

between iconicity and familiarity, while a study on BSL (Vinson et al., 2008) conducted with deaf participants found a positive correlation as we did.

We conclude that the differences between judgments might be due to the fact that hearing nonsigners might not see iconicity in a level as deep as deaf signers. The methodological implication is that, if a researcher aims to find iconic signs (e.g. for stimulus selection for an experiment), collecting data from hearing participants can be viable. However, if the research goal is concerned with the whole spectrum of iconicity, then, collecting ratings from deaf participants would give more accurate results.

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Signing Irony in LIS

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Background. A remark such as "What a wonderful present!" can be interpreted either literally (i.e. I really like it) or ironically (i.e. I don't like it at all). Ironic remarks can be recognized by the discrepancy between what is said and the context of utterance (e.g., it is clear that the speaker does not like the present, still she says that it is wonderful). In spoken languages, ironic statements are often characterized by the presence of specific prosodic cues, such as prolonged articulation and exaggerated pitch (e.g., Ackerman 1983; Capelli, Nakagawa & Madden 1990; but see Bryant & Fox Tree 2005 for a criticism). In signed languages, semantic prosodic features (e.g., the difference between statements and questions) are conveyed by means of non-manual markings.

Focusing on Italian Sign Language (LIS) the present study aims at exploring: i) whether there are manual and non-manual disambiguation cues that distinguish ironic from literal remarks, and, in particular, (ii) whether ironic criticism (IrCrit: positive remark in negative context) is expressed differently from ironic compliment (IrComp: negative remark in positive context).

Methods. By means of a Discourse Completion Task (Félix-Brasdefer 2010) we obtained a semi-spontaneous elicitation of the literal and ironic version of a total of 10 remarks. We presented our native signers with a context (either positive or negative), and asked him/her to produce a final remark. Crucially, the very same remark was elicited after a situational prompt that favored its literal interpretation, and another one that induced its ironic interpretation. To avoid production bias, the two versions of the same remark were elicited in two different and temporally distant moments (six months gap).

To illustrate the task, the remark "What a wonderful present!" has been elicited after the context (1a), favoring its literal interpretation, and (in a second session) after the context (1b), inducing its ironic interpretation:

(1a) Tommy and Chiara are siblings. For Chiara's birthday, Tommy is asked to buy a present. He uses all his savings to buy his sister the doll she longs for. As she receives it, she reacts with enthusiasm.

(1b) Tommy and Chiara are siblings. For Chiara's birthday, Tommy is asked to buy a present. When he goes to the bookshop, he is fascinated by a book about his favorite rock band and decides to buy it for his sister. As she receives it, she gets disappointed.

We thus obtained ten minimally differing pairs of sentences. Each pair includes the same remark with two different interpretations: literal and ironic. Since there were five negative and five positive contexts, among the ten ironic remarks, five are IrCrit and the other five are IrComp. For the time being, data have already been collected from two Deaf native signers. Our goal is to elicit data from at least two other informants so that consistency across signers can be checked and a more accurate picture can be drawn. Both the literal and the ironic remarks were manually coded in ELAN (Crasborn & Sloetjes 2008). An annotation template was conceived to code for both manual items (sign glosses and gestures) and nonmanual markers (body posture, head, eyebrows, eyes, gaze, mouth). The data annotation was conducted by two blind annotators to ensure accurate and bias-free coding.

Preliminary results. The comparative analysis between literal and ironic expressions in LIS confirms the importance of prosody in conveying the signer's communicative intention and reveals that irony is expressed through a specific array of manual and non-manual cues.

Manual markers. In some ironic remarks we observed the presence of 'PROPRIO' (tr. REALLY), an intensifier used to add emphasis to the ironic expression. Gestures also play a special role in signaling irony in LIS: they can be produced at the beginning and/or at the end of the ironic remark (gestural onset and/or coda). The open-hand gesture shown in (2) co-occurs with IrCrit, while the close-hand gesture in (3) co-occurs with IrComp. Overall, the movement component of the signs appears slower and more exaggerated in ironic remarks. This prosodic aspect should be quantitatively evaluated in depth once a richer corpus of remarks is available.

Non-manual markers. As expected, irony in LIS is marked by specific non-manual cues. In particular, these are realized by the position of the head and the mouth. Unlike literal remarks, ironic ones are often produced with slightly tilted head (as shown in 2 and 3). Moreover, IrCrit is marked by head nods, while IrComp by head shakes. As for the mouth, we observed the following distinction: IrCrit correlates with mouth corners down (as in 4), while IrComp with a smiling facial expression (as in 5).

Gestures		Mouth markers	
			
(2) Open-hand gesture in IrCrit	(3) Close-hand gesture in IrComp	(4) Mouth corners down in IrCrit	(5) Smile in IrComp

Discussion. These preliminary findings confirm the existence of visual cues disambiguating ironical vs. literal remarks in LIS. The tilted head may suggest a deviation from conventional nonfigurative language. This study also reveals that the expression of irony in LIS should not be considered a homogeneous phenomenon, since the language offers distinct prosodic strategies to mark IrCrit and IrComp. As for IrCrit, we argue that the open-hand gesture and the head nods have a mocking function and the use of mouth corners down strengthens the intended criticism. In IrComp, both the close-hand gesture and the head shake suggest that the statement should not be taken seriously. The smiling expression is likely to be used to mitigate the apparent criticism expressed by the sentence.

Conclusions. This study shows that, as for spoken languages, the expression of irony in LIS rely on precise gestural and prosodic cues intended to help the interlocutor overcome the mismatch between what is said and what is meant. Further research is needed to delineate which cues are more helpful for irony comprehension in LIS, and to compare non-manual markers of irony in LIS with specific behavioural cues that characterize the production of irony statements in spoken languages (Winner 1997; González-Fuente et al. 2015).

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Assessing morphosyntactic skills in LSF (French Sign Language): focus on predicative structures

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Up to now, no reference tools can be found to assess LSF competence and identify potential SLI. This is due to i) the paucity of linguistic descriptions of LSF, in terms of first language acquisition and developmental stages in children, and ii) the failure of previous attempts to adapt tests from other Sign Languages (SL) (no cross-linguistic, standardized tests are available, Courtin & al., 2010; Haug,

2008). Just as in spoken language, SLI in SL is characterized by heterogeneous language skills. Yet the speech modality induces a number of differences. Morphosyntactic disorders in SL can be linked to the way the signer uses: semantico-syntactic space (Quinto-Pozos, 2011), agreement morphology and classifier system (Morgan et al., 2007). In a previous study (Puissant-Schontz, 2013), we created a pilot assessment tool, which proved insufficient to investigate predicative structures, due to the lack of overall description of the predicative system.

This paper aims at filling this gap, and proposes a more fine-grained classification of predicative structures in SL. After a corpus analysis of different speech-situations, we select formal features in order to classify predicates: i) action predicates: manual contact with the body, manual orientation, manual movement (with a change of grammatical space), and configuration, ii) existence predicates: standard sign, gaze, chest movement, pointing, classifier and iii) property assignment predicates: standard sign, facial expression and classifiers. We present hypotheses on the impact of the type and the number of clues in the acquisition.

We then proceed to work out an assessment tool for 4 to 10 y.o children, with reception and production tasks, with a view to test sign language acquisition and diagnose potential SLI or delayed acquisition. The assessment tool could also be used as a basis for remediation protocols. And the classification of predicative structures could be used in others SL.

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Modal-negation interactions in Japanese Sign Language

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Background: It has been observed that negation signs used in the same sign language indicate different scopes of negation, and may appear in multiple syntactic positions (Wood 1999). Japanese Sign Language (JSL), considered as a manual dominant language (Zeshan 2006), has a variety of negation signs (Morgan 2006). Their syntactic and semantic properties, however, have not been fully investigated.

Claim: Syntactic positions of three different negative JSL signs can be identified based on their ordering restrictions with modals.

Modal and negation signs in JSL: Ten epistemic modals, identified by Akahori, et al. (2013), were classified into three classes: True-High, True-Low, and Quasi, as shown in (1). The syntactic tests used for the classification were (i) the ordering restriction between the modal and the negation sign /NOT/, and (ii) the ordering restrictions between the modals.

(1) a. True-High (/TRUE/ 'absolutely', /WRONG/'isn't it', /MAYBE-NO^IDEA/ 'maybe'):

may not be followed by /NOT/, may not be followed by any modal-like expressions

b. True-Low (/MEAN/ 'meant-to', /ERROR/ 'without-doubt', /SEEM/ 'seem'): may not be followed by /NOT/, may be followed only by the True-High modals

c. Quasi (/DECIDE/ 'certainly', /SHOULD/ 'should', /PLAN/ 'expectedly', /MAYBE- IMAGINE/ 'could be'): may be followed by /NOT/, may be followed by any True modals; may not be followed by other Quasi modals

Three negation signs: In addition to /NOT/, used in the previous study, JSL sentences can be negated by two other negation signs.