ELAN programą atlikti kokybinę fonologinio lygmens metaforų analizę ir nustatyti jų kūrimo būdus.

6. Pasitelkus ELAN programą atlikti kokybinę neologizmų analizę, atskleidžiant jų formavimosi principus ir funkcijas LGK meniniame tekste.
7. Parengti tyrimo medžiagą kiekybinei analizei, naudojant CV įrankius: bandomajam tyrimui, pasitelkus *MediaPipe Holis*tic, atrinkti 10 vaizdo įrašų (5 meninius LGK tekstus ir 5 jų perpasakojimus), o išplėstiniam tyrimui, pasitelkus *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace,* atrinkti 24 vaizdo įrašus (12 meninių LGK tekstų ir 12 jų perpasakojimų).
8. Pasitelkus CV *MediaPipe Holis*tic įrankį atlikti bandomąjį kiekybinį tyrimą, siekiant įvertinti šio įrankio tinkamumą LGK meninių tekstų ir jų perpasakojimų skirtumams nustatyti, susitelkiant į pasirinktus nerankinius elementus ir simetriją.
9. Pasitelkus CV *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace* įrankius atlikti išplėstinį kiekybinį LGK meninių tekstų ir jų perpasakojimų tyrimą, siekiant nustatyti LGK meninių tekstų ir jų perpasakojimų skirtumus, susitelkiant į pasirinktus nerankinius elementus ir simetriją.
10. Pasitelkus diskusijų grupės metodą kokybiškai išanalizuoti ir interpretuoti CV tyrimo rezultatus bei nustatyti, kokias meninės raiškos funkcijas identifikuoti parametrai atlieka LGK meniniuose tekstuose, palyginti su jų perpasakojimais.

Disertacijoje aprašomo tyrimo **teorinė vertė –** sistemiškai aprašomos LGK gestakalbių kurčiųjų autorių naudojamos meninės raiškos priemonės: globaliosios metaforos, fonologinio lygmens metaforos, neologizmai, jų struktūra, kūrimo būdai bei funkcijos. Taip šis tyrimas papildo iki šiol atliktus įvairių GK meninės raiškos priemonių tyrimus. Pavyzdžiui, disertacijoje plėtojamas *neologizmų konstruktų* tyrimo aspektas. Nors panašūs konstruktai minimi kitų tyrėjų darbuose ir GK kūrėjų kūriniuose, iki šiol jie nebuvo plačiau aptarti, o juoba sistemiškai nagrinėti moksliniu požiūriu. Todėl šis tyrimas sudaro prielaidas tolesniems neologizmų konstruktų ir jų raiškos galimybių tyrimams.

Be to, tyrimo medžiaga praturtina šios srities empirinių duomenų bazę.

Tyrimo **metodologinė vertė** – GK meninių tekstų analizei pritaikyti CV įrankiai *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace,* bendradarbiaujant su prof. Vadim Kimmelman. *MediaPipe Holistic* tinkamumas LGK meninių tekstų analizei pirmiausia buvo išbandytas atliekant bandomąjį tyrimą, o išplėstiniame tyrime CV analizė papildyta *OpenFace* įrankiu. Kiekybinės CV įrankiais atliktos analizės ir kokybinio diskusijų grupės tyrimo derinimas sudaro naują metodologinį pagrindą GK meninės raiškos priemonėms tirti.

Disertacijoje aprašomas tyrimas turi ir **praktinę vertę**. Jo rezultatai svarbūs švietimo sričiai. Šiuo metu kurtieji vaikai Lietuvoje turi ribotas galimybes susipažinti su originaliais LGK meniniais tekstais, nes ugdymo procese daugiausia remiamasi vertimais iš žodinių kalbų ir rašytiniais lietuvių kalbos tekstais. Disertacija atkreipia dėmesį į šią problemą ir pagrindžia originalių meninių LGK tekstų integravimo į ugdymą svarbą, skatinant kūrybiškumą, saviraišką ir pilnavertį tapatybės formavimąsi. Taip pat tyrimas aktualus ir LGK vertėjams. Meninės raiškos priemonių atpažinimas ir perteikimas vertimo procese dažnai kelia sunkumų, o šiai sričiai skirtų mokomųjų priemonių Lietuvoje vis dar trūksta. Disertacija prisideda prie meninės raiškos interpretavimo principų pažinimo bei platesnio kurčiųjų bendruomenės kalbos ir kultūros supratimo. Tyrimo rezultatai gali būti aktualūs mokslininkams, pedagogams, švietimo, kultūros politikos formuotojams, vertėjams ir kitiems specialistams bei visiems gestakalbiams ar net GK nemokantiems.

Tyrimas vykdytas 2017–2025 m. **Tiriamoji medžiaga –** 57 LGK meniniai kūriniai. Analizei surinkta tiek pat šių meninių tekstų perpasakojimų, tačiau disertacijoje pateikti ne visi 57 perpasakojimai, o tik 26. Nors visa medžiaga naudota analizei, dalis perpasakojimų autorių buvo nufilmuoti privačioje aplinkoje, todėl, siekiant išlaikyti diskretiškumą, nuspręsta šių įrašų neviešinti. Perpasakojimai naudoti siekiant geriau suprasti meninių tekstų turinį ir meninės raiškos priemones, o kiekybinėje analizėje – lyginti juos su originaliais meniniais tekstais.

Tyrime taikyti **kokybiniai ir kiekybiniai metodai**. Kokybinė analizė atlikta naudojant ELAN programą. Analizuoti 57 LGK meniniai tekstai, siekiant identifikuoti globaliąsias metaforas, fonologinio lygmens metaforas ir neologizmus, nustatyti jų kūrimo principus, reikšmes bei funkcijas meniniuose tekstuose. Atliekant tyrimą pasitelkus ELAN įrankį remtasi Sutton-Spence ir Kaneko (2016) siūloma *makro* ir *mikro lygmenų* prieiga, t. y. konkrečios meninės raiškos priemonės analizuojamos ne izoliuotai, o paisant viso kūrinio konteksto.

LGK meninių tekstų analizei taip pat pasitelkti minėti CV įrankiai. Tyrime konkrečiai naudotas *MediaPipe Holistic* įrankis, kurio tinkamumas pirmiausia buvo patikrintas atliekant bandomąjį tyrimą, o vėliau įrankis pritaikytas išplėstinėje analizėje. Atliekant bandomąjį tyrimą, analizuota 10 vaizdo įrašų (5 meniniai tekstai ir 5 jų perpasakojimai), siekiant įvertinti įrankio ir metodo tinkamumą LGK meninių tekstų analizei. Vėliau atlikta išplėstinė analizė, į kurią, pasitelkus *OpenFace* įrankį, įtraukti 24 vaizdo įrašai (12 meninių tekstų ir 12 jų perpasakojimų). Kiekybinės CV analizės rezultatai

išplėstinio tyrimo atveju derinti su kokybiniu diskusijų grupės tyrimu, taip prisidedant prie naujų GK meninės raiškos tyrimų metodų plėtros.

Ginamieji teiginiai

1. Globaliosios metaforos LGK tekstuose nėra atsitiktinės – jos sistemingai kyla iš šių kūriniuose pasikartojančių teminių sričių: *kalba, vertybės ir komunikacija* (angl. *language, communication and values*)*; išankstiniai nusistatymai ir ignoravimas; tapatybė ir kultūrinė priklausomybė arba buvimas per vidurį* (angl. identity and cultural belonging, in-betweenness)*; pasipriešinimas ir socialinė kova* (angl. *resistance and social struggle*)*; kurčiųjų kultūra ir bendruomenė* (angl. *Deaf experience and community*)*; kurčiųjų tapatybė ir patirtys* (angl. *Deaf identity and experience*)*; sensoriniai pasauliai* (angl. *sensory worlds*)*; universalios ir egzistencinės temos* (angl. *universal and existential themes*). Šios teminės sritys atspindi platesnį GK meninės raiškos lauką, būdingą įvairių šalių gestakalbių bendruomenėms. Globalioji metafora dažniausiai grindžiama ne viena tema, o kelių teminių sluoksnių sąveika, leidžiančia kurti vientisą ir daugiasluoksnę meninę struktūrą.
2. Meniniuose LGK tekstuose neologizmų konstruktai yra viena sudėtingiausių meninės raiškos priemonių. Juos pasitelkus kuriama vizualinė perspektyva. Neologizmų konstruktai veikia kaip savarankiška meninio vaizdinio kūrimo priemonė, o kai kuriais atvejais gali būti pasitelkiami ir metaforoms kurti. Neologizmų konstruktai gali tapti pagrindine konkretaus kūrinio meninės raiškos priemone, organizuojančia visą jo vizualinę struktūrą, atskleidžiančia autoriaus stilistinį savitumą, simbolinę teksto prasmę ir gestakalbio pasaulėžiūrą.
3. Meninių GK tekstų autoriai sistemingai naudoja nerankinius elementus kaip meninės raiškos priemonę. Rankų, pečių ir viršutinės kūno dalies judesių visuma gali būti suvokiama kaip Marilyn Mafra Klamt (2018) aprašytas *vizualinis skambumas* (angl. *visual sonority*). Vizualinis skambumas yra GK meniniams tekstams būdinga meninės raiškos priemonė, ir tai yra vienas iš įrankių, kuris paverčia tekstą meniniu.
4. Meniniuose LGK tekstuose *įkūnijimas* (angl. *embodiment*), suprantamas kaip veikėjų ar įvykių perteikimas pasitelkiant kūno judesius, yra svarbi meninės raiškos priemonė, prisidedanti prie teksto meniškumo kūrimo ir leidžianti atskirti meninius tekstus nuo nemeninių.

Darbą sudaro teorinė, metodologinė ir empirinė dalys. Teorinėje dalyje aptariama gestų kalba, pateikiama gestakalbių bendruomenės lingvistinė ir kultūrinė perspektyva. Taip pat pristatoma GK literatūros samprata, pateikiama gestų kalbos meninių tekstų temų, veikėjų ir simbolinių motyvų apžvalga bei apibendrinami iki šiol atlikti GK meninių tekstų tyrimai. Vėliau dėmesys sutelkiamas į pagrindinį šios disertacijos objektą ir išsamiai aptariamos globaliosios metaforos, fonologinio lygmens metaforos, neologizmai, nerankiniai elementai kaip meninės raiškos priemonė bei simetrijos raiška. Antrojoje disertacijos dalyje aprašoma tyrimo metodologija. Joje pristatomas tiriamosios medžiagos rinkimo ir tyrimo imties sudarymo procesas, duomenų parengimas tolesniems tyrimo etapams. Taip pat aprašomi tyrime taikyti metodai ir priemonės – ELAN programa, CV įrankiai *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace*, diskusijų grupės nariai bei šios grupės diskusijos ypatumai. Trečioji disertacijos dalis skirta LGK meninių tekstų meninės raiškos priemonių analizei: nagrinėjamos globaliosios metaforos, fonologinio lygmens metaforos ir neologizmų konstruktai. Toliau pateikiami *MediaPipe Holistic* įrankiu atlikto tyrimo rezultatai ir vertinama, ar šis įrankis yra tinkamas akademiškai pagrįstiems ir patikimiems LGK meninių tekstų tyrimams. Vėliau aptariamas išplėstinis tyrimas, kuriame taikyti ir kiekybinis, ir kokybinis metodai: CV įrankiais *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace* gauti duomenys bei diskusijų grupės rezultatai. Aprašoma, kokias funkcijas meniniame tekste atlieka tyrimo metu identifikuotos meninės raiškos priemonės – nerankiniai elementai ir simetrija bei asimetrija. Taip pat išsamiai analizuojamos tyrimo metu identifikuotos meninės raiškos priemonės – įkūnijimas ir vizualinis skambumas. Disertacijos pabaigoje pateikiamos tyrimo išvados, aptariami atlikto tyrimo ribotumai, galimi trūkumai ir numatomos tolesnių mokslinių tyrimų kryptys ir perspektyvos. Disertacijoje pateikiamas 241 pozicijų literatūros sąrašas ir 2 priedai: 1 priede pateikiami 57 analizuotų LGK meninių tekstų aprašymai, informacija apie jų autorystę ir viešai prieinamų vaizdo įrašų QR kodai; 2 priede – tyrimo dalyvių rašytiniai sutikimai. Pagrindinėje disertacijos dalyje pateikiamos 6 lentelės ir 63 paveikslai.

Tyrimo rezultatai apima metaforų – globaliųjų ir fonologinio lygmens, neologizmų konstruktų, nerankinių elementų, simetrijos bei asimetrijos – analizę.

Globaliosios metaforos. Tyrimas parodė, kad iš visos šios disertacijos tyrimo medžiagos, t. y. iš 57 analizuotų LGK meninių tekstų, 14-oje nustatyti globaliosios metaforos atvejai. Nustatyta, kad globaliųjų metaforų atsiradimo prielaida yra gestakalbių bendruomenei aktualios teminės sritys, kurios

analizės metu atsiskleidė kaip pasikartojančios. Atliekant šį temų tyrimą remtasi GK meninių tekstų temas plačiausiai tyrusio Bahan (2006) išskirtomis teminėmis sritimis, taip pat Christie ir Wilkins (2007), Sutton-Spence ir Kaneko (2016) ir Sutton-Spence ir Machado (2023) darbais. Užfiksuotos šios teminės sritys: *kalba, vertybės ir komunikacija; išankstinės nuostatos ir ignoravimas; tapatybė ir kultūrinis priklausymas; pasipriešinimas ir socialinė kova; kurčiųjų kultūra ir bendruomenė; kurčiųjų tapatybė ir patirtys; sensoriniai pasauliai* bei *universalios ir egzistencinės temos*. Tyrimas parodė, kad globaliosios metaforos dažniausiai kuriamos ne vienos temos, o kelių teminių sluoksnių sąveikos pagrindu. Taip pat nustatyta, kad jos kuriamos pasitelkiant pasikartojančius simbolius ir motyvus, tokius kaip *medis, vėjas, augalas, vanduo, gyvūnai (gulbės, drugelis, katės ir šuo), kalnas, gėlės, vaivorykštė, metalinis įrankis, žirklės, akis, laikrodis, sulčiaspaudė, ugnis, obuolys, turkio spalva, apsiaustas – švarkas, užsiveriančios ir atsiveriančios lūpos (burna), akys ir ausys, Niutono lopšys* ar *angelas*. Per globaliąsias metaforas atskleidžiami tokie reikšminiai konceptai: *gestų kalba kaip širdies kalba akiai,* jos suvokimas kaip vertybės, visuomenės išankstinės nuostatos GK ir gestakalbių atžvilgiu bei jų ignoravimas, dėl to kylantys komunikacijos sunkumai. Taip pat nustatyta, kad globaliosios metaforos kuriamos pasitelkus ir kitas meninės raiškos priemones – fonologinio lygmens metaforas, neologizmų konstruktus ir nerankinius elementus.

Fonologinio lygmens metaforos. Išanalizavus 57 LGK meninius tekstus, 8 iš jų rasta fonologinio lygmens metaforų. Iš viso užfiksuota 12 tokių atvejų, nes kai kuriuose kūriniuose yra daugiau nei viena fonologinio lygmens metafora. Nustatyta, kad metaforinė reikšmė tokiais atvejais kuriama pasitelkus *judesį, lokalizaciją, nerankinius elementus*, *orientaciją* ir *konfigūraciją*. Pastebėta, kad fonologinio lygmens metaforos gali funkcionuoti savarankiškai arba papildyti globaliąją metaforą. Taip pat nustatyta, kad viena fonologinio lygmens metafora gali būti kuriama keliais fonologiniais parametrais: vienas jų sudaro pagrindinę metaforinę ašį, o kiti ją papildo ir plėtoja. Pavyzdžiui, lokalizacija gali būti pagrindinė metaforinės reikšmės kūrimo priemonė, o konfigūracija ir judesys – šią reikšmę papildyti. Analizė atskleidė, kad fonologinio lygmens metaforos LGK meniniuose tekstuose kuriamos per judesio greičio kontrastą ir kaitą, judėjimą ratu, nusistovėjusių gestų vietos modifikavimą, tam tikros lokalizacijos pasirinkimą neologizmui, nerankinių elementų pasitelkimą, taip pat per plaštakos ir pirštų kryptį bei plaštakos formą. Šiuo lygmeniu kuriamos metaforos perteikia *brutalumo, rūpesčio, apsaugos / globos, ligos, gyvybingumo, tapatybės, vidinio „Aš“, priklausymo, galios santykių,*

emocinio atsiribojimo, pažeidžiamumo, vidinio konflikto, pasimetimo, tęstinumo, atkaklumo ir išlikimo bei laiko tėkmės reikšmes. Taip pat kuriamos *priėmimo bei priklausymo* ir *slopinimo, nepripažinimo, sumažėjusios savivertės* reikšmės. Nustatyta, kad fonologinio lygmens metaforos gali būti kuriamos ir modifikuojant nusistovėjusį gestą, ir pasitelkiant neologizmą. Fiksuojama ir metaforinė reikšmė, susijusi su gestakalbio kurčiojo tapatybe, jos formavimusi bei raida, kai fonologinio lygmens metaforinė raiška siejama su šviesos konceptu. Pasitelkus šią raiškos priemonę taip pat metaforiškai perteikiama, kad GK yra *širdies kalba akiai*.

Neologizmų konstruktai. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad LGK meniniuose tekstuose funkcionuoja ne tik mokslinėje literatūroje aptariami pavieniai neologizmai, bet ir šiame darbe išskirti *neologizmų konstruktai* – kelių tarpusavyje susijusių gestų seka ar grupė. Tyrime sutelktas dėmesys tik į juos, pavieniai neologizmai nebuvo analizuoti. Nustatyta, kad neologizmų konstruktai gali būti sudaryti vien iš naujai sukurtų proformų, tačiau dažnai jų viduje derinamos naujos proformos, atpažįstamos ir nusistovėjusios proformos, polisintetiniai gestai ir nusistovėję gestai. Analizė parodė, kad neologizmų konstruktai naudojami vizualinei perspektyvai organizuoti (priartinimui, nutolinimui, jų kaitai ar grįžimui į pradinį vaizdinį). Analizė taip pat atskleidė, kad dalyje LGK meninių tekstų neologizmų konstruktai naudojami gestakalbio kurčiojo pasaulėvokai perteikti. Neologizmų konstruktai pasitelkiami ir estetiniam bei emociniam poveikiui kurti, simbolinėms reikšmėms išryškinti, metaforoms kurti arba funkcionuoja kaip savarankiški meninės raiškos vienetai. Taigi atlikus analizę nustatyta, kad skirtingų gestų kalbos elementų derinimas neologizmų konstruktuose leidžia išlaikyti meninei kalbai būdingą daugiareikšmiškumą, kartu sudarydamas prielaidas teksto patyrėjui atpažinti kuriamą vaizdinį ir rekonstruoti jo reikšmę.

Nerankiniai elementai. Pasitelkus CV *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace* įrankius, kiekybiškai analizuoti pasirinkti rankiniai ir nerankiniai raiškos požymiai. Analizuojami nerankiniai elementai apėmė rankų judesių amplitudę (angl. *hand movement amplitude*), rankų judesių kintamumą (angl. *variation of hand movement*), kūno pasvirimą į šonus (angl. *sideward body leans* (*shoulder position*)), antakių judesius (angl. *eyebrow movement*), akių vokų kintamumą (angl. *eye aperture variation*) ir žvilgsnio kryptį (angl. *eye gaze direction*), o rankiniai – simetriją. Pirmiausia buvo analizuojami nerankiniai elementai. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad LGK meniniai tekstai, palyginti su jų perpasakojimais, pasižymi didesne šių nerankinių parametrų variacija ir didesne judesių amplitude. Diskusijų grupės analizė atskleidė, kad šie

nerankiniai elementai sistemingai pasitelkiami įkūnijimo raiškai, emociniam ir estetiniam poveikiui kurti bei meninio teksto raiškai formuoti. Taip pat nustatyta, kad koordinuota rankų, pečių, liemens, veido ir žvilgsnio dinamika veikia kaip vientisa raiškos sistema, šioje disertacijoje konceptualizuojama kaip vizualinis skambumas.

Simetrija. Tyrimas, atliktas pasitelkus CV *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace* įrankius, parodė, kad simetriškumas LGK meniniuose tekstuose pasireiškia rečiau negu jų perpasakojimuose. Šis rezultatas atskleidžia, kad kiekybiškai fiksuojamas didesnis simetriškumas savaime nėra meninio teksto požymis. Diskusijų grupės medžiagos analizė leido pamatyti, kad kiekybiniais metodais fiksuojamas didesnis simetriškumas dažnai kyla iš pačios gestų kalbos sistemos, ypač dėl dvirankių simetriškų gestų gausos, todėl savaime neatlieka meninės raiškos funkcijos. Nustatyta, kad meniniuose LGK tekstuose simetriškumas gali būti sąmoningai pasitelkiamas estetiniam ir emociniam poveikiui kurti. Tyrimo metu taip pat išryškėjo asimetrijos reikšmė: ji gali kurti įtampą, išryškinti erdvinius akcentus ir stiprinti naratyvinę dinamiką. Taigi meniniuose LGK tekstuose simetrija ir asimetrija gali funkcionuoti kaip tarpusavyje sąveikaujančios meninės raiškos priemonės, kurių reikšmė atsiskleidžia viso kūrinio kontekste.

Išvados. Atliktas tyrimas leidžia daryti tokias išvadas:

1. Globalioji metafora LGK meniniuose tekstuose nėra pavienė meninės raiškos priemonė – ji funkcionuoja kaip visą kūrinį organizuojantis prasmės kūrimo principas. Globalioji metafora leidžia konceptualizuoti gestakalbių kurčiųjų bendruomenei reikšmingas ir universalias patirtis, todėl tampa pagrindine meninio teksto semantinės struktūros ašimi. Ji kuriama ne izoliuotai, bet per skirtingų teminių sluoksnių ir kitų meninės raiškos priemonių sąveiką, formuojančią vientisą daugiasluoksnę meninę struktūrą. Pasikartojantys simboliai joje atlieka ne iliustracinę, o struktūrinę funkciją – organizuoja kūrinio prasmę ir leidžia nuosekliai plėtoti jo vizualinę bei semantinę struktūrą. Globaliųjų metaforų analizė parodė, kad LGK meniniuose tekstuose atsiskleidžia konceptualūs dėsningumai, būdingi ir kitų pasaulio gestų kalbų meniniams tekstams, todėl galima teigti, kad LGK meninė raiška remiasi bendrais GK meninio teksto principais, kartu išlaikydama savitą ir originalią meninę raišką.
2. Fonologinio lygmens metaforų analizė parodė, kad LGK meniniuose tekstuose gesto fonologiniai parametrai funkcionuoja ir kaip savarankiški meninės raiškos ištekliai, galintys kurti metaforinę reikšmę, bet kartu ir papildyti kitomis meninės raiškos priemonėmis

kuriamą metaforą. Tokiu būdu fonologinio lygmens metaforos prisideda prie tapatybės, vidinės patirties, santykio su bendruomene ir kitų gestų kalbų meniniam diskursui reikšmingų prasmių kūrimo. Analizė taip pat atskleidė, kad fonologinio lygmens metaforomis LGK meniniuose tekstuose perteikiami tie patys konceptai, fiksuojami ir kitų pasaulio GK meniniuose tekstuose, o tai rodo bendrus GK meniniam diskursui reikšmingus konceptualius dėsningumus.

3. Neologizmų konstruktų analizė parodė, kad jie LGK meniniuose tekstuose funkcionuoja kaip savarankiški meninės raiškos vienetai, galintys ne tik kurti meninę reikšmę, bet ir papildyti kitomis meninės raiškos priemonėmis kuriamą metaforą. Skirtingų gestų kalbos elementų derinimas neologizmų konstruktuose leidžia išlaikyti meninei kalbai būdingą daugiareikšmiškumą, o jų sąveika su *įkūnijimo* raiška – perteikti ne tik vaizdinę, bet ir įkūnytą patirtį. Neologizmų konstruktai taip pat tampa svarbia gestakalbio kurčiojo pasaulėvokos raiškos priemone. Todėl neologizmų konstruktai atsiskleidžia kaip viena kompleksiškiausių LGK meninės raiškos priemonių.
4. Šios disertacijos metu pirmą kartą gestų kalbų tyrimuose patikrintas CV *MediaPipe Holistic* įrankio tinkamumas LGK meninių tekstų analizei. Tyrimas parodė, kad šis įrankis leidžia patikimai identifikuoti ir kiekybiškai analizuoti meninei raiškai reikšmingus parametrus: rankų judesių amplitudę, rankų judesių kintamumą, kūno pasvirimus į šonus, antakių judesius, akių vokų kintamumą ir žvilgsnio kryptį, taip pat nustatyti sisteminius skirtumus tarp LGK meninių tekstų ir jų perpasakojimų. Siekiant interpretuoti CV analizės rezultatus, kiekybinė analizė vėlesniu etapu, vykdant išplėstinį tyrimą, buvo papildyta diskusijų grupės metodu, kuris leido konceptualiai pagrįsti nustatytų reiškinių reikšmę meninės raiškos kontekste.
5. Nerankiniai elementai LGK meniniuose tekstuose funkcionuoja kaip viena svarbiausių meninės raiškos priemonių. Tyrimas, pasitelkus CV įrankius *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace*, parodė, kad LGK meniniuose tekstuose jų raiška yra intensyvesnė negu tekstų perpasakojimuose, o diskusijų grupės medžiagos analizė atskleidė, kad jų funkcijos neapsiriboja prozodine (angl. *prosodic*) ar *vaizduojamąja* (angl. *descriptive*) raiška – jie taip pat prisideda prie teksto struktūros organizavimo, kūrinio ekspresyvumo ir patyriminio poveikio formavimo. Koordinuota rankų, pečių, liemens, veido ir žvilgsnio dinamika sudaro vientisą multimodalinę raiškos sistemą, šioje disertacijoje konceptualizuojamą kaip vizualinis skambumas. Tyrimas

leidžia teigti, kad *vizualinis skambumas* yra viena esminių LGK meninės raiškos priemonių, sistemingai pasitelkiama meniniuose tekstuose ir leidžianti juos atpažinti kaip meninius.

6. Pasitelkus CV įrankius *MediaPipe Holistic* ir *OpenFace* atliktas tyrimas parodė, kad simetriškumas LGK meniniuose tekstuose pasireiškia rečiau negu jų perpasakojimuose. Diskusijų grupės analizė atskleidė, kad kiekybiškai fiksuojamas simetriškumas nėra tiesiogiai susijęs su menine raiška, nes dažnai kyla iš pačios GK sistemos. Taip pat kokybinis tyrimas atskleidė ir tai, kad simetriškumas meniniuose tekstuose meninę funkciją įgyja tik tuomet, kai yra sąmoningai pasitelkiamas ir sąveikauja su kūrinio turiniu, struktūra bei kitomis meninės raiškos priemonėmis. Diskusijų grupės analizė taip pat leido pastebėti, kad meninėje raiškoje reikšmingą vaidmenį gali atlikti ir asimetrija, kuri naudojama naratyvinei įtampai, erdviniams akcentams ir kūrinio dinamikai kurti.
7. LGK meniniuose tekstuose pasitelkiamos meninės raiškos priemonės – metaforos (tiek globaliuoju, tiek fonologiniu lygmenimis), nerankiniai elementai ir simetrija – atitinka GK literatūros tyrimuose aprašomas meninės raiškos tendencijas. Nustatyta, kad šios priemonės, būdingos kitų šalių GK meniniams tekstams, taip pat sistemiškai pasireiškia ir LGK meninėje raiškoje. Neologizmų konstruktų tiesioginis palyginimas su kitų GK meniniais tekstais kol kas nėra galimas, nes jie iki šiol nėra sistemiškai tirti. Vis dėlto šio tyrimo metu pastebėta, kad panašių konstruktų galima identifikuoti ir kitų GK meniniuose tekstuose, todėl tai sudaro pagrindą tolesniems lyginamiesiems tyrimams. Tai leidžia teigti, kad LGK meniniai tekstai yra neatsiejama pasaulio GK literatūros dalis, o jų meninė raiška grindžiama bendrais GK meninės raiškos principais, atspindinčiais panašias gestakalbių kurčiųjų bendruomenių patirtis ir pasaulėvoką.

Ši disertacija laikytina pirmuoju nuosekliu žingsniu sistemingai analizuojant LGK meninius tekstus ir jų raišką. Tačiau tyrimas patvirtino, kad nagrinėjama sritis yra itin plati ir daugiasluoksnė, todėl šio darbo net ir kompleksinis tyrimas neleidžia aprėpti visų meninių tekstų raiškos aspektų, ir tai yra šios disertacijos ribotumas. Nors analizuoti 57 LGK meniniai tekstai sudaro reikšmingą tyrimo pagrindą, šis kiekis nėra pakankamas platesnėms apibendrinančioms išvadoms. Pabrėžtina, kad Lietuvoje iki šiol nėra sukurta LGK meninių tekstų tekstyno, kuris būtų naudingas tokio pobūdžio tyrimams. Taigi siekiant tikslesnių rezultatų, būtina sistemingai kaupti LGK meninius

tekstus, tęsti ir plėsti tyrimą, kad būtų galima nustatyti ir atskleisti daugiau dėsningumų.

Aprašytas tyrimas gali būti tęsiamas įvairiomis kryptimis. Analizės metu paaiškėjo, kad už disertacijos tyrimo ribų liko dalis metaforų, kurios nepateko į globaliųjų metaforų ir fonologinio lygmens metaforų kategorijas. Tad tokios metaforos galėtų tapti tolesnių tyrimų objektu. Taip pat toliau galima plėtoti simetriškumo analizę, įtraukiant skirtingus jo tipus, tokius kaip *laiko simetrija* (angl. *temporal symmetry*), *erdvinė simetrija* (angl. *spatial symmetry*) ir kt. Be to, už aprašyto tyrimo ribų liko ir kitos meninės raiškos priemonės, pavyzdžiui, pasikartojimai, dviprasmybės ir kt. Tai klausimai ateities tyrimams.

Disertacijos rengimo metu taip pat išryškėjo, kad meninį tekstą formuoja ne viena atskira raiškos priemonė, o jų sąveika. Kartu identifikuotas dar vienas svarbus, kol kas mokslinėje literatūroje neaptartas aspektas – vaisingų diskusijų su srities tyrėja prof. Sutton-Spence rezultatas: kiekviename kūrinyje esti išskirtinė, esminė raiškos vieta, kuri gali būti apibrėžiama kaip *auksinė akimirka* (angl. *golden moment*). Ši kūrinio dalis realizuojama skirtingai, pasitelkiant įvairias meninės raiškos priemones, ir gali būti laikoma kertiniu elementu, suteikiančiu tekstui meninį pobūdį. Šis aspektas – kertinė kūrinio vieta, ašis ar vadinamoji *auksinė akimirka* – reikalauja tolesnių tyrimų. Be to, pasakytina, kad siekiant atsakyti į klausimą, kas daro meninį tekstą meniniu, būtini kompleksiniai tyrimai, apimantys skirtingas meninės raiškos priemones ir jų tarpusavio sąveiką, taip pat platesnės apimties tekstyno analizė.

Itin svarbi šio tyrimo įžvalga, kad LGK meninių tekstų analizė reikalauja kompleksinio, bendradarbiavimu grįsto požiūrio. Disertacijos rengimo metu buvo nuolat konsultuojamasi su tekstų autoriais, duomenys tikrinami su srities specialistais ir gestotyrininkais bei lingvistais, o ypač diskusijų grupės pasitelkimas pasiteisino kaip efektyvus būdas užtikrinti analizės patikimumą ir rezultatų interpretacijos pagrįstumą. Tokia metodologija laikytina būtina tolesniems šios srities tyrimams.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Anželika Teresė obtained a Professional Bachelor's degree in Lithuanian Sign Language interpreting from Vilniaus kolegija (University of Applied Sciences) and a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Vilnius University. She is currently a Junior Assistant and a doctoral student at the Department of Lithuanian Studies, Institute of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University. She is Head of the Sign Language Research Centre at Vilniaus kolegija (University of Applied Sciences), where she also works as a Lecturer-Practitioner, and is an LGK interpreter for Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT).

A. Teresė's research interests include artistic LGK texts and means of artistic expression, LGK and sign language linguistics, sign language dictionaries and corpora, interpreting, translation, and bibliotherapy.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1. Teresė, A. 2022. *Lietuvių gestų kalbos poezija: gesto lokalizacija kaip metaforos raiškos priemonė* [Lithuanian Sign Language Poetry: Location as Mean of Expression of Metaphors]. Taikomoji Kalbotyra, *17*, 9–37. https://doi.org/10.15388/Taikalbot.2022.17.1
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3. Teresė, A., Kimmelman, V. 2026. *Analyzing Lithuanian Sign Language literature with Computer Vision and Focus Group: Embodiment and Prosody as Artistic Devices in Sign Languages.* Sign Language and Linguistics, John Benjamins Publishing Company. Publishing in progress.

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