

Introduction

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The book we are now introducing contains a selection of texts presented at the *III Meeting on Morphosyntax of Portuguese Sign Language and other sign languages*, organized by the Centre of Linguistics of the University of Porto (CLUP) and by the Centre for Research and Innovation Education (inED) of the Porto Polytechnic School of Education (ESE/IPP), which took place on February the 6th and the 7th, 2020, in the premises of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the UP and the School of Education of the IPP.

This was already the third edition of an international/transcontinental meeting, which is held by tradition in co-organization by the institutions involved. It includes two days of work and reflection, sharing, and discussion, around themes from different languages and various scientific and investigative perspectives on sign languages and their properties and structures in different areas of grammar and of languages. In addition to having hosted researchers from Portugal, Brazil, Spain and Italy, the meeting had two guest speakers, Prof. Meltem Kelepir, from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, and Prof. Ana Mineiro, from the Portuguese Catholic University, Lisbon, both with a vast curriculum on sign languages.

Although sign languages have been considered natural languages, since William Stokoe, many doubts remain about their organization. During some decades of the 20th century, linguists tried to show that sign languages are governed by the same principles that regulate oral languages, principles of Universal Grammar. In recent decades, however, the focus has been placed on specific properties related to the manual-visual modality of sign languages, and on the simultaneity of manual and non-manual elements, among other aspects. Both perspectives are important and the challenge for lin-

guists is to discover what is universal and what is dependent on the specific modality of sign language, which makes the research so challenging and so stimulating.

This book covers topics from the most studied areas of sign languages and in particular Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) – lexicon and phonology – but also includes less explored areas such as syntax and semantics, as well as the wider domain of variation and change.

While the lexicon of sign languages is widely studied from different perspectives, there are many semantic dimensions of these languages still to be analysed and understood. One of those dimensions is quantification. Studies on quantification in sign languages are rare and there are difficult questions to answer: how are universal quantification (*all x*) and existential quantification (*some x*) expressed in different sign languages? How do these languages express definiteness and indefiniteness?

In her text, Meltem Keleşir studies the role of space in the expression of exclusive and inclusive indefinite quantification, taking Turkish Sign Language (TİD) as a starting point; in this language, the sign for ONE, when signed in different spaces, results in different interpretations. There are exclusive indefinite forms (which exclude at least the interlocutor and other individuals), particularly a sign to OTHER, which can function as an exclusive indefinite with a sense of “someone” and which can be used alone or combined with other forms. And there is a sign for an inclusive indefinite that includes the addressee and a third person (“he” / “she”). As there is no sign to give the value of inclusive OTHER, it seems, therefore, that the exclusive value is the unmarked value for the indefinite in TİD, which is in line with the proposal of Cormier (2005)¹ for personal pronouns in American Sign Language (ASL).

One of the central issues to explore in sign languages is the organization of simple sentences, in their different types, and the organization of complex sentences, including word order and the way these languages express the argument structure of verbs, typical problems addressed in syntax. In this book, several texts analyse these themes, albeit in different ways.

Alessandra Checchetto, Caterina Donati and Carlo Cecchetto describe partial exclamatives in Italian Sign Language (LIS) from a semi-spontaneous corpus, with Deaf informants, who were asked to describe drawings that would provoke positive and negative surprise reactions, as well as judgments of grammaticality regarding such productions. The analysis allowed to observe that the main marks of partial exclamatives in LIS are furrowed eyebrows, as in partial interrogatives, which permits the conclusion that furrowed eyebrows are the non-manual expression of a *wh* feature, the common feature of interrogatives and partial exclamatives. This proposal allows the authors to elaborate a formal treatment of partial exclamatives along the lines of Zanuttini & Portner (2003)² and which is minimally different from the analysis of *wh* interrogatives.

¹ Cormier, Kearsy (2005). Exclusive pronouns in American Sign Language. In Filimonova, E. (ed.), *Clusivity: Typology and case studies of inclusive-exclusive distinction*, 241-268. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

² Zanuttini, Raffaella & Paul Portner (2003). Exclamative Clauses: At the Syntax-Semantics Interface. *Language*. 79: 39-81.

Morgado and Brito study predicative sentences in Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) with adjectives and locatives; the data collected, either in provoked productions of four Deaf informants, or through the collection in the *Spread the Sign* dictionary, allowed them to conclude that there is null copula with adjectives, with individual predicates and with stage-level predicates, as opposed to locative predicates, which are produced with a sign for the verb, followed or preceded by a locative index and, in several constructions, accompanied by the *mouthing* /lala/. This finding justified, by the authors, a comparative analysis between null copula oral languages and other sign languages, in particular ASL, Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS), Spanish Sign Language (LSE) and Finnish Sign Language (FinSL).

Word order, as we have already said, is also an aspect to be explored regarding sign languages, with some researchers claiming that sign languages have greater flexibility in word/phrase order than oral languages, but, on the other hand, there are linguists who, comparing different sign languages, advocate in favour of dominant patterns of order.

Mariana Martins, Hope Morgan and Victoria Nyst studied word order and argument structure in Guinea-Bissau Sign Language (LGG), an emerging sign language, therefore not yet fully stabilized. Data were obtained from an elicitation task by 12 Deaf signing women, from the observation of videos that captured transitive events. The analysis allowed the authors to realize that the verb arguments are indexed in space, but the directionality of the verbs does not always consider the location of the arguments. The sentence has the verb in the final position, but there may be differences related to the arguments' animacy features: the SOV pattern appears when the subject is non-human and the OSV pattern appears with two human arguments, which allows finding similarities with other emerging sign languages, namely the sign languages that appear in villages (*village SL*).

One of the questions always raised about the lexicon of sign languages is to know to what extent the used signs are iconic, trying to approximate the shape of objects, or whether they are arbitrary, with an increasingly distant relationship from that shape.

Rosana Constâncio and Jorge Bidarra, based on several examples from LIBRAS discuss this issue, considering that, in sign languages, and from a functional perspective, iconicity cannot be considered an antagonistic phenomenon of arbitrariness, since, if certain parts of signs can be iconic, other parts are not. Thus, the authors consider that the two dimensions characterize LIBRAS, just like any other natural language.

Ana Mineiro also discusses this issue from the analysis of how the syntactic space, - the space where the signs of a sign language are produced -, is modified in an emerging language, the Sign Language of São Tomé and Príncipe (LGSTP). The study allowed to observe how, from a wide space regarding the use of the whole body and the production of signs away from the signer, signs are getting closer to the trunk and that decreases in terms of the occupied space area, in a process which the author considers to be universal, neurolinguistically motivated, in search of linguistic economy and less energy in the articulation of the sign and in the use of space.

Marta Morgado and Victoria Nyst also study two village sign languages, one used in Adamorobe (AsaSL), Ghana, and the other in Bouakako (LaSiBo), Ivory Coast. The first language exists for several generations and currently has thirty speakers. The

second is emergent and has seven speakers. Being village languages, they were not influenced by the school or other sign languages. From the production of stories about attacks by animals, namely snakes, the aim of the study was to understand how mouth movements are used to express size and shape. Some similarities and differences were found in these two languages: in LaSiBo the small size and circular shape were expressed mainly by body signs and very little by mouth movements; mouth movements were more frequent at AsaSL.

Like any natural language, sign languages are prepared to build texts and discourses, using narrative strategies, reference and co-reference processes.

Leidiani da Silva Reis and Jorge Bidarra study referential processes in two sign languages, LIBRAS and LSE, from two parallel *corpora* composed of narratives produced by six Deaf individuals, three Brazilians and three Spanish, based on the visualisation of a video that tells the story of pears (*Pear Film*). The research allowed to show that, although each language uses its own narrative strategies, the reference processes are similar, since the signers used, recurrently, mechanisms of introduction of referents and of co-reference through complex constructions constituted by deictic expressions and anaphoric expressions, which the authors called Deictic-Anaphoric constructions.

Like natural languages, sign languages are also subject to variation and change.

Neide Gonçalves, Mara Moita and Ana Mineiro decided to study these dimensions in two productions of the short story *Little Red Riding Hood*, by two Deaf signers at different times, in 1992 and 2019. The elicited productions were recorded. The main results point to a slight increase, in 2019, in the use of the non-dominant hand with a symmetrical role in sign articulation and an increase in the use of facial expressions with phonological value. It was also observed that the configuration is the changing parameter in all items that suffered phonological variation. From the lexical point of view, of the 20 key items analysed, only three suffered lexical variation.

The texts now published were subject to peer review and we take this opportunity to renew, once again, our thanks to the reviewers.

We thank the institutions involved in this publication and all their contribution, especially CLUP and FCT, for funding this publication.

We would also like to thank our colleagues from ESE/IPP who have collaborated with us in the organization of the meetings on morphosyntax of LGP, which have contributed so much to the advance of the knowledge about Sign Languages and to the constitution of a knowledge network capable of continuing to develop initiatives in this area.

Porto, July 2021

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