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

1. Introduction
2. Method and Data
3. Results
   - Focus Particles in DGS, NGT and ISL
4. Analysis
   - Syntactic Analysis
   - Nonmanuals
   - Postfocus Occurrences
5. Conclusion
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)

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

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
Annik Herrmann
Nonmanual Aspects of Focus Particles in SL
Files elicited with focus particle tasks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transl. S.</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Picture Story</th>
<th>Transl. D.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DGS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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

- NUR$_1$: only
- NUR$_2$: only
- AUCH: also
- DAZU: add/also

**Figure**: Restrictive and additive focus particles in DGS
Results: focus particles in NGT

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

- **ALLEEN**
  - *only*
- **EEN**
  - *one/only*
- **OOK\(_1\)**
  - *also*
- **OOK\(_2\)**
  - *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

DGS

FERTIG / NUR₁

ISL

COMPLETION / AT-LAST / ONLY

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)

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{hn,r} & \text{tense} & \text{even} \\
\text{TIM} & \text{IX}_3 & \text{BOOK} & \text{ALSO} & \text{PF} & \text{READ}_F \\
\end{array}
\]

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. \text{ht-f} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{ht-f, hn} \\

\text{TIM} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{ALSO} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{BANANA} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{EAT}

b. \text{r,sq} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{ht-f, hn, r} \\

\text{TIM IX_3} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{ALSO_2} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{BANANA} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{EAT} \hspace{0.2cm} \text{IX_3}

- Possible with additive focus particles such as \textit{AUCH} and \textit{OOK}

- Specific prosodic marking, focus particle receives focus marking itself
Adverbial account for ‘regular forms’

- **DGS**: NUR₂, AUCH, DAZU
- **ISL**: ONLY, JUST, SAME, ALSO
- **NGT**: ALLEEN, OOK₁, OOK₂

- Adjacent to and preceding the focus constituent
- Can be combined [AUCH DAZU], [JUST ONE]
- XP status
- Adverbial positions above VP and IP
Sentence final \text{nur}_1 \text{ and completion}

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

(7) \*ix_1 \text{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) 

```
(\text{SpecAdvP}) \\
(\text{ALSO}) \\
\text{AdvP} \\
\text{Adv}' \\
\text{Adv}^0 \\
\text{IP} \\
\ldots \\
\text{C}' \\
\text{C}^0 \\
\ldots
```

- 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]

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{r,sq} & \text{ht-f,hn,r} \\
\text{TIM} & \text{IX}_3 \\
\text{ALSO}_2 & \text{BANANA} & \text{EAT} & \text{IX}_3 \\
\end{array} \]

- 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 
  \( \text{even} = \text{ALSO} + \text{nonmanuals} \)
- 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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References


