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Book of Abstracts
& Program

Department of Linguistics
Stockholm University

organized by
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Name signs in Swedish Sign Language

Carl Börstell

This paper investigates the domain of name signs in the Swedish Sign Language (SSL) community. The data are based on responses from an online questionnaire, in which Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing participants answered questions about the nature of their name signs. The collected questionnaire data comprise 737 name signs, distributed across five main types and 24 subtypes of name signs, following the categorization of previous work on SSL. Signs are grouped according to sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, and identity (e.g., Deaf or hearing), the relationship between name giver and named (e.g., family or friends). The results show that name signs are assigned at different ages between the groups, such that children of Deaf are named earlier than other groups, and that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals are normally named during their school years. It is found that the distribution of name sign types is significantly different between females and males, with females more often having signs denoting physical appearance, whereas males have signs related to personality/behavior. Furthermore, it is shown that the distribution of sign types has changed over time, with appearance signs losing ground to personality/behavior signs – most clearly for females. Finally, there is a marginally significant difference in the distribution of sign types based on whether or not the name giver was Deaf. Although some previous work has looked at name signs in Sweden (Hedberg 1989, 1994, 2009), this study is the first to investigate name signs and naming customs in the SSL community statistically – synchronically and diachronically – and one of the few for any sign language.

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Language and communication

Johan Sjons

Is there a relation between language and communication?

South Saami: Making a geographically accessible language linguistically accessible

Richard Kowalik

South Saami is an endangered Uralic language spoken in central Sweden and Norway, only about 500 kilometres from Stockholm. The language, despite its geographical proximity and thus accessibility, has not left many marks in academic pursuits and is still under-described. A reason for this might be South Saami's bigger brother: if one thinks or speaks of "Saami" as a language, it is often implied that one refers to North Saami. Although treating the Saamic languages as one probably makes it more accessible for the governments, as they do not have to differentiate between different Saamic languages in laws (and thereby granting rights for e.g. education), this would be a typological over simplification. There are nine Saamic languages, which form a dialect continuum reaching from central Sweden and Norway in the south to the Kola peninsula in Russia in the north-east (Sammallahti 1998). North Saami is the largest language with approximately 20 000 speakers, South Saami has about 400 native speakers (Sammallahti 1998).

In this presentation, I want to introduce South Saami by presenting a brief typological profile of the language. That said, many grammatical features of South Saami have not yet been explored thoroughly; the following overview is therefore also a to-do list for my PhD project. Apart from features typical for Saamic languages such as preaspiration, a negative verb, dual pronoun and verb forms and rich derivational morphology, South Saami diverges in a number of features, amongst others in complex umlaut (instead of consonant gradation), SOV word order, a genitive possessive, copula drop and clause-initial question markers. Whenever possible, I will contrast these features with North Saami.

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A naughty bus and a homesick frog: Preschoolers' narratives

Signe Tonér

Previous studies have shown connections between early narrative ability and later academic success as well as interdependencies between narrative ability and [executive functions \(EF\)](#). Knowledge of narrative ability and EF in Swedish preschoolers is limited and several methodological challenges need to be addressed.

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The acquisition of Swedish quantifiers

David Pagmar

This study concerns the acquisition of Swedish quantifiers. Children start to show an understanding of quantifiers around their second birthday (Wynn 1992). The acquisition process of quantifiers have shown a similar order of establishment, across different languages (Katsos et al. 2016). Are there correlations between the acquisition of quantifiers and the development of other linguistic skills? A correlation between the understanding of quantifiers and the size of the child's productive vocabulary is hypothesized. Seventy three children's understanding of thirteen quantifiers are tested. All children are at the age of 3;6. The results of the test are correlated with the size of each child's productive vocabulary. Early results suggest that there is no correlation between the understanding of quantifiers and the size of the child's productive vocabulary.

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Number variation in Yucatec Maya Sign Language

Josefina Safar

Rural, non-institutionalised sign languages can make valuable contributions to the emerging discipline of sign language typology (De Vos & Zeshan 2012; De Vos & Pfau 2015). Yucatec Maya Sign Language (YMSL) developed in Yucatec Maya communities with a high incidence of deafness in the peninsula of Yucatán (Mexico) and exhibits an unusual system of cardinal numbers, including base-20 and base-50 numeral bases, e.g. in FIFTY TWENTY TEN for ‘80’ (Zeshan et al. 2013). Such features, which are unattested in urban sign languages but known from spoken languages, provide new insights to intra-modal and cross-modal typology in the number domain. However, Zeshan et al.’s (2013) typological claims are based only on data from the village Chicán and they neglect substantial regional and individual variation in YMSL numerals.

In this study, which I carried out in collaboration with other members of the YMSL documentation project, we look at data from elicitation tasks, natural conversations and interviews recorded in three Yucatec Mayan signing communities: Chicán, Nohkop and Cepeda Peraza. We will consider regional and age-related variation in the use of additive (e.g. TWENTY TEN ‘30’) vs. digital number (e.g. THREE ZERO ‘30’) strategies and discuss the impact of formal education and literacy on the formation of YMSL numerals. Furthermore, we will provide evidence for family-related variation in YMSL of Chicán, e.g. in the use of the lexical sign HUNDRED described by Zeshan et al. (2013: 373). Finally, we will analyse strategies absent from previous studies of YMSL, e.g. numeral incorporation and a non-manual component for multiples of 100 and 1000 in Chicán.

Our study proves that systematic sociolinguistic variation exists even in young micro-community sign languages like YMSL and stresses the importance of taking this variability into account in typological analyses.

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Motorics of speech movements in conditions of varying vocal effort

Elisabet Eir Cortes

Speech production requires a fine-tuned control of the articulatory system. This system is particularly difficult to study since large parts of it are not visible to an observer's eye and therefore require specialized imaging methods to capture. Studying speech as an articulatory process is essential to gain deeper understanding of the articulators' organization and control. The outcomes are also relevant for understanding the relationship between kinematics and acoustics of speech, as well as its phylogenetic and ontogenetic development.

My PhD project aims to investigate the motor control of articulatory movements in speech uttered with varying vocal effort. Research has shown that the articulatory behaviour of speaking loudly includes lowering the jaw (Schulman 1989; Geumann 2001). This effort-induced jaw lowering will provide a means to access the constancy and reorganization of speech movements in the context of varying communicative demands.

The goal is to collect experimental data as a basis for two studies: One focusing on physiological and acoustic aspects of speech, the other on sound structure.

The speech study addresses several issues, of which one is the phonetic specification of speech sounds, i.e. the systematic way in which speakers modify their articulation and acoustic output as a function of vocal effort.

The sound structure study aims at investigating the relationship between articulation and sound structure, with special focus on the role of the jaw. Existing views on the jaw's role range from it being a largely irrelevant secondary articulator to a key factor in shaping both speech and phonological structure (cf. Saltzman & Munhall 1989; Browman & Goldstein 1990; Lindblom 1983; MacNeilage 1998). One of the goals of this project is to present experimental data that clarifies the status of the jaw.

My presentation aims to give an overview of the project and the ongoing data collection and analysis.

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The magic of mapping: Perception and production in Swedish L1 acquisition

Lena Forssén Renner

In this talk, I will present my thesis, which investigates the relationship between speech production and perception in first language acquisition. I will focus on the last study in my thesis, designed to examine the link between perception and production in language acquisition. This study shows that the child's own production of a word influences speech perception of the same word. In an eye-tracking experiment, the children mapped their own mispronunciation of a word onto the familiar object, as if the word was correctly pronounced. Earlier studies testing perceptual reactions on mispronunciations not connected to the child's production capacities, showed the opposite pattern: only the correct pronunciation was concretely mapped onto the familiar object. The results of my last study named MAGIC, reveal a closer relationship between production and perceptual abilities in toddlers than has previously been demonstrated and bridges the gap between production and perception towards a deeper understanding of first language acquisition.

The progressive gram type in parallel corpora

Ghazaleh Vafaeian

This study investigates the functional scope of a number of progressive or potentially progressive grams. Within the field of typology, cross-linguistic studies of functional scopes of gram types are less common. It is often more practical to focus on structural comparison since this type of data is easier extracted from grammatical descriptions. However, we do not know whether a gram in a particular language has the same function as another gram which we would like to call by the same name. And even if we do know that they share their prototypical functions they may not overlap in their peripheral ones. In order to investigate the functional scope of the progressive gram type the distribution of these grams is looked at in two parallel corpora, the Parallel Bible Corpus and the TED Corpus, in order to see in which contexts these grams overlap and in which contexts they don't. 'Function' and 'context' then refer to and are extracted from the distribution of line(s) in the corpora. Rather than starting out by defining the progressive gram type, this study examines various potential progressive grams in order to delimit core as well as peripheral functions of the progressive gram type. Following the results of this investigation a discussion on the definition of prototypical progressive grams and the core function of the progressive gram type is expected.

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Adverbs across languages and why they matter

Pernilla Hallonsten Halling

The adverb¹ category is recurrently treated as containing leftover words that do not belong in other traditional categories such as noun, verb, and adjective. In this disorderly group, among other things, manner adverbs are found. Manner adverbs stand out from other types of adverbs in that they modify verbs, in the same way as adjectives modify nouns. In this sense, manner adverbs serve as basic a function as adjectives. However, manner adverbs have not been dealt with in cross-linguistic studies, since they are quite rare across languages, in comparison to the major categories noun, verb, and adjective. Some scholars even claim that in order to have an adverb category, a language must have an adjective category (Hengeveld 1992).

In this talk, I will present the purpose and some of the main findings of my thesis, which examines manner adverbs in a sample of 60 languages from the whole world. The results show that the majority of these languages have adverbs. Moreover, some languages that lack adjectives also have adverbs, in spite of earlier claims. In line with Dixon's (1977) famous semantic types for adjectives (COLOR, DIMENSION, AGE, etc), the adverbs found in the languages of my sample often consist of certain types of notions. Some of these semantic types for adverbs are: SPEED (*fast, slowly*), VALUE (*well, badly*), NOISE (*loudly, indiscriminately*), and CARE (*carefully, carelessly*). Even in languages that do not have any adverbs, constructions denoting e.g. SPEED in adverbial function are often unmarked. This points to a prototypical role for SPEED words as adverbs, and to a conceptually central role for the adverb category as such.

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¹Language-specific category names are capitalized, while category names used more loosely begin with a lowercase letter.

Glossary

acoustics Relating to sound and soundwave properties.

articulatory system Vocal folds, velum, jaw, tongue, lips.

communication How unsure some system is about the states of the world after minus before having received a message.

consonant gradation Regular, qualitative or quantitative change of consonant clusters to mark grammatical categories such as case or number.

cross-modal Compares languages from different modalities – i.e. spoken and signed languages – to each other.

Deaf Capital D “Deaf” refers to identity, rather than a medical condition.

diachronically Concerning several points in time.

dialect continuum A group or family of languages whose members are more similar (and possibly even mutually understandable) if they are adjacent, and more different the further away from each other they are spoken.

digital number A digital number strategy represents numbers in sign language the same way they are written, THREE ZERO ‘30’ in YMSL (Nohkop).

executive functions (EF) An array of organizing and self-regulating behaviors, generally described as consisting of working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control.

genitive possessive A genitive construction marking predicative possession, i.e. *Kim has a book* (as opposed to adnominal possession *Kim’s book*), by means of an existential sentence in which the possessor is marked with a genitive and the possessed unmarked.

gram A grammatical item with a specific form and a specific function (Bybee & Dahl 1989). A gram can be a functional word, a morpheme or a complex construction. E.g. the *håller på att* progressive construction in Swedish or the English plural morpheme *-s*.

gram types Cross-linguistically certain grams tend to cluster in that they occur with similar functions. Such a cluster is referred to as a gram type (Dahl & Wälchli 2016).

intra-modal Compares spoken to spoken and signed to signed languages.

kinematics Description of motion, without reference to the masses or forces involved in it.

language A loose term for a capacity all humans share and which some unknown operation which can put small units together into bigger units underlies.

MAGIC MAGIC is the abbreviation for **MAGIC Analyses Gaze In Children**.

mispronunciation A mispronunciation consists of a deviation of the adult word form. This could effect a single segment, e.g. *cjcodile* instead of *crocodile*, or even the whole word, e.g. [mʊaɕ] instead of *mössa* ‘hat’.

modify nouns In *The fast runner won the prize*, the adjective *fast* modifies the noun *runner*.

modify verbs In *The lion runs quickly*, the Adverb *quickly* modifies the Verb *runs*.

motor control Activation and coordination of the muscles and limbs involved in the performance of a motor skill (some desired movement or action).

name giver The individual inventing a name sign for someone.

name signs Name signs are proper nouns used in the Deaf community, assigned to members of the community or other individuals talked about in the community.

non-manual component Non-manual components (or non-manual markers) in sign language are meaningful movements of articulators other than the hands, e.g. eyelids, eyebrows, cheeks, lips, neck or shoulders.

numeral bases A number that is used as a base for constructing higher numbers. This can be done through different arithmetic operations such as addition (e.g. Swedish *tjugotvå* = 20+2) or multiplication (e.g. Swedish *tvåhundra* = 2×100).

numeral incorporation In sign languages, number handshapes from 1–9 can be simultaneously combined with specific movements that indicate, for instance, hundreds or thousands, or even time units such as hours or years. See e.g. the sign **FYRA-TIMME** (‘four hours’) in Swedish Sign Language: <http://teckensprakslexikon.su.se/ord/07229>.

preaspiration A devoiced period or aspiration before a voiceless stop, e.g. /hk/ like in Icelandic *takk*. In South Saami, they are phonematic: /^hk/.

productive vocabulary The productive vocabulary is a set of words that the child can produce, and use to some extent.

progressive grams A morphosyntactic device which is mainly used in contexts to mark that an action is taking place at a particular point in time. Examples: English: *He is working*; Swedish: *Han håller på att jobba*; Spanish: *Está trabajando*.

quantifiers Quantifiers, such as *all*, *some* and *none*, are properties of sets.

relation A mapping from one domain to another.

semantic types Types that concepts can be divided into on the basis of their semantics: more generally e.g. OBJECTS, PROPERTIES, ACTIONS, and more specifically for subtypes of for instance PROPERTIES e.g. COLOR, AGE, VALUE etc.

sound structure The admissible arrangement of sounds within a certain language, here Swedish.

synchronically Concerning a single point in time.

umlaut Vowel assimilation caused by the vowel in the following syllable.

unmarked A marked item is encoded by (i.e. takes the shape of) *at least as many* morphemes as an unmarked item. In English, the Adverb *fast* is unmarked compared to the Adverb *quick-ly*, since the latter requires a derivational ending, whereas *fast* does not.

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