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Towards a comprehensive grammatical study of polar interrogatives in LSC: description and analysis through a feature-based theory of biases.

In this talk, I would be addressing a specific sentence type in Catalan Sign Language (LSC): the polar interrogative (PI). The goal of the talk is two-fold. First, I will provide a formal morphosyntactic description of the structure under study. Data will show us which are the main characteristics of PIs in LSC: nonmanual marking features and their scope will be broached; as well as the YES-NO Q-sign, which, in principle, can appear optionally (Quer et al. 2005). Special attention will be payed to the following facts: 1) different nonmanual marking combinations can be articulated with PIs in LSC; 2) the considered most salient nonmanual marking feature for this sentence type in sign languages, being the eyebrow raising (Cecchetto 2012, Zeshan 2004), is not constant for PIs in LSC; and 3) the YES-NO Q-sign cannot appear in every LSC PI. Together, this constitutes a puzzle yet to be solved. The second goal of the talk will be, therefore, to account for this data. I will rely on Sudo's (2013) feature-based theory of biases to give a detailed solution. Sudo (2013) considers that different forms of PIs can encode various flavors of biases and he proposes a description system, considering two major types of biases (evidential and epistemic bias), that can account for that. In this vein, I will argue that the LSC resulting PIs from different nonmanual marking combinations (as well as from the "optional" appearance of the YES-NO Q-sign), are in fact encoding different kinds of biases. That means that nonmanual marking combinations (and the appearance of the YES-NO Q-sign) are not interchangeable and only function in very specific and restricted contexts, given the epistemic and evidential bias that they trigger. This study, therefore, contributes to the grammar of LSC by formally describing its PI sentence type; while at the same time, provides more information on which is actually the role and function of the different nonmanual marking combinations in this structure.

References

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