

Topics in sign linguistics research

Josep Quer, U. Amsterdam/ICREA

This course starts with an introductory overview of sign language linguistics, mainly from a formal and structural point of view but also from a sociolinguistic perspective. However, we will concentrate on a specific research topic from the perspective of contrastive linguistics. After the incorporation of this type of languages into the empirical domain of linguistic research, some fundamental questions have been raised as to whether the existing formal tools of analysis can account for the whole range of complex phenomena found in the visual-gestural modality as well. In this light, (nonlinguistic) gesture has been given a prominent role by some researchers when explaining certain components of signed languages. We will focus on a domain that has led to opposing views in the description and analysis: pronouns and verb agreement. By contrasting formal and “mixed” types of accounts, we will address the limitations in current linguistic theorizing when one takes into account languages in the visual-gestural and in the oral-aural modalities.

Session 1: Background on sign languages.

Dilluns, 15 de desembre de 2008, 12.30-15.30h

UPF, Edifici Rambla, Aula 204

First part (12.30-14h): Introduction to the study of sign languages. General remarks on sociolinguistic features of sign language communities and on SL genesis and acquisition. [NB: This part of the course is co-extensive with a general seminar recommended for all Masters' students.]

Second part (14-15.30h): Main features in the grammars of sign languages: Phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon.

Session 2: On the proper characterization of deictic elements in sign languages: pointing indices and pronouns.

Dimarts, 16 de desembre de 2008, 14.30-18.00h

UPF, Edifici Rambla, Aula 204

Session 3: Verb classes and verbal agreement in SLs: particular and non-particular characteristics and the impact of modality.

Dimecres, 17 de desembre de 2008, 18.30-21.30h

UPF, Edifici Rambla, Aula 204

Background and preparatory readings:

Sandler, W. & D. Lillo-Martin. 2000. Natural Sign Languages. In *The Handbook of Linguistics*, eds. M. Aronoff & J. Rees-Miller, 533-562. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sandler, W. & D. Lillo-Martin. 2006. *Sign Language and Linguistic Universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.