PART II

STUDIES OF NEGATIVES AND INTERROGATIVES IN INDIVIDUAL SIGN LANGUAGES
Chapter 3

Aspects of interrogatives and negation in New Zealand Sign Language

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NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is used by approximately 4,500 deaf people (Dugdale 2000), in a country of four million people. Immigrants from the UK began colonising New Zealand in the 19th century and NZSL is closely related to British Sign Language (BSL) and Australian Sign Language (Auslan). The extent of lexical similarity and mutual intelligibility between them suggests that they are dialects or close relatives of a BSL-based sign language family (Johnston 2000; McKee & Kennedy 2000.) Deaf New Zealanders first congregated in a residential school in 1880, which was followed later by two others; all were strictly oralist. In these schools a form of signing (now known as “old signs”) emerged and developed further in the deaf adult social world. It is not clear from available historical sources how BSL signs entered the early signing community since no signing teachers or residential staff were employed at the schools and deaf immigrants would have been few and far between. However numerous children were sent to Australian deaf schools where sign language was used by teachers from the UK and Ireland, and their return to New Zealand was probably one source of language transmission.

In 1979, a system of manually coded English called Australasian Signed English (ASE) was introduced into deaf education. The lexicon was drawn mainly from Auslan signs supplemented by invented signs, and its use in schools for fifteen years has led to many “old” and “new” variants in the current NZSL lexicon.
Increased international interchange since the 1970s, especially with deaf people from Australia and the UK, has motivated lexical borrowing and expansion, and to a lesser extent borrowing from American Sign Language also occurs in NZSL. The first systematic linguistic analysis of the language was conducted during the early 1980s (Collins-Ahlgren 1989), leading to the recognition and naming of “New Zealand Sign Language”. The first dictionary of NZSL was made in 1985 (Levitt) followed by a more comprehensive dictionary in 1997 (Kennedy, Arnold, Dugdale, Fahey, & Moskovitz). NZSL was recognised in law as an official language of New Zealand in April 2006.

References:
This article describes interrogative and negation structures in New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), focusing on lexical, syntactic and suprasegmental (non-manual) aspects which may contribute to a typological comparison of these structures across signed languages. Analysis draws on data from a transcribed corpus of 100,000 signs in natural discourse (McKee & Kennedy 1998), as well as examples observed and elicited by the writer for the purpose of analysis. Structures described here are those which appear to be canonical for native and fluent signers who acquired NZSL during early childhood; their usage of course varies across the entire signing community. The writer is a non-native signer who has used NZSL for twenty years as an interpreter, teacher of deaf adults, researcher, and social participant in the Deaf community. The writer’s observation of NZSL discourse in natural contexts contributes to this analysis. A brief socio-historical introduction to NZSL in section one provides context for certain linguistic structures and changes described in the article.

1. Background to NZSL

The extent of documented lexical similarity and mutual intelligibility reported between NZSL, British Sign Language (BSL), and Australian Sign Language (Auslan) users indicates that these are dialects of a common language, or at least close relatives in the BSL-based language family (Johnston 2002; McKee & Kennedy 2000). Deaf people in New Zealand first came together in an oralist residential school in 1880; anecdotal evidence indicates that a mix of indigenous (home and school) and certain BSL signs were used amongst deaf people at least a century ago, although it remains unclear exactly how and when BSL lexicon found its way into the early development of NZSL in an exclusively oralist, hearing-taught education system. Potential sources of transmission were Deaf UK immigrants, an early British teacher of the deaf who taught using signs before the establishment of a state school, and New Zealand children’s attendance at Australian Schools for the Deaf using sign language around the turn of the twentieth century (Collins-Ahlgren 1989). In recent decades, increased contact with Auslan and BSL signers in particular, has been a productive source of lexical borrowing into NZSL.

In 1979 a system of manually coded English called ‘Australasian Signed English’ (ASE) was introduced into deaf education as the manual component of

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1 Thanks to Ricki Pointon for modelling the NZSL examples and David McKee for video editing.
the Total Communication approach (Jeanes & Reynolds 1982). Because NZSL was not systematically described or documented as a language until the mid 1980s (Collins-Ahlgren 1989, Levitt 1985, Kennedy, Arnold, Dugdale, Fahey, & Moskovitz 1997) the lexicon of ASE was based mainly on Auslan signs of the Melbourne area, supplemented by invented signs. This system was used (variably) in deaf education until about 1993, and has resulted in significant lexical and stylistic differences between older and younger generations of signers. An oralist educational history remains evident in NZSL signers’ tendency to co-produce many manual signs with English mouthing - defined by Boyes Braem (2002:99) as “unvoiced pronunciation of … words or word parts”- particularly to disambiguate homophonous signs that have multiple meanings. Older NZSL signers who do not use a conventionalised manual alphabet, may also combine voice or mouthing with signs to convey proper nouns that do not have a sign equivalent. These features of variation in the lexicon and use of mouthing to specify meaning appear in certain forms of interrogatives and negation.

2. Interrogatives

2.1 Sign order in questions

No special constituent order or interrogative particle distinguishes polar questions from statements, but signers frequently place or repeat a subject pronoun or index at the end of a polar question. In a content question, the interrogative sign (such as WHAT or WHO) may occur in clause initial position, clause final position, or be repeated in both. Clause final, or repeated at beginning and end are preferred patterns. Analysis so far indicates that multiple content questions are rarely used in NZSL.

2.2 Non-manual marking of interrogatives

2.2.1 Form of non-manual interrogative marking

Non-manual signals are a key feature of question structure in NZSL, as is typical of signed languages in general (cf. Zeshan 2004b). Polar questions are signalled

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2 Grammatical variation between generations has not been systematically studied.
by direct gaze at the addressee and raised brows (also described as eye-widening), with forward and slight downward movement of the head (see Example 1). Content (or ‘wh’) questions are signalled by furrowed (or lowered) brows and less marked forward – or sometimes backward - movement of the head (Example 2). Both types of question may be articulated with a slight sideways turn of the head.

Example 1 Polar question non-manuals  Example 2 Content question non-manuals

YOU?  WHAT?

video ex.1  video ex.2

The articulation of non-manual question signals varies for pragmatic reasons, including intensification of the signals for stronger enquiry. When it is obvious from discourse context or the presence of an interrogative sign in a sentence that a question is intended, non-manual marking may be reduced or imperceptible. A polar question may be formed without eye-widening or in fact with furrowed brows when the question seeks to confirm or express doubt about a fact, (e.g., ‘You’re 21, aren’t you?’ as opposed to ‘Are you 21?’) This parallels the effect of falling vs rising intonation in spoken English polar and tag questions. In content questions, the chin may move back rather than forward to add affect such as surprise, puzzlement, or disapproval to the interrogative.

2.2.2 Scope of non-manual interrogative marking

In polar questions non-manual signals co-occur with the whole sentence or question clause, excluding any initial topic or conditional phrase. Example 3 illustrates a polar question with a topic phrase that is marked by narrowed eyes, raised brows and chin. In contrast, forward and downward head movement and the wide eyes mark
the clause FINISH YOU as a polar question. Non-manual signals in questions tend to intensify towards the final sign, which is held fractionally longer than normal.

Example 3  
*Polar question with topic clause*  

t  pol-q  
HOMEWORK  FINISH PRO2pl  
‘The homework - have you done it?’  

In content questions, non-manual marking can accompany the whole sentence, but is obligatory with at least the interrogative (‘wh’) sign. When an interrogative sign occurs at the beginning of the sentence, non-manual marking continues throughout the sentence, (see Example 4). When an interrogative sign occurs only in sentence final position, non-manual marking may be limited to the question sign (see Example 5), or can optionally cover the whole sentence.

Example 4  
*Content question non-manual marking throughout sentence*  
cont-q  
WHERE ROOM WHERE  
‘Where is the room?’  

Example 5  
*Content question non-manual marking with interrogative sign only*  
cont-q  
SEND LETTER WHY  
‘Why did (they) send me the letter?’  

2.3 Negative questions

2.3.1 Negative polar questions
Negated polar questions seek confirmation of a negative proposition. Non-manual marking combines a negative headshake (represented below as ‘neg’) with brow signals in either of two ways:
(a) When the questioner strongly expects negative confirmation of the proposition (i.e., agreement) the eyes are squinted or brows furrowed. The head may be moved forward or down, as seen in Examples 6 and 7.
Example 6  **neg + squint**  
IX-2 GO PRO2  
‘You’re not going, are you?’  video ex.6

Example 7  **neg + squint**  
DEAF PRO2  
‘You’re not Deaf, are you?’  video ex.7

(b) When the questioner less strongly expects agreement with the negative proposition, the brows are raised (b.r.) as in a normal polar question, as in Examples 8 and 9. The head may be moved forward or down.

Example 8  **neg + b.r.**  
TEACHER COME NOTHING  
‘Has the teacher not come?’  video ex.8

Example 9  **neg**  
**b.r.**  
PRO2 RECEIVE NOT-YET  
‘Have you not received it yet?’  video ex.9

The negation headshake commences at the beginning of the whole proposition (Example 8), or at the negated constituent (e.g., the verb or the negation sign), as in Example 9.

2.3.2 *Negative content questions*

In negated content questions, the ‘neg’ headshake normally co-occurs with the negated predicate only and not with the interrogative sign (see Examples 10 - 12). Content question non-manual signals, however, can cover the entire sentence (Examples 10 and 11) or the interrogative clause only (Example 12):

Example 10  **cont-q**  
**neg**  
WHY  \_ TELL \_ WHY  
‘Why didn’t you tell me?’  video ex.10

Example 11  **cont-q**  
**neg**  
SPORT LIKE WHICH PRO2  
‘Which sports do you not like?’  video ex.11
2.4 Interrogative signs: ‘old’ and ‘new’ paradigms

2.4.1 The generic interrogative

Specific signs for different types of content questions have developed relatively recently (influenced by Signed English) in contrast to an earlier paradigm in which one generic interrogative sign covered most information seeking functions. The generic interrogative sign consists of two open hands turned palm upwards, with a small sideways movement away from the centre, (see WHERE, in Example 4). This corresponds with the gesture used by non-deaf English speakers to seek information or express uncertainty. Among the oldest generation of NZSL signers, this sign is used to express ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘how’, ‘why’, and any other enquiring phrases such as ‘what for?’, ‘what kind?’, ‘what happened?’ The exact meaning of the question is specified by context and by a lip pattern of an English question word. This traditional paradigm also included separate signs for HOW-MANY, WHO, and WHAT-FOR (a directional form used as a generally probing or deictic interrogative, e.g., ‘what’s that?’). Australasian Signed English introduced a larger set of interrogative signs from Auslan which correspond to English wh question words; these signs are now widely used to differentiate ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘which’, and ‘why’. While the generic interrogative system was apparently unproblematic among older generations of NZSL users, the pedagogically motivated expansion of the question sign paradigm has brought modern NZSL closer to the lexicons of related languages Auslan and BSL. The differentiation of question signs also brings NZSL into closer correspondence with the semantics of English content question words, while simultaneously increasing independence from spoken language by reducing reliance on English mouthing to specify interrogative meaning.

[This is part of a more general process of lexical expansion in NZSL whereby many traditional polysemous signs that were specified by mouthing have been replaced by, or co-exist with, borrowings from ASE, Auslan, and elsewhere (e.g. ASL, BSL). An example is a generic sign for ‘colour’ that is specified by mouthing an English colour name, which is now used only by signers over the age of about 50; younger signers use a set of Auslan-based colour signs imported via ASE.]
The signs HOW, WHERE and one form of WHAT retain the traditional interrogative form of upturned, open hands, although HOW is distinguished slightly from WHERE by a more pronounced turning upward movement of the palms. Use of the two-handed generic form may be pragmatically conditioned. It occurs in emphatic questions that function as exclamations, such as – ‘What?!’, ‘Why?!’ - or in large/distant audience settings where the two-handed form is more visible or dramatic than the one-handed variants. Signers might also use this generic form in situations where they want to elicit information in a more ‘open-ended’ manner, for reasons of politeness or emphasis, or perhaps when the type of expected response is less defined than a ‘what’/‘which’/‘why’/‘how’ enquiry would signal. The generic interrogative may be added to the end of a question that begins with a specific question sign - for example WHAT SAY INTERROG? or WHY LATE INTERROG? The pragmatic effect of this ‘doubling’ is to encourage a response (‘tell me’), or perhaps to soften the impact of a bald question.

Two forms of WHO, old and new, also co-exist and appear to be diverging in usage. The older version, glossed here as WHO-1, wiggles the extended four fingers of the flat hand, palm down. It can be directed at referents in a deictic manner to distinguish ‘who/which of them?’ (group) or to specify ‘who’s that?’ (singular) (Example 13). Introduced through ASE (and identical in BSL), is another sign glossed WHO-2, formed with an upright index finger, moving in a small circle (Example 14). This form is not generally locatable for person deixis.

For those signers who use and differentiate between the two sign forms, WHO-1 (wiggle) is used to ask ‘who (which) of a number of referents’, or to enquire about the identity of a specific visible referent, allowing the signer to avoid obvious pointing, whereas WHO-2 is used more generally for a non-specified referent. Most older signers, however, use the traditional WHO-1 sign in all contexts; younger signers vary in how consistently they differentiate semantic contexts for the two forms. Further analysis of contexts of their use is needed to confirm whether a consistent semantic distinction exists. Both variants are also used to express the possessive interrogative ‘whose’. Some older signers also report a third, now practically extinct, form of WHO - a bent index finger tapped on the chin, palm left

\[Zeshan (2004b)\] notes a similar distinction for two forms of WHO in Icelandic Sign Language. See also chapter 2 in this volume.
– also known in the southern dialect of Auslan (Johnston 1989). Interestingly, signs from this era for STAFF and FATHER are identical in form, and the traditional sign NAME is similar but with a straight index finger, suggesting that this interrogative form may have been part of a semantic grouping (around the chin/mouth location) of nouns relating to personal identity.

2.4.2 Conventionalised question expressions

A number of conventionalised question expressions consist of non-interrogative signs combined with content question non-manual signals, including (how) MANY? (also glossed as HOW-MANY), (how) MUCH?, (how) LONG?5, (are you) HEALTHY?, (what) DO?, (what’s) WRONG?, (how) OLD?. (The glosses in brackets are not expressed by a separate sign.) Just as vocal intonation in English can signal a question in the absence of a question word or special word order, single signs or phrases without an interrogative sign can function as questions when marked by non-manual signals - for example:

Example 15  **pol-q**

HEALTHY  
‘Are you well?/How are you?’  video ex.15

Example 16  **cont-q**

TIME  
‘What’s the time?’  video ex.16

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5 The form of (how) LONG? varies depending on the kind of time period in question; different forms of (temporal) ‘LONG’ may be used to differentiate past–until-now, from-now-to-future, a general period of time, or clockface time.
2.4.3 Interrogatives and indefinite pronouns

Several indefinite pronoun forms are the same as or very similar to a corresponding interrogative sign. The traditional generic interrogative sign which covers a wide range of question meanings covers an equally wide a range of pronoun meanings, as shown in Table 1 along with other correspondences in pronoun/question signs from the older and more recent paradigms of question signs. The meaning of forms that function as both interrogative and indefinite pronoun is differentiated by context, lip pattern, and the presence or absence of question non-manual signals.

Old and new versions of WHICH correspond to different pronoun forms: the older sign (first two fingers extended, hand palm up, shaken horizontally from wrist) has the primary meaning of a dual person pronoun. The new (Auslan) form of WHICH (‘Y’ handshape, palm forward/down, moved horizontally in a small side to side movement; see Example 11), when used with a small rotating wrist movement means ‘either’/ ‘or’, implying deictic pronoun meaning – ‘this one’ or ‘that one’. The traditional form of WHICH can be oriented in space so that the extended fingers index the two referents, while the new form can be either moved in a manner that indexes dual referents (side to side movement) meaning ‘which-of-the-two?’, or a group of referents (circling movement ) to mean ‘which of these/those?’

3. Negation

Negation in NZSL is expressed through several forms used independently or in combination: lexical negators, non-manual signals, mouthing co-produced with
manual signs, morphological inflection of a closed (small) set of verbs, and lastly, a family of signs with inherently negative meaning (e.g., BAD, WRONG, RUDE, MISTAKE, DIRTY) that are formed with an extended-pinky handshape that can be used productively. This last category of signs will not be discussed here, except to note that their handshape is also associated with negative meaning in other signed languages including Auslan (Johnston 1989), BSL (Brien 1992), Chinese Sign Language and Thai Sign Language (Yang & Fischer 2002), and some varieties of ASL (Sternberg 1981).

### 3.1 Non-manual marking of negation

Predicates can be negated non-manually by a headshake co-occurring with the phrase. Non-manual negation (headshake) may be used with or without a negator sign. In relaxed discourse particularly, non-manual negation alone is typical, and articulation of the negation headshake may be reduced to a single sideways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interrogative sign</th>
<th>Related pronoun forms</th>
<th>Other non-interrogative uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic interrogative</td>
<td>something, somewhere, somebody, anyone, any, somehow</td>
<td>because (trad.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(trad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>so or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHICH (trad) (+ spatial</td>
<td>two-of-them/you</td>
<td>both, same, generic sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inflect. for person)</td>
<td></td>
<td>for family relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHICH (new) (+ spatial</td>
<td></td>
<td>either, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inflect. for person,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW-MANY (trad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>number, many, count,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW-MUCH (trad)</td>
<td></td>
<td>enough /not enough (+neg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO-2 (new)</td>
<td>someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY (new) - see Ex. 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>because (new), reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Interrogative – indefinite pronoun correspondences
(Older or traditional signs are marked as ‘trad’ and more recent forms borrowed via ASE as ‘new’.)
movement of the head, returning only to the centre, as also described by Sutton-Spence & Woll (1999) for BSL.\(^6\) Negation is emphasised by closed lips drawn down at the corners with the chin tensed (see Example 20). The head may be pulled back, and the brows furrowed to express emphatic negation in speech acts such as denial or disagreement.

Particularly in sentence final position, or as a stand-alone utterance, the sign NOTHING is accompanied by a “mouth gesture” (Sutton-Spence & Boyes Braem 2001) consisting of protrusion of the tongue between the teeth, as shown in Example 21. This mouth gesture also occurs with other negatives (conveying denial) such as NOT-ME and NOTHING-ME (see Section 3.3). Backward head movement shown in Example 20 signals intense negation.

Example 20: Emphatic negation: NOTHING + mouth gesture

![video ex.20]

Example 21: NOTHING with tongue protrusion mouth gesture

![video ex.21]

\(^6\) See the contributions by Antzakas and by van Herreweghe & Vermeerbergen in this volume about the use of this head movement in Greek Sign Language and Flemish Sign Language.
3.2 Scope of non-manual negation marking

The scope of non-manual negation marking occurs in the following patterns:

(a) Entire simple sentence or clause, minus any topicalised constituents\(^7\), for example:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{neg} \\
\text{Example 22} \quad \text{PRO3 LIVE AUCKLAND} \\
\quad \text{‘She doesn’t live in Auckland.’} \quad \text{video ex.22}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{t neg} \\
\text{Example 23} \quad \text{NEXT MEETING, PRO1 GO PRO1} \\
\quad \text{‘As for the next meeting, I’m not going.’} \quad \text{video ex.23}
\end{array}
\]

(b) In complex sentences - negated clause only, excluding other clauses such as topic, rhetorical question or conditional which are marked by contrasting non-manual signals:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{cond neg} \\
\text{Example 24} \quad \text{IF RAIN, MOW} \\
\quad \text{‘If it rains, don’t mow the lawn.’} \quad \text{video ex.24}
\end{array}
\]

(c) Co-occurring with a sentence final pronoun. This structure is used to refute, contradict, or emphasise negation of a proposition about a particular referent.

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{neg} \\
\text{Example 25} \quad \text{DEAF SCHOOL, PRO3} \\
\quad \text{‘She didn’t attend a deaf school – not her.’} \quad \text{video ex.25}
\end{array}
\]

Construction (c) has a positive corollary with an affirmative head nod. Sutton-Spence & Woll (1999:74) describe post-clausal negation in BSL, where the headshake occurs off the end of a sentence, without a manual sign. This is infrequent but possible in NZSL, usually occurring in the form of a rhetorical polar question (marked by slight brow and chin raise) followed by a headshake, as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{\textcopyright} \\
\text{\textcopyright}
\end{array}
\]

\(\text{7A restriction on the co-occurrence of topic and negation marking in NZSL is also described by Collins-Ahlgren (1989).}\)
(d) Post-clausal negation by headshake without a manual sign

Example 26  \textsc{rhet-q} \textsc{neg}

\begin{quote}
\textsc{worth go conference}

‘Is it worth going to the conference? I don’t think so.’
\end{quote}

video ex.26

Predicates containing a negation sign – or at least the sign itself – tend to be marked by a negative headshake, but not invariably. The combination of non-manual and manual negation does not result in positive meaning, in the way that two lexical negatives in English cancel each other out (as noted by Collins-Ahlgren 1989).

3.3 Lexical negation

NZSL has a variety of negation signs with distinct semantics and contexts of use, including (but not exhaustively) NOTHING, NOT, NOT-YET which negate predicates; negative pronouns and quantifiers - NOBODY, NONE (more emphatic than NOTHING which is also used as a quantifier), NOTHING-LEFT, NOTHING-THERE, exclamations of disavowal - NOT-ME and NOTHING-ME; negative imperatives - DON’T, MUST-NOT, FORBIDDEN, and negative replies - ‘neg’ headshake, DECLINE (sometimes described as neg. handwave), and NO. A closed set of verbs – WANT, KNOW, CAN, WILL – incorporate negation by a movement away from the body contact point (see Examples 27a, b).

Example 27a  \textsc{will}

Example 27b  \textsc{will-neg (‘Won’t’)}

As with interrogatives, the set of negation signs in NZSL has diversified somewhat in recent decades. Previous and older generations of NZSL signers used one
generic sign for most basic negative functions, including ‘not’, ‘don’t’, ‘can’t’, ‘never’, ‘should not’. This sign (glossed as NEG, Example 28) is formed with two (optionally one) flat hands, palms facing forward or down, moving outward from the centre.

Example 28   NEG (traditional generic negator)   video ex.28

Like the generic interrogative, this coincides with a gesture used by hearing people to emphasise refusal or ‘no more’. Its use by most NZSL signers now is restricted to ‘no more/that’s all’, imperative ‘don’t’, and very emphatic negation of a predicate.

Examples 29-32 show a related set of negation signs (variants of the root sign NOTHING) which cover the domain of negative quantification and negative pronouns.

Example 29   NOT (Signed English)   video ex.29
Example 30   NONE   video ex.30
Example 31   NOBODY   video ex.31
Example 32   NOTHING-THERE   video ex.32

3.3.1 Inflection of NOTHING for grammatical person

NOTHING can be inflected for grammatical person by forming the sign (one handed) in pronoun loci, to incorporate reference to either abstract or visible referents. For example, NOTHING made with the arm outstretched into the second person locus can mean, in context, ‘You don’t have /You aren’t/ Not you’. Moved in a horizontal arc in front of the signer, or made at various discrete points in the signing space, these meanings apply to multiple referents. The negative pronoun glossed NOBODY (Example 31) is a lexicalised group inflection of the ‘nothing’ handshape, while the sign NOTHING-THERE (Example 32) is a lexicalised use of the ‘nothing’ handshape moved in a circular path to incorporate the meaning of area. A further example of

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8 This is consistent with a similarly wide range of negative meanings expressed by this sign in BSL (cf. Brien 1992: 699)
this negation morpheme being used productively is the sign meaning ignorant or unknowing, in which the zero handshape is held against the forehead - the semantic location associated with knowledge and thought. ASL has a direct cognate of this sign formed with the ASL “zero” handshape, and it seems likely that the NZSL sign, which is of modern derivation, may be an adapted borrowing of that.

Two inherently first person negation signs are formed on the signer’s chest, the locus of first person reference. The sign NOT-ME (Example 33) is used to deny an accusation, disown an action or object, or to strongly decline involvement, e.g., ‘Nothing to do with me’; ‘Bags not!’; ‘Count me out’. The sign glossed NOTHING-ME (Example 34) is used to disavow or disclaim possession or knowledge of something, e.g., ‘I haven’t got one’, ‘I didn’t get a turn’, ‘I didn’t know that’, ‘I’ve never done/seen that’.9

| Example 33 | NOT-ME: Denying       | video ex.33 |
| Example 34 | NOTHING-ME: Disavowing | video ex.34 |

3.3.2 Position of negators in sentences
The most common lexical means of negating a clause is the addition of NOTHING to a predicate, either preceding or following a verb (e.g., PRO1 IMPROVE NOTHING – ‘I didn’t improve’; PRO3 NOTHING TALK – ‘He didn’t talk’). Clause final position of NOTHING is very frequent and described as more ‘natural’ by deaf consultants, although the data contain acceptable examples of NOTHING in either position. Pre-verb negation (using NOTHING or NOT) is more noticeable in careful or formal signing and in discourse with hearing participants, possibly influenced by awareness of English word order.

Like pronouns and question signs, NOTHING can be repeated at both ends of a verb phrase, e.g., PRO1 GROW-UP BOARDING SCHOOL NOTHING COOK SEW NOTHING – ‘I went to boarding school and we didn’t learn to cook and sew’. The doubling of NOTHING might be interpreted in such cases as emphasising both

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9 According to Johnston 1989:382, the same sign form in Auslan is used to express a reaction, such as ‘oh, really, you don’t say’, which is similar but has a slightly narrower range of meaning than in NZSL usage.
negative occurrence and negative quantity (‘didn’t learn any cooking or sewing’). NOTHING can also occur at the end of a clause containing another negator, for example: PRO1 NEVER TAKE-PILL NOTHING – ‘I never take (any) pills’; IX NOT-YET, FAX, NOTHING – ‘(They) haven’t faxed me yet’. A similar construction in Chinese Sign Language is characterised by Yang and Fischer (2002) as a ‘negative sandwich’.

Incomplete aspect is expressed by the sign NOT-YET normally accompanied by a headshake and/or backward head movement, although the headshake may be absent as in Example 35. NOT-YET generally follows a verb or a topic phrase, as in Examples 35 and 36. NOT-YET may pre-modify a verb (see Example 37), but this is a less preferred position. Data suggest that when NOT-YET precedes a verb, negation non-manual signals mark the whole sentence (as in Example 37), but when in clause final position, particularly following a topic, negation signals are only required with the negation sign or clause (see Example 36).

Example 35  (NOT-YET without headshake)
PAINT HOUSE NOT-YET

Example 36 HOUSE PAINT  NOT-YET PRO1
‘As for painting the house, I haven’t done it yet.’

Example 37 PRO1 NOT-YET PAINT PRO1
‘I haven’t painted (it) yet.’

The semantic opposite of NOT-YET is FINISH, which indicates completive aspect and patterns identically to NOT-YET. Either the sign NOT-YET, or non-manual negation alone, is used to negate FINISH, meaning that an action is in progress but has not yet been completed, e.g., ESSAY FINISH NOT-YET (‘I haven’t finished my essay yet’) or HOUSE PAINT, NOT-YET FINISH (‘I haven’t finished painting the house’). NOT-YET or FINISH can be used as negative/affirmative replies to a closed question (e.g., ‘Have you paid?’)
The sign NOT (Example 29) originates from Signed English and is now sometimes used in place of the older NEG form with nominal and adjectival predicates. NOT immediately precedes the constituent it negates, e.g., BORN PRO1 NOT RIGHT (‘When I was born something wasn’t right’). It does not appear in clause final position - e.g., *PRO1 TEACHER NOT is unacceptable, in contrast to PRO1 NOT TEACHER or PRO1 TEACHER NOTHING. While NOTHING (and NOT-YET) can negate a whole preceding predicate (e.g., DEAF LEARN FAMILY HISTORY NOTHING – ‘Deaf people don’t learn about family history’), the scope of NOT appears to be limited to an immediately following constituent or phrase, in a construction similar to English syntax. This usage may be influenced by its Signed English origin. NOTHING appears to be favoured over NOT as a general negator.

3.3.3 Negative existential and possessive functions of NOTHING
As well as being a negative pronoun, the sign NOTHING expresses negative existential and negative possession; its positive antonym is HAVE. HAVE is not required in an existential predicate, but is used to assert or emphasise existence, often accompanied by a head nod. HAVE is primarily used to express possession, and the sign form iconically represents grasping or holding something. These factors suggest that the existential meaning of HAVE has developed by extension. Another sign glossed as TRUE is also used with existential meaning. Both NOTHING and HAVE can stand as independent utterances in reply to closed questions about existence or possession, meaning for example (in context), ‘It’s not’, or ‘I am’.

To assert or negate existence, NOTHING and HAVE usually follow a predicate, while in a possessive context they commonly occur before or after the noun. Assertion is stronger when NOTHING or HAVE are clause final. For example:

Positive existential:

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Example 38  PRO3 SHY HAVE PRO3
          _________ nod
          ‘She’s shy.’    video ex.38
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Example 39  PRO1 NERVOUS HAVE
          _________ t   nod
          ‘I am nervous.’ video ex.39
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Negative existential:

\[ \text{\underline{neg}} \]

Example 40  PRO1 SHY NOTHING  ‘I’m not shy.’  video ex.40

Positive possession:

\[ \text{\underline{nod}} \]

Example 41a  CAR PRO1 HAVE PRO1  or  video ex.41a

Example 41b  HAVE CAR PRO1  ‘I have a car.’  video ex.41b

Negative possession:

\[ \text{\underline{neg}} \]

Example 42  CAR NOTHING PRO1  ‘I don’t have a car.’  video ex.42

HAVE can also be negated by combination with NOTHING, as in the example,
GALLAUDET ONLY DEAF UNIVERSITY IX WORLD. NOTHING HAVE HERE, NOTHING HAVE AUSTRALIA. The meaning of this particular example could be ambiguously possessive or existential (‘we don’t have one/ there isn’t one’), but the post-negation position of HAVE (and other examples in the data) suggests that this combination is used with the intent of emphasising negative existence.

4. Conclusion

NZSL shares some features of interrogative and negative constructions with other signed languages, and exhibits recent change and expansion in these two aspects influenced by the introduction of Signed English from 1979. Both questions and negative propositions can be expressed by suprasegmental non-manual signals, produced with or without manual signs which express interrogative or negative meaning. Non-manual signals for negation and interrogatives can be layered to express negative questions of both open and closed types. Syntactic analysis shows
that the scope of non-manual marking is subject to more restrictions than constituent order, which generally displays more flexibility. In NZSL, there is a tendency for signers to repeat pronouns, question words and negators at the beginning and end of a clause or predicate, in a form of “sandwiching”.

Lexical aspects of interrogative and negation signs have been described, noting in each case an historical shift from a small set of forms consisting principally of generic interrogative and generic negation forms, differentiated by mouthing, towards a more diversified lexicon of question and negation words. Lexical expansion and replacement has come about mainly through language contact (and intervention) since the 1979 introduction of Australasian Signed English, based on Auslan vocabulary. Signs from both traditional and newer paradigms co-exist and generally, but not in every case, are associated with older and younger generations of NZSL signers. Observation indicates that middle-aged and younger signers make more consistent use of grammaticised non-manual signals for marking interrogatives than do older signers, who place more emphasis on mouthing to convey or disambiguate word and sentential meaning.

Traditional generic forms of interrogative and negation signs that are specified by mouthing, and non-manual signals that signal questions (brow movement) and negation (negative headshake), coincide substantially with hand and facial paralinguistic gestures that non-deaf people in New Zealand might also use to emphasise a question or negative statement. This overlap with gestures (supported by mouthing) is not true of recently adopted question and negation signs; this perhaps reflects a shift in the resources from which the NZSL lexicon draws - away from the surrounding spoken language (at least in terms of production features, if not semantics) and towards other signed languages, as opportunities for cross-language contact increase and the language changes internally in a changing sociolinguistic context.