

14.30 – 15.00

Christian Rathmann: *Performance of German Deaf Children, Adults and L2-Learners in German Sign Language Sentence Reproduction Test*

Background:

Signed languages are natural languages with all linguistic properties at phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels. Users of signed languages include linguistically and culturally diverse L1 sign language users and L2 learners.

In line with spoken languages, it is important to have instruments that can assess the signed language development of these L1 users and L2 learners

The German Sign Language Sentence Reproduction Test (DGS-SRT) has been adapted from ASL Sentence Reproduction Test (ASL-SRT, Hauser et al 2008) and used in a number of psycholinguistic studies.

Goal:

This presentation will describe the performance of linguistically and culturally diverse deaf children, adults and L2 learners taking the DGS-SRT.

Methodology:

Subjects are divided into three groups: The first group consists of (a) 16 deaf schoolchildren in the 3rd and 4th grade (6 are native signers and 10 nonnative signers), (b) 15 deaf schoolchildren in the 6th and 7th grade (10 are native signers and 5 nonnative signers), and (c) 21 deaf schoolchildren in the 9th and 10th grade (11 are native signers and 10 nonnative signers). The second group consists of 20 adults who are either Deaf native signers and Deaf nonnative signers. The first group consists of (a) 10 L2 learners in the first semester, (b) 10 L2 learners in the third semester and (c) 10 L2 learners in the fifth semester at a German university.

Subjects are asked to reproduce 30 DGS-sentences. Some of them are more morphosyntactically complex sentences, and other sentences are less morpho-syntactically complex sentences. The sentences start out easy with fewer words and simpler grammatical structure and gradually increase in difficulty. The difficulty level at which subjects can accurately repeat the sentence has been shown to correlate well with level of competence.

Results:

The results show a statistically significant difference between native and nonnative signers in the first two groups and between L2 learners at various levels.

Conclusion:

The DGS-SRT provides a valid and reliable sign language competency tool for measuring students' global DGS proficiency. In addition, the talk will discuss the effect of sociolinguistic variables on measurement and rating as well as implications of SRT-test for other sign languages.

Reference:

Hauser, P. C., Paludnevičienė, R., Supalla, T., & Bavelier, D. (2008). American Sign Language- Sentence Reproduction Test . In R. Müller de Quadros (ed.), *Sign languages: Spinning and unraveling the past, present and future*. TISLR 9, forty-five papers and three posters from the 9. Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research Conference, Florianopolis, Brazil, December 2006 (pp. 160-172). Petrópolis/RJ, Brazil: Editora Arara Azul.