



ISCH COST Action IS1006 SignGram



STSM final report

Barcelona, December 24th, 2014

Dear STSM coordinator,

This is to notify that the following STSM: Complex sentences at the syntax-semantics-prosody interfaces

Beneficiary: Josep Quer (ICREA-Universitat Pompeu Fabra)
Host: Markus Steinbach (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)
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started and finished in the expected dates.

Report

The STSM has developed mainly in two domains:

- a) Discussing the proposal of analysis for left-peripheral adverbial clauses in Catalan Sign Language (LSC) in the context of asymmetries between dependent clauses appearing to the left and to the right of the main clause (Quer 2014).
- b) Conducting initial empirical comparative work between LSC and DGS (German Sign Language).



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The meetings with Markus Steinbach and Annika Herrmann have focused on both aspects. The discussion of theoretical issues has brought to light interesting parallelisms between the LSC cases and comparable asymmetries in the analysis of certain dependent clauses in German (relative, concessive, causal clauses) (see for instance Gärtner 2001, Antomo & Steinbach 2011, among others). Such syntactic and interpretive asymmetries are extremely suggestive of the ones we find in LSC, but need to be further explored empirically to see to what extent they have the same nature. Next to this, the proposal that certain adverbial dependent clauses are syntactically complex NP structures has been further examined and made more precise, partly through the examination of relevant DGS data for crosslinguistic comparison.

A preliminary collection of DGS has been carried out with two informants. The elicitation was based on a representative selection of target structures (temporal, causal, final and concessive adverbial dependent clauses) in the form of a questionnaire that would facilitate the comparison with the LSC data. The first tentative results point to a strong parallelism between DGS and LSC, but also to some differences that deserve attention, although finer-grained analysis of those data and discussion with other informants is still pending.

A recurrent issue in our discussions has been the degree of grammaticalization of the relevant structures. The work carried out will result in some methodological remarks in the relevant sections of the SignGram Blueprint (the Action's main deliverable) on adverbial subordination, subordination and complex sentences in general.

Further, I have had meetings with Annika Hübl about her work on reportive structures and role shift, which falls under the more global topic of complex sentence forming, and with Nina Pendzich on the relevance of lexical nonmanual features on the marking of dependent clauses.

Next to the advancement in the hypothesis I intended to explore, a concrete plan has been set up with Annika Herrmann and Markus Steinbach to study concessive clauses in DGS and LSC from a comparative perspective, because it is a barely known empirical domain in sign languages that will enrich our description of complex sentences. At the same time, it will also shed further light on the questions about clause combining in the visual-gestural modality that constitutes the core of this STSM.

All the best,
Josep Quer

