

# Preface

A brisk breeze lifted red, brown, and gold leaves into a swirl that blew across the campus of Gallaudet University on a crisp, clear November weekend in 1998. Inside the Kellogg Conference Center, a flurry of swirling hands raised questions and proposed theories about signed languages from around the globe. The myriad of concurrent sessions held at the sixth Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR) conference explored theoretical perspectives ranging from the strictest of formalist to the most corpus-based of functionalist perspectives. Moreover, the conference reflected a trend toward increasing the body of work that represents signed languages never before studied. The task of compiling proceedings that do justice to the largest TISLR conference ever held is daunting. To capture the diverse topics and the international flavor of the conference in a single volume seems nearly impossible. Our solution was to focus on papers that have not been published elsewhere, thereby making them available to interested readers. To capture the theoretical and global diversity of the conference, we raked through a stack of excellent papers; with the assistance of our referees, we have compiled an assortment of topics that include phonology, morphology and syntax, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and poetics.

In the first of two chapters on phonology, Mathur and Rathmann focus on articulatory phonetics. They address the role of joint-based constraints in the articulation of signed language phonology and the implications of these constraints in terms of signed language morphology. The second chapter addresses phonological processes. In her examination of the Sign Language of the Netherlands (SLN), van der Kooij finds that weak drop in SLN, as it is in American Sign Language (ASL), is acceptable for balanced signs in which both hands move symmetrically with respect to each other. However, contrary to prior claims, she finds that weak drop is not blocked on the basis of alternating movement and contralateral articulation (crossing the midsagittal plane). Rather, she finds that semantic, iconic, and possibly even nonmanual aspects play a role in these cases.

Part 2, on morphology and syntax, includes papers that cover manually produced nouns and verbs as well as the morphological status of nonhanded signs. Bergman and Wallin discuss the morphological relationship of noun classifiers to nouns in Swedish Sign Language, specifically, in narrative discourse. Dively challenges the notion that nonhanded signs such as affirmative head nods and negative headshakes are bound morphemes in ASL. She analyzes the form, meaning, and function of eight nonhanded ASL signs. Finally, Meir focuses on Israeli Sign Language in her study of spatial and agreement verbs. She proposes a specific lexical decomposition analysis that seems to predict verb classification in Israeli Sign Language and, potentially, in other signed languages.

In the section on psycholinguistics (part 3), Wilson and Emmorey counter their own earlier claims regarding the role of abstract properties of language in the structure of working memory. In this chapter based on their new data, they propose that the modality of a language does affect the structure and functioning of working memory and, hence, carries implications regarding cognition.

Language acquisition is the focus of part 4. Regarding second language acquisition, Mirus, Rathmann, and Meier find that hearing adults who are learning ASL as a second language struggle with proximalization and distalization of sign movement. This finding has both pedagogical and interactive implications. For example, hearing signers' sign movement impediments might cause native ASL users to perceive them as aggressive.

While Mirus, Rathmann, and Meier focus on phonological features in second language acquisition, Vercaingne-Ménard, Godard, and Labelle address first language acquisition and the acquisition of narrative discourse in deaf children who use Quebec Sign Language (LSQ). They study the development of story grammar in two deaf children of hearing parents. Their findings show that, during a two-year period (between the ages of 4 and 6 for each child), the children are able to close a two-year gap in narrative grammar.

Part 5 addresses both pragmatics and sociolinguistics. One chapter focuses on sociolinguistic variation analysis, one on politeness, and one on language contact as well as language maintenance or death. Hoopes, Rose, Bayley, Lucas, Wulf, Petronio, and Collins analyze the theoretical and methodological issues that are related to signed language variation research. Three different studies are described: one focusing on lexical variation, one on phonological variation, and one on variation at all linguistic levels between visual and tactile ASL. The three studies are compared in terms of both methodological approach and findings and, therefore, provide a unique perspective regarding the sociolinguistic analysis of signed languages.

In a discussion of politeness in Venezuelan Sign Language, Pietrosevoli examines the systematic violations of politeness principles that occur when deaf people interact with the hearing, mainstream culture. In her application of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness to examples of "false codeswitching" by deaf signers, Pietrosevoli brings together issues of language contact and interethnic communication.

As the Deaf community has grown together internationally, an increasing number of signed languages have come into contact. African countries, as have some other countries, have been besieged by ASL and some European signed languages, which have already received the attention of researchers. Consequently, the signed languages of these countries have a more prestigious linguistic status than are generally attributed to indigenous signed languages. In the chapter on Hausa Sign Language, Schmalting discusses some of the difficulties that confront researchers in Northern Nigeria (and other African countries) who face the challenge of distinguishing between the native signed languages and the influence on those native languages of signed languages that are foreign to that country. The findings of this study suggest that Hausa Sign Language, though subject to borrowing from ASL, is surviving as a distinct language.

The work of two poets is addressed in part 6. Taub provides an analysis of the conceptual metaphors used in an ASL poem by Ella Mae Lentz, "The Treasure," demonstrating how one poet has used linguistic resources to blend linguistic and cultural metaphors to make artistic and dramatic statements about important issues. Sutton-Spence focuses on British Sign Language (BSL) poetry in her analysis of the work of Dorothy Miles. Through her analysis of Miles's BSL poem "Trio," Sutton-Spence finds that the BSL poetry incorporates features similar to those that have been found in British English poetry.

Clearly, the contents of this volume reflect a broad range of topics from both formal and functional schools of thought. In addition, despite the fact that the TISLR conference was held in the United States and despite the historical prevalence of ASL (both in research and missionary zeal), less than half of the chapters focus on American Sign Language as the language of discussion. The international scope of these papers raises the constant issue faced by all linguists, that of transcription. The transcription conventions used here are provided in the appendix (however, variations on these conventions will be addressed in individual chapters).

Finally, we would like to thank all who supported our work as the editorial team for these proceedings. We are grateful to those who assisted in reviewing the papers for the proceedings, to the authors for their work in preparing their manuscripts for publication, and to Jayne McKenzie and Ethlynn DeStefano for their assistance throughout the editing process. In

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