Nonmanual Aspects of Focus Particles in Sign Languages

It is not *only* the hands that count, nonmanuals are *even* important, *too*.

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Outline

Introduction

Focus particles and focus

- Lexical items such as *only, just, solely, also, too, even*
- Non-inflecting, flexible syntactic distribution
- Associate with the highlighted part of the sentence (focus)
- Syntactic and semantic scope over a specific focus constituent
- Denote a relation to a set of alternatives
- Focus as an information structural notion generally reflects new information (focus - background distinction)

Krifka (2007), Büring (2007), Féry & Krifka (2008), Lambrecht (1994) et al.

Introduction

Nonmanual markers in sign languages

- High simultaneity (manual and nonmanual means)
- Grammatical and affective nonmanuals
- Functions of nonmanuals:
  sentence types, topicalization, relative clauses, conditional clauses, adverbials, ...

Introduction

Focus particles in sign languages

- No systematic research on focus particles in sign languages
- ASL: ONLY, ONLY-ONE (restrictive); SAME (additive)
- DGS: NUR (restrictive); DAZU (additive)
- Cross-linguistic study: **DGS**, NGT and ISL
- Focus Particles investigated:

restrictive	*only*
additive	*also*
scalar	*even*

(Wilbur 1994, Wilbur & Patschke 1999, Happ & Vorköper 2006)

Introduction

Assumption

- Universally, all languages have equivalents for focus particles
- Assumption for SL: manual equivalents for focus particles
- Modality-independent and modality-specific aspects of the realization of focus particles?

Data elicitation

- Pilot study for DGS, NGT, and ISL
- 14 native and near native signers
- 2 hour video session each
- 2 camcorders (upper body and face)

Development of elicitation battery

- Translation task (sentences)
- Picture question-answer task (interaction)
- Picture story task (narration including dialogues)
- Translation/Narration task (dialogues)

Data elicitation

Translation task (sentences)

1. FP **Tim** eats a banana.   (S)
2. Tim FP **bought** the book.   (V)
3. Tim FP **watered the flowers**. (VP)
4. Tim FP watered the **flowers**. (O)
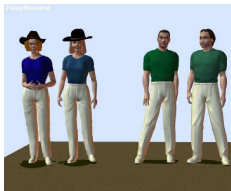
Data elicitation

Figure: Pictures of question-answer task

Are all of the people wearing hats?
Are only the men wearing white trousers?

(Pictures taken from the QUIS-Questionnaire, Potsdam, cf. Skopeteas *et al.*
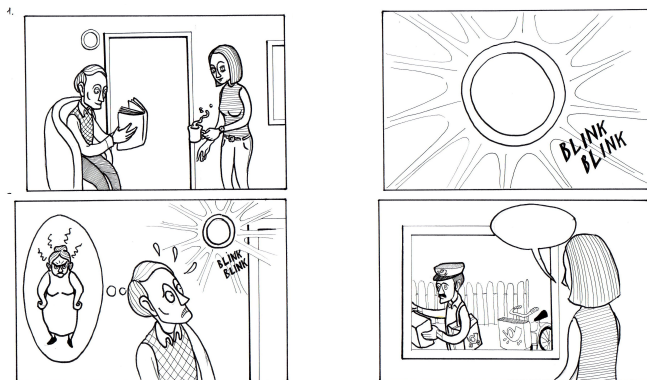2006)

Data elicitation

Figure: Picture story 1: Eliciting degrees of *only* (scalar)
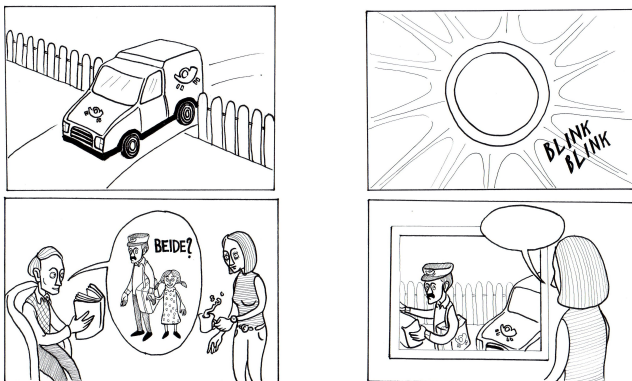
Data elicitation

Figure: Picture story 2: Eliciting degrees of *only* (quantitative)

Data elicitation

Translation task (dialogues)

A: The prime minister is allowed to decide.
B: No, only the Queen is allowed to decide.
A: The Queen can decide, but also the PM is allowed to decide.
B: Are you sure?
A: Yes, even the prince is allowed to decide.

Data

Data Annotation

- ELAN annotation tool (MPI Nijmegen)
- Synchronization of videos
- 14 different tiers
- Systematic transcription conventions
- 8 separate nonmanual levels

Data

ELAN Screenshot

Data

Files elicited with focus particle tasks:

SL	Transl. S.	Picture	Picture Story	Transl. D.	All
DGS	169	47	46	49	**311**
NGT	34	19	16	21	90
ISL	37	16	21	21	95
Sum	251	82	83	91	**496**

Results: focus particles in DGS

Focus in DGS: raised brows, head tilts, nods, tense and large articulation

Figure: Focus marking of object focus in DGS

(also see Waleschkowski 2009)

Results: focus particles in DGS

Manual signs for *only* and *also* in DGS
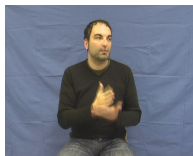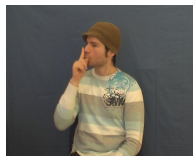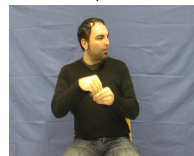
Figure: Restrictive and additive focus particles in DGS

Results: focus particles in NGT

Manual signs for *only* and *also* in NGT
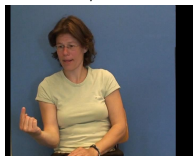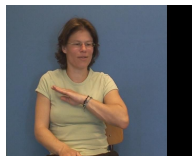
ALLEEN	EEN	OOK$_1$	OOK$_2$
only	one/only	also	also
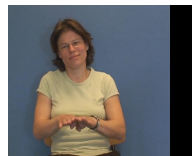
Figure: Restrictive and additive focus particles in NGT

Results: focus particles in ISL

Manual signs for *only* and *also* in ISL

ONLY   ONE   JUST
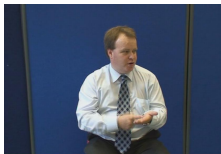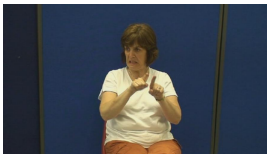
ALSO   SAME   AS-WELL

Figure: Restrictive and additive focus particles in ISL

Results: focus particles - distribution

(1)   ONLY$_2$/ALSO [TIM]$_F$ FLOWER WATER (S)   [DGS]

(2)   TIM FLOWER ONLY$_2$/ALSO [WATER]$_F$ (V)

(3)   TIM ONLY$_2$/ALSO [FLOWER WATER]$_F$ (VP)

(4)   TIM ONLY$_2$/ALSO [FLOWER]$_F$ WATER (O)

Results: focus particles

Sentence final focus particles

<div>

DGS

FERTIG / NUR$_1$

</div>

<div>

ISL
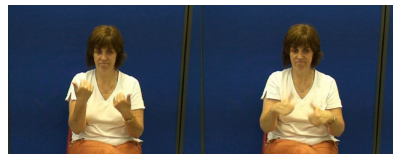
COMPLETION / AT-LAST / ONLY

</div>

Figure: Sentence final perfect tense marker and accomplishment marker

Results: focus particles - *even*

Even

- No manual sign for *even* in any of the sign languages
- Combination of manual additive particle with specific nonmanuals
- Raised eye brows, wide eyes, forward or upward head-tilt
- Sign language specific signs used to express *even*: PF-sign in DGS, AH-sign in ISL

Results: focus particles - *even*

(5)   'Tim even **read** the book.' (V)

			hn,r		tense	
					even	
TIM	IX$_3$	BOOK	ALSO	PF	[READ]$_F$	g-pu

- Manual additive particle for additive meaning
- Nonmanuals for scalar level of meaning
- Expressed simultaneously through different articulatory channels

Results: focus particles - *even*

Video

"Tim even read the book."

Results: focus particles - *even*

Nonmanuals for scalar level of meaning   [DGS]
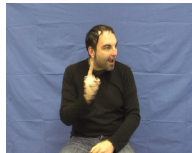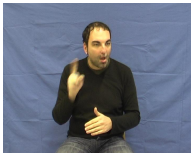
ALSO   ALSO + nonmanuals

Results: postfocus occurrences

(6)   'Tim eats a banana, too.'   [DGS]

    a. $\dfrac{\text{ht-f}}{\text{TIM}}$ $\dfrac{\text{ht-f,hn}}{\text{ALSO}}$ BANANA   EAT

    b. $\dfrac{\text{r,sq}}{\text{TIM}\ \text{IX}_3}$ $\dfrac{\text{ht-f,hn,r}}{\text{ALSO}_2}$ BANANA   EAT   IX$_3$

- Possible with additive focus particles such as AUCH and OOK
- Specific prosodic marking, focus particle receives focus marking itself

Syntactic analysis of focus particles

Adverbial account for 'regular forms'

- DGS: NUR$_2$, AUCH, DAZU
- ISL: ONLY, JUST, SAME, ALSO
- NGT: ALLEEN, OOK$_1$, OOK$_2$

- Adjacent to and preceding the focus constituent
- Can be combined [AUCH DAZU], [JUST ONE]
- XP status
- Adverbial positions above VP and IP

Syntactic analysis of focus particles

Sentence final NUR_1 and COMPLETION

- Grammaticalization from temporal aspect markers
- Sentence final wh-elements, modal verbs, copied pronouns are blocked in DGS

(7) *IX_1 SIGN LANGUAGE STUDY MUST ONLY$_1$

(8) *WHO TOPIC MODALITY STUDY WHO ONLY$_1$

- X° status
- Occupying right C°

Analysis of nonmanuals for scalarity

(9)

```
                                    C′
                          ┌─────────┴─────────┐
                        AdvP                   C⁰
                   ┌──────┴──────┐             │
               SpecAdvP         Adv′          . . .
                   │        ┌─────┴─────┐
                (ALSO)    Adv⁰          IP
                            │          ╱╲
                       [+scalar]      . . .
```
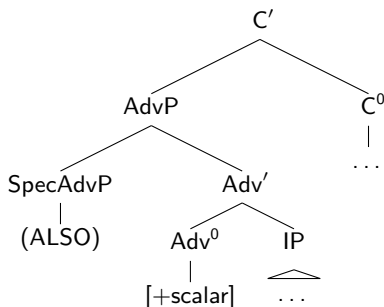
- The nonmanuals are not lexically associated with *also*
- Spread across the particle and rest of sentence (c-command)

Different levels of meaning are represented in different syntactic positions which are instantiated by different articulatory channels.

Analysis: postfocus occurrences

(10)   'Tim eats a banana, too.'   [DGS]

$$\underline{\text{r,sq}} \quad \underline{\text{ht-f,hn,r}}$$

TIM IX$_3$ ALSO$_2$ BANANA   EAT   IX$_3$

- Analysis as contrastive topic (cf. Krifka 1999 and Féry 2011)

- Specific nonmanual marking

- Focus particle receives focus marking itself

- Special contour is similar to hat contours in spoken languages

- The main function would be to restore scope of the focus particle (inverse scope reading)

Conclusion

Modality independent findings:

- Manual equivalents for restrictive and additive focus particles in DGS, NGT, ISL, and many other SL
- Distributional properties similar to focus particles in spoken languages
- Different analyses for adverbial focus particles, sentence final items, and postfocal items

Modality specific findings:

- Nonmanuals for scalarity, two different articulatory channels *even* = ALSO + nonmanuals
- Nonmanuals may occur without manual item depending on the context (nonmanually dominant languages)
- Nonmanuals are the relevant cues to interpret scalar meaning and postfocal items

Outlook

- Typological study on scalar particles (signed + spoken)
- Sign Language Lab in Göttingen:
  Native signers from two different age groups
  Grammaticalization and diachronic change
  Elicitation of narratives and different text structures in DGS
  Focus particles in natural signing
- Distribution of specific signs such as PF in DGS

Thank you very much for your attention.

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