



## Raised brows in relative clause constructions in Iranian sign language: A cognitive grammar analysis

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### Abstract

Raised brows are important grammatical facial markers in relative clause (RC) constructions in Iranian Sign Language (Zaban Eshareh Irani: ZEI, aka Esharani). RC constructions can be characterized as manifestations of a reference-point relationship in language. A reference-point relationship allows for a sequential scanning mental process by which an activated entity in the first conceptual domain is the reference point to lead the conceptualizer to a target. Activation of the nominal head as the reference point in the RC is marked by raised eyebrows which are held through the entire relative clause. Relative clauses are part of a larger conceptual context, the matrix clause. The trajector or landmark of one process functions as the trajector or landmark of another process, and the two processes together need to be comprehended as a whole. Thus, the grounded nominal expression in RC construction has a dual grammatical role in the utterance. In the first phase, an entity becomes accessible via an event. In the second phase, a second event is accessible via the same entity. The eyebrows raising and returning to their neutral position indicate the boundary between the two phases. In this way, the relative clause and the main clause are construed to be in relation to one another.

**Keywords:** Iranian sign language, ZEI, Reference point relationship, Relative clause, Cognitive grammar

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