

Exploring the Translingual Practices of Deaf Polish Sign Language (PJM) Signers - A Corpus-based Study

The current study explores the diversity of the linguistic repertoires that deaf native Polish Sign Language (PJM) signers have at their disposal and use to construct meanings during natural conversation with other signers.

All deaf signers possess some level of spoken Polish (sP) proficiency, parallel to their knowledge of PJM. This, combined with the fact that signers can use both their hands and mouth to produce meanings, results in the fact that different linguistic resources can be incorporated into constructing meanings of signed utterances. No previous systematic research on that topic has been done for PJM users.

The aim of the study is thus to explore the strategies for incorporating elements of spoken language into PJM text to build effective communication. Building on previous literature (eg. Kusters et al., 2017; Johnston et al., 2015) among those strategies we expect to find examples belonging to the following categories:

- 1) adopting sP elements to express spatial, temporal and causal relations without the use of the signing space,
- 2) using code-blending as a tool for achieving an enhanced semantic precision,
- 3) occurrences of lexical and structural borrowings and code-mixing for creating coherent and cohesive text.

In order to provide a description of the use of those strategies we analyze a data sample extracted from the PJM Corpus (Rutkowski et al., 2017), an extensive repository of recordings of native PJM users signing to each other in dyads. The chosen data sample consists of 20 video clips (10 participants performing 2 tasks each), and amounts to 179 min of linguistic material. This material is tokenized and glossed (N=8.200), tagged for clause-like units (CLUs) (Johnston, 2019), argument structure and semantic functions. 3.032 CLU tags are identified and analyzed for the occurrence of the previously mentioned strategies.

Our talk provides examples of the observed translingual practices that can be explained by the occurrence of natural language contact phenomena such as code-switching, code-mixing and code-blending (Herbert & Pires, 2017). Naturalistic corpus data shows that PJM, even when used by competent native signers, is influenced by sP, since its users are bimodal bilinguals.

References:

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