A point well taken: The non-first person category in Sign Language of the Netherlands

Martine Zwets
(with Emar Maier & Kees de Schepper)
“First person = speaker; second person = spoken to; third person = neither speaker nor spoken to” (Jespersen 1924)

“Universal 42: All languages have pronominal categories involving at least three persons and two numbers.” (Greenberg 1963)
Person in Signed Languages

- Reference and pointing

- Speaker (‘I’)
- Addressee (‘you’)
- Non-addressed participant (deictic ‘he’)
- Non-present reference by prior localization (anaphoric ‘he’)

Spoken language
- 1-2-3 person distinction
- Singular versus plural
Person in Signed Languages
- Reference and pointing

- Speaker (‘I’)
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Spoken language
- 1-2-3 person distinction
- Singular versus plural
Outline

- Person in sign language: three approaches
  - Berenz: 1 vs 2 vs 3
  - Meier: 1 vs 2=3
  - Liddell: 1=2=3

- Non-addressee oriented imperatives in NGT
  - 2=3 → “3rd person imperatives”
Non-first person

- *The body coordinates model*

- Berenz, 2002; Alibasic & Wilbur, 2006

First versus Non-First

- Body-anchored verbs (e.g. LOOK-AT)
- First person in Role Shift

Second versus Third?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘You’</th>
<th>‘He’</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Feature</td>
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<td>Gaze</td>
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<td>Hand</td>
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Person in signed languages

Outline

Non-first person

Imperatives

Non-addressee oriented imperatives

Conclusions
Non-first person

- First vs. Non-first

- Meier (1990)
- Grammar: first versus non-first
- Pragmatics: look at addressee (Baker 1977)

→ Alignment of coordinates
→ Prediction: cancelable

“Can’t you see I’m busy?”
Meier, Liddell, …

→ 2=3

→ Imperatives?
“In ASL the subject is often deleted or occurs after the verb [...] ASL imperatives also have particular nonmanual signals [...] possibly frowning.”

(Valli & Lucas 1992)
Imperatives

- Imperatives in sign language

Syntactic features
- Deleted subject

Emphasis
- Speed
- Heavy, accentuated signing

Non-manual marking
- Frowning
- Squint
- Wrinkled nose
- Inclined head

Particles
- COME ON
- GO AHEAD
- GO ON
Imperatives

- Imperatives in sign language

**Syntactic features**

- Deleted subject

[Private clip]

WATCH OUT

‘Watch out!’
Imperatives

- Imperatives in sign language

Emphasis

- Speed
- Heavy, accentuated signing

[Private clip]

NOW START EAT
‘Start eating now!’
Imperatives
- Imperatives in sign language

Non-manual marking
- Frowning
- Squint
- Wrinkled nose
- Inclined head
Imperatives

- Imperatives in sign language

Particles

- COME ON
- GO AHEAD
- GO ON
Non-addressee oriented imperatives
- *In spoken language*

- Spoken imperatives are restricted to 2\textsuperscript{nd} person.
  Counter-examples?
  - **Nobody move!** (Schwager 2005)
Non-addressee oriented imperatives

- In spoken language

- Spoken imperatives are restricted to 2nd person
  Counter-examples?
  - Nobody move!
  - Let him do the dishes!

Imperative = imperative meaning + imperative morphology
• Spoken imperatives are restricted to 2\textsuperscript{nd} person

Counter-examples?

• **Nobody move!**

• **Let him do the dishes!**

• **Laat hem het zelf maar oplossen!**

| let him it self solve |

• **Laat hij het zelf maar oplossen!**

| let he it self solve |

(Mastop 2005)

• In SL: Non-addressee oriented imperative
Kim and Ruby are friends and are talking to each other. Kim had a date, but afterwards the boy didn’t call. She’s unsure about it and asks Ruby. Ruby tries to calm her down and says that he might not have had the time to call or has had other things to do. Kim says: ‘Whatever! Let he apologize! With some flowers!’

[Private clip]

BYE IF o-COME-s FLOWERS o-GIVE-s APOLOGIES o-GIVE-s
*‘Whatever! If he comes, let he give flowers and apologize’
Non-addressee oriented imperatives

- Prediction for sign language

Pete runs to John and says: ‘have you heard?! Frank has quit his job and now wants to make a trip around the world on a unicycle! John sighs and says: ‘Let he act normal, that’s crazy enough!’

[Private clip]

CRAZY pu NORMAL DO pu
*‘Crazy! Let he act normal!’
Two days later, John sees Frank. Frank enthusiastically starts telling that he is planning to make a trip around the world. John interrupts him and says: ‘Yes, I’ve heard that: Act normal, that’s crazy enough!’

CRAZY pu NORMAL DO pu
’Crazy! Act normal!’
Conclusions

- Sign language does not grammaticalize the 2nd-3rd distinction
- Evidence: non-addressee oriented morphological imperatives in NGT
- Three person universal refuted?

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