

ESF Exploratory Workshop 2004

Ref: EW03-147 (SCH)

“Modality Effects on The Theory of Grammar:
A Cross-linguistic View from Sign Languages of Europe”

Barcelona, November 15th – 17th, 2004

Scientific Report

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Organisation of the workshop

The three-day exploratory workshop was held on November 15, 16, and 17, at the Institució Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avançats (ICREA), who kindly put a perfect workshop room at our disposal without asking for any imbursement.

The workshop was set up as follows:

Day 1: 7 presentations, including presentation of the ESF by the ESF representative

Day 2: 4 presentations

Day 3: 6 presentations

Each presentation was scheduled for 40 minutes, followed by a discussion period of 15 minutes. Between presentations time was reserved for setting up equipment for the next talk and to allow for a pause for the interpreters. The four organizers took turns in chairing the sessions.

Day 2 held a free afternoon, which could be spent on discussions in smaller groups – such as a meeting of the MPI (Max Planck Institute) project group on possessive constructions across sign languages – or could be used to rest.

The workshop originally hosted 17 presenters and 8 guests. One of the presenters and two of the guests were deaf, and communication took place via interpreters. Unfortunately, one of the presenters was not able to come. Therefore the schedule was changed slightly and instead of this talk, a general discussion was included.

Almost all of the presenters used PowerPoint, which is known to be a convenient method of presentation, especially when deaf participants are present. In addition, many of the presenters distributed hand-outs. Many examples were given, which were consequently discussed in detail. The use of PowerPoint made it possible to show video examples. In the cases in which this was not the case or where the video examples did not work, live examples were given by the presenters or the Deaf participants.

1.2 Participation

One of the aims of the workshop was to bring together beginning sign language researchers and more experienced sign language researchers, in order for the former to learn from the latter, and to enhance discussion by all. This worked out as expected. The discussion periods were fully used, and many discussions had to be continued during breaks.

All participants contributed to the discussion. The active participation by the ESF representative Prof. Alain Peyraube was a pleasant surprise.

Interaction between Deaf and hearing participants went extraordinarily well. During the workshop this was mediated by the interpreters. However, even during extra-workshop events, in case there was no interpreter available, the communication (signing) skills and the will to communicate of both hearing and Deaf participants proved to be sufficient to establish at least a basic form of communication.

1.3 Interpretation

The workshop languages were English and International Sign. Two qualified interpreters were hired, who could take turns in interpreting. Presenters were requested to send in (a draft version of) their presentations a few days before the workshop in order to allow the interpreters to prepare themselves. All presenters responded to that request. Furthermore, presenters were asked to be available for questions before the morning or afternoon session started. In this way, the interpreters could optimally prepare for their task.

1.4 Facilities

Every participant was issued a folder containing information and a name tag. The large workshop room was fully equipped for all needs, and included appropriate light conditions for both the interpreters and for the speakers when demonstrating signed examples. Furthermore, it was a very pleasant room with all facilities. There was a separate room for coffee breaks. Catering was perfect.

1.5 Extra-workshop activities

A formal workshop dinner was organised on the evening of the second day. This dinner was attended by all participants.

Furthermore, all participants were invited to an informal get-together on the evening before the workshop, so that they could get to know each other. In the course of the workshop, it was decided to organize another informal dinner for all participants on the evening of the last day of the workshop. Again, the dinner was attended by all participants, except two who had already left. Interestingly, during the after-workshop informal dinner a start was made in writing a manual for starting sign linguists as suggested in the general discussion (see under 2 and 3 for details).

2. Scientific Content of the Event

2.1 Linguistic theory

The workshop was started with a talk giving an overview of the field (Vermeerbergen), indicating that sign language research started out focusing on proving that sign languages were the same as spoken languages, using spoken language research instruments. During the 1980s, the focus was rather the opposite, zooming in on the differences between sign and spoken languages to see how the modality difference between sign and speech might influence the two types of language. Nowadays, both perspectives are present, but with the increased attention for sign language studies in the field of general linguistics, people are often taking a closer look on detailed aspects of sign languages without a specific agenda in mind.

Several sources of differences in structure and form of sign languages are well-known. They include the influence (i) of the visual-gestural modality, (ii) of the special sociolinguistic situation of sign languages which universally are in close contact with spoken languages, and (iii) of the heterogeneity of the language communities, with often a large proportion of non-native users. These different sources of possible differences were not the direct focus of attention of any of the talks, but did repeatedly come up during the discussion sessions and outside the official workshop sessions. The participants implicitly seemed to agree on why these questions should not yet be the focus of attention: we simply do not yet know enough about any of the sign languages involved to make such large claims. This was evidenced by the detailed analyses of specific constructions in specific sign languages, a few papers comparing more than one sign language (Nyst & Perniss, Zeshan).

Descriptive talks were nicely balanced by more theoretical talks. This division was not a sign of two camps, but instead resulted in animated discussions, with an open eye for methodological concerns (see also below). Also, it appears that as soon as we expand our horizon to over more spoken languages than just the western European languages it turns out that some of the sign language phenomena that seem to be exotic do in fact also occur in spoken languages.

Some presenters didn't fully address the focal point of the workshop. For the researchers presenting on languages about which there is still little known, it proved to be very difficult to make the step of putting their data into a larger framework. However, the issue then was raised and discussed during the discussion period.

Integration of young researchers (some of whom have really just started in sign linguistics) and more experienced researchers envisaged worked out excellently. The restricted age range as well as the absence of 'grand old (wo)men' may also have contributed to the open atmosphere and feeling of excitement among the participants, the organisers presume.

Below is a list of the topics addressed in the presentations, following the program. For the details of each presentation, we refer to the (revised) summaries in section 4.2.

1. Meta-theoretical/register (Vermeerbergen)
2. Typological/manual vs. non-manual (Zeshan)
3. Morphosyntax (Alibasic)
4. Morphology/phonology (Schwager)
5. Morphology/syntax/semantics, manual/non-manual (Schalber)
6. Morphology (Zwitsersloot)
7. Syntax (Morales-López)
8. Typology/morphosyntax (Nyst & Perniss)
9. Morphosyntax (Sapountzaki)
10. Syntax/semantics (Quer)
11. Phonology/register (Blondel)
12. Information structure/prosody (Crasborn & van der Kooij)
13. Syntax/phonology/prosody (van der Kooij & Crasborn)
14. Syntax/psycholinguistics (Cecchetto & Zucchi)
15. Syntax/typology/phonology (Pfau & Steinbach)

Thus, the whole range of grammatical levels, from phonology to information structure (discourse) was represented. The large time slots that we scheduled made it possible for most speakers to give the audience enough background information about the general linguistic context, making it possible for a specialist in syntax to engage in a discussion about phonology, for example. One organizational aspect that could be improved at a future event is emphasizing even more to the participants the importance of providing the relevant theoretical background when presenting to such a mixed audience.

The following general issues were recurrently brought forward in the discussion period:

- methodology, including data collection
- questions often concerned interpretation of data (for example, how do you know where sentence boundaries are in a stretch of discourse?)
- the occurrence of rules versus tendencies
- common vs. uncommon (exceptional, infrequent) properties
- grammatical vs ungrammatical (in the sense of grammaticality judgements)
- grammatical vs. paralinguistic (in the sense of emotional facial expressions, for example)

We think that it is not a coincidence that exactly these issues came up repeatedly (in addition to specific questions about analyses that were proposed), instead of detailed theoretical issues such as the relation between morphology and syntax or morphology and phonology. It is precisely at the level of these ‘methodological’ issues where researchers from different theoretical convictions can benefit from each other. Not only did the participants start relatively recently with sign language research (maximally 15 years ago), it was also everyone’s experience that the sign linguistics field is very small. There are only very few universities or research institutes in Europe that have a long-lasting tradition of sign language research. Most of the participants knew the feeling of

having to reinvent the wheel when starting to look at their own sign language, and also experience their research as a fairly individual enterprise within their respective universities, even if they form part of small research groups. It was therefore a highly useful workshop in that respect, getting to know colleagues from other parts of Europe, and discussing fundamental issues relating to data analysis.

2.2 The comparison of sign languages within Europe and in other parts of the world

The selection of participants ensured the representation of a large number of sign languages, and indeed data and analyses from many languages within and outside Europe were discussed, cf. the list below. Abbreviations for the sign languages are used if they are in common use.

European:

- Croatian SL, Croatia (Alibasic)
- DGS, Germany (Pfau & Steinbach, Nyst & Perniss, Zeshan)
- GSL, Greece (Sapountzaki)
- LIS, Italy (Cecchetto & Zucchi)
- LSC, Catalonia, Spain (Quer)
- LSF, France (Blondel)
- LSE, Spain (Morales-López)
- NGT, the Netherlands (Crasborn & v. d. Kooij, Zwitserlood, v. d. Kooij & Crasborn)
- ÖGS, Austria (Schalber)
- RSL, Russia (Schwager)
- Turkish SL, Turkey (Zeshan)
- (Irish Sign Language: the presentation by Leeson was cancelled)

Non-European:

- Adamarobe SL, Ghana (Nyst & Perniss)
- ASL, USA & Canada (Crasborn & van der Kooij)
- HKSL, Hong Kong (Crasborn & van der Kooij)
- I(P)SL, Indian subcontinent (Zeshan)

While some of the relatively well-studied European sign languages are not present in the above list (notably Swedish Sign Language and British Sign Language), the languages do form a broad sample, that could also be fruitfully compared in future comparative work (see section 3 below).

3. Results & Future Directions

3.1 Overall response from participants

The workshop led to enthusiastic reactions among the participants. The size of the audience was felt to be ideal; moreover, everybody indicated to be happy about the facilities and the timing of the talks/discussions. Most importantly, many people explicitly indicated that they very much valued the chance to informally interact with people in a similar stage in their career, where at other events they sometimes feel a bit restrained in the presence of established specialists in the field with a long-time research record. As was already mentioned above, the overall theoretical interests were similar enough to make detailed discussions possible and fruitful. Coming back to what was already mentioned in section 2.1, the participants agreed that their primary interest is in the theory of grammar, and not in the modality difference between signed and spoken languages.

3.2 Comparing sign languages within Europe

The talks by Zeshan and Nyst & Perniss presented studies that were explicitly designed to compare multiple sign languages. Comparisons between other languages during the workshop were made on the basis of published research and knowledge by the participants. Such discussions on similarities can indeed be very fruitful in a workshop setting, generating new ideas, but for further study comparable data would need to be collected and analysed in a comparable manner for different languages. One possibility that was raised during the workshop is to set up a joint study involving both the participants of this workshop and potentially sign language specialists from some other countries, with a clear typological goal. At first sight this may appear to be a very ambitious plan, in the sense that standard typological research (represented by Zeshan at this workshop) aims to look at a set of languages as diverse as possible, necessarily involving languages from outside Europe. However, it became clear during the workshop that within Europe there may be a much larger typological diversity than hitherto assumed. The reason for this is that only very few European sign languages have been studied in detail for the same set of linguistic structures. Each time researchers from two European countries get together to discuss their sign languages, they find considerable differences, in addition to many obvious similarities. As methodological insights and experiences with fieldwork in sign languages develop, it becomes more and more attractive to actually compare sign languages within Europe.

Participants agreed that it would be worthwhile to examine in the near future how such a project could be set up, and how ESF funding could be used to support such a study. There is a rather peripheral methodological reason why such a collaborative project would be well-timed in the near future: the use of computer technology has developed to allow easy exchange of data.

A recently completed EU pilot project (ECHO, European Cultural Heritage Online) devoted one of its case studies to sign language (<http://www.let.kun.nl/sign-lang/ECHO>). That case study paved the way for more collaborative work across Europe, by exploring potential problems with the computer-based transcription and exchange of video data. Existing transcription (ELAN) and database (IMDI) software was improved substantially to serve the needs of linguists working on sign language. A new collaborative project could make use of these (open source, multi-platform) computer facilities.

These technological developments could of course be used for any kind of European collaboration between sign linguists, but the European cultural diversity would make it a missed opportunity if such a project would not have an explicit typological focus.

3.3 Helping young researchers

It was already mentioned above that many participants shared the experience of entering the field without a clear view on how to go about: there are no handbooks that guide young researchers who lack other forms of sign-specific training or support. During the general discussion session, the proposal was brought forward to jointly collect hints and suggestions for new researchers, and publish those on a web site. It was decided to ask the recently founded Sign Language Linguistics Society (SLLS) to include that ‘manual’ on their web site.

It was encouraging to see how energetically ideas were collected during the dinner following the final general discussion. In the two weeks following the workshop, these ideas were synthesized by the workshop organisers, and SLLS was very happy to publish the page, as the training of and support for new researchers is one of their core goals. After the workshop, participants read through the guide and submitted numerous additions. The page has been available since December 1st at <http://www.let.ru.nl/sign-lang/SLLS/startguide.html>.

The current guide is mostly aimed at non-signing linguists. However, in the future, there should also be attention for the many deaf people who work in research projects as assistants, but have trouble developing themselves in the direction of researchers. The use of a web page rather than a printed guide will allow for easy and frequent updates in the future.

Other suggestions that were brought forward included the participation in general fieldwork courses, such as those organized by SOAS (London) and the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project.

The Meertens Institute for Dutch language variation research in the Netherlands has indicated that they would be willing to share information about methodology as well as elicitation material that they use for variation research. This could profitably be used in collaborative projects as reported in section 3.1 above.

There was also a concern in the opposite direction, in a sense: how can we make sign language descriptions accessible for spoken language typologists? They often find it hard to access descriptions of sign languages, while sign language data certainly constitute important data for their studies. No clear proposal was brought forward at the workshop, but obviously an increased standardisation of transcription and notation conventions could also help people outside the sign language field in accessing sign language data.

3.4 Methodological issues

Several methodological issues were raised during the workshop, and participants agreed that it would be very important and beneficial to further discuss these together in the future. Many methodological decisions are made in the early stages of a research project that may influence the possibility of specific analyses later. These issues involve data collection, elicitation and recording techniques, how the data could best be transcribed, but also further analytical problems. It is often not clear where sentence boundaries are located in sign languages. This may in part be related to the many independent articulators or channels present in the visual modality, leading to a constant flow of signals in at least one channel, but it is surely also related to our lack of an overview of the possible morphosyntactic constructions that sign languages manifest.

Some of the practical difficulties in recording and collecting data have now been overcome thanks to the omnipresence of cheap digital video equipment, but computer-based transcription as demonstrated in the online corpus of the ECHO case study mentioned above is surely not yet common practice in all institutes in Europe. Analytical problems (such as ‘where does a sentence begin and end?’) are even further from being solved. Such methodological issues, too, would best be solved by bringing together researchers from different countries for joint research. It is therefore the clear intention of the organisers and invited participants to pursue the collaboration started at this workshop.

4. Final Workshop Program

4.1 Program

MONDAY, 15. NOVEMBER 2004
9:15 – 9:30 Welcome and opening words by Prof. Alain Peyraube (ESF representative)
9:30 – 10:30 Myriam Vermeerbergen Sign Languages: more of the same or not quite?
10:30 – 11:30 Ulrike Zeshan Negative and interrogative marking in Turkish Sign Language and Indian Sign Language: manual-dominant, nonmanual-dominant, balanced, and mixed systems
11:30 – 12:00 COFFEE/TEA BREAK
12:00 – 13:00 Tamara Alibasic The pronominal system in Croatian Sign Language: a closer look at person distinctions
13:00 – 14:30 LUNCH BREAK
14:30 – 15:30 Waldemar Schwager What is a morpheme? Intra-segmental alterations in Russian Sign Language
15:30 – 16:30 Katharina Schalber Event visibility in Austrian Sign Language
16:30 – 17:00 COFFEE/TEA BREAK
17:00 – 18:00 Inge Zwitterlood Sign morphology soup



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM
Faculty of Humanities

TUESDAY, 16. NOVEMBER 2004

9:30 – 10:30 Esperanza Morales-López

Word order in Spanish Sign Language (LSE) declarative sentences

10:30 – 11:30 Victoria Nyst & Pamela Perniss

Classifier or generic directionals? Motion in Adamorobe Sign Language (Ghana) and German Sign Language

11:30 – 12:00 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

12:00 – 13:00 Galini Sapountzaki

Free markers of tense, aspect, and modality in Greek Sign Language (GSL): the role of language contact and grammaticization

13:00 – 14:00 Josep Quer

Quantificational strategies in Catalan Sign Language (LSC)

21:30 Conference dinner at CARMELITAS, Doctor Dou 1/Carme 42

WEDNESDAY, 17. NOVEMBER 2004

9:30 – 10:30 Marion Blondel

What does French Sign Language (LSF) poetry tell us about syllable structure and modality?

10:30 – 11:30 Els van der Kooij & Onno Crasborn

Categorical and gradient nonmanual prosodic markers in sign language

11:30 – 12:00 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

12:00 – 13:00 Onno Crasborn & Els van der Kooij

Eye blinks and prosodic structure in Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT)

13:00 – 14:30 LUNCH BREAK

14:30 – 15:30 Carlo Cecchetto & Sandro Zucchi

Structural constraints on sign languages grammar: the role of short term memory

15:30 – 16:30 Roland Pfau & Markus Steinbach

Restrictive relative clauses in German Sign Language (DGS)

16:30 – 17:00 COFFEE/TEA BREAK

17:00 – 18:00 General discussion

4.2 Abstracts (in order of presentation)

MYRIAM VERMEERBERGEN:

Sign Languages: more of the same or not quite yet?

Especially in the early days of sign linguistics a large part of the research concentrated on the similarities between spoken and sign languages and emphasised the underlying identity of signed and spoken language. Characteristics that make sign languages unique were often ignored or minimised. This approach arose from the desire – or need – to demonstrate that sign languages are indeed fully-fledged, natural languages. Today the “spoken languages compatibility view” seems to make room for a “sign language differential view”. More and more research is focusing on what makes sign languages unique. This presentation starts with an account of how sign language research has changed radically since the publication of the first linguistic analysis of a sign language now almost 45 years ago. It also presents an overview of several unique characteristics of sign languages, as exemplified by Flemish Sign Language. Today, sign linguists are being confronted with a number of fundamental questions: questions about the nature of gestural-visual languages, what their unique characteristics mean and how they should be dealt with. To conclude the presentation, it is shown how the relevance of these questions -and their answers- extends well beyond the domain of sign linguistics.

ULRIKE ZESHAN:

Negative and interrogative marking in Turkish Sign Language and Indian Sign Language: manual-dominant, nonmanual-dominant, balanced, and mixed systems

A number of grammatical functions in sign languages can be marked both manually (by signs) and non-manually (by facial expressions, head movements, etc.). In these cases, the relative prominence of manual and non-manual marking respectively can be assessed, and a four-way typology can be established: Either the manual marking is dominant, or the non-manual marking is dominant, or both are equally important, or both are equally optional. This typology allows constructions in individual sign languages to be characterized at a higher level of generalization, and examples are presented from negative and interrogative systems in Turkish Sign Language (as a European representative) and Indian Sign Language (as a non-European representative).

TAMARA ALIBASIC:

The pronominal system in Croatian Sign Language: a closer look at person distinctions

In this presentation I addressed the issue of grammatical first, second and third person pronouns in Croatian Sign language (HZJ). Examination of the first person pronoun showed that the signer indicates by non-manuals that she has taken the role of another person. Thus, the signer points to herself, but the interpretation is to the character in the story and not to the signer. These findings are used to provide evidence for grammatical first person. Analysis of second and third person pronoun in HZJ following Berenz's Body Coordinates Model show certain consistency. When reference to the second person is intended, hand orientation, eye gaze and the head will usually line up. In contrast, when reference to third person is intended, disjunction of some of these features occurs. Thus, we conclude that the distinction between second and third person pronoun is linguistically marked in HZJ. In sum, Berenz' Body Coordinates Model allow us to capture for the differences between second and third person pronoun and therefore suggest that sign languages (ASL, LSB, HZJ) share same universal properties as spoken languages, i.e. have a system of grammatical persons that is possible to analyze linguistically

WALDEMAR SCHWAGER:

What is a morpheme? Intra-segmental alterations in Russian Sign Language

Considering that there are a number of fundamental theoretical problems with respect to the morphology of signed languages, I first present an optimal classification system for the description of morphological processes. Subsequently, I discuss processes of intra-segmental morphology, which involves featural affixation, as exemplified by data from Russian Sign Language.

KATHARINA SCHALBER:

The visibility of event structure in Austrian Sign Language

The presentation is concerned with the event structure of ÖGS non-classifier predicates and their visibility in the phonology. I will demonstrate that Wilbur's Event Visibility Hypothesis (EVH) is also applicable to ÖGS, using a set of morphemes whose phonological forms mark telic and atelic predicates. I also discuss the behaviour of the mouth, identifying two different types of mouth gestures which correlate with the event structure.

**INGE ZWITSERLOOD:
Sign morphology soup**

Sign languages are often characterized as languages that have a very complex morphological structure; some sign languages are reported to have a productive process of compounding. I will focus on compounding in NGT (Sign Language of the Netherlands): 1. sequential compounding (viz. concatenation of two signs that can occur in isolation), the productivity of which I question; 2. simultaneous compound formation (viz. combination of meaningful sign components, that are expressed simultaneously), that I claim to be very productive; and 3. combinations of the two.

**ESPERANZA MORALES-LÓPEZ:
Word order in Spanish Sign Language (LSE) declarative sentences**

The aim of my presentation was 1) to provide a summary of research on word order patterns in LSE declarative sentences, trying to locate this language within the universal typology framework about sentence constituent order; and 2) point out some hypotheses about the function of topic and focus in discourse data. As methodology, I follow a *functionalist* approach where language is interpreted as a net of relationships from which different grammatical structures emerge.

Our data comes from the LSE variety used by Deaf people in the city of A Coruña. We have analyzed two kinds of data: sentences invented by deaf informants imagining possible contexts and spontaneous speech material recorded in video format: narratives, interviews between two signers and a lecture.

Our conclusions point out that three word orders are possible in declarative sentences: SOV; O, SV (topicalization of object); and SVO (only in certain cases). At the same time, our discourse data shows how topic and focus have both an important function connecting propositions: the first one expresses co-referentiality and the second functions as a mechanism of propositional subordination.

**VICTORIA NYST & PAMELA PERNISS:
Classifier or serial verb? Motion in German Sign Language and Adamorobe Sign Language (Ghana)**

Comparing cartoon retellings in German Sign Language (DGS) and Adamorobe Sign Language (AdaSL; a village based sign language in Ghana), we found that AdaSL expresses motion in a way that is radically different from what has been described for other sign languages. Instead of using entity classifiers, AdaSL uses generic directionals, which are ambiguous for transitivity. Adding the sign GUAN to the generic directional blocks a transitive reading. GUAN is thus analysed as an intransitive motion marker. Finally, in AdaSL path can be overlaid on manner signs in character perspective, a strategy not available to DGS.

GALINI SAPOUNTZAKI:

Free markers of tense, aspect, and modality in Greek Sign Language (GSL): the role of language contact and grammaticization

This paper presents some results from an in-depth study of aspectual markers and modal forms in Greek Sign Language (GSL), also looking at tense and agreement. Data come from a corpus study of around 6 hours of spontaneous interaction and monologues of native signers. GSL is shown to have a substantial set of highly grammaticized forms expressing aspect and modality. These forms do not resemble the structure of spoken languages such as Greek or English, which could have potentially influenced GSL, but do resemble forms of various sign languages around the world. At the same time, the influence of the visual-manual modality on the presence of these forms seems to be limited if present at all.

JOSEP QUER:

Quantificational strategies in Catalan Sign Language (LSC)

The study of quantification has traditionally focused on structures where quantificational meanings are encoded in Determiner-like elements in the nominal domain (D-quantification). Only as a later development has attention been devoted to quantificational strategies that rely on adverbs, affixes, auxiliaries, etc. (A-quantification; Partee et al.'s 1987 terminology). Partee (1995) actually suggests that A-quantification might not form a natural class and might need to be further split into true unselective quantifier structures, on the one hand, and lexical quantification applied directly to a verb or other predicate type, on the other. Some of the ASL verb inflections described by Klima & Bellugi (1979) and studied in Petronio (1995) would fall under the latter grouping.

In this paper I discuss the three varieties of quantificational strategies attested in two signed languages (ASL and LSC (Catalan SL)) and argue that even the apparent instances of pure D-quantification in those languages actually make use of the more “constructional” way of building quantificational meanings, i.e. A-quantification. Further, lexical quantification is addressed from the domain of quantifier binding structures.

MARION BLONDEL

What does French Sign Language (LSF) poetry tell us about syllable structure and modality?

This talk has drawn a link between Miller's proposal for a metrical representation of the syllable in SL and the data I had collected among poetry for children in several sign languages. It has focused on the question of the status of the movement and especially how the ‘secondary’ movements (such as oscillating movements) can be represented in

their syllabic structure. In background has raised the question of the equivalence of such phenomena in the spoken languages.

**ELS VAN DER KOOIJ & ONNO CRASBORN:
Categorical and gradient nonmanual prosodic markers in sign language**

Prosody in spoken languages can express various linguistic and paralinguistic meanings. As for spoken language, research into the prosodic structure of sign languages has to take these various meanings into account. One of the questions we are dealing with is how to distinguish linguistic prosodic cues from paralinguistic cues. We discuss production based proposals concerning this question that formulate conditions on the type and timing properties of facial expressions in relation to the manual signs. We show that none of these conditions is conclusive and we argue that perception based studies are preferable in dealing with this question. An approach is proposed that radically separates form from function. We propose a dual research track, from formal cue to linguistic or paralinguistic meaning(s) and from linguistic function to its associated formal cue(s). The observation-based generalizations that result from this dual track are tested in perception studies.

**ONNO CRASBORN & ELS VAN DER KOOIJ:
Eye blinks and prosodic structure in Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT)**

Human beings, like other animals, blink their eyelids in order to prevent their retina being damaged by becoming too dry. Further, eye blinks occur to clean the eye of particles of dust and similar objects. These physiological functions account for only a small percentage of the total number of eye blinks that occur in a day: on average 15.000. Psychological research has shown that factors like cognitive processing and visual attention can affect the number of eye blinks. The question therefore arises whether eye blinks are actually used in sign language interaction for specific grammatical or discourse purposes. We present some initial studies on the occurrence of eye blinks in NGT, showing that single eye blinks often precede a response to a question, while repeated eye blinks follow a (relatively short) response. They thus may function as prosodic boundary markers, whether related to syntactic structure or discourse structure. In the same data set, eye blinks appear to also be possible within a sentence, for example in between a subject and a predicate. Based on the physiological literature and our own transcription experiences, we propose a new classification of eye blinks that does not include the central distinction between ‘lexical blinks’ and ‘boundary blinks’ proposed by Wilbur (1994) for ASL and adopted by Sze (2004) for HKSL. This classification aims to clearly separate form from function, as is common in the field of spoken language prosody.

CARLO CECCHETTO & SANDRO ZUCCHI:
Structural constraints on sign languages grammar: the role of short-term memory

In our talk we argued that spoken languages and sign languages differ in this respect: sign languages are less tolerant of center-embedded structures than spoken languages are. We related this fact to the differences observed in the psycholinguistic literature between signers and speakers with respect to the working memory, in particular with respect to ordered recall tasks. We claimed that the grammatical structure of (many) sign languages might be optimally designed to deal with the potential problem created by the lower performance in ordered recall by deaf signers.

Finally, we argued that the fact that wh-phrases are naturally located at the right periphery of sentences in sign languages is also related to a difference between speakers and signers with respect to the working memory. In this case, the relevant difference has to do with the ability to better recall the first\last element in a sequence of items.

ROLAND PFAU & MARKUS STEINBACH:
Restrictive relative clauses in German Sign Language (DGS)

Relative clause constructions are known to show considerable variation across spoken languages. In this talk, we investigate relative clauses in German Sign Language (DGS) and in other sign languages and we show that similar variation is attested across sign languages. We argue that DGS has externally headed postnominal relative clauses with a sentence-initial relative pronoun. In addition, relative clauses in DGS may be fronted or extraposed. We show, that extraposition of relative clauses in DGS is less constrained than in German, since the highly specific relative pronouns allow for unambiguous reconstruction of extraposed relative clauses.

5. Final List of Participants

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5.4 Interpreters (International Sign)

1. Esther de los Santos (Spain, edls@eresmas.com)
2. Gerdinand Wagenaar (The Netherlands, gerdinandwagenaar@talkinghands.nl)

6. Statistical Information on Participants

Note: the statistical information given below only includes the invited participants.

6.1 Gender

Women: 11
Men: 6

6.2 Age

26-30 years: 4
31-35 years: 5
36-40 years: 7
41-46 years: 1

6.3 Status

MA, currently PhD student: 4
MA, currently research assistant: 2

PhD, currently post-doc: 6
PhD, assistant/research professor: 3
PhD, associate professor: 2

6.4 Status and age per participant

Tamara Alibasic	MA, research consultant	26
Katharina Schalber	MA, research consultant	27
Victoria Nyst	MA, PhD student	28
Pamela Perniss	MA, PhD student	30
Galina Sapountzaki	MA, PhD student	32
Onno Crasborn	PhD, post-doc researcher	32
Marion Blondel	PhD, research assistant	33
Waldemar Schwager	MA, PhD student	34
Ulrike Zeshan	PhD, post-doc (research project)	34
Markus Steinbach	PhD, assistant professor	37
Myriam Vermeerbergen	PhD, post-doc research follow and guest professor	37
Josep Quer	PhD, research professor	39
Roland Pfau	PhD, assistant professor	38
Carlo Cecchetto	PhD, associate professor	40
Els van der Kooij	PhD, post-doc researcher	40
Inge Zwitterlood	PhD, post-doc	40
Esperanza Morales-López	PhD, associate Professor	46