FOREWORD

This collection of articles is a selection of some of the papers that were presented at the conference *Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research 8* (TISLR 8), which took place at the University of Barcelona between September 30th and October 2nd, 2004. TISLR is the most important international conference on sign language research and it constitutes a good overview of the current state of the field. First, because of the high standards held for the selection of papers, and second, because despite the linguistic focus, it incorporates work on sign in related fields such as neurolinguistics or psycholinguistics. It was the second time that TISLR was organized outside North America and it attracted a very significant number of participants from all over the globe (almost 380). After the peer reviewing process of the 153 submitted abstracts by an international Scientific Committee, 23 papers were selected for a talk and 59 for poster presentations. In addition, the programme included three invited addresses. This volume offers a representative sample of all those selected papers and it includes two of the invited lectures. All the articles submitted for this volume went through a specific anonymous peer reviewing procedure and the result of that is the collection presented here.

The whole allows us to get a fair impression of a field that keeps expanding and becoming more and more prominent within linguistic research in general. As the reader will notice immediately after a quick look at the table of contents, the range of topics addressed in the individual contributions is very broad and the number of sign languages studied too −the crosslinguistic slant is recurrent in many of the chapters, a valuable feature in itself. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to group the 17 chapters by thematic affinity into recognizable sections. Still, it should be made clear that these divisions are one of many possible ones and thus artificial: in most of the cases there are aspects of the paper that have a clear link to another thematic section. This is a natural outcome of the fact that linguistic research does not remain limited to isolated compartments, but usually looks into different subdomains in order to reach substantial results.

The first thematic block deals with a number of rather diverse issues connected to phonetics and phonology of sign. *Mauk, Lindblom and Meier*, in their study of undershoot in American Sign Language (ASL) locations as a consequence of fast signing, show that the methodologies developed for the study of vowel undershoot in spoken languages can be successfully applied to sign languages. The phenomenon of undershoot is argued to exist in both modalities, which opens up a venue of research to determine what is modality specific in the organization of the respective articulatory systems and what is not. In *Rozelle*'s paper the question is asked to what extent the values of certain phonological parameters (handshape, location and one- vs. two-handedness) show interdependence. Applying an information theoretic method to data from different sign languages, she shows that certain correlations between parameter variables arise, but they vary crosslinguistically, an interesting fact for the study of the phonetics-phonology interface. The third paper in this section by *Tyrone and Woll* has a rather different focus, namely phonetically impaired sign production as the effect of Parkinson's Disease on a British Sign Language native signer. This case study adds to the body of knowledge reached on the basis of ASL subjects and pinpoints the differences in detail. It supports the conclusion that articulatory

laxing is the main consequence of Parkinson's Disease on the phonetic production. Dysarthria, however, not being articulator-specific, is not seen as linguistic in nature.

The next two chapters tackle topics related to intonation, but with important ramifications into other domains of grammar. *Dachkovsky* defends that the distinction between neutral and counterfactual conditionals in Israeli Sign Language is realized at the nonmanual level by brow raise and eye squint: while the first marks the former type of conditional, the combination of the two flags the latter. These markings are analyzed as intonational units and not as syntactic markers: as such they have very general pragmatic meanings that reappear in other constructions. On the basis of Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL) data, *Sze* reconsiders the role of blinks as put forth by Wilbur for ASL (voluntary blinks would perform a semantic and/or prosodic function of emphasis, assertion or stress, while involuntary periodic blinks would be markers of intonational phrase boundaries). She offers a modified classification of blinks that reduces the linguistic motivation for most categories. Specifically, one of the main claims is that the boundary-sensitive blinks might not have the grammatical function of marking a syntactic or prosodic juncture, but it would rather be the consequence of cognitive processing of the information flow. Head movement is proposed as a more consistent marker of prosodic boundaries instead.

The largest section of this book is the central one dealing with different aspects of morphology, syntax, semantics of sign languages. Some of them concentrate mainly on syntactic analysis. *Benedicto, Cvejanov and Quer* study the morphosyntactic properties of verbs of motion in serial verb constructions in Catalan and Argentinean Sign Languages, comparing them with the claims previously made for ASL. Couched in a vP-shell structural account, the analysis supports the hypothesis that these constructions form clausal units and derives the commonalities as well as the variation attested from a limited set of mechanisms. *Lam* discusses the status of number agreement markers in HKSL and argues that exhaustive, distributive and multiple markings are actually a fusion of genuine number marking and quantificational affixation. They are argued to show distinct scope properties and it is further hypothesized that their differentiated behaviour might derive from the level where they are attached (lexicon vs. syntax). *Lillo-Martin and de Quadros* offer a syntactic analysis of two distinct discourse-related constructions in ASL and Brazilian Sign Language: information focus vs. emphatic focus, which is in turn argued to be the source of double constructions. The different syntactic derivations for each type of focus construction is further supported with language acquisition data, as the two contructions are acquired at different stages. Moreover, final and double emphatic focus constructions are acquired at the same time, as predicted by their analysis. *Nunes and de Quadros* explore the consequences of the Copy Theory of Movement for the account of double (emphatic) constructions in ASL and Brazilian SL and derive their properties from the same morphosyntactic restrictions on phonetic realization of multiple copies that apply to the analogous structures in spoken languages. *Rathmann and Mathur* offer an analysis of verb agreement in signed languages as the result of a linguistic innovation that allows the interaction of linguistic properties of agreement verbs with gesture: if a verb selects for two animate arguments, it can participate in agreement with the subject and the object in person and number features. They claim that recourse to gesture by the verb agreement process does not get "frozen" as in other types of grammaticalization. Despite

the modality specific interaction with gesture, on the basis of different sorts of evidence they argue that this innovation crucially relies on the mediation of grammar.

In her chapter, *Wilbur* further develops her Event Visibility Hypothesis, whose central claim is that the morphophonological components of complex predicate signs in ASL (and other SLs) constitute the overt reflex of the semantic units that integrate the events they convey. The universally available elements of physics of motion and geometry of space are argued to be mapped onto notions such as Duration or State that are relevant for event semantics and to combine in a compositional fashion. This framework establishes a powerful explanation for the visual similarities across SLs. From a different perspective but partially dealing with the same issue of compositional mapping of morphology onto lexical signs, *Zwitserlood* proposes for SL of the Netherlands (NGT) that lexical entries that have generally been argued to be "frozen" (i.e. non-productive) forms stemming from classifier constructions are actually morphologically complex. Within the Distributed Morphology framework, she proposes that morphologically complex lexemes occur below the level of the sign, which allows her to derive the superficial similarities between frozen signs and the related classifier constructions, as well as their differences.

The next section features two chapters that concentrate on different aspects of sign language acquisition. *Blondel and Tuller* present a longitudinal case study of a bimodal, bilingual subject acquiring French Sign Language (LSF) and French. Specifically, they discuss the appearance of pointing gestures in the child's production and argue that they serve as the precursors to more complex syntax (two word/sign stage), where they acquire pronominal status. They argue that this precursory role is not the result of the combination of two different linguistic modalities from start, but rather of the non-linguistic status of pointing gestures before the first propositional utterances arise. *Chen Pichler* offers a thorough survey of the results of the research on word order acquisition in sign (and spoken) language and shows how notions such as word order "error" have shifted over time. The author reconsiders apparently conflicting results from earlier work and puts them into the perspective of current research in this domain. According to her, this leads to the conclusion that the role attributed to the canonical word order in the acquisition of the language has not changed in essence, but the notion of "acquisition error" has, as more sophisticated accounts of alternative word orders have developed.

Although adopting very different frameworks, two chapters are devoted to the analysis of what is commonly referred to as role shift. *Meurant* develops an account for Sign Language of Southern Belgium (LSFB) role shift structures that crucially relies on the role of (non-)gaze addressing, motivated in turn in its function within the system of pronominal reference. She identifies role shift in non-direct speech as the consequence of person neutralization (non-addressed gaze) and studies three different complex structures involving this category in multiple verb occurrences. These results are analyzed from an interpretive point of view within Ducrot's theory of Polyphony. Drawing on data from German and Turkish Sign Language narratives, *Perniss and Özyürek* analyze the possible combinations of type of perspective (observer, character, fused, or none) with type of predicate (classifier vs. lexical) in order to express action, location, and motion events in sign space. Seven different combinations, whose use differs between the two languages, are attested. The authors argue that not only iconic principles, but also language-specific linguistic and discourse constraints, are determining factors in the choice of perspective and predicate type in such utterances.

The volume ends with a chapter devoted to a topic in applied linguistics: lexicography. *König, Konrad and Langer* explain and discuss the criteria applied in the corpus-based elaboration of technical dictionaries at the Institute of German Sign Language and Communication of the Deaf at the University of Hamburg. Crucial concepts such as conventional forms (lexemes) vs. productive forms, as well as conventional vs. productive uses of lexemes are analyzed and exemplified from their practice. They argue for the importance of the underlying image and the image-producing techniques involved. The interaction of manual sign and mouthing is shown to play a decisive role in the development of technical terms.

This is just a relatively small portion of all the papers presented at TISLR 8, but it gives a representative sample of the research carried out in the field of sign linguistics. A field with an open horizon ahead!

Acknowledgments

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