

A THEORETICAL STUDY OF PHONESTHEME IN THE BRAZILIAN SIGN LANGUAGE: INITIAL REFLECTIONS



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INTRODUCTION

- Sound symbolism is a concept commonly applied to oral languages and represents an aspect of linguistic iconicity studies.
- In oral languages, sound symbolism involves onomatopoeias and so-called sound symbols or phonesthemes.
- The latter phenomenon corresponds, in oral languages, to groups of phonemes that, without fitting the classical definition of morpheme, often present relation to a vague notion of nature that constitutes the meaning of several words containing such phonemes (ULLMANN, 1962).
- The notion of sound symbolism or phonesthetic is of interest to phonetics, stylistics and semantics fields.
- In sign languages, phonesthemes would be associations or relationships established between visual articulators as the parameters form signs, to a given concept, repeating themselves in various signs that allude to that same meaning (RATHMANN; MATHUR, 2010 ; HEALY, 2011).
- By recognizing these semantic similarities between signals, one can obtain the so-called lexical family. In Brazil, research of this nature is still incipient, which justifies our initiative. If we look at studies along these lines, we may find, perhaps, promising perspectives on lexicological and lexicographic aspects in / for Libras.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS CONCERNING LEXICAL SIGNAL FAMILIES

- **Rathmann and Mathur (2010):** consider that lexical families are groups of signals that share the same specification for one or more phonological parameters and fall into the same semantic category. Therefore, this denomination can be extended to all sign languages, highlighting certain similarities between them.
- British Sign Language (BSL) lexicons presented in Rathmann and Mathur (2010): in this study signs in the first column have the same positive semantic hand configuration.
- In the second column, the signs have, among themselves, the same hand configuration expressing an idea of negativity. In this case, these settings will be the basis.

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
CONGRATULATE	CRITICIZE
RIGHT	WRONG
GOOD	BAD

FEMALE	MALE
WOMAN	MAN
MOTHER	FATHER
DAUGHTER	SON
GRANDMOTHER	GRANDFATHER
SISTER	BROTHER

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND DATA CHARACTERIZATION

- To conduct this work, we rely on perspectives that are based on qualitative research. According to Minayo (2001), this type of research does not focus specifically on numbers and percentages, but seeks to describe, understand and elucidate dynamic and social relationships and situations. Following this direction, the corpus elaborated here comes from access to the Glossary of the Letters/Libras course of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), besides the free registration obtained by statements of deaf signaling through direct observation. This path was traced by us, the authors, because we recognize the possibility of the existence of signetemas also in Libras.

ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF PHONESTHEMS IN BRAZILIAN SIGN LANGUAGE

- Following are some lexical families identified in Libras, where there are one or more phonesthemes parameters in common sharing the same semantic idea.
- In the first set of examples, it is noticed that the movement is a common parameter bringing a perspective of formation / constitution of a group and / or agglomeration of people.



- In an initial character of research, it was identified some signs and categorized from the patterns observed in its constitution phonology and semantics:
 - A. FAMILY, COMMUNITY, CONGRESS, DEPARTMENT, MEETING;
 - B. ARTICLE-LAW, CURRICULUM, CONTENT, CHAPTER, DECREE, STATUTORY, LAW, SCHEDULE, PROJECT, PROPOSAL, REPORT;
 - C. POST-GRADUATION, MASTER'S, VICTIMS; and
 - D. VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT LEARNING, CHAT, E-MAIL, HYPERTEXT, LEGEND, ONLINE PARTICIPATION, SLIDE-POST, VIDEO-CONFERENCE, PhD.
- **In family (A)**, for example, the base is a movement indicating 'group'.
- **In family (B)**, the base is a hand configuration that indicates 'register'.
- **In family (c)**, the base is a configuration that represents a 'linguistic unit'.
- **And in the (d) family**, we detected a common basis on these signals, reflecting the idea of 'monitor' with a 'L' shaped hand configuration.

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