Temporal Constructions in LIS and LSF: Subordination vs. Coordination

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ABSTRACT

Background: Temporal constructions typically involve subordination. This is the case of languages like English and French. However, this strategy is not the only one available. Many other languages express these constructions by using juxtaposition or coordination [3]. These syntactic configurations are usually distinguished through several criteria such as dependency [4], asymmetric extraction [5], etc. In this presentation, we use these criteria as a diagnostic to investigate temporal constructions in French Sign Language (LSF). After comparing LSF constructions to the LIS counterparts, we will show that they are expressed by a different type of syntactic strategy (coordination vs. subordination).

Data: The baseline of temporal clauses in LIS and LSF is shown in (1) and (2).

(1) a. GIANNI BUY FLOWER, BEFORE MARIA STEAL BIKE. (LIS)
   re
b. GIANNI BUY FLOWER, AFTER MARIA STEAL BIKE.
re
c. GIANNI BUY FLOWER, {MOMENT SAME/MOMENT PI} MARIA STEAL BIKE.
   ‘Maria stole a bike {before/after/at} the moment in which Gianni bought flowers’

(2) a. JEAN BUY FLOWER, BEFORE MARIE STEAL BIKE. (LSF)
b. JEAN BUY FLOWER, AFTER MARIA STEAL BIKE.
c. JEAN BUY FLOWER, {MOMENT SAME/*MOMENT PI} MARIA STEAL BIKE.
   ‘Jean bought flowers and {before/after/at the same moment} Maria stole a bike’

We observe in LSF, unlike LIS, the absence of non-manual marking on the first part of the clause, the absence of negation in before-clauses, the absence of relative marker PI in when-clauses, and the possibility that the two clauses can stand in isolation. Finally, inversion triggers a change in meaning in LSF, while it is not allowed in LIS, as in (3) - (4).

(3) *AFTER, MARIA STEAL BIKE, GIANNI BUY FLOWER. (LIS)
(4) #AFTER, MARIA STEAL BIKE, GIANNI BUY FLOWER. (LSF)
   ‘Later, Marie will steal a bike and Jean will buy flower’
Analysis: Such differences call for two separate syntactic analyses. LIS temporal clauses were analyzed by [1] as subordinate constructions in which the relativized temporal clause sits as a complement of the degree-phrase left-adjoined to the matrix clause. Evidence for this analysis comes from the difference in non-manual marking of the two clauses, the asymmetric extraction pattern, the impossibility to express each clause in isolation and the presence of the relative marker PI ([2]) in when-clauses.

In this presentation, based on the mirror pattern of LSF with respect to the properties mentioned for LIS, we argue that LSF temporal clauses are instances of coordination in which the second clause contains an anaphoric pronoun (4). Similarly to [1], we propose that temporal markers are comparative markers, which iconically map the moments of the events as loci. These iconic representations are interpreted as pronominal elements (5).

(5)

REFERENCES