

Introduction

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This collection of papers serves as the Proceedings of the FEAST Colloquium 2018 which took place in Venice, Italy. This is the second volume of the FEAST journal. As always, this year's conference featured papers across geographically and typologically diverse sign languages. Works included in this volume examine different phenomena in eight sign languages: Sign Language of Cuba (LSCu: Calderón et al.), Italian Sign Language (LIS: Fornasiero), Turkish Sign Language (TİD: Hakgüder and Karabüklü et al.), Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT: Legeland et al. and Klomp), French Sign Language (LSF: Hauser), Russian Sign Language (RSL: Kimmelman & Khristoforova), Brazilian Sign Language (Libras: Lourenço & Wilbur), German Sign language (DGS: Oomen), and Catalan Sign Language (LSC: Zorzi). Each of the papers makes strong claims in various subfields of theoretical linguistics. Some of the papers explore certain language-specific facts while others propose a novel account of phenomena that have been previously observed cross-linguistically.

Several papers investigate the role of non-manual markers. Hakgüder which explores non-manual markings observed with polar interrogatives in TİD. Hakgüder argues that, contra previous analyses, the head-tilt (backward vs. forward) signal both syntactic and semantic information; in particular, the non-manual marker not only encodes the clause-type but also further differentiates the type of question/interrogative it marks. Kimmelman and Khristoforova analyze the quotation construction in RSL with a focus on non-manual marking (role shift). The authors show that the construction mostly involves direct speech and lack of embedding yet a mixed behavior with indexicals; in this, RSL patterns differently from other sign languages. However, Kimmelman and Khristoforova demonstrate that in RSL, context shift and role shift must be disassociated. Calderón et al. analyze motion predicates in LSCu and argue that certain non-manual markers (mouth gestures and eye gaze) are grammatical markers of event and argument structure in this language. This paper also contributes to the debate on the syntactic vs. prosodic status of non-manual marking, and provides arguments for the generative-constructivist approach to argument structure. Finally, Karabüklü et al. test the universality of the body-mapping hypothesis, previously articulated for DGS. Applying the hypothesis to TİD, the authors find differences between the two languages under examination. Their conclusions open new and exciting, albeit not unexpected, possibilities for the study of TİD: the difference in clausal syntax between languages as well as potentially different syntax and semantics of modals may be expected to affect the outcome of the body-mapping and, therefore, scopal relations.

Several papers address morphological or morpho-syntactic phenomena. Fornasiero's paper offers both corpus and elicited production data as evidence for both manual and non-manual evaluative morphology in LIS. Fornasiero demonstrates that LIS in particular (and, by extension, sign languages in general) are best described in terms of agglutinative morphology. The paper by Lourenço and Wilbur redefines agreement. By using data from Libras – particularly focusing on the so-called plain verbs, – and extending it to other sign languages, they argue against the previous analyses of agreement, all of which are morpho-syntactic or semantic in spirit. Instead, they demonstrate that restrictions on “agreement”

are phonological and are best described in terms of co-localization. Addressing a related topic, Oomen's work on DGS is focused on the verb types traditionally thought to participate in agreement processes. She tests the hypothesis, previously proposed for spoken languages, that case-frame selection is governed by the semantic properties of verbs; therefore, she examines DGS verbs participating in agreement for transitivity.

Syntax of sign languages is addressed in three papers. Hauser's paper on the Question-Answer Pairs (QAPs) in LSF examines a construction which has been explored elsewhere in the literature and, having offered a variety of diagnostics, arrives at the conclusion that it is best viewed as something close to a pseudocleft undergoing a grammaticalization processes. In this, Hauser situates LSF between ASL/NGT and LIS. Zorzi focuses on TP conjunction in LSC. Building on a variety of works from the spoken language literature, she presents several tests used to identify this structure. She shows that in LSC, TP conjuncts are hosted in the specifier and complement of the CoP – a syntactic category meant to be used for other types of coordination as well. The paper by Legeland, Hartmann and Pfau on NGT coordination addresses the issue of the Parallel Structure Constraint (PSC), well known in the syntactic literature for its puzzles. Legeland et al. suggest that PSC violations (well known in the spoken language literature) may in fact be accounted for by the same mechanisms that accounts for such violations in NGT – Information Structure in general and contrastive focus in particular.

Finally, Klomp's experimental study examines the findings of the nonce sign repetition task that was developed for Sign Language of the Netherlands (the NGT-NSRT) and discovers a difference in performance between deaf signers and hearing children of deaf adults (Codas). She also shows that phonological complexity influences the results in this task.

In general, the volume makes substantial contribution by discussing much novel data from diverse sign languages and providing novel theoretical analyses of previously described phenomena.