

IX signs in Turkish Sign Language relative clauses: A (re)analysis of variation

Introduction

- Pointing (IX) signs have a multitude of functions in sign languages (e.g. pronominal, determiner, adverbial), which can be identified looking at the formal as well as distributional properties of these signs (Pfau 2011; Fenlon et al. 2013; Cormier 2014 inter alia).
- One of the most interesting properties of the IX signs is their **optionality and varying distribution** within as well as across clauses.
- For Turkish Sign Language (TİD), a **varying frequency of IX signs** were observed in (non)final positions within (potential) Relative Clause Constructions (RCC) (Kubus 2016).



How to explain this variation?

- Potential RC markers in TİD (Kubus 2016)
 - > In the process of grammaticalization
- Discourse governed (Kubus & Nuhbalaoglu 2018)
 - > Track & disambiguate head nouns in the context

The position of an IX sign in addition to accompanying non-manual markers can be used to differentiate between potential RCs (1) and relative periphrastic constructions (2) in TİD.

(1) [HOUSE ARRIVE IX GIRL] DREAM

'The girl who arrived home was dreaming.'

(2) [HOUSE ARRIVE GIRL] IX DREAM

'The girl arrived home. She was dreaming.'

(Re)-analysis of the Free Conversation Data from Kubus (2016)

Data Source

- Small scale corpus (selected part)
- Videos shared publicly and elicited narratives
- 16 video clips (172 min)
- 14 signers (5 native, 7 near-native and 2 fluent)
- Age range: 21-54 years
- Re-analysis of 21 glossed ELAN files
- Data: 78 RCs including IX signs from a database of 112 potential RCs identified by Kubus (2016)

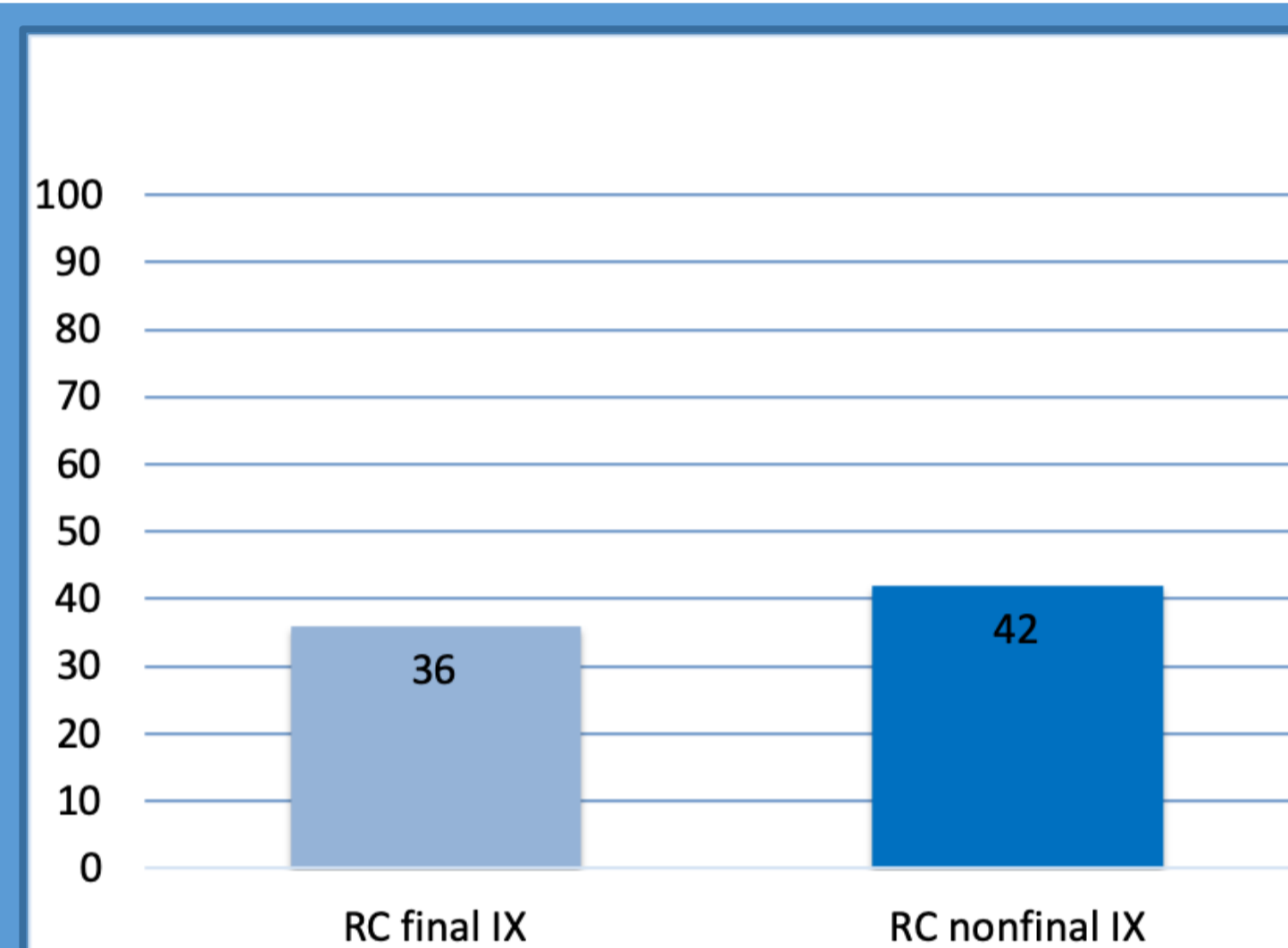


Figure 1. Frequency of IX in RC final and nonfinal positions (with actual number of occurrences)

RC nonfinal IX NMMs	RC final IX NMMs
Eyebrow raise, squint	Eyebrow raise, head nod
/o/ & /bu/* mouthing	/o/ mouthing

* o: 3rd person pronoun/demonstrative distant, bu: demonstrative proximate in Turkish

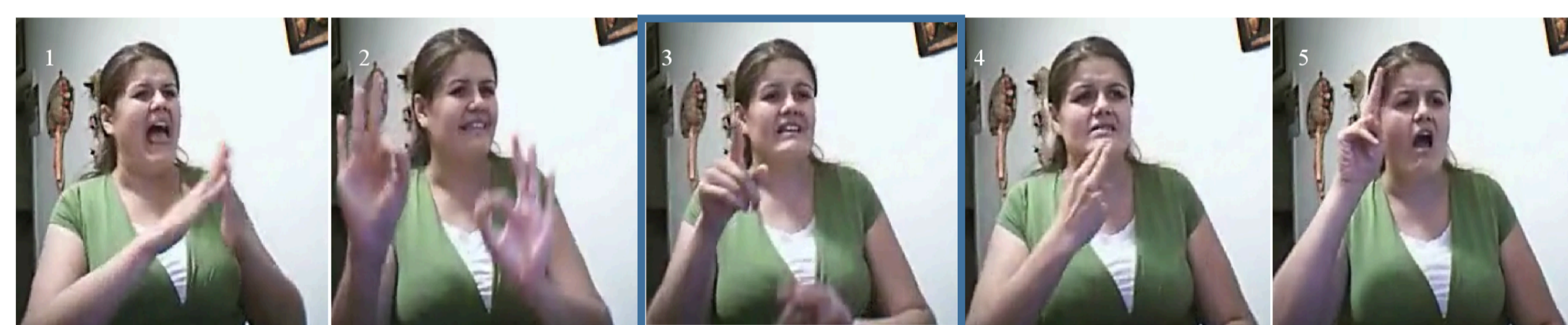
Table 1. Non-manuals accompanying IX sign

	RC final IX	RC nonfinal IX
Duration	410 ms (75 – 1040 ms)	365 ms (60 – 1120 ms)
Grammatical function:	- Pronoun - Subject or object	- Demonstrative / determiner** - Pronoun - Adverbial (e.g. locative)
for RC Internal IX		
Discourse context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IX N: (Re)Introduction & Maintenance N IX: (Re)Introduction & Maintenance 	

** (IX N vs. N IX, both appear as topics of the following contexts)

Table 2. Other properties of IX

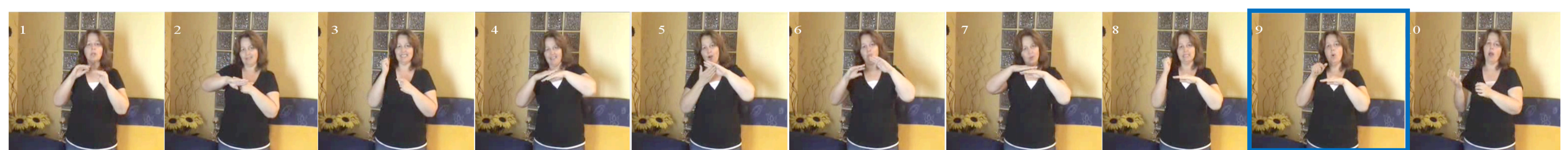
(3)



HOUSE ARRIVE IX GIRL THINK

'The girl who arrived home was thinking.'

(4)



SOFT SPONGE HARD FRONT BACK SOFT ABOVE HARD IX BUY

'(You know) The soft sponge is hard in the front and soft at the back side, buy it/this one.'

Summary & Discussion

- IX signs identified as RC final in Kubus (2016) are **re-analyzed as initiating a new clause**.
- Head nouns accompanied by IX signs -> topics of the next contexts
- RC internal (initial or medial) IX signs accompanying head nouns, equally indicate the discourse status of those nouns ((Re)Intro and maintenance).
- A general function of IX signs: to introduce and track discourse referents either across clauses (locally) or within a larger discourse (globally).

Open Questions

- Can we observe similar distribution of IX signs in the elicited data?
- In RCs which have clause medial IX signs or no IX signs at all, how can we make sure that those are not periphrastic constructions?
- Can the path of acquisition give us a cue for development of RCs in TİD? (e.g. young children tend to use periphrastic constructions in Turkish (Sarilar & Küntay 2011))
- Are there any differences between native and non-native signers in terms of production of RCs/periphrastic constructions?

REFERENCES

Cormier, Kearsy. 2014. Pronouns, agreement and classifiers: What sign languages can tell us about linguistic diversity and linguistic universals. *UCLWPL*. 1–12. Fenlon, Jordan, Adam Schembri, Ramas Rentelis & Kearsy Cormier. 2013. Variation in handshape and orientation in British Sign Language: The case of the '1' hand configuration. *Language and Communication* 33(1). 69–91. doi: 10.1016/j.langcom.2012.09.001. Kubus, Okan. 2016. Relative clause constructions in Turkish Sign Language. University of Hamburg Ph.D dissertation. Retrieved from <http://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de>. Kubus, Okan & Derya Nuhbalaoglu. 2018. The challenge of marking relative clauses in Turkish Sign Language. *Dilbilim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 29 (1), 139-160. doi: 10.18492/dad.373454. Pfau, Roland. 2011. A point well taken. In Mathur Gaurav & Donna Jo Napoli (eds.), *Deaf around the world: The impact of language*, 144–163. Oxford: OUP. Sarilar Ayşe & Aylin C. Küntay. 2011. Do young learners pick up on relative constructions in referential communication? A Training Study. In Eser E. Taylan & Bengisu Rona (eds.), *Essays in Honor of Karl Zimmer*, 121-135. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

