

# Experience Day Linguistics

## 4 april 2025



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

### Introduction

A student of Linguistics will tell you about your first year at this programme.

### Lecture + seminar

#### **Title**

Understanding human language through the lens of sign languages

#### **Short description**

Deaf communities across the globe have been using sign languages for centuries. In 1995, Uganda was the first country in the world to officially recognize its sign language, the Netherlands followed suit in 2021. But how different are the sign languages of the world? And what does this tell us about their histories? And why are some signs very similar across sign languages, and others very different?

Our understanding of how linguistics is predominantly based on spoken languages. In this course, we will look at what sign languages tell us about the human language faculty and discuss implications for linguistic theory.

**Lecturer:** Dr. Victoria Nyst ([v.a.s.nyst@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:v.a.s.nyst@hum.leidenuniv.nl))

Victoria Nyst is associate professor in the field of Sign Languages and Deaf Studies, with a particular focus on a) African contexts, and b) historical perspectives. Her research interests include sign language documentation and description, lexicography, linguistic iconicity, and the relation between gestures and signing.

### Q&A

Do you have any questions regarding the programme? The student will answer them all at the Q&A.

### Preparation

In preparation, please visit [www.spreadthesign.org](http://www.spreadthesign.org), select three sign languages, and learn the signs for:

- 1 EAT
- 2 FATHER
- 3 LIE

Try to note down and/or remember these nine (3x3) signs, compare them, and if they are similar, note down why you think they are similar.