Size and shape specifiers in Russian Sign Language: the non-manual component

NRU HSE academic fund
"Modality effects in RSL syntax" meeting
January, 16
2018

Masha Kyuseva
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Size and shape specifiers

1. Denote size and/or shape of objects

2. The movement component cannot designate the object's displacement or location

This is not SASS:

'There are three brushes on the table'
RH: CL-long.thin.object-three
LH: CL-flat.surface

This is SASS:

'[They are seating at] a round table'
RH: TABLE SASS-round
LH: TABLE SASS-round

Semantic classifiers (Zwitserlood, 2003)

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Semantic classifiers (Zwitserlood, 2003)

SASS

movement outlines the object's contour

tracing

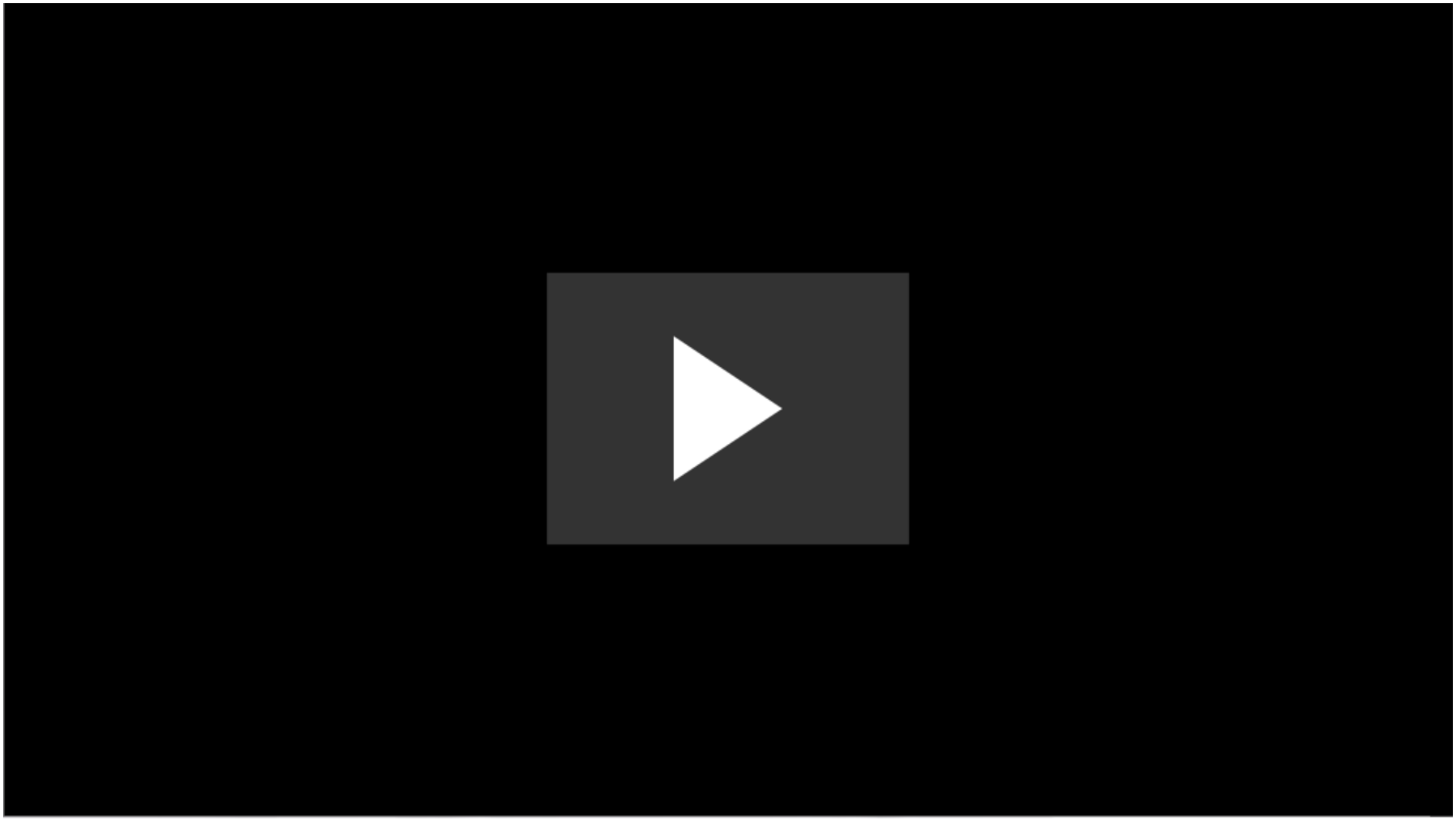
'[The vase is] thin'

static

no movement, hands at the ends of the object's projection

'[The brush is] this size'

not in sense of Supalla (1982, 1986)



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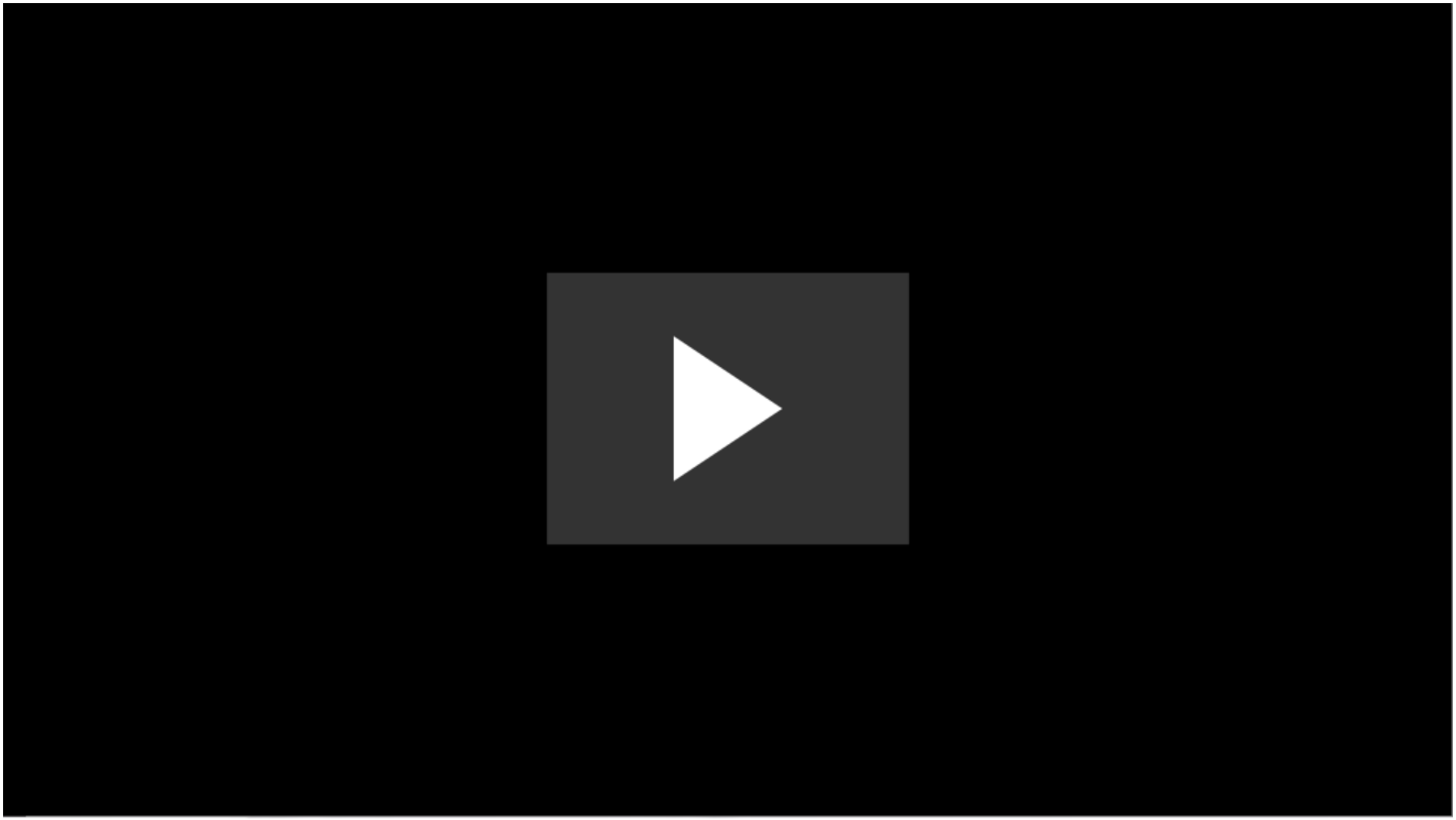

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Lexicalized SASSes

'road'

Brennan, 1990
Johnston&Schembri, 2007

Lexicalized SASSes

- derived from productive SASSes

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- form does not depend on context
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- kept in the mental lexicon

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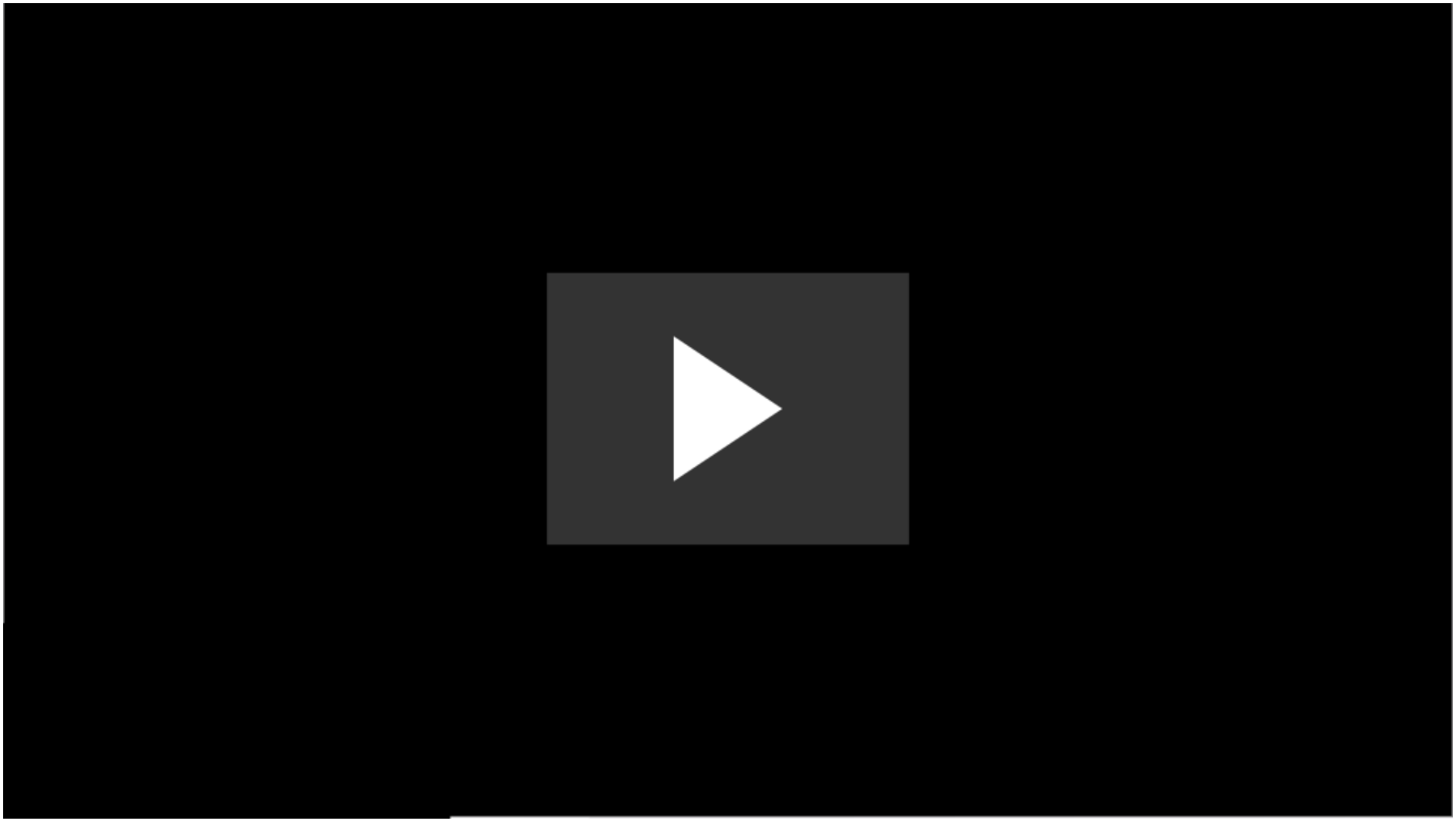

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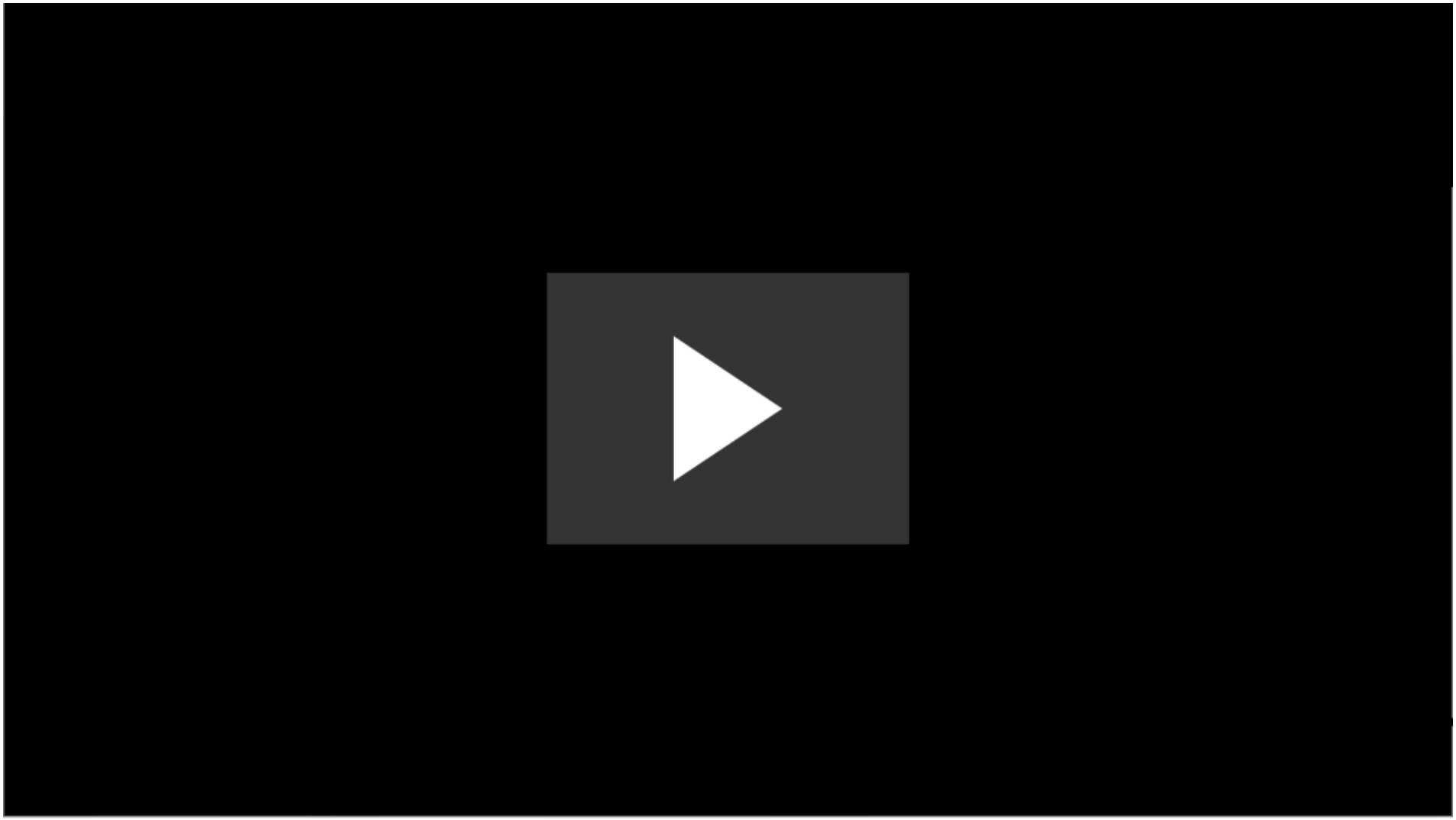

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Size and shape specifiers received relatively little attention since (Supalla, 1982)

In this talk

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BUT

They are a worthwhile object of study

- they exhibit features of both conventional signs and gestures

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BUT

They are a worthwhile object of study

- they exhibit features of both conventional signs and gestures

AND

In this talk

Russian Sign Language is largely understudied

In this talk

- I will focus on mouth actions
- I will tell how I collected and annotated the data
- I will argue that:
  mouth actions play an important role in SASS semantics;
  they can act as minimal distinctive units;
  sometimes they are used to highlight a particular aspect of the shape outlined by a SASS.

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Corpus with semi-spontaneous speech

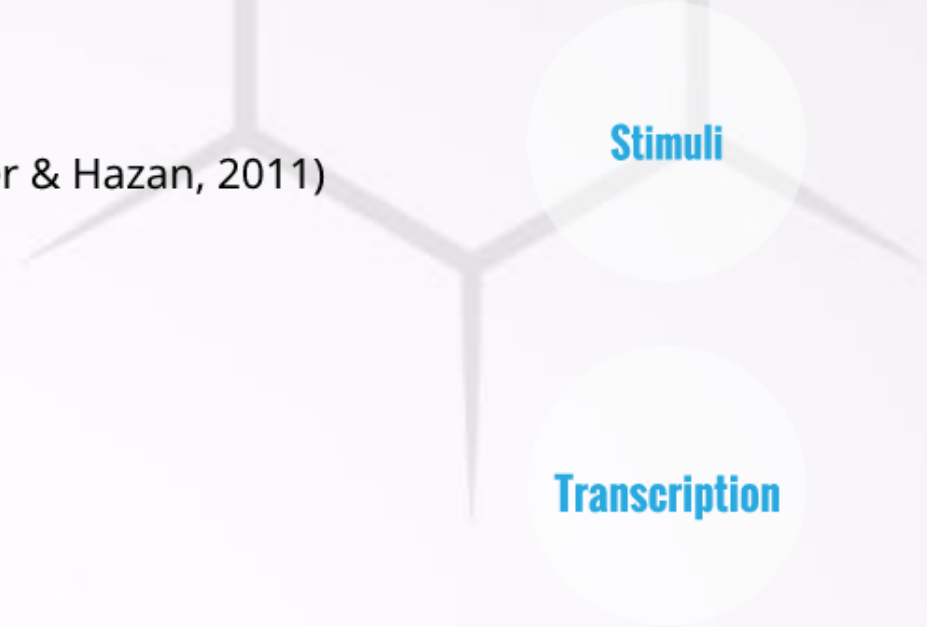
Corpus with semi-spontaneous speech

Communicative games

Corpus with semi-spontaneous speech

Communicative games

'Spot the difference' task (Baker & Hazan, 2011)



Corpus with semi-spontaneous speech

Communicative games

'Spot the difference' task (Baker & Hazan, 2011)

- two participants
- presented with different versions of the same picture
- the goal -- to find the differences without looking at each other's pictures

Stimuli

Transcription

Corpus with semi-spontaneous speech

Communicative games

'Spot the difference' task (Baker & Hazan, 2011)

- two participants
- presented with different versions of the same picture
- the goal -- to find the differences without looking at each other's pictures

Overall:

- 3 hours of data

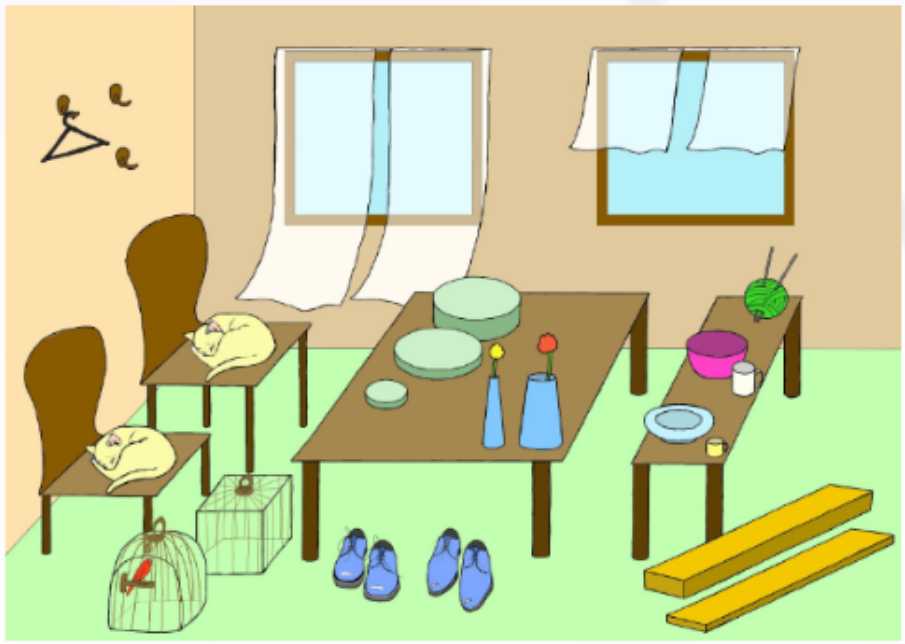
In this project:

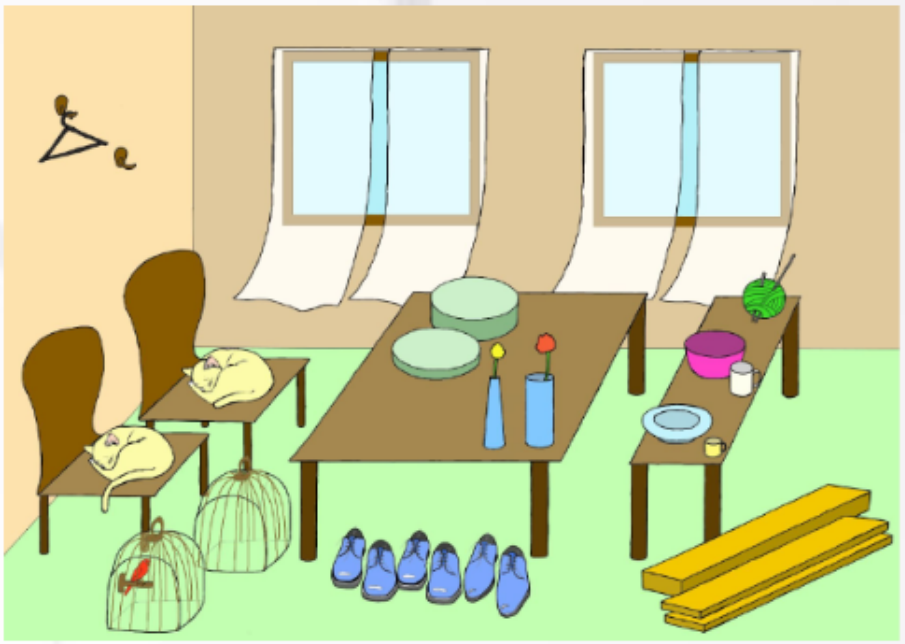
- 30 minutes
- 6 signers
- 6 parties of the game
- 598 SASSes

Stimuli

Transcription

Spot the difference task





Annotation of mouth gestures

Jaw	open (mo) / closed (mcl) / crack (mcr)
Cheeks	puffed (chp) / sucked in (chs)
Tongue	protruded (tt) / pushed into one cheek (tch)
Lips	neutral (ln) / stretched (ls) / protruded (lpd) / drawn (ldn) / pressed (lpr) ...
Air	inhalation (msc) / exhalation (mbl)

Example

Vogt-Svendsen, 2001
Burkova & Filimonova, 2016

mcl, ldn

mouth closed; lip corners down

mcr, ln, tt, mbl

mouth crack; lips neutral,
tongue protruded, air exhalation

mcl,

mout

mcl, ldn

mouth closed; lip corners down

mcr, ln, tt, mbl

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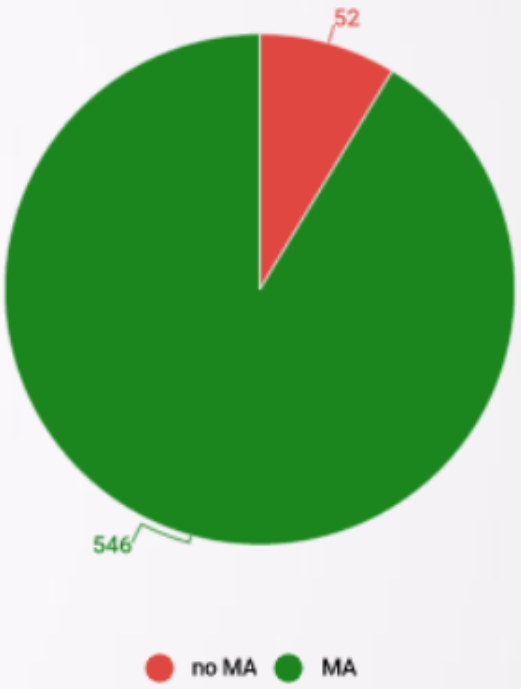
Results

SASSes by mouth action accompaniment



Lexicalized vs. productive SASSes

Static vs. tracing SASSes

Tracing: size vs. shape

Results

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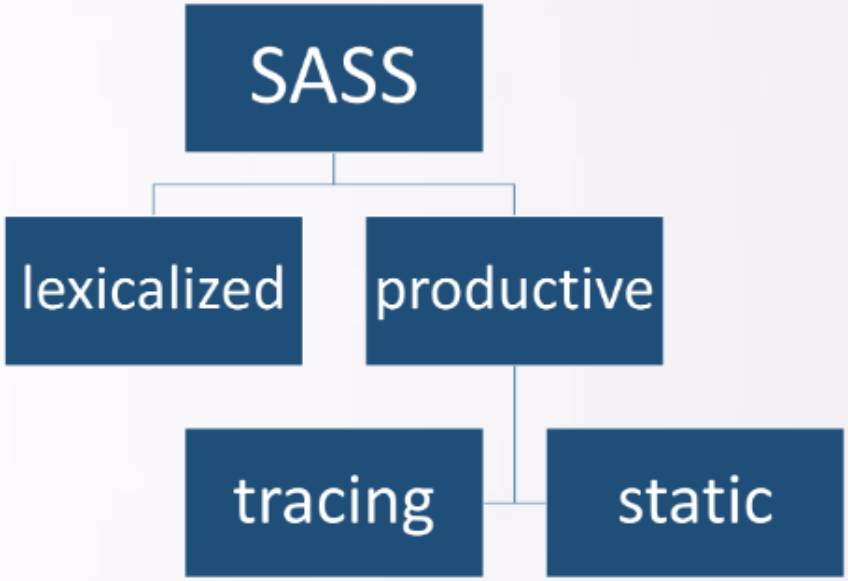
Classification of SASSes



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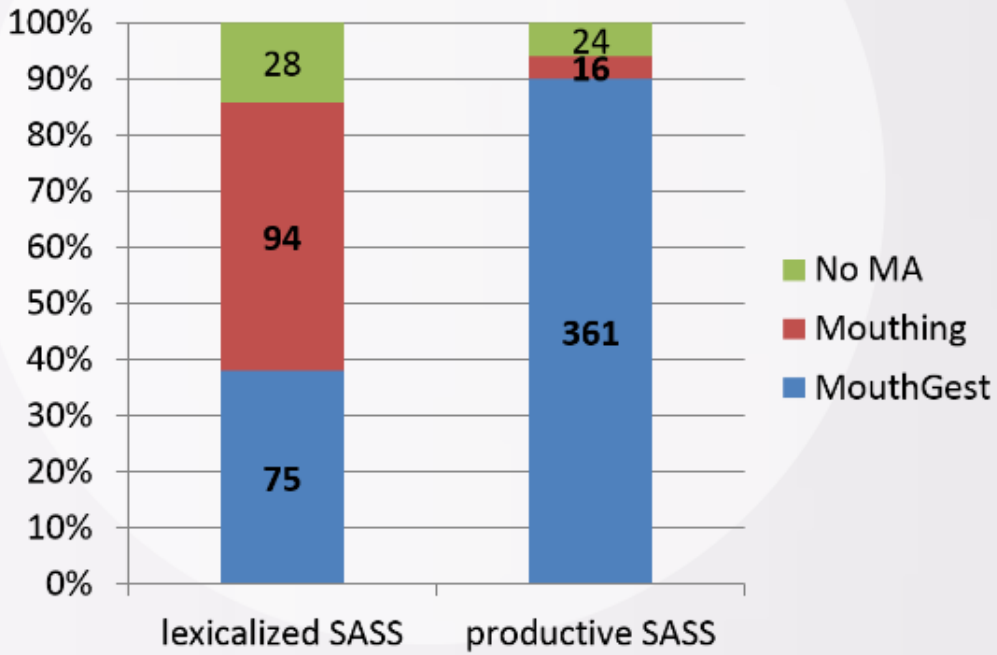

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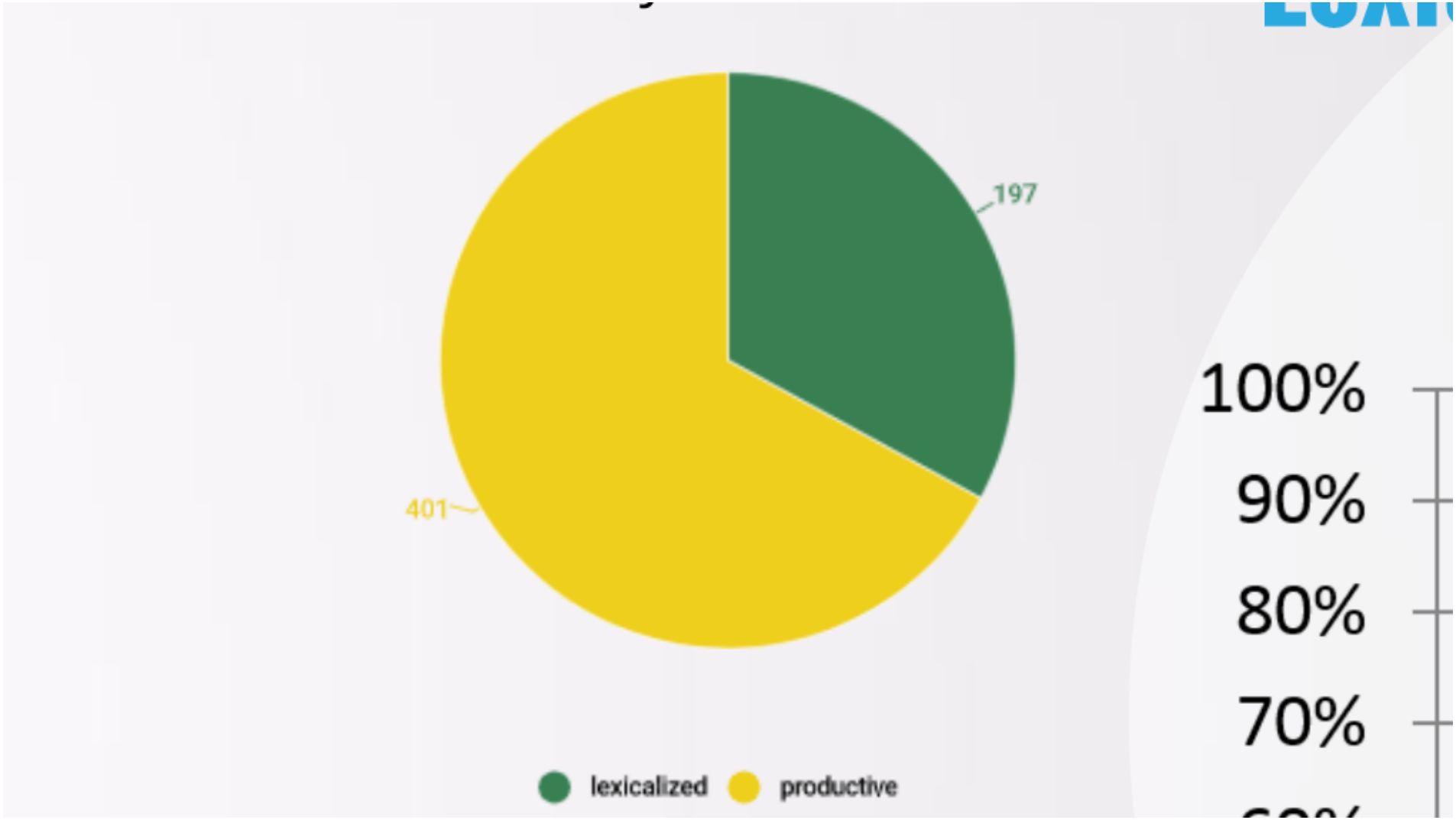
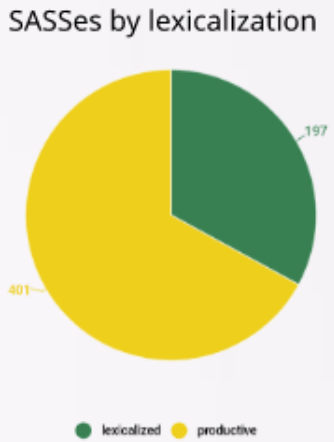
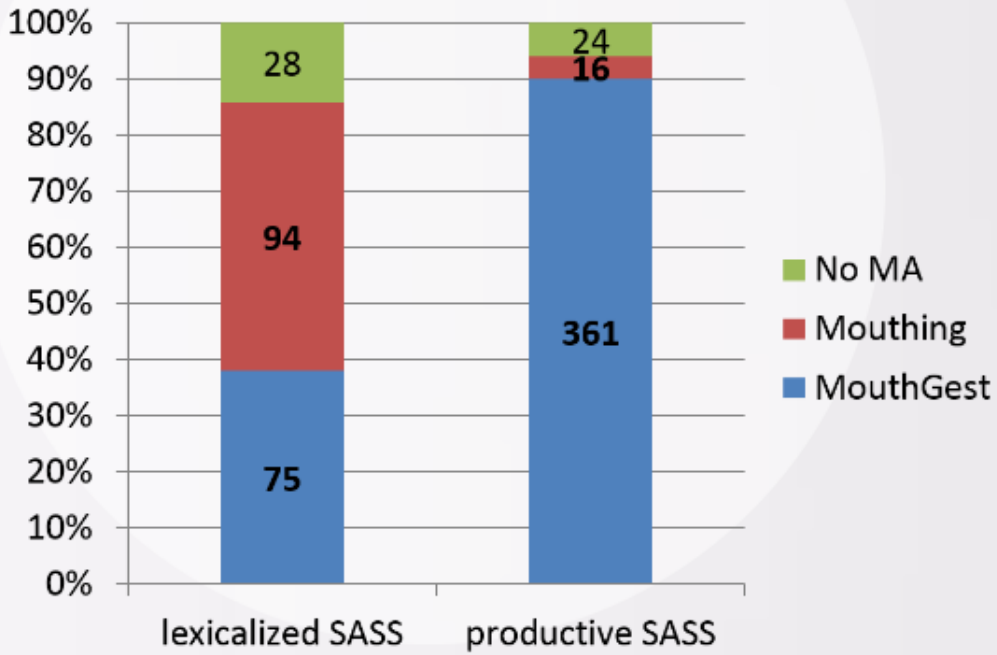

197
401
lexicalized
productive
100%
90%
80%
70%

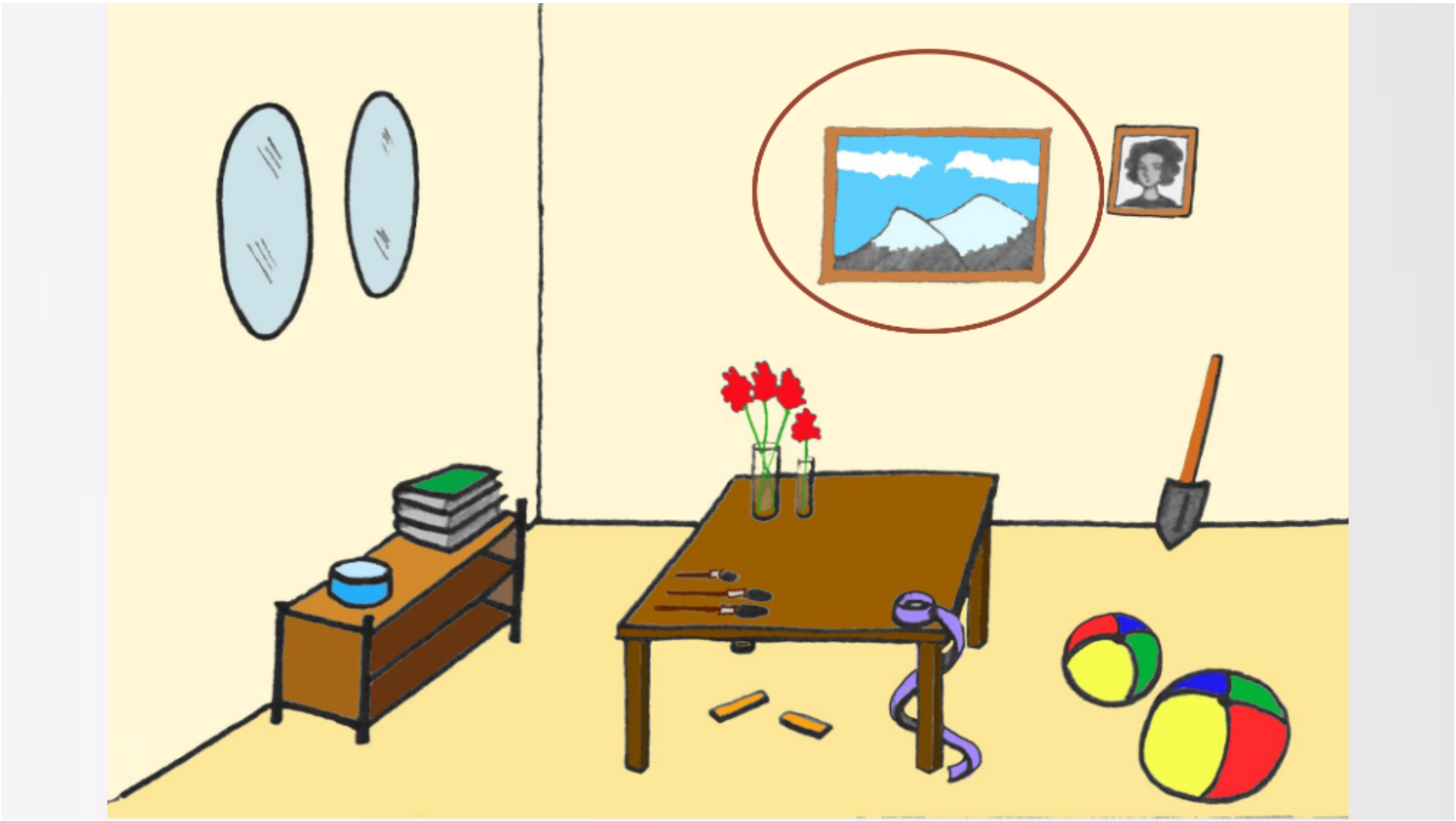
Lexicalized vs. productive SASSes

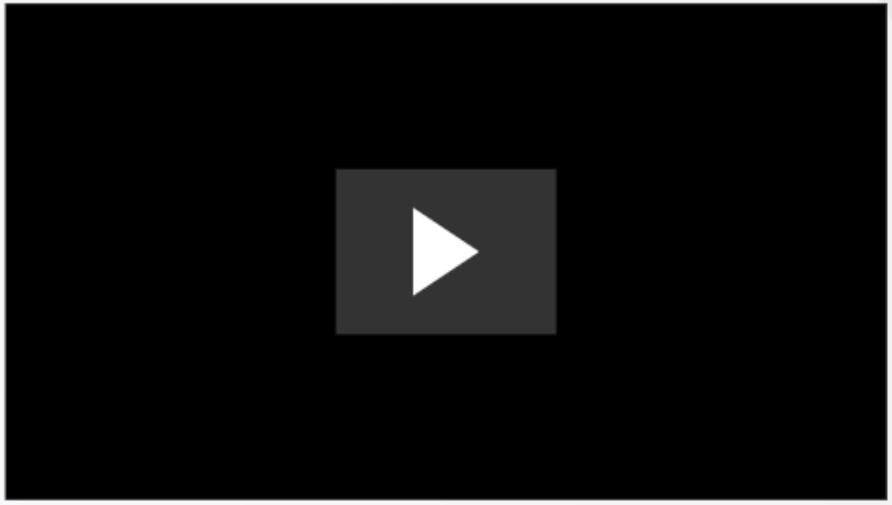




Example

'There are two pointed mountains [on the picture]'





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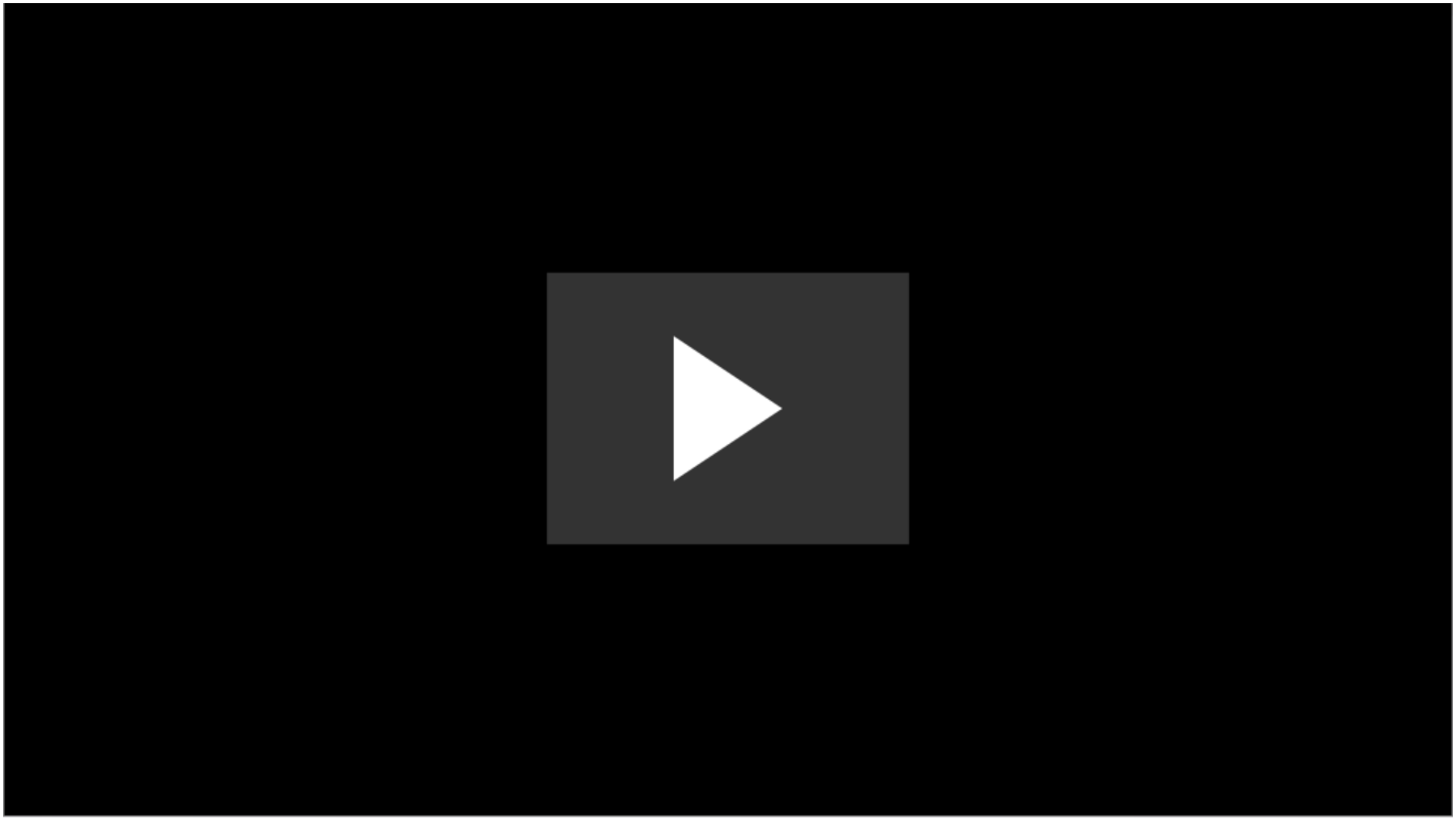

Static vs. tracing SASSes

120 SASSes: 60 tracing + 60 static

Example

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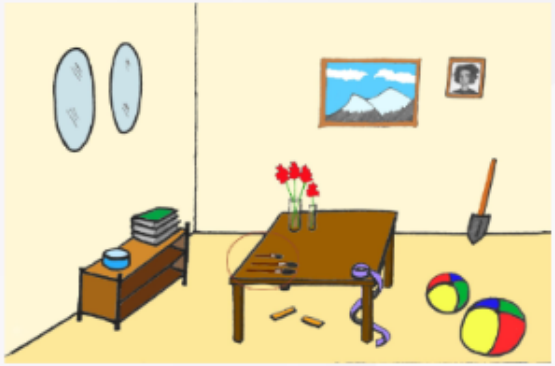
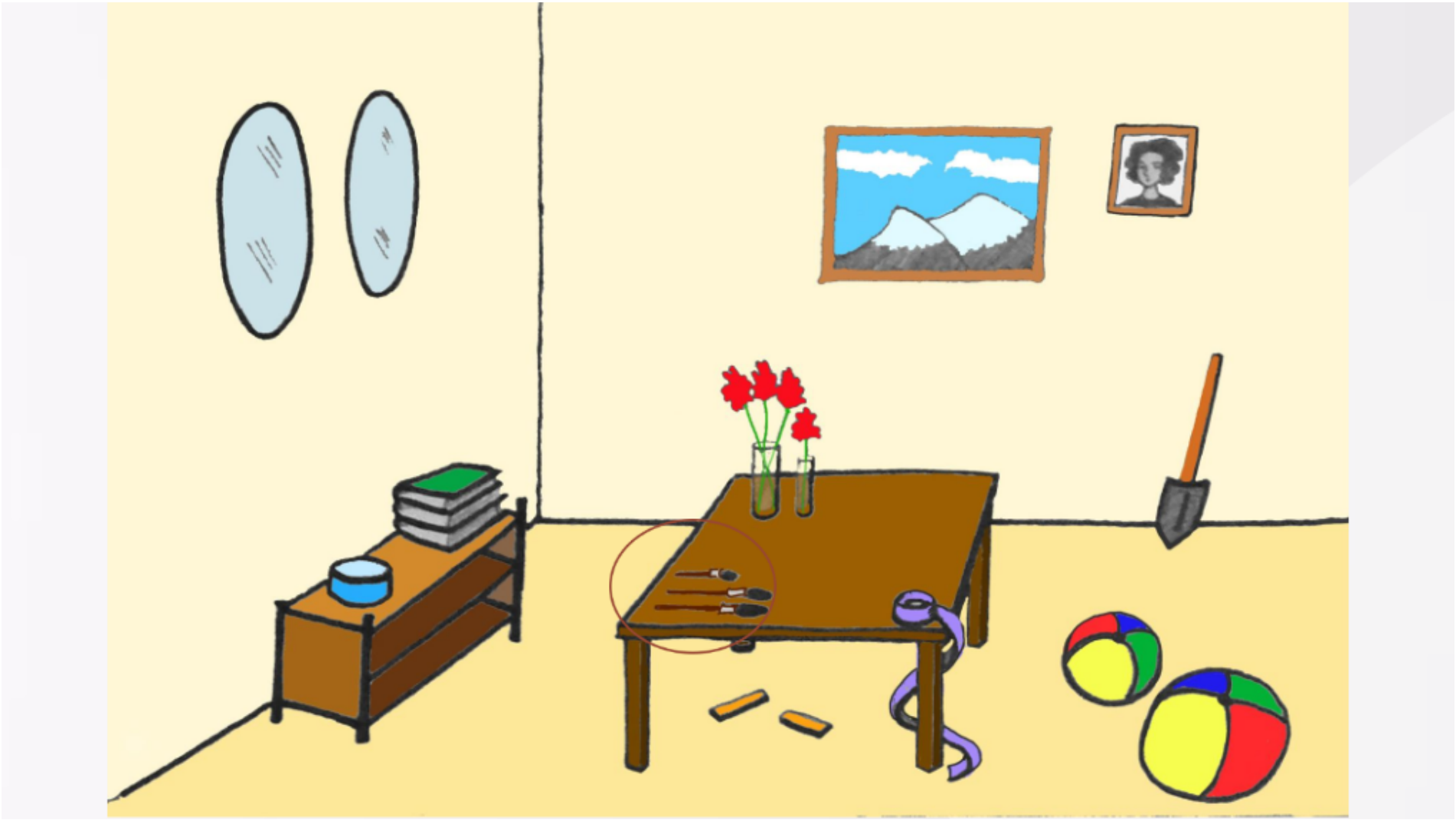
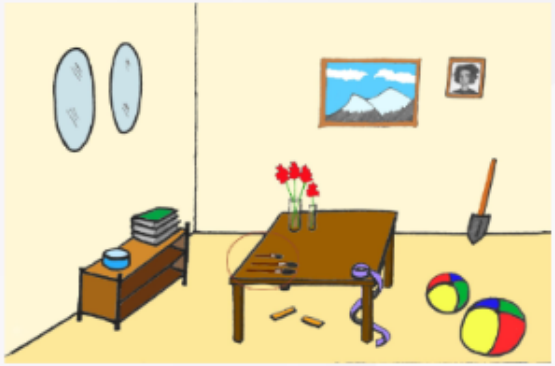


'Two [brushes] are long and the third one is short'





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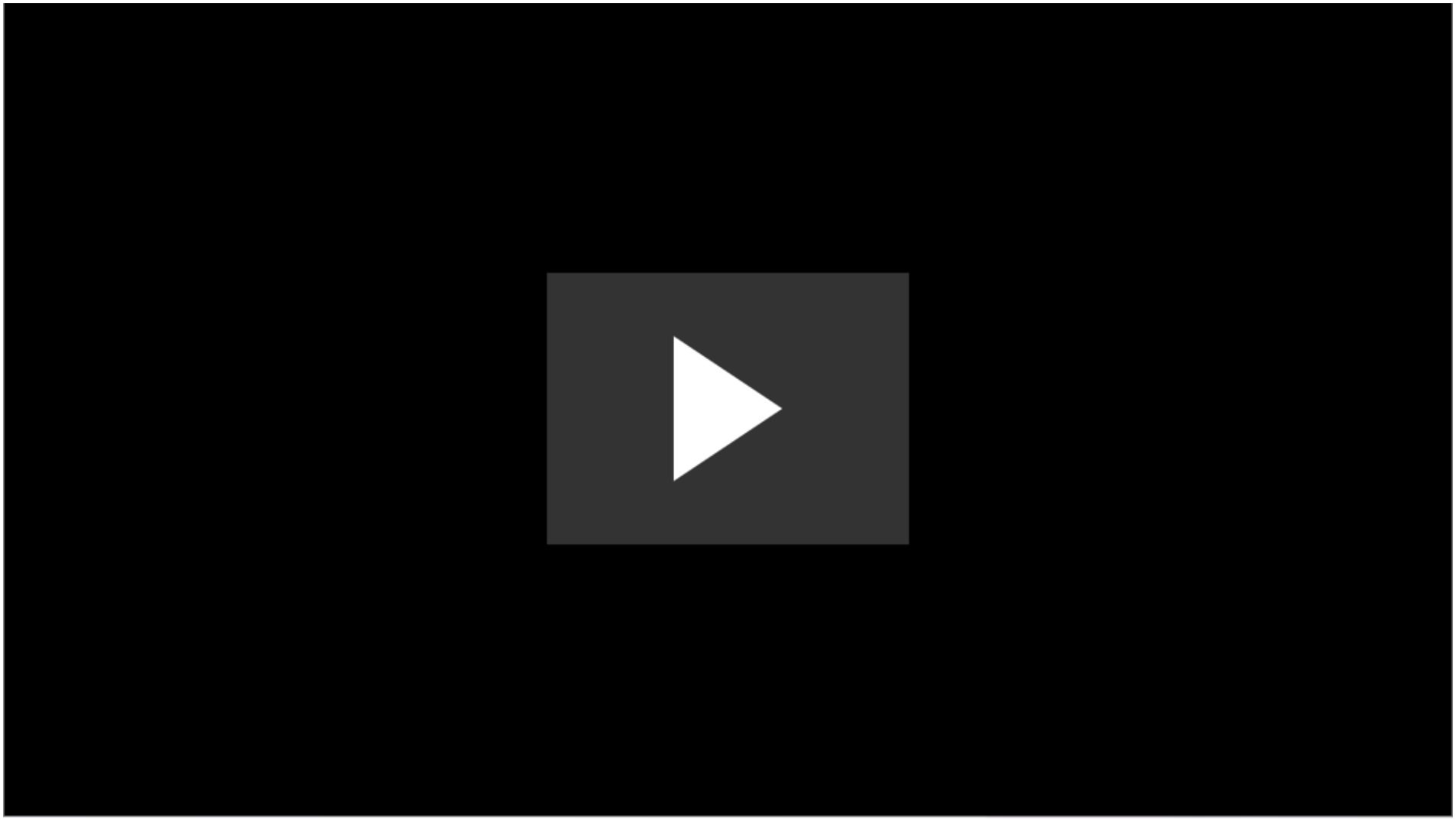
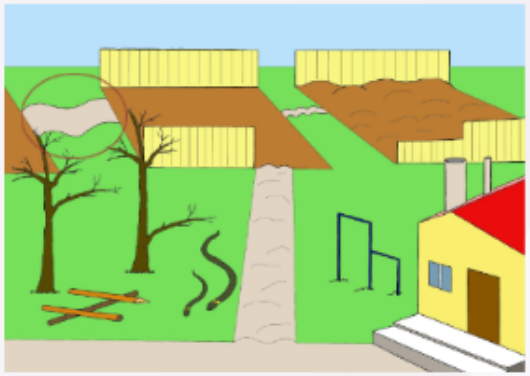
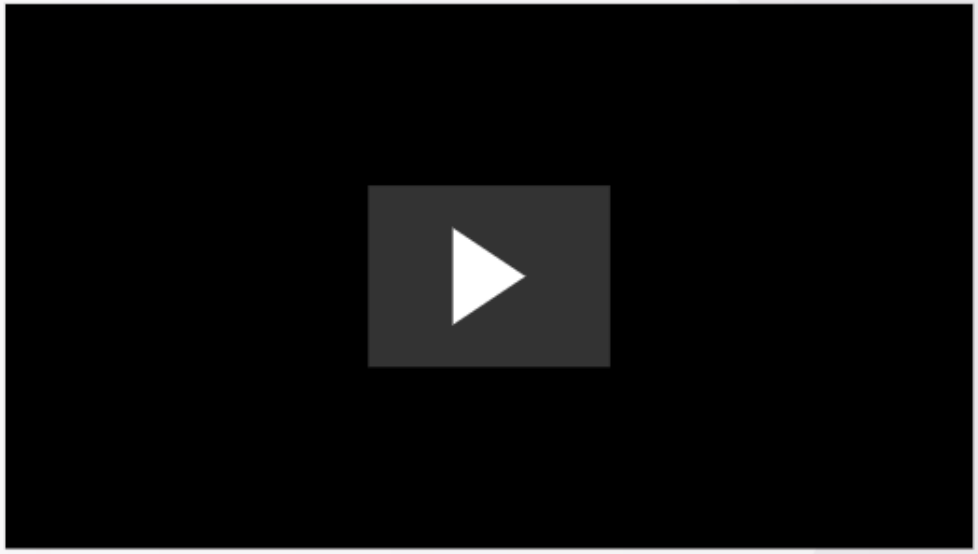


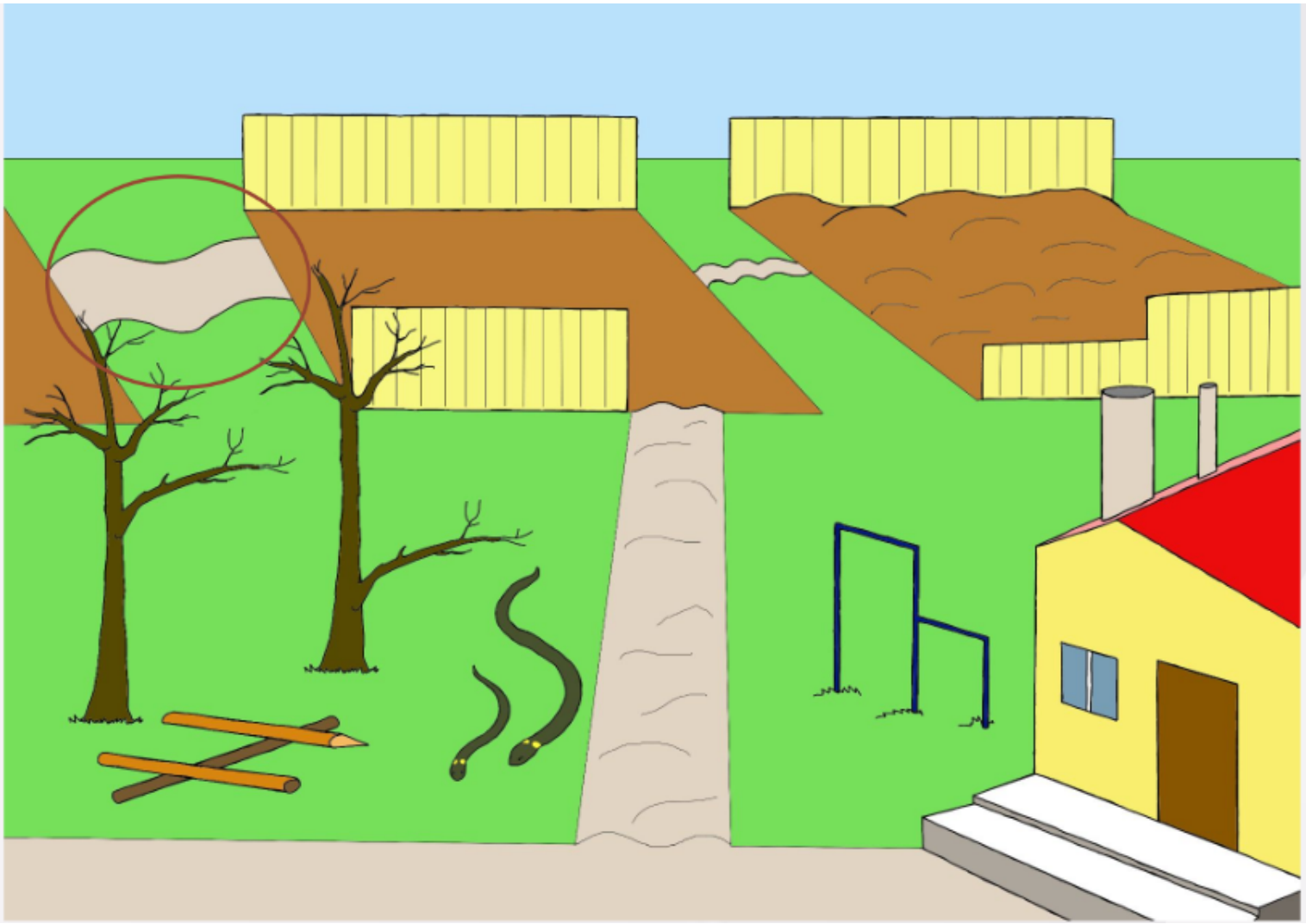
Mouth gestures in tracing SASSes
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
af
peeh
pl
th
uuu
cheeks puffed
ash'
lips stretched
corners down
f

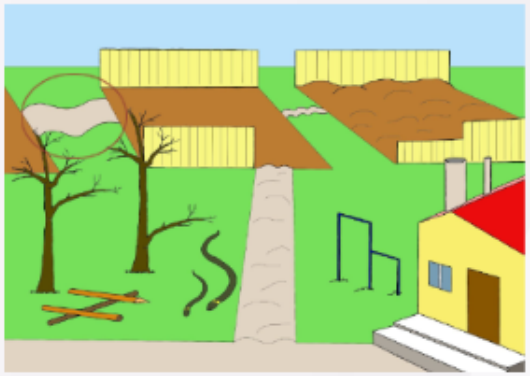
Example

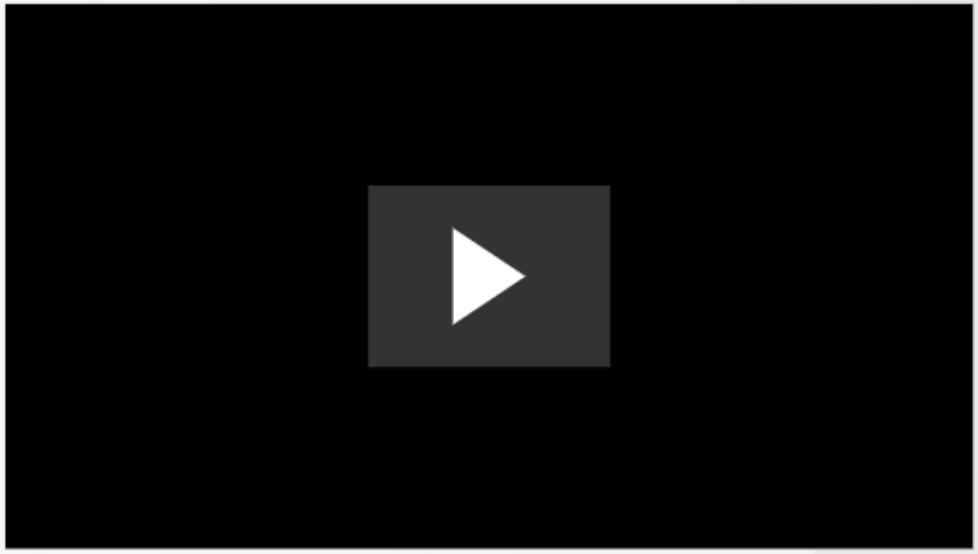




- I've got a thick wiggly path
- It's straight on my picture
- Oh, it's wiggly on mine







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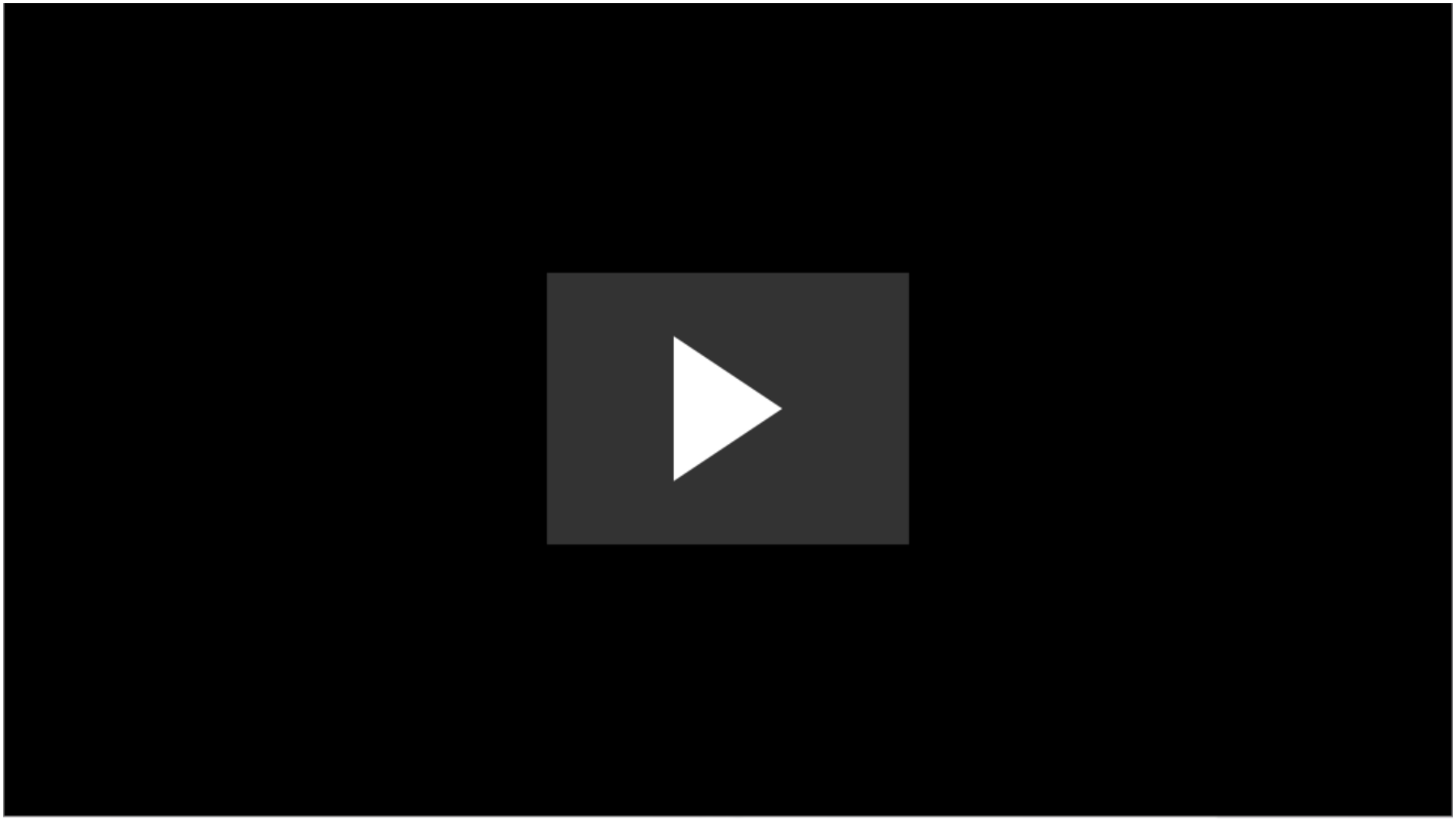

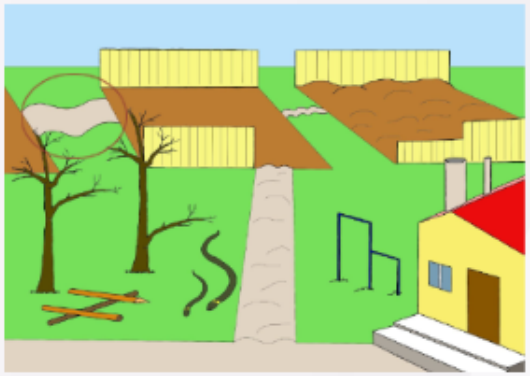

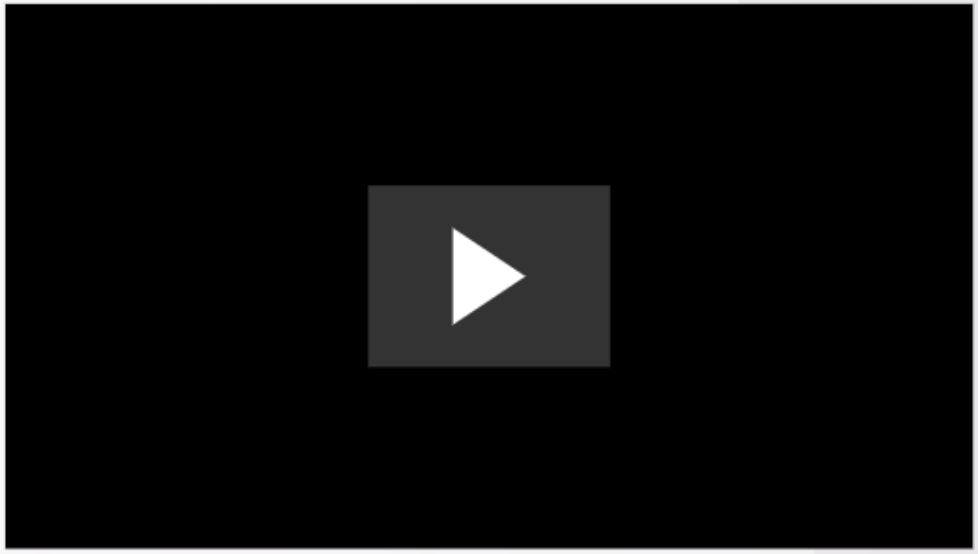

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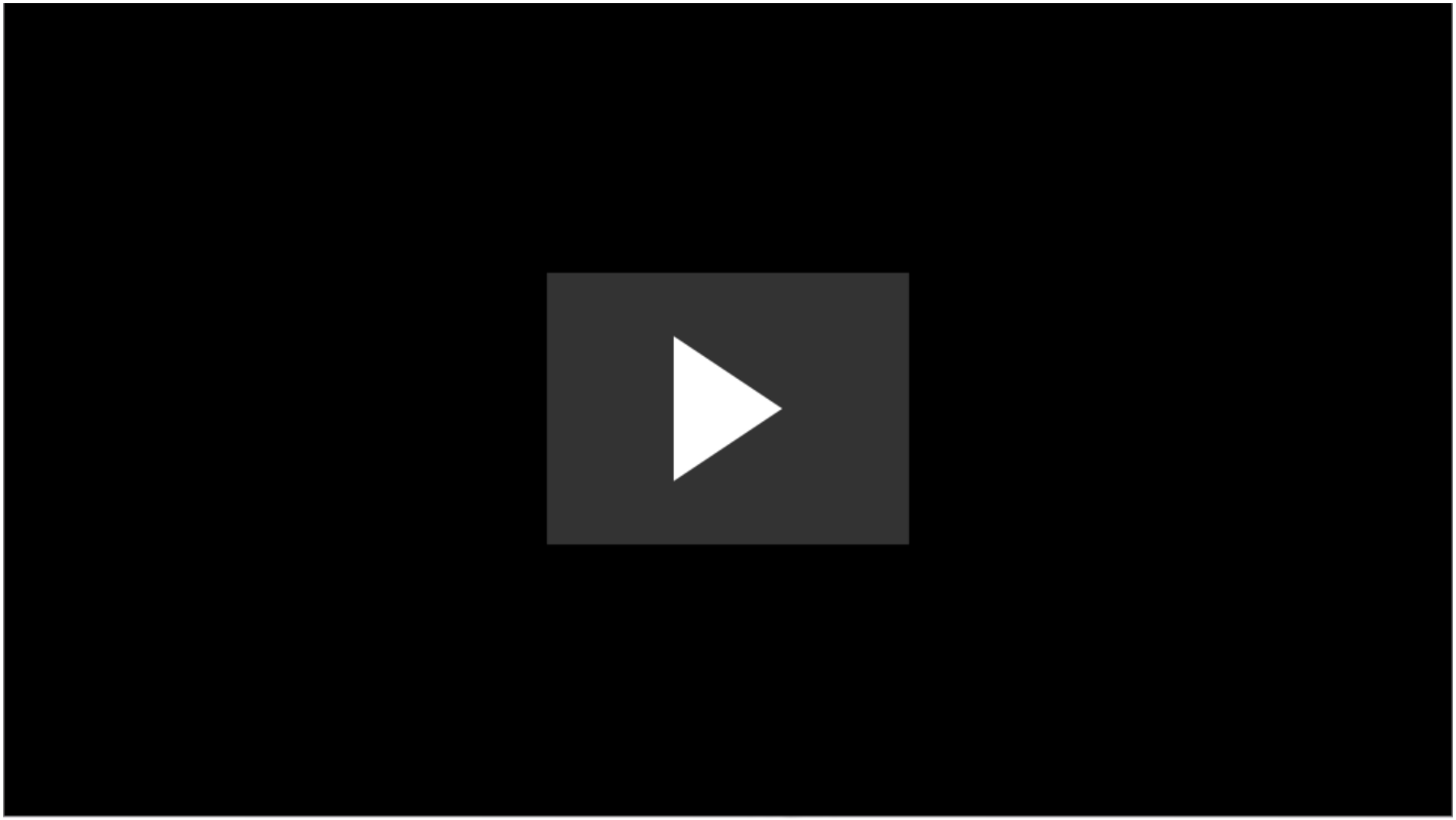

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