Conditional clauses in German Sign Language (DGS) and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) - A comparison

1. Theoretical background

“A conditional sentence is a sentence consisting of two clauses, one of which (the antecedent) expresses a condition whose fulfillment or non-fulfillment is relevant to the degree of reality assigned to the other (the consequent).”

(Quer et al. 2017:462-463)

They are subordinate clauses which form a relatively new field in sign language syntax (Baker & Padden 1978, Liddell 1986, Tang & Lau 2013, Herrmann & Steinbach 2013) and require a combination of non-manual and, optionally, manual signs.

2. Methodology and evaluation

2.1 Methodology and evaluation

Research question:

DGS and Libras are unrelated sign languages. Which combinations of manual and nonmanual elements do they use to express a conditional? Do they use similar or different strategies?

Elicitation by Chiao Rare Game (cf. Dachkovsky), annotated by ELAN and evaluated by Esctil (binary code).

2.2 Participants

17 participants (9 ♀, 8 ♂)
34.3 years average age
146 identified conditional clauses

18 participants (9 ♀, 10 ♂)
38.2 years average age
84 identified conditional clauses

3. Results

3.1 Results in DGS

3.2 Results in Libras

4. Conclusion

DGS and Libras are unrelated sign languages, but are typologically similar: „Nonmanual dominant sign languages“ (cf. Zeshan 2006)

5. References


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