

Expressing simultaneity of events in Catalan Sign Language (LSC): forms and age differences

The aim of this research was to explore age differences in the expression of simultaneous events, that is, events that “share a value on the time axis” (Aksu-Koç & Stutterheim, 1994, p. 397). The expression of simultaneous events is a complex structure in the discourse that denotes text cohesion, making it an area of great interest in the field of language development.

Narratives in LSC were elicited from 2 deaf adults and 16 deaf children aged 6 to 13 years old. Participants were asked to tell a story from a wordless picture book (Mayer, 2009), in which we identified 6 scenes with simultaneous events.¹ Narratives were coded using ELAN, and strategies used to express simultaneous events were analyzed and categorized.

As a result, we first identified the forms of expressing simultaneity of two events. Secondly, we analysed age differences in the expression of simultaneous events.

We did not find significant differences in the amount of simultaneous events expressed by adults and children. However, forms used to express simultaneity differ between both age groups. Children do not use simultaneous strategies to express events simultaneity, and their narratives show a lower use of sign space. They rely more on simple consecutive presentation of events and on the use of lexical signs to express simultaneity of events. The results will be discussed in relation to sign language acquisition.

References

- Aksu-Koç, A., & Stutterheim, C. von. (1994). Temporal relations in narrative: simultaneity. In R. A. Berman & D. I. Slobin (Eds.), *Relating events in narrative. A crosslinguistic developmental study* (pp. 393–455). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Mayer, M. (2009). *Rana, ¿dónde estás?* Madrid: Los cuatro azules.

¹ The simultaneous events identified are the following: 1) the frog escapes while the boy and the dog are sleeping; 2) while the boy looks into a boot, the dog looks into a glass jar; 3) when the kid opens the window, the dog falls out of it; 4) the dog hits the tree with the beehive, meanwhile the kid is looking into the mole hole; 5) as the kid is looking into a tree hole, the beehive falls; 6) the bees are pursuing the dog when the boy falls of the tree.