

# Understanding ASL Grammatical Features and Discourse Mapping

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Jeff Pollock and Doug Stringham  
2007 USDB Fall Workshop



About Jeff



About Doug



About you

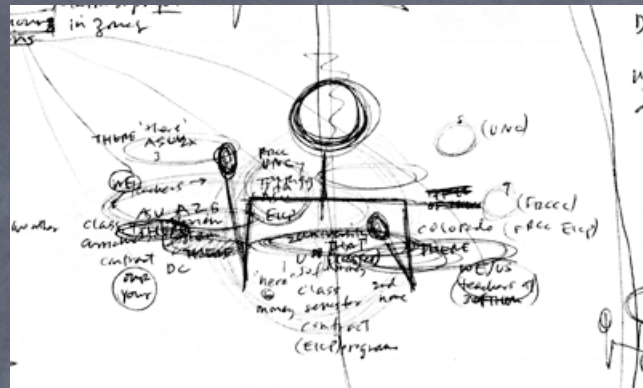


What we hope to  
accomplish in this  
workshop:



- Review and identify salient ASL grammatical structures:
  - nominal and pronominal structures
  - verbal and adverbial structures
  - complex sentences
- Introduce and demonstrate discourse mapping
- Work in small groups to incorporate ASL grammatical features in our work
- Debrief and evaluate





# Seeing and Telling ASL: Discourse Mapping



What is discourse?



This is discourse.



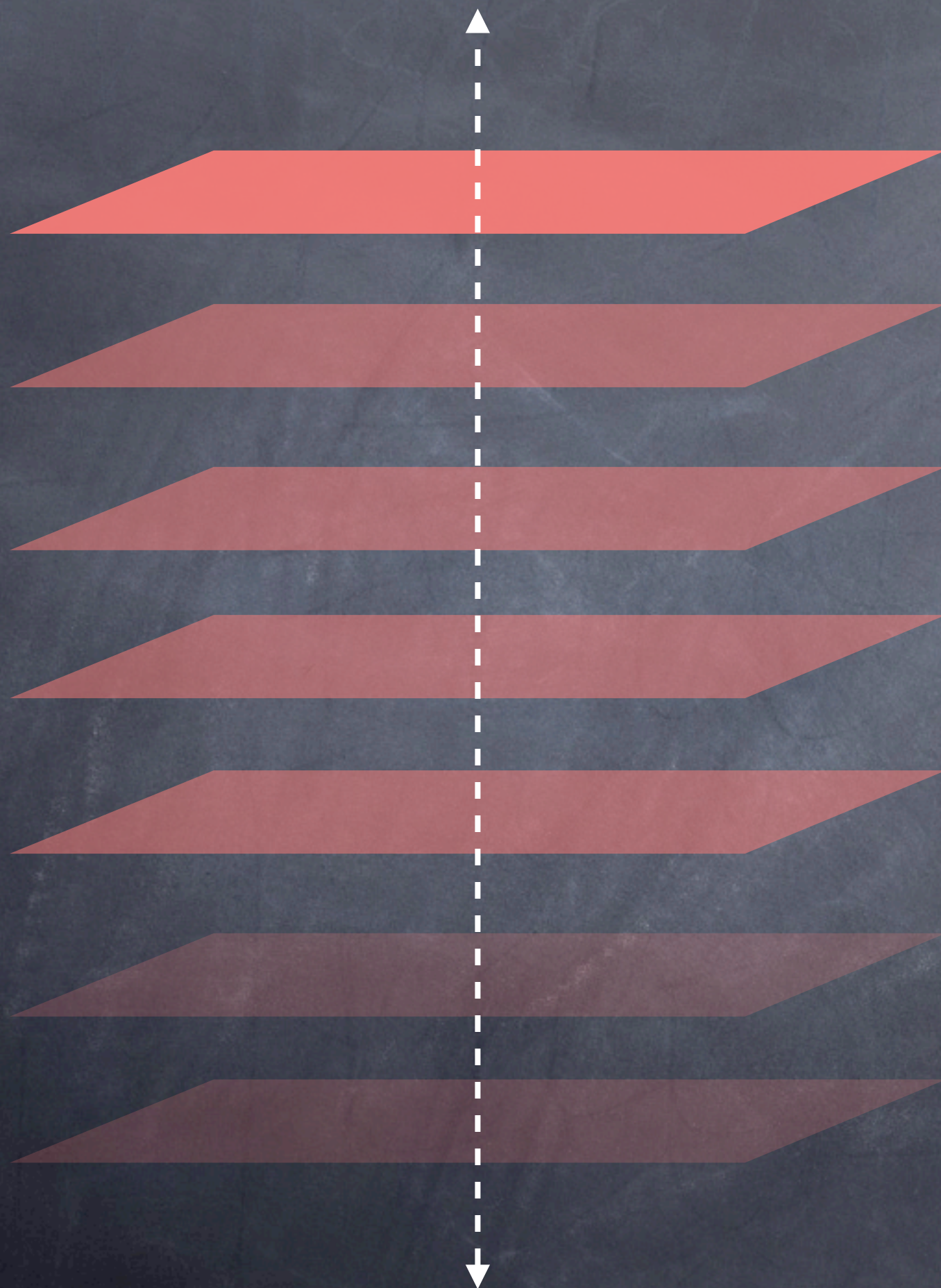
Patterns, styles, scripts,  
and genres in how and  
what we communicate:





Message





**discoursal**

message intent, affect, prosody

**grammatical**

construction, rules

**syntactical/sentential**

sentence, phrasal construction

**semantic**

meaning

**lexical**

words, signs

**morphological**

elements of pronunciation

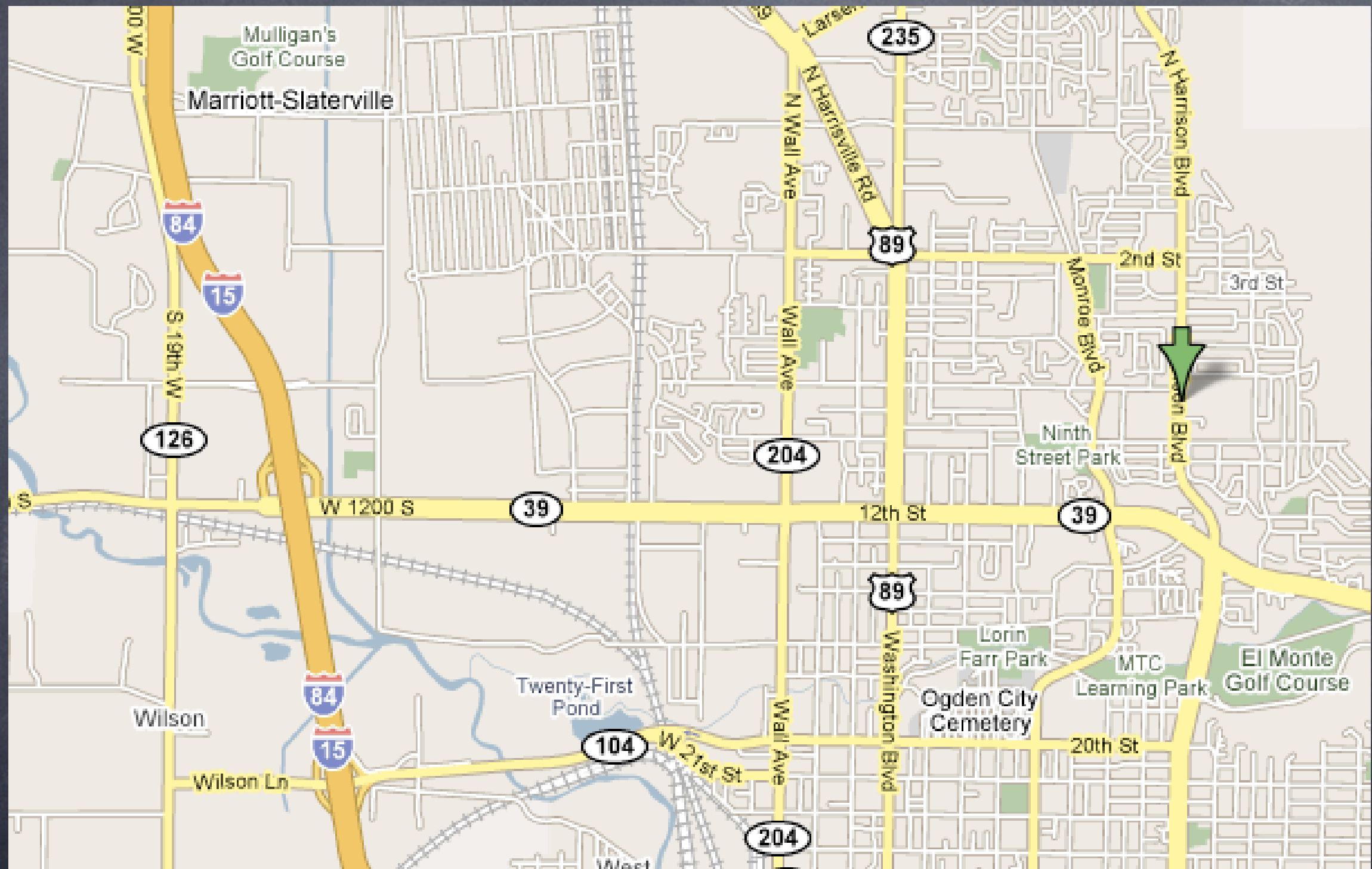
**phonological**

elements of pronunciation



“mapping?”

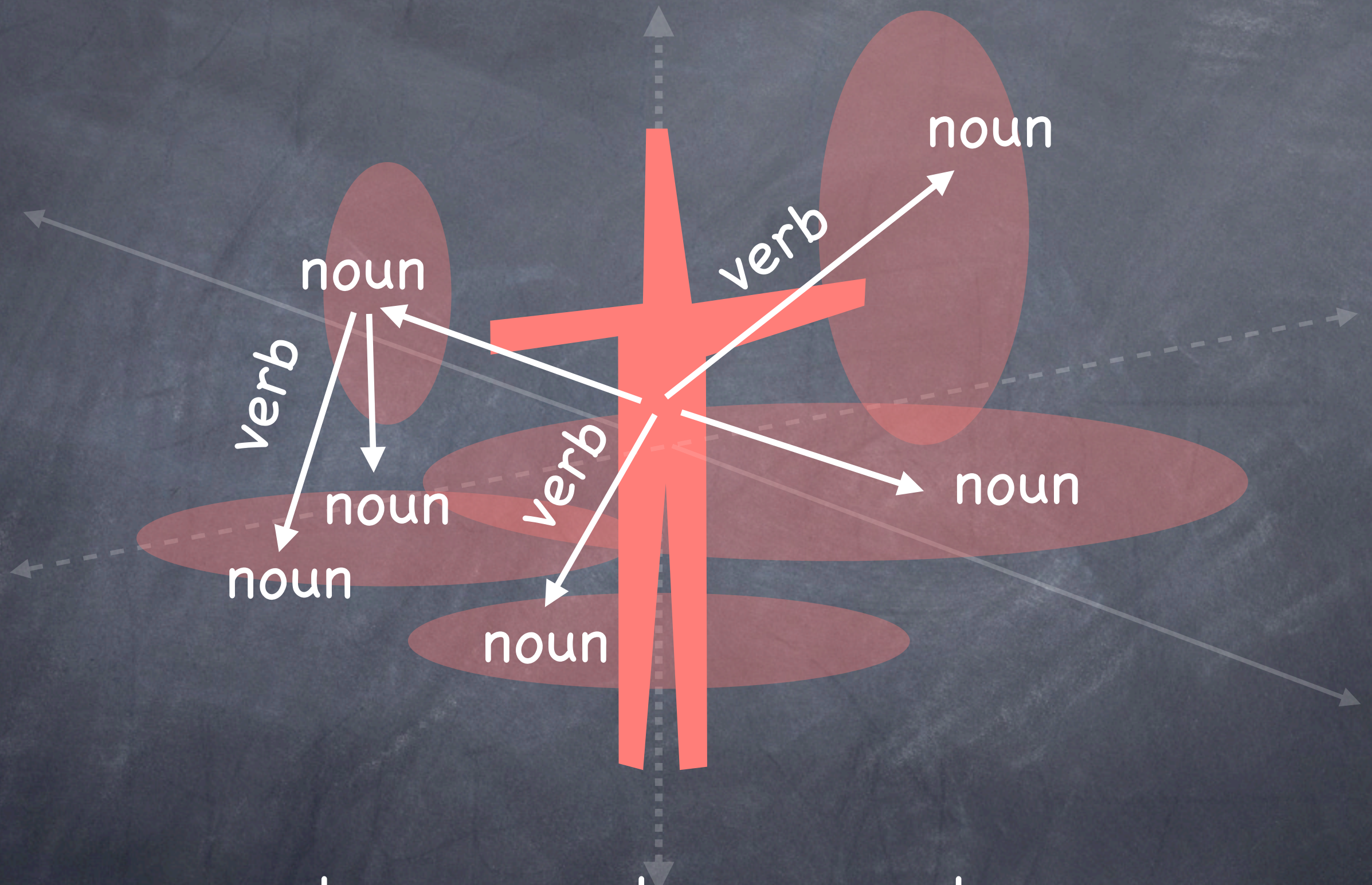






Not that. This.





...sentence + sentence + sentence...



Why?



Scholarly research data  
and national EIPA  
assessment results:



message cohesion



cognitive mapping



Discourse mapping  
helps signers identify  
**cohesion** structures in  
a signed text.



Discourse mapping helps  
interpreters cognitively  
map (chunk, peg, link,  
and monitor) message in  
a given text.

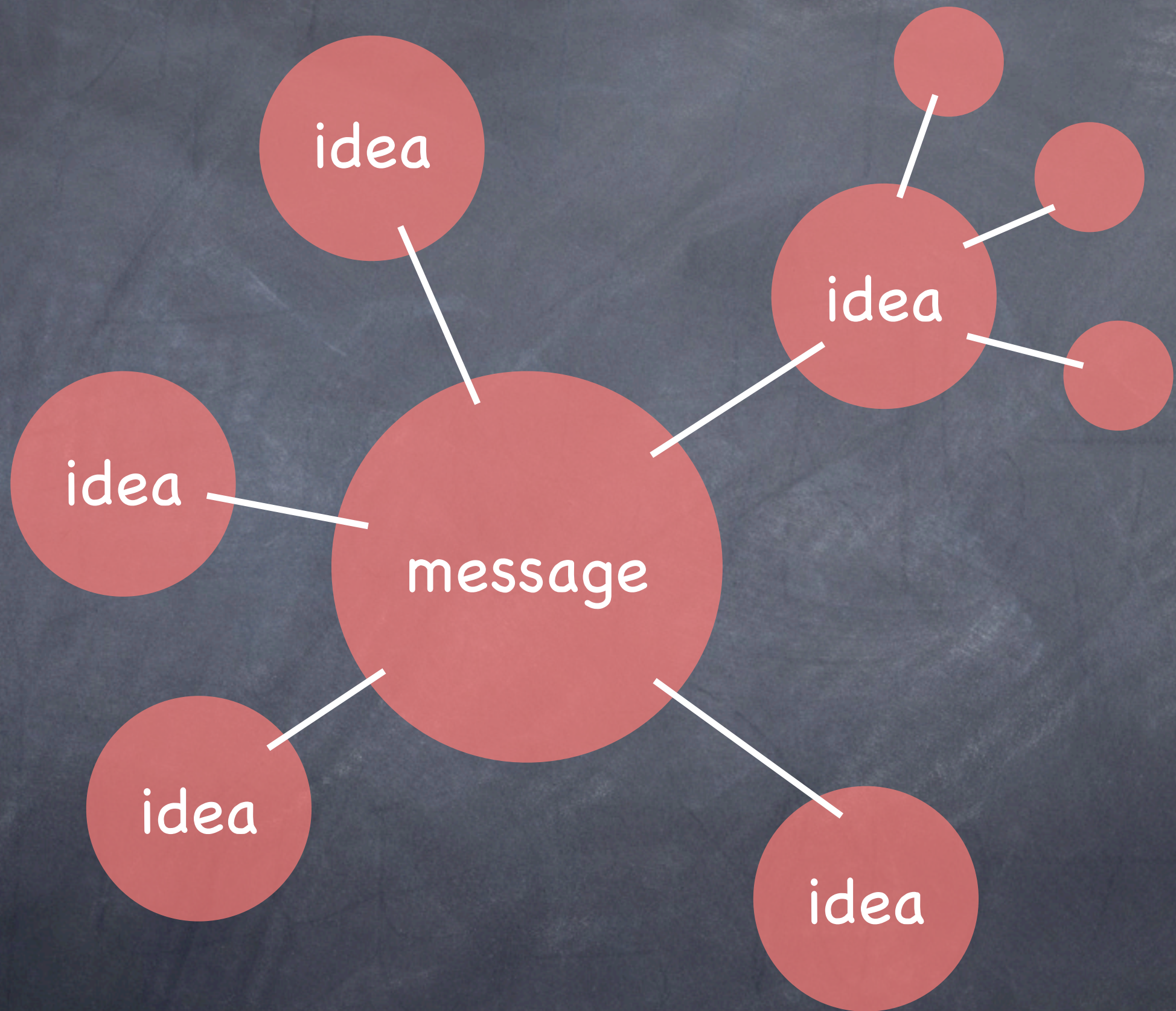


How?

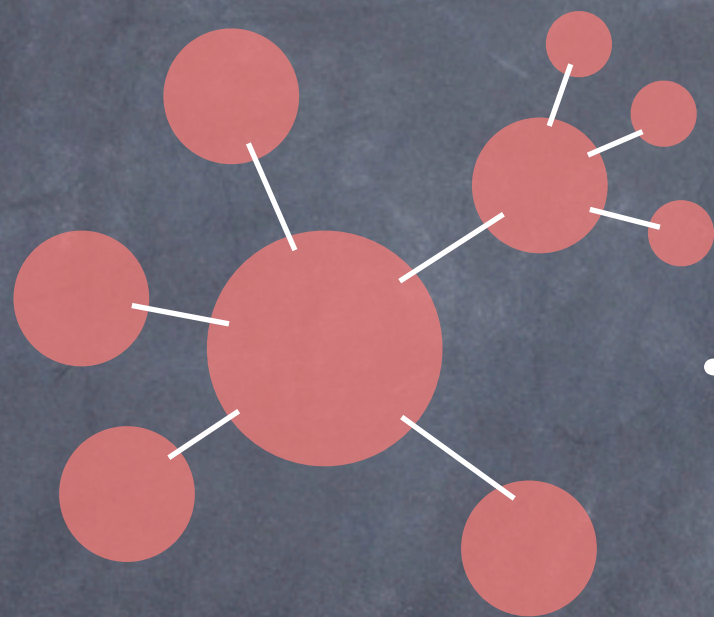


By creating a visual  
representation of how  
native signers organize  
and incorporate message  
into language.









+ grammar =



language



# 1. Cohesion



What are some ASL  
manual and nonmanual  
**transitional** behaviors?



- blinks and eyegaze
- extended hold of signs
- head nod
- lexemes
  - conjunctionals:
    - FINISH, WRONG, FRUSTRATE, HAPPEN
  - NEXT
  - DOWN-HIERARCHY or SIDE-HIERARCHY
  - ~~THEN, AND~~





# The Snowmobile Story

(00:10, 00:21, 00:23, 00:38, 00:43, etc.)

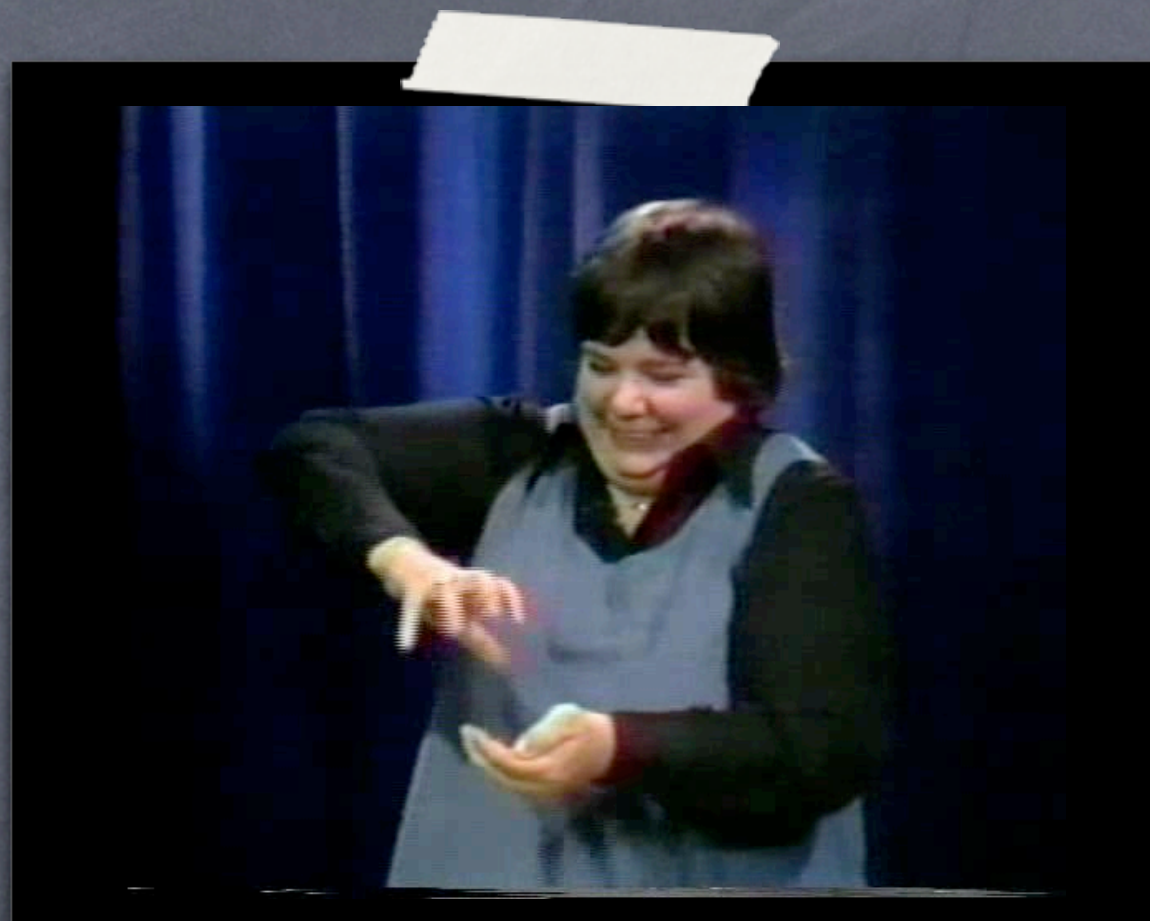


What are some ASL  
manual and nonmanual  
**relational** behaviors?



- contrastive structure
- spatial placement
- topical marking (eyebrow raising)
- eyegaze
- lexemes:
  - classifiers
  - CONNECT-TO
  - demonstrative pronouns (THAT)





A Little Bit At A Time  
(00:19, 00:38, 00:47, 00:51, 01:16, etc.)



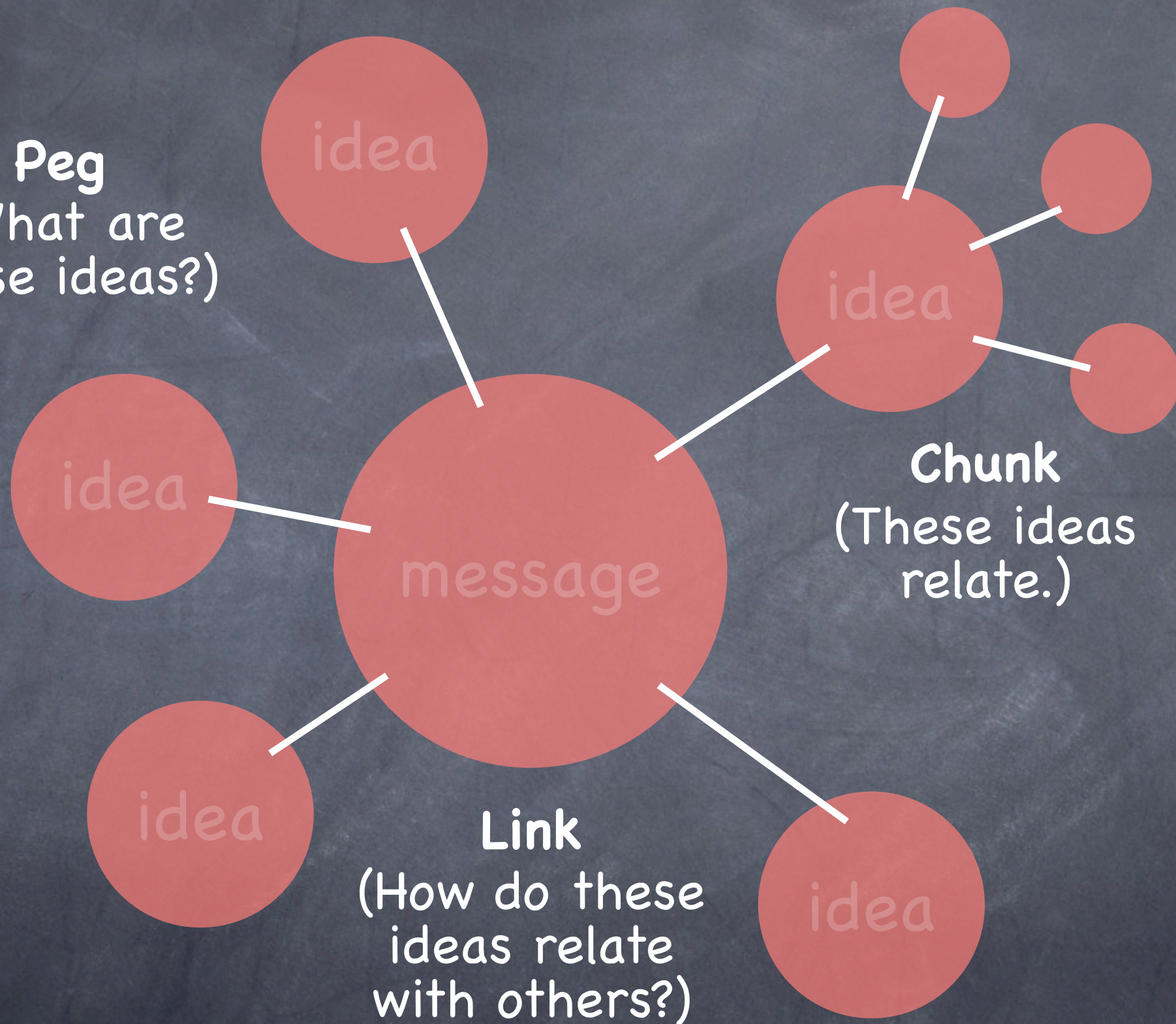
## 2. Cognitive mapping



Chunking, pegging,  
linking, and self-  
monitoring message  
in a text.



**Peg**  
(What are  
these ideas?)



**Self-monitor** (Where am I/is this message or sentence going?)



How does this happen?



The ability to  
restructure information  
in the mind is largely  
dependent on  
language ability.



The goal, then, is to  
**replicate** logical  
language organization  
in interpretative work.



# The Discourse Mapping Process



1. Watch text for  
comprehension.



2. Watch text for  
specific linguistic  
features:



nominal and pronominal  
information



verbal and adverbial  
information



3. Watch text to confirm observations in #2, make visual representation, and make notes:



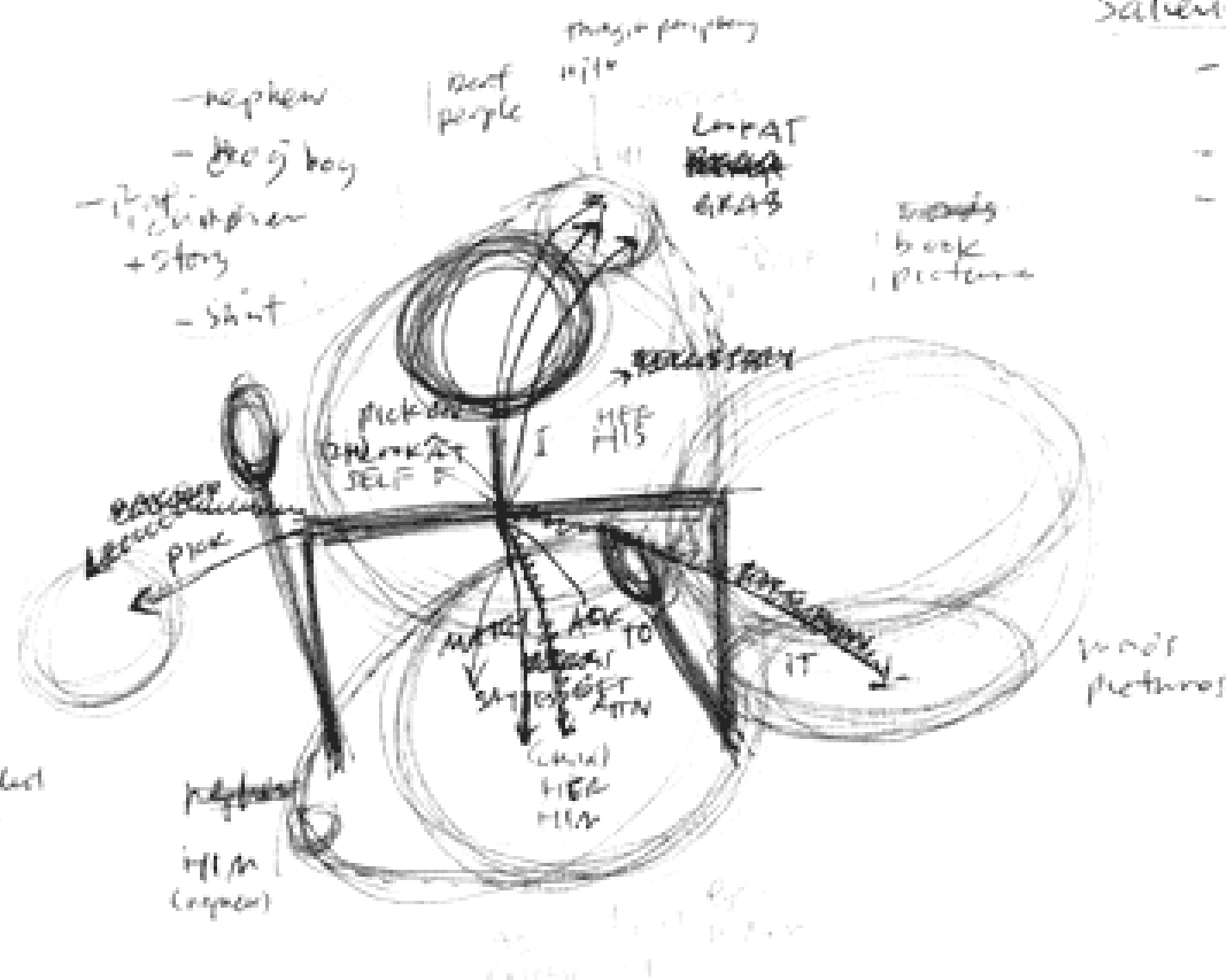
- represent spatial zones (clusters or pegs) where specific linguistic features occur
- peg linguistic features:
  - nominals
  - pronominals
  - unidirectional verbs  
(signer is agent or actor)
  - unidirectional verbs  
(signer is recipient or actee)



for formal speech

repetition = ?

- Important
- pick story
  - usual
  - fun taking
  - in reading
  - allowing self pacing
  - testing comprehension
  - dialog with student
  - be consistent

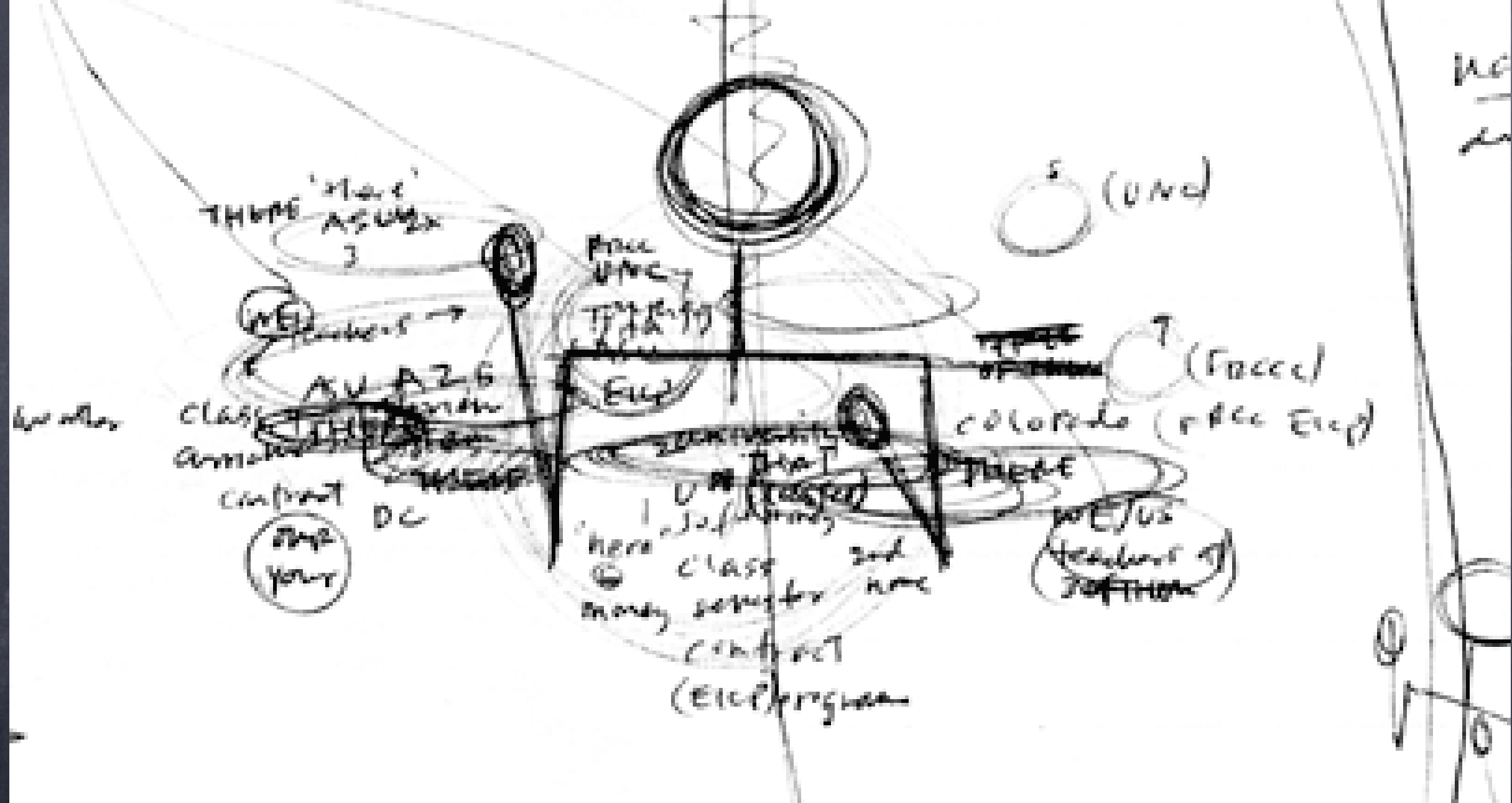


Salient features -

- repetition of signs - reinforcement
- eye movement
- constructed dialogue/action - characterization



~~10000~~ in zones





## 4. Discuss observations in small groups

confirm comprehension ("I saw X..."),  
discuss specific features, identify  
questions for the group)



4a. Repeat for each  
linguistic feature.



5. Watch text again

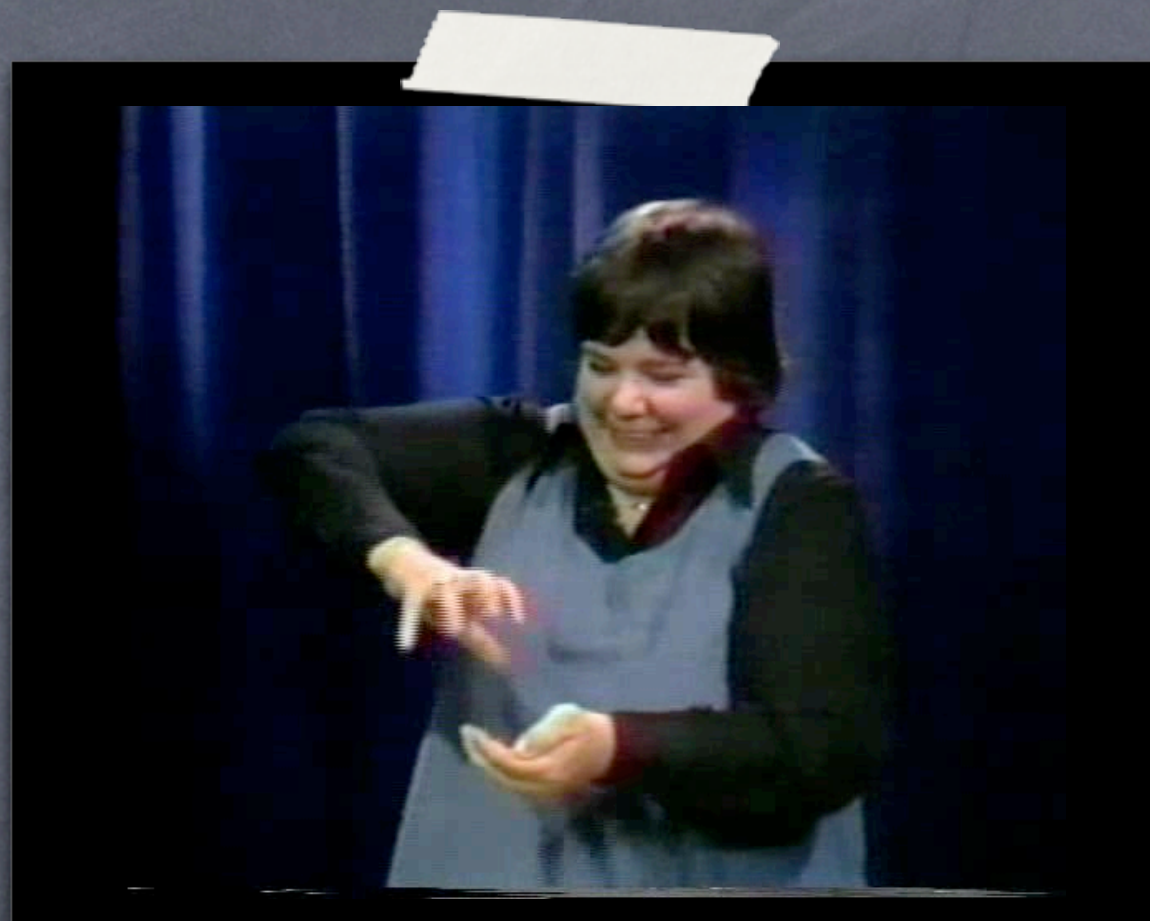


6. Based on created  
visual representations,  
**retell the text** in  
small groups.



# 7. Debrief





“A Little Bit At A Time”



Do try this at home.



# References

- Witter-Merrithew, A. (2006). Discourse Mapping for Sign Language Interpreters (workshop notes, n.p.).



Thank you.

[jeff.pollock@datc.edu](mailto:jeff.pollock@datc.edu)

[dstringham@gmail.com](mailto:dstringham@gmail.com)