Deaf annotators’ associations with ‘head forward’ in Austrian Sign Language

INTRODUCTION

Sign language research shows ‘head forward’ (‘hf’) can be indicator or part of the nonmanual configuration in interrogatives, conditionals and other constructions. The actual study is based on corpus data, annotated by Deaf natives focusing on clause-like units (CLUs) and nonmanuals (NMs). In central stage of this study is informed evaluation on ‘hf’, that is, the Deaf annotators understanding of ‘hf’ and its function is analyzed.

APPROACH

1. Determine ‘hf’s within given signed discourse by selecting them from given sets of parameters

2. Determining the function/meaning associated with ‘hf’ occurring in this particular signed context by using functional domains such as contrast, illocution, modality, reference etc. as guiding principle i.e. selecting along a template one or more possible functions associated with
   - each ‘hf’
   - each identified CLU

3. Determine CLUs and annotating the propositional-semantic information associated with each identified CLU

ANALYSIS

Functions associated with ‘hf’

- questioning
- embedded (polar) interrogativity
- irreality
- conditionality
- emphasizing
- exclamation
- itemizing
- emotion (e.g. astonished)
- semantic contrast
- others (e.g. part of CA-construction)

Statistics with ‘hf’

- Analyzed material:
  - a choice of signed texts of the corpus, focusing on videos with themes about expressing wishes, thoughts, negative and positive experiences
  - in total 150 min annotated material

- embedded polar interrogatives (44 constructions)
- (hypothetical) conditionals (45 constructions)

- 11 hf
- 19 br
- 2 non

FUTURE – EXPECTATIONS

A) Analysis on language status

Based on criteria of
a) systematic recognition of forms
b) systematic association of meanings/functions
c) well-formed evaluation regarding co-occurrence of NMs
d) replacement/alternation of particular NMs in each CLU
e) subjective awareness of rules of usage by SL-users

We expect to gain information
- on acceptability and variation
- on how strongly particular elements are grammatically integrated into the signed structure

B) Modal of functional/semantic interpretation of nonmanuals

References:


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