

Having a look at direct quotations in LSF and Belgian French: insights from a multimodal and cross-linguistic perspective

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Recent works on quotational phenomena have emphasized the need for a multimodal turn in the study of utterance reporting. On the one hand, the field needs to include insights gained from the study of signed languages more systematically (Hodge & Cormier, 2019). On the other hand, multimodal aspects of quotation are often left unaccounted for in spoken languages (Stec et al., 2016). Yet, it has been shown that language users (re-)construct much more than words or sentences in quotes. For example, language users may also enact the facial expression, hand movements and posture of quoted referents (Clark & Gerrig, 1990). These aspects are well-known in signed languages and have sometimes been called “constructed action”, “constructed dialogue” or “role-shift” (Metzger, 1995; Herrmann & Steinbach, 2012). The present work reports on a corpus study of quotation in LSF, French Belgian Sign Language, and its ambient spoken language, Belgian French. Using the same conversational and narrative retelling tasks in two directly comparable databases, the LSF and the FRAPé corpora (Meurant, 2015; Lepeut et al., submitted), the study asks how frequently quotation is used and which articulators are recruited to depict quoted referents. The preliminary results show that quotations are much more frequent in LSF than in Belgian French and that the two languages use a partly different set of articulators to enact quoted referents. The impact and interplay of several factors, such as text type, individual, linguistic, and cultural differences, on these results is discussed.

References

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