

Annotating Real-Space Depiction

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“Shifted referential space” (SRS) and “fixed referential space” (FRS) (Morgan 2005) are two major types of referential space known to signed language researchers (see Perniss 2007 for a discussion of alternative labels used in the literature). An example of SRS has the signer’s body representing an event participant. An example of FRS involves the use of “classifier predicates” to demonstrate spatial relationships of entities within a situation being described. A number of challenges in signed language text transcriptions identified in Morgan (2005) pertains to the use of SRS and FRS. As suggested in this poster presentation, a step towards resolving some of these challenges involves greater explicitness in the description of the conceptual make-up of SRS and FRS. Such explicitness is possible when more than just the signer’s body, hands, and space are considered in the analysis. Dudis (2007) identifies the following as components within Real-Space (Liddell 1995) that are used to depict events, settings and objects: the setting/empty physical space, the signer’s vantage point, the subject of conception (or, the self), temporal progression, and the body and its partitionable zones. We considered these components in a project designed to assist video coders to identify and annotate types of depiction in signed language texts. Our preliminary finding is that if we also consider the conceptual compression of space—which results in a diagrammatic space (Emmorey and Falgier 1999)—there are approximately fourteen types of depiction, excluding the more abstract ones, e.g. tokens (Liddell 1995).

Included in this poster presentation is a prototype of a flowchart to be used by video coders as part of depiction identification procedures. This flowchart is intended to reduce the effort of identifying depictions by creating binary (yes or no) decisions for each step of the flowchart. The research team is currently using ELAN (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator, www.la-mpi.eu/tools/elan/) to code the depictions focusing on the relationship of genre and depiction type by looking at the depictions’ length, frequency, and place of occurrence in 4 different genres: narrative of personal experience, academic, poetry, conversation. We also have been mindful that a good transcription system should be accessible in an electronic form and be searchable (Morgan 2005). In tiered transcription systems like ELAN the depiction annotation can simply be a tier of its own when it is not the emphasis of the research, or it can occupy several tiers when it is the forefront. In linear ASCII-style transcriptions the annotation can mark the type and beginning then end of the depiction. Our poster does not bring a complete bank of suggested annotation symbols, but rather the idea that greater explicitness as to the type of depiction in question may be beneficial to corpus work.

References

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