

**A DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR  
OF MORPHOSYNTACTIC  
CONSTRUCTIONS IN UGANDAN  
SIGN LANGUAGE (UgSL)**

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**A Descriptive Grammar of Morphosyntactic Constructions in  
Ugandan Sign Language (UgSL)**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire

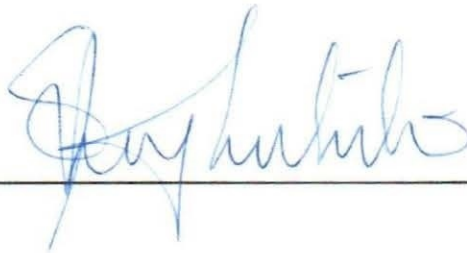
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Ugandan Deaf Community, consisting of approximately 25,000 sign language users, has seen significant developments in its recent history. Government recognition of sign language, establishment of schools for the deaf, and the beginnings of research into Ugandan Sign Language (UgSL) have been important milestones. While Deaf Ugandans are entering university level education for the first time, a number of challenges to the community remain.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the linguistic structures of UgSL in order to produce a description of the language's morphosyntax. There is a close relationship between word (or sign) properties and syntactic expressions, so UgSL is described here in terms of its morphosyntactic constructions, rather than a differentiation between morphological and syntactic features (cf. Croft 2001; Wilkinson 2013:260). While a substantial number of such descriptions exist for languages outside of Africa, this thesis is the first attempt at describing the morphosyntax of an African sign language. Many African sign languages are severely under-documented, and some are endangered. This study uses an inductive approach and a corpus-based methodology, examining how UgSL signers construct utterances of morphosyntactic complexity. The thesis is in three parts: part I is an introduction and overview of UgSL and also provides the theoretical and methodological background; part II provides a preliminary survey of UgSL grammar to provide a wider context for subsequent chapters; and part III is a detailed survey of five morphosyntactic domains of UgSL. The author is a native Deaf user of UgSL and a member of the Ugandan Deaf Community, as well as being fluent in several other sign languages and participating in international communities of Deaf people.