



Department of
Linguistics and Modern Languages

語言學及現代語言系

Asking content/wh-questions in Catalan Sign Language (LSC)

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Date: November 28, 2023 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
Venue: Lecture Theatre 4, Lee Shau Kee Building,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Abstract

Sign languages have been shown to instantiate a range of variation in the syntactic encoding of content/wh-questions that is comparable to the one attested in spoken languages and includes *wh*-movement, *wh*-in situ, interrogative particles and multiple *wh*-questions (see Kelepir 2021 for a recent overview). Putting aside the issue of the directionality of *wh*-movement (Cecchetto et al. 2009), which in sign languages is predominantly rightward, I will review and further elaborate on the different syntactic strategies of question formation mentioned in Alba (2016). I will devote some attention to clefted questions, which have not received much attention in the literature on sign languages so far (with a few exceptions like Abner 2011 for ASL). Clefted interrogatives were first described for LSC in Quer & Zorzi (2023) based on a particular elicitation context (*which*-questions with two animate arguments of the same type), as exemplified in (1):

(1)

	re re+squint	fe
ANIMAL 3a-BITE-3b (3a-AUX-3b). IX3a	(ANIMAL) WHICH(BB)	
'Which is the animal that is biting the other one?'		

The manual markers of content interrogatives can be typically realized as simple or complex DPs across sign languages. In order to complete the picture, I will address the cases of the particular set of non-interrogative nouns that contribute specific constituent questions about time, age, etc. without any overt *wh*-sign beyond non-manual marking. In this connection, I will also address the question whether concealed questions (nominals with interrogative interpretation as arguments of question-taking predicates) are attested in LSC and how this evidence can shed light on the debate about their nature across language modalities (cf. for instance Frana 2021).

Speaker

Josep Quer is ICREA Research Professor at the Department of Translation and Language Sciences of the Pompeu Fabra University since 2009, where he leads the Catalan Sign Language Lab (LSCLab). His research focuses on different aspects of the syntax and semantics of sign languages, as well as on Romance languages and Greek. Member of the research group ATLAS (Accessible Tools for Language Assessment in Schools) that started out at NIAS (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, Amsterdam) in 2021. He has led the projects SignGram Blueprint (COST) and SIGN-HUB (Horizon 2020) and has been co-editor of *Sign Language & Linguistics* (2007-2020). He is member of the Catalan Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Institut d'Estudis Catalans) in charge of the Catalan Sign Language projects. He was professor of Romance Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam and ICREA Research Professor at the General Linguistics Department of the University of Barcelona.

All Are Welcome

Enquiries

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