

## FOCUS in Argentine Sign Language<sup>1</sup>

### 7. *FOCUS Initial Languages that are SOV: Argentine Sign Language*<sup>2</sup> About Argentine Sign Language, Massone & Curiel (2004.68) report:

Members of the deaf community use LSA<sup>3</sup> in their everyday interactions, and when participants in conversations are hearing or hard of hearing people with some knowledge of sign language, deaf people may switch to either signed Spanish or Spanish. Deaf people may use LSA when conversing with hearing participants who are not only fluent signers but also members of the Deaf community ...

In brief, it is important to state that historically all education in our country has been and still is purely oral and conducted entirely in spoken Spanish. Only recently — in 1983 — was signed Spanish introduced in a few schools as the medium for teaching Spanish; however, it has not been used as a systematic or planned methodology. The Deaf community is marginalized culturally and linguistically from hearing society; however, it is embedded economically. Deaf people in Argentina constitute a nonliterate community in which most members are virtually monolingual in LSA or are at least subordinate bilinguals ...

... all deaf people, beginning in childhood and even when nonnative, use LSA as their first language.

And (Massone & Johnson 1991.348):<sup>4</sup>

LSA is the first and primary natural language of deaf children in Argentina. The deaf children of deaf parents acquire LSA through normal language acquisition

<sup>1</sup> This is excerpted from Chapter 10 of *Syntax and Semantics*.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the published work on Argentine Sign Language appears to involve María Ignacia Massone, Mónica Curiel, Robert E. Johnson, Silvana C. Veinberg and Emilia Machado, in various collaborative configurations. Cf. the references in Massone & Curiel 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The acronym for Argentine Sign Language is LSA, Lengua de Señas Argentina.

<sup>4</sup> Massone & Menendez (1997.76) repeat:

... in spite of the pressures of the oral educational system most deaf people become skilled signers. The process whereby this happens is similar to that in other industrialized societies and involves socialization of young deaf children, primarily by their peers at school.

This implies that a deaf child either remains incommunicado for the first 5 to 6 years of his/her life, or depends upon home signing.

processes beginning in infancy and those with hearing parents acquire LSA at school through their peers ...

In spite of these pressures from the educational system, most deaf people become skilled signers. The process whereby this happens is similar to that in other industrialized societies and involves the socialization of young deaf children, primarily by their peers. It is our observation that most adult men in the community have little skill in lip reading and speaking and could be classed as virtually monolingual signers in LSA. Women, on the other hand, tend to integrate with mainstream society to a somewhat greater degree than men.

Finally (Veinberg 1993.96):

Oralism — i.e. education without signing — is the only way parents, medical doctors, and educators consider to integrate the deaf person into hearing, majority society. However, most deaf adults do not learn the official language (Spanish) in spite of efforts of educators over many years. On the other hand, the very few deaf people who finally learn Spanish and can understand and interpret a simple paragraph think of Spanish as the prestigious way to communicate and despise their natural language as a low, variant or deviant way to communicate.

The number of deaf signers of LSA is not stated, but (Massone & Menendez 1997.76):

... deaf people are in close contact all through the country<sup>5</sup> ... Social activities and sports are the most important events within the group ... As schools are eminently oral[,] the gathering places for developing these activities have been the deaf associations.

Deaf associations constitute hierarchical institutions conformed by an Executive Committee plus deaf members. The members of such Committee are usually the deaf leaders who are very much respected within the whole community.

Data on LSA have been collected in various ways.<sup>6</sup> Curiel & Massone

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<sup>5</sup> Massone & Johnson (1991.350):

Most social interaction of deaf individuals in Argentine society is with other deaf individuals. Most deaf people's lives are centered completely in their interaction with other deaf people in clubs, sporting groups, and less formal social groupings.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Curiel 1993.29, Veinberg 1993.96-97. Massone 1994.123, Massone & Curiel 2004.69-72. Veinberg (1993.96) notes

It is not easy to collect the appropriate material in Argentina. Spanish language still has a privileged position within the deaf community, making it difficult to find competent signers.

(1993.29-30) attempt to neutralize the negative perception of LSA by its signers:

Debido al prestigio que tiene el español oral en la comunidad lingüística sorda argentina y al consecuente desprestigio de la LSA ..., la mayoría de la informantes al señalar con oyentes tiende a producir los enunciados señalados en el orden del español y una seña de la LSA, falseando, de este modo, la realidad gramatical de la lengua. Por esta causa, parte del corpus especialmente preparado ha sido elicitado por una persona sorda, quien es la asesora sorda de nuestro proyecto; luego, dicho corpus fué presentado a un grupo consultor de diez informantes sordos para corroborar su validez. Posteriormente, fué verificado en textos espontáneos de diferente extensión y a través de observación participante.

Because of this circumstance, we cannot always be certain how to interpret an utterance that seems to contradict the descriptive statement. Is it truly a contradiction, or is it an utterance with an intrusion of Spanish?<sup>7</sup>

### 7.1 *The order of signs*

The use of order in the expression of meaning is a bit more complicated in Sign Language overall than it is in the language of the hearing. A speaker of oral-aural language has but one mouth with which to articulate. A speaker of Sign Language has at least four independent means of embodying content. Kimmelman (2012.417) notes:

... signers have at their disposal two identical articulators, and, thus, for instance, an argument can be signed simultaneously with a verb. This, of course, makes the notion “word order” inapplicable.

Besides the hands, the head (including the mouth, eyes, and eyebrows) and the remainder of the body (upper body, at least) can be employed.<sup>8</sup> With respect to (1) in LSA,

(1) BOY<sup>9</sup> GET-UP (perf) / FROG NOT-HAVE DISAPPEAR IN-THE-PAST.

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<sup>7</sup> “...el gran prestigio que tiene español dentro de la comunidad sorda resulta difícil elicitar enunciados en LSA sin interferencias del español” (Veinberg & Massone 1992.79).

<sup>8</sup> Veinberg & Massone (1992.80) provide this list: head, body, lips, eyebrows, eyes, cheek, and forehead.

<sup>9</sup> Veinberg & Massone (1992.79):

Debemos recordar que la glosa en letras mayúsculas españolas [or English] indica el significado de la seña, y no es una traducción palabra española-seña.

CALL FROG CALL (locative-distributive). TREE MALE LOOK-FOR  
TREE LOOK-FOR

‘When the boy got up, the frog had disappeared. (The boy) calls the frog in all directions. In the tree the boy looked for (the frog).’

Massone & Curiel (2004.74-75) observe:

These entities [Subject and Object] had to be located in space by either body shift or movement, eye gaze or manual indices. These strategies establish reference to subject and/or object. In ... [(1)] the second sentence exhibits elision of the subject, and the third sentence shows elision of the object ... We also observed that eye gaze marks personal reference in the lexical domain. Personal pronouns are distinctively marked nonmanually, with eye gaze addressed to a different locus in the sign space where the second or third person reference has been located ...

Curiel & Massone (1993.27) describe the proliferation of syntactic channels:

Una de ellas es la característica de ser polisintética<sup>10</sup>, es decir, que su estructura permite la superposición de más de un morfema, generando, por ejemplo verbos espaciales-locativos, donde la configuración de la mano [CM] tiene significado propio y la ubicación [UB] y el movimiento [M] expresan otro significado, que refiere el lugar del espacio — real o hipotético — en que se localiza el objeto especificado. Estos rasgos morfonológicos ocurren simultáneamente, presentando una realidad lingüística inexistente en las lenguas orales.

The expressive resources of LSA are polysyntactic and parsed into manual and non-manual signs. In addition to the polysyntactic distinction between LSA (and other sign languages) and oral language, LSA (and other sign

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<sup>10</sup> *Polisintética* would probably be glossed as English *polysynthetic*, which has been historically applied to oral languages to identify heavy reliance on morphology to express semantics, as in this Mohawk utterance:

- (i) kh-y-a-ha-ny-a÷kw-a-kwari-hsy-a÷t-e÷  
[contrastive-translocative-aorist-masculine.singular.agent-esophagus-epenthetic -  
crooked-reversive-causative-punctual]  
‘He drank it right down’

Perhaps a better label for this condition would be *polysyntactic*. Brennan (1994.30) notes that its existence is well-established:

A major claim made again and again in the literature is that signed languages exhibit not only a temporal sequential ordering, but a spatial simultaneous patterning.

languages) exploits the space about the signer.<sup>11</sup> That space does more than contain the manual and non-manual gestures. It is organized so that it provides semantic substance to a signed utterance. Cf. Figure 1 (Massone 1994.124). The A dimension is a “Time-line ... where past, present and future are marked ...” The B dimension is a “Time-line ... [which] runs left to right at the torso level in front of the signer and represents duration in time.” The C dimension is a “Time-line ... [which] is used to indicate succession and duration in time and is placed in front of the torso at the ipsilateral side ... and moves toward the extension of the full arm.” Dimension D “is used to show something growing or growing up or in maturity or decreasing ....” (Massone 1994.124).

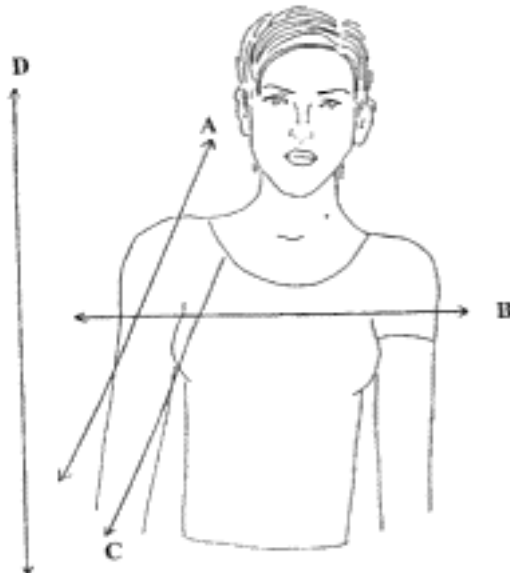


Figure 1: *Space about the Body of a Signer.*

The singular pronouns in LSA have the manual shapes in Figure 2 (Curiel & Massone 1993.45).

<sup>11</sup> Systematically grounding meaning with reference to the human body may uncommon, but it is not unique to LSA (or signed languages). Bella Coola, for example, resorts to human anatomy for a large number of affixes, which can then be projected on non-anatomical experience (Saunders & Davis 1975a).

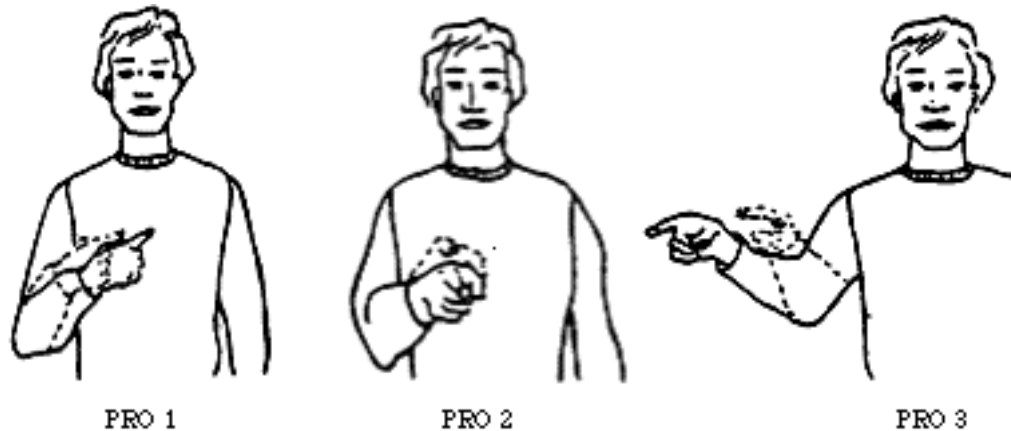


Figure 2: *Signs for Pronominal Reference in LSA.*

Massone & Curiel (2004.74) add:

We also observed that eye gaze marks personal reference in the lexical domain. Personal pronouns are distinctively marked nonmanually, either eye gaze addressed to a different locus in the signing space where the second or third person reference has been located ... Eye gaze always accompanies manual index reference in the second-person pronoun but not the third-person pronoun ....

Further (Curiel & Massone 1993.35 and Massone & Curiel 2004.74):

La persona del coloquio se establece a través de la seña pronominal correspondiente; en general, la forma de citación sin especificación personal coincide con la de sujeto en primera singular.

The ellipsis of the subject frequently occurs when it refers to the first-person singular because of the fact that the first person is the implicit pronoun of verbs without person inflection.

## 7.2 SOV

Within this frame of expressive devices, Argentine Sign Language is Verb final (Curiel & Massone 1993.31):

El verbo es la categoría gramatical cuya función esencial es la predicación; constituye el centro de los sintagmas predicativos y a su alrededor se aglutinan diferentes sintagmas nominales cumpliendo múltiples funciones complementarias, tanto en el plano sintáctico como semántico ... El verbo es el núcleo de la frase verbal y su ubicación no marcada dentro del sintagma oracional es posterior al sintagma nominal sujeto del que predica.

Complementarily, Nouns will precede the Verb (Curiel & Massone 1993.37):

El sustantivo es la categoría gramatical que cumple la función de núcleo del sintagma nominal; como tal desempeña las funciones sintácticas de sujeto y de objeto en el sintagma oracional, siendo su ubicación no marcada en ambos casos, antes de la aparición del verbo.

And “The unmarked sign order of LSA sentences with transitive verbs is SOV”<sup>12</sup> (Massone & Curiel 2004.73):

- (2) PRO<sub>1</sub> WINDOW CLOSE IN-THE-PAST  
'I have closed the window'
- (3) BOY GLASS WINDOW THERE BREAK (perf.)  
'The boy broke the glass of the window'
- (4) PEDRO PRO<sub>1</sub> FLOR DAR<sup>13</sup> (Curiel & Massone 1993.39)  
[Pedro flower give]  
'Pedro gives me the flower'  
'Pedro me da la flor'
- (5) PRO<sub>1</sub> TORTA GUSTAR (Curiel & Massone 1993.39)  
[I cake like]  
'I like cake'  
(‘Me gusta tortas’)

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<sup>12</sup> Further (Massone & Machado 1993.138):

Los informantes de la comunidad sorda marcaron como inaceptable la intercalación del sujeto, entre el verbo y el objeto: \*VSO. Del mismo modo, rechazaron la posición del sujeto detrás de la frase verbal, ya sea manteniendo la secuencia VO o invirtiéndola: \*VOS y \*OVS.

<sup>13</sup> Here the Indirect Object precedes the Direct Object, but in (i)

- (i) TEACHER MATHEMATICS PUPIL TEACH (Massone & Curiel 2004.80)  
'The teacher teaches mathematics to the pupils'

the order is reversed: DO + IO. It is not clear what is at play. Massone & Curiel (2004.80) remark:

The present study of LSA sign order also considered transitive verbs that need two different objects, one corresponding to a non-personal referent and the other to a personal one. In this case, the unmarked order is SO [-animate] O [+animate] V, similar to SOV with a split object.

The semantics of Verbs recognizes a contrast between deictic and non-deictic depending on their use of space to encode content.<sup>14</sup> The deictic use of space either encodes contrasts between the semantic ROLES of PARTICIPANTS or configurations of space encode spatial relations.<sup>15</sup> The non-deictic Verbs express ‘process’ or ‘state’<sup>16</sup>

“The sign order of sentences with intransitive verbs is SV” (Massone & Curiel 2004.82):

- (6) Det JAR BREAK IN-THE-PAST  
‘The jar broke’
- (7) MAN BE-TALL ENGINEER  
‘The tall man is an engineer’
- (8) MÉDICO TRABAJAR (Curiel & Massone 1993.38)  
[doctor work]  
‘The doctor is working’  
(‘El médico trabaja’)
- (9) LIBRO SER-INTERESANTE (Curiel & Massone 1993.38)  
[book be-interesting]  
‘The book is interesting’  
(‘El libro es interesante’)

### 7.3 Syntagmatic FOCUS in LSA

The grammar of LSA exploits the position after the ‘final’ V for the expression of a range of semantics. Their presence is often accompanied by a

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<sup>14</sup> “si utilizan el espacio con valor sintáctico y/o morfológico” (Curiel & Massone 1993.30).

<sup>15</sup> Curiel & Massone (1993.30):

*verbos de concordancia* — que utilizan espacio para marcar las relaciones de sujeto y objeto — y *verbos espaciales-locativos* — que usan el espacio y las configuraciones de la mano en forma significativa.

<sup>16</sup> “La clasificación de no deícticos abarca los verbos de proceso y los de estado.” The opposition between ‘process’ and ‘state’ is also relevant to the Verbs of Agreement (*los verbos de concordancia*) (Curiel & Massone 1993.31):

Cabe señalar que los verbos de concordancia ser reagrupados según la determinación de su marco casual, ya que por el mismo perternece también a los verbos de proceso, de acción or de estado.

Cf. below for further discussion of Verbs of Agreement.



characteristic non-manual sign that extends semantically to the preceding content. That is, the non-manual gesture begins before the sur-final expression and continues through it.

### 7.3.1 *Utterance final terms: NEGATION.*

Negative utterances maintain the order of positive ones (Massone & Curiel 2004.81, Curiel & Massone 1993.48 & Veinberg & Massone 1992.86).

The constituent sign order in negative sentences with transitive as well as intransitive verbs is the same as in affirmative sentences. Negative adverbs such as NEVER, NOBODY, NO, and NOTHING are generally placed either in sentence-final position or before or after the modified sign.

Negative verbs, such as TO-SAY-NO, TO-BE-IMPOSSIBLE are sentence final.

La negación en las LSA se expresa a través de adverbios manuales y no-manuales. Se ha constatado la presencia de los adverbos NO, NUNCA, JAMAS, NINGUNO, TAMPOCO, NADA.

La negación en la LSA puede estar marcada por un desplazamiento craneal lateral alternado, ceño fruncido, constricción nasal, desvío de la mirada y cuerpo ligeramente hacia atrás. Estos rasgos no-manuales pueden ocurrir todos en forma simultánea o algunos de ellos separadamente.

Veinberg (1993) describes the non-manual negative signing:<sup>17</sup>

The side-to-side headshake has a major role in signaling negation in LSA ... other nonmanual markers were found and in some cases, those markers appeared without the negative headshake (99) ... The headshake occurred rarely as the only nonmanual marker; it was generally accompanied by other nonmanual markers, such as lowering the corners of the mouth, narrowing the eyes, and squinting the brow. Protruding lips and constricting the nose were also observed but with less frequency (102) ...no single nonmanual gesture was observed functioning alone as the nonmanual component, except for the NH [head shake] (103).

Thus (Veinberg 1993.99, 100)

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<sup>17</sup> Massone & Curiel (2004.77) observe that when negative semantics are present, their manual expressions

are accompanied by nonmanual behaviors that spread along the negated phrase or over the negated signs. The nonmanual, negative features are head shaking, partially closed eyes, frowning eyebrows, and lowering of the lips.

- Cñfr+OJsc+NA+LAab<sup>18</sup>  
alt
- (10) VACUNA COMBATIR GRIPE<sup>19</sup> NO-PODER ENCONTRAR NO  
[vaccine to-fight flu not-able find no]  
'They couldn't find the vaccine against influenza'

In (10), "nonmanual features are spread along the negated phrase or over the

<sup>18</sup> "La línea representa el uso que hace el señante de una combinación particular de actividades no-manuales y las letras que colocan al final y por encima de dicha línea indican el tipo particular de actividad no-manual presente a lo largo de la seña o secuencia de señas por debajo esta" (Veinberg & Massone 1992.86).

*Cñfr* is 'Brow squint'. *Ojsc* is 'Eyes narrowed'. *NA* is 'Nose wrinkled'. *LAab* is 'Mouth corners down'. (Veinberg 1993.112). *alt* transcribes a negative headshake (Veinberg 1993.99).

<sup>19</sup> LSA identifies qualifying content by placing it after the content qualified (Curiel & Massone 1993.35):

- (i) NIÑO CORRER ESCUELA SER-PRIVADA INGLES ESTUDIAR  
[boy run school be-private English study]  
'The boy who is running studies English in a private school'  
'El niño que corre estudia inglés en una escuela privada'

The LSA phrase VACUNA COMBATIR GRIPE 'vaccine against influenza' in (10) similarly places qualifying material following, but the OV order is lost. Note that if the 'canonical' order, VACUNA GRIPE COMBATIR, were used, the sequence might be interpreted as an SOV assertion in itself, 'The vaccine fights the flu', and not as qualifying content. Compare (ii)

- NA-Ojsc-Cñfr+LAab  
alt
- (ii) PRO<sub>1</sub> ESPOSO NUNCA NO-GUSTAR MIRAR ESPECTACULO TV  
[I husband never not-like watch TV shows]  
'My husband never likes to watch television shows'

In (ii), PRO<sub>1</sub> ESPOSO NUNCA NO-GUSTAR expresses the ASSERTION 'My husband doesn't like', and the following MIRAR ESPECTACULO TV — with an apparent VO order — states 'to watch television shows'. That sign sequence simply identifies the content that is not liked without an accompanying semantic ASSERTION of that content.

Curiel & Massone (1993.33-34) comment further:

La oración ... [CASA SER-LINDO SER-SUCIO EN-PRESENTE (house be-pretty be-dirty at-present) 'The pretty house is dirty'] tiene dos verbos de estados de se relacionan con la frase nominal de dos maneras diferentes; esta distinción se pone de relieve con la presencia de modalizador aseverativo y temporal en-presente ..., que delimita la atribución de la frase nominal (característica propia del sustantivo) a la predicación.

La oración ... [NIÑO SER-RUBIO CORRER (boy be-blond run) 'The red-headed boy is running'] presenta la misma estructura pero con verbos de dos clases distintas; tampoco es viable, en este caso, interpretarla como dos predicaciones coordinadas al mismo nivel, sino que se debe distinguir entre una atribución con el verbo es estado [SER-RUBIO] con el proceso [CORRER].





Without the interrogative pronoun, the non-manual *int* marks ‘yes-no’ questions (Massone & Curiel 2004.81):

- (18) int  
 PARIS CITY BE-MODERN?  
 ‘Is Paris a modern city?’

When occurring with an interrogative pronoun, the non-manual interrogative signs (Veinberg & Massone 1992.89):

consisten en cabeza hacia atrás, cejas elevados y elevamiento de la mandíbula<sup>24</sup>  
 ....

When the non-manual sign occurs as in (18) (Veinberg & Massone 1992.88),

la marca no-manual para la interrogación absoluta consiste en la cabeza y el cuerpo hacia adelante, el ceño fruncido, los ojos semicerrados y los labios distendidos ....

### 7.3.3 *Utterance final terms: MODALITY of temporal modality.*

In addition to Negatives and Interrogatives, a third semantics is sentence final.<sup>25</sup> First, Curiel & Massone (1993.35) observe:

Con respecto a la marca temporal verbal, Massone (1992) ha observado que no se registra como inflexión en la mayoría de los verbos, excepto un grupo restringido que evidencia morfológicamente la marca de pasado, a través de una tensión rápida del movimiento propio del verbo; estos verbos son DECIR, CONTAR, LLEGAR, SABER, IR, VENIR, DAR, REGALAR, ESPERAR, entre otros. El tiempo, sin embargo, generalmente, se expresa a través de lexemas modales or adverbios temporales, cuyo centro de influencia es el verbo. Consideramos que el tiempo se especifica en estructura profunda en forma independiente del verbo, junto a otros valores de modalidad, como ser aserción, duda, deseo, hipótesis or posibilidad. ... La realización de estructura profunda se conserva en la LSA mediante la aparición de las señas glosadas como EN-PRESENTE, EN-PASADO y EN-FUTURO.

And then (Massone & Curiel 2004.78):

The sign order SOV has been indicated with modality temporal markers

<sup>24</sup> “consideramos esta descripción como temporaria ya que hace falta estudiar más detalladamente este tipo de interrogación” (Veinberg & Massone 1992.89).

<sup>25</sup> Massone (1994.128): ‘These signs ... are always located at the end of the signed production.’

localized in final position. These modality markers present a fixed order; they always appear as the final sign in the sentence or the text. Because of their anaphoric scope, these markers indicate the time and the type of modality of the sentences and modify the whole previous sentence or the whole previous text. Three modality temporal markers have been identified: IN-THE PRESENT, IN-THE PAST, and IN-THE-FUTURE ... The modality marker IN-THE-PAST also implies an undeniable fact ...; the whole sentence that it modifies does not then indicate past time.

See (1), (2), and (6) above, and these:

- (19) DROGARSE SER-FEO EN-PASADO (Curiel & Massone  
[drugs be-nasty IN-THE-PAST] 1993.46)  
'To take drugs is utterly nasty'
- (20) JAPON LEJOS EN-PASADO (Curiel & Massone 1993.46)  
[Japan far IN-THE-PAST]  
'Japan is far away'
- \_\_\_\_\_af  
(21) DECIR-SI DAR (pdo) EN-PASADO (Curiel & Massone  
[say-yes give IN-THE-PAST] 1993.46)  
'Yes, I've already given it to you'  
(‘Sí, si ya te lo di’)

Curiel & Massone (1993.46):

La seña EN-PASADO es un adverbio temporal que indica el tiempo anterior e la finalización de la acción afectada por el adverbio; se ubica en la posición final de la oración. Asimismo, se ha verificado el uso de esta seña en conversaciones indicando la modalidad aseverativa intensificada del enunciado, utilizándose con frecuencia para expresar verdades absolutas (como en ... [19] y ... [20], o la conclusión de un tema o asunto (come en ... [21]) ....

Like IN-THE-PAST, IN-THE-FUTURE has a sense that exceeds future time (Curiel & Massone 1993.46):

La seña EN-FUTURO es también un adverbio temporal equiparable al significado de FUTURO; el valor principal es el de otorgar una modalidad hipotética a la emisión. Con esta seña se expresa que la oración realizada es una probabilidad, posibilidad o deseo.

As in (Curiel & Massone 1993.46):

- (22) CAMPO ANDAR-EN-BICICLETA GUSTAR EN-FUTURO  
 [field walk-on-bicycle like IN-THE-FUTURE]  
 ‘I’d like to do outside and ride a bicycle’  
 (‘Me gustaría ir al campo a nadar [sic] en bicicleta’)

Lastly,

La seña EN-PRESENTE, como se observa en ... [(23)], otorga una modalidad aseverativa no enfática al enunciado coincidente con el tiempo presente.

- (23) HOUSE BE-NICE BE-DIRTY IN THE PRESENT  
 ‘The nice house is actually dirty now’

Like Negation and Interrogative, the semantic force of the Modality Temporal Markers qualifies what has preceded. Two of them, at least are accompanied by non-manual signing (Curiel & Massone 1993.46):

Estas dos señas, EN-PASADO y EN-FUTURO, presentan rasgos no-manuales específicos ...

#### 7.3.4 *Utterance final terms: AFFIRMATION.*

On AFFIRMATION<sup>26</sup>, Veinberg (1993.104, 110) remarks:

An asserted statement will be defined ... as an assuring or confirming proposition ... A nodding movement of the head backward and forward (HN) was observed to mark assertive propositions in LSA. This movement affirms the validity of the proposition and appeared in various forms: (a) as a repeated and rhythmic movement [CAB], (b) as a single movement [CAB1], and (c) as a rapid and short movement [CABr] ... No manual adverbs were found to mark assertion.

Curiel & Massone (1993.49)

La afirmación ha sido registrada con un adverbio afirmativo de ejecución no-manual, consistente en el meneo de la cabeza hacia adelante y hacia atrás y redondeamiento labial, el cual produce aislado o en coincidencia con la secuencia señada ....

“The head nod tends to accompany all the manual signs in the proposition asserted” (Veinberg 1993.105). Compare (24a) with (24b) and (24c) (Massone & Machado 1993.138):

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<sup>26</sup> In the literature, AFFIRMATION is variously noted as CAB, CABr, CAB1, and AF.

- (24) (a) PRO<sub>1</sub> TENER-HAMBRE  
[I be.hungry]  
'I'm hungry'  
(‘Tengo hambre’)
- (b) af  
PRO<sub>1</sub> TENER-HAMBRE  
[I be.hungry]  
'I'm hungry'  
(‘Yo tengo hambre’)
- (c) af  
PRO<sub>1</sub> TENER-HAMBRE PRO<sub>1</sub>  
[I be.hungry]  
'I'm hungry'  
(‘Yo tengo hambre’)

“En el caso de que el sujeto es un pronombre, éste puede repetirse después sin que eso ocasione ninguna topicalización del sujeto.” In (24b) the entire utterance is selected for AFFIRMATON, and in (24c), only the Subject.

- (25) af  
PRO<sub>3</sub> ESTOMAGO TENER-HAMBRE TENER  
[ stomach be-hungry be]  
'I'm really hungry'  
(‘Sí, yo tengo hambre’) (Curiel & Massone 1993.48)

Further,

- (26) CABr  
PERRO CORRER GATO LLEGAR CASA  
[dog run cat arrive home]  
'The dog that chased the cat arrived home' (Veinberg 1993.105)
- (27) OJsc  
CAB1 CAB  
PRO<sub>1</sub> TOMAR VINO MAREARSE POR-ESO PRO<sub>1</sub> NO-GUSTAR  
[I drink wine be.dizzy therefore I not-like]  
'When I drink wine I get dizzy, that's why I don't like it' (Veinberg 1993.105)





the agreement verbs ...; and it expresses the agreement relation between subject and object.

The auxiliary almost always appears in the final position of the sentence ...

For example (Massone & Curiel 2004.80):

- (29)    JOHN<sub>a</sub>    MARY<sub>b</sub>    LOVE    aAUX<sub>b</sub>  
           ‘John loves Mary’

Sentence (29) is probably acceptable without the Agreement Auxiliary,<sup>27</sup> but the semantic increment that its use may add is not recognized.<sup>28</sup>

#### 7.4 *Paradigmatic FOCUS in LSA*

The preceding five sections demonstrate that the semantics of utterance final position in LSA supports not only the ASSERTION of the EVENT/Verb, but also the denial of NEGATION, the inquisitiveness of WH-Questions, the intense MODALITY of Temporal Modality, the force of AFFIRMATION, and the semantics of the Agreement Auxiliary.

Utterance-final position reasonably marks a kind of Syntagmatic FOCUS. Cf. section 2, this chapter. Sentence-final EVENTS/Verbs along with the sentence-final expression of the semantics detailed in sections 7.3.1 - 7.3.5 are manifestations of ASSERTION, and they stand in contrast with the post-verbal expression of qualifying content in the absence of ASSERTION (e.g., PERRO CORRER GATO ‘the dog that chased the cat in [26]). The prominence of FOCUS is maintained by the semantics themselves of the five sorts of forms in final position. Recall also that their semantics — like Harris’ long components or Firth’s prosodies — typically covers more than just the termination of an utterance and that there is not a more prominent semantics which selects a piece of the utterance. To describe a specific portion of an utterance for

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<sup>27</sup> Compare (29) to (i) without the Agreement Auxiliary, but with the non-manual sign of FOCUS (Massone & Curiel 2004.80):

- (i)     $\frac{\quad}{\text{MARY}} \text{ JOHN LOVE}$   
       ‘Máry loves John’

<sup>28</sup> Massone & Curiel (2004.80) appear to suggest that it has the function of disambiguation:

In sentences with reversible subject and object, the auxiliary or agreement marker disambiguates the sense of the relationship as it marks personal agreement.

But the order of signs has already prevented ambiguity.

Paradigmatic FOCUS, use of utterance-initial position and non-manual signage is required.

The semantics of Syntagmatic FOCUS is distributed and imprecise whereas the selective precision of the semantics of Paradigmatic FOCUS is reflected in its grammar. As noted above, the sign order of a transitive utterance is SOV (Massone & Curiel 2004.72):

- (30) (a) PAST DOG MEAT EAT  
 'The dog ate meat'  
 (b) \*PAST MEAT DOG EAT

Sentence (30a) is the acceptable statement in LSA, and the OSV order in (30b) is apparently meaningless, unless the sign for the initial O is accompanied by a non-manual sign:

- (31) \_\_\_\_\_t  
 PAST MEAT DOG EAT  
 'It was the meat that the dog ate'
- (32) \_\_\_\_\_t  
 PIZZA MÓNICA SEASON (Massone & Curiel 2004.79)  
 'It is the pizza that Mónica seasons'
- (32) PRO.1pl CONFUSE. NO. \_\_\_\_\_t  
 PRO.1 PRO2.pl CONFUSE  
 'We are all confused. No. It is me that you all confuse' (Massone & Curiel 2004.79)
- (33) \_\_\_\_\_top \_\_\_\_\_af (Curiel & Massone 1993.58)  
 CIGARRILLO PRO<sub>1</sub> QUERER  
 [cigarette I want]  
 'It's cigarettes that I want'  
 ('Cigarrillos yo quiero')

Massone & Curiel (2004.73):

The object cannot precede the subject unless it is topicalized<sup>29</sup>; in this case the

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<sup>29</sup> Massone & Curiel use the term 'topic' in place of 'focus', although it seems clear that FOCUS is what is intended. This difference in terminology appeared in the literature on Haida (Chapter 4), where Elizabeth Edwards (1979 and elsewhere) used 'topic' to reference 'focus'.

topicalized object must be accompanied by the set of manual and nonmanual features characteristic of the topic. Therefore, OSV is an ungrammatical order in LSA when the topic marking is not simultaneously produced with the object sign.

Sentence (31) contrasts with (30b) by virtue of its utterance-initial non-manual sign: Head back & eyebrows raised.<sup>30</sup>

There is a small set of Verbs in LSA, termed Agreement Verbs (or *verbos de concordancia*). Massone & Machado (1993.102-103):

Los verbos de concordancia son aquellos cuyo referenciación espacial manifiesta el sujeto y/o el objeto de la transitividad o intransitividad por ellos expresados. En estos verbos la lexicalización de los pronombres a través de una seña es innecesaria, ya que éstos se explicitan en la articulación fonológica del verbo, manifestada en el movimiento y en la dirección en el espacio ...

No todos los verbos de concordancia flexionan los dos argumentos de la relación. Algunos de ellos sólo expresan el objeto y otros, únicamente el sujeto. Así los verbos como VISITAR, VER, MIRAR, PREGUNTAR, como otros necesitan señalar la persona que desempeña la función de sujeto con las señas propias de los pronombres, mientras que el objeto está flexionado espacialmente en el verbo.

With Agreement Verbs, the presence of a separately expressed Object is more than “innecesaria”, it is ungrammatical (Massone & Machado 1993.139):

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However, having terminologically chosen to use *topic* for FOCUS, the literature on LSA appears, then, conceptually, to confuse TOPIC with FOCUS (Massone & Curiel 2004.83):

... topic is theoretically very difficult to define or is an elusive concept. Furthermore, we believe that further documentation of topic constructions in LSA is needed. However, since we have found that the topic alters canonical sign order in LSA, we also believe that similar data about other sign languages would be of interest. The topic position in LSA is sentence initial and is always marked by the same set of nonmanual features plus a change in duration in the internal structure of the last topicalized sign. Different constituents of the sentence may be topicalized in order to identify or make information accessible as has been shown for other sign languages ... Examples from LSA texts show that signers use topicalization to present new information about a topic that already has been presented. The topic is the “center of attention” (Li & Thompson 1976) or “sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds” (Givón 1976).

It is the last sentence that evidences the confusion. The semantics and grammar of TOPIC has not, as far as I can determine, been broached in LSA.

<sup>30</sup> Veinberg & Massone (1992.91):

RNM	CAat	=	Rasgo No-Manual	Cabeza atrás
	CEar			Cejas arriba

“También se observó un alargamiento en la producción de la seña topicalizada”.

- (34) (a) PRO<sub>1</sub>    <sub>1</sub>ENSEÑAR<sub>2</sub>  
           [I        taught.you]  
           ‘I taught you’
- (b) \*PRO<sub>1</sub>    PRO<sub>2</sub>    <sub>1</sub>ENSEÑAR<sub>2</sub>  
           [I        you     taught.you]  
           ‘I taught you’

Massone & Machado (1993.139) describe (34):

Los verbos transitivos, con especificación deíctica de la relación entre S y O, o verbos de concordancia presentan particularidades sintácticas propias. Al ser el S y el O inflexiones internas del verbo su orden no puede variar. Los verbos de concordancia manifiestan su relación a través de la orientación de la seña, cuyo punto inicial representa el sujeto y el final, el objeto [e.g., <sub>1</sub>ENSEÑAR<sub>2</sub>] ... Pero una de sus características es que se pueden marcar estos roles gramaticales de manera adicional, con las señas pronominales. Es gramatical, entonces, producir el pronombre correspondiente al sujeto al comenzar su ejecución [e.g., (34a)]. Sin embargo, es agramatical la lexicalización pronominal de ambas funciones gramaticales intercalando el verbo [e.g., (34b)] o el objeto unicamente [i.e., \*<sub>1</sub>ENSEÑAR<sub>2</sub> PRO<sub>2</sub>].

The Object PARTICIPANT of Agreement Verbs does appear, however, when it is FOCUSSED (Massone & Machado 1993.139):<sup>31</sup>

- (35)                  top  
           PRO<sub>2</sub>    PRO<sub>1</sub>    <sub>1</sub>ENSEÑAR<sub>2</sub>  
           [you    I        taught.you]  
           ‘It’s you whom I taught’

<sup>31</sup> Compare (35) with (i) (Massone & Curiel 2004.79):

- (i)                  t  
           JOHN<sub>b</sub>        DOCTOR<sub>a</sub>    <sub>3a</sub>VISIT<sub>3b</sub>    YESTERDAY  
           ‘It is John that the doctor visited yesterday’

Sentence (i) parallels (35) in its grammar and semantics, and VISIT seems like ENSEÑAR to be an Agreement Verb. But we do not know the effect of removing FOCUS from JOHN. What happens to JOHN? Sentence (ii) (Massone & Curiel 2004.80):

- (ii)    PRO.1    STORY    PRO.1    SON        1TELL<sub>3</sub>  
           ‘I tell a story to my son’

suggests that there is more to this pattern since a Pronoun Subject can accompany a Noun Object with an Agreement Verb, but a Pronoun Subject cannot accompany a Pronoun Object, i.e., (34b).





### 7.5 *Conclusion*

Argentine Sign Language, like Somali, has an unmarked order of constituents that is SOV, and again, like Somali, FOCUS is expressed by exploiting sentence-initial position and a suprasegmental. Like some other FOCUS-initial languages (e.g., Haida), Argentine Sign Language does not appear to combine its Paradigmatic FOCUS with the semantics of ASSERTION. Cp. (40), that maintains the sentence-initial paradigmatic FOCUS top separate from the sentence-final ASSERTION of af.

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