

New insights on contrast, coordination and subordination in Catalan Sign Language

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Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign Language Theory (FEAST) 2024

- Contrast in sign languages (SLs) has been mostly treated as a feature of focus and topic (van der Kooij et al. 2006, Wilbur 2012, Kimmelman 2014, Barberà 2015).
- The notion of contrast in complex sentences has been mainly analyzed in coordinate structures, less studies explore its presence in subordination.
- Contrast is understood here as semantic parallelism: the referents contrasting in each clause belong to the same set of alternatives (Umbach 2004).

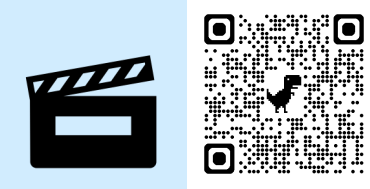
Goals

- i) Establish the **criteria** to identify the presence of contrast in LSC in coordination and subordination.
- ii) Support the claim that the notion of contrast is an **independent category**.
- iii) Provide new data on contrast and **clause marking** in different types of coordinate and subordinate clauses in LSC.

Expression of contrast, coordination and subordination in LSC

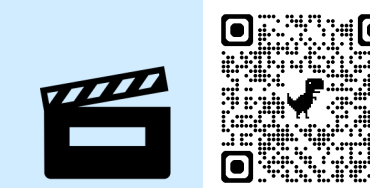
Coordination in LSC has been claimed to be expressed syndetically, though the use of overt markers, and asyndetically, using a combination of head tilts (ht), body leans (bl), and the use of opposite sides of the signing space (sp) (Zorzi, 2018) (1).

_____ left ht+bl _____ right ht+bl
(1) [JORDI [BOOK RECIPE READ]_{left_space} [GIORGIA COOK]_{right_space}
'Jordi was reading a recipe and Jordina was cooking.'



Subordination in LSC has not been widely analyzed (see Pfau & Quer 2010, for conditionals, and Mosella 2012, for relative clauses).

_____ right ht _____ left ht
(2) [IF JORDI CAKE BURN]_{central_space} [ROSA CROISSANT BUY]_{right_space}
'If Jordi burns the cake, Rosa will buy a croissant.'



Contrast in LSC has been also described to be expressed by the same combination of prosodic markers and use of the signing space (Barberà 2012, Navarrete-González 2021).

_____ left bl+ht _____ right bl+ht
(3) [GIORGIA LINGUIST]_{left_space} [RAQUEL INTERPRETER]_{right_space}
'Giorgia is a LINGUIST and Raquel is an INTERPRETER.' (Navarrete-González, 2021)



➤ Same markers for coordination and contrast.

Main criteria to identify contrast:

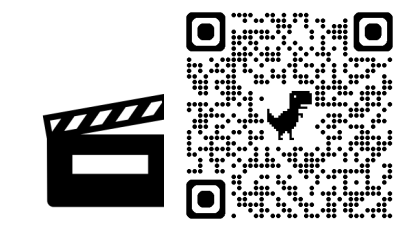
- Contrast appears whenever there is **parallelism** between the elements:
 - the elements belong to the same set of alternatives
 - there is contrast due to similarity plus dissimilarity



When there is parallelism between the elements and therefore contrast is present:

- the same markers are used both in coordination and subordination (1-2)
- they do not appear in non-contrastive clauses, (4) vs. (1).

_____ central
(4) [JORDI RUN SUN]_{central_space}
'Jordi was running and it was very sunny.'



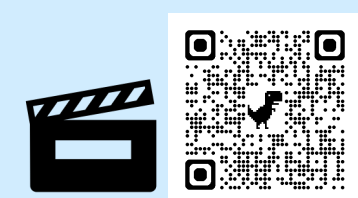
- The combination of head tilts, body leans, and the use of opposite sides of the signing space is marking contrast and not coordination.
- This supports the claim that the notion of contrast is an independent category in the Information Structure field.

Coordination vs. subordination in LSC: structural ambiguities

Some coordinate and subordinate clauses are expressed with the same syntactic realization:

- **Conjunctive coordination** and **temporals expressing simultaneity of events**:

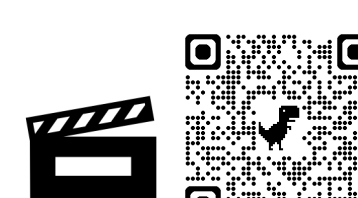
_____ central _____ left ht+bl _____ right ht+bl
(5) [JORDI]_{central_space} [BOOK RECIPE READ]_{left_space} [GIORGIA COOK]_{right_space}
'Jordi was reading a recipe and/while Giorgia was cooking.'



No overt markers that help disambiguate both structures.

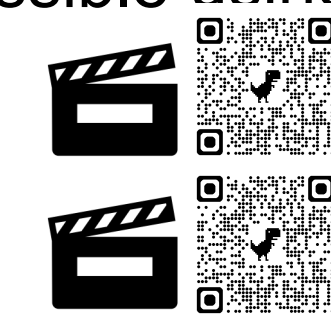
- **Adversative coordination** and **concessives**:

_____ left ht+bl _____ right ht+bl
(6) [GIORGIA CAKE FRUIT CL: fruits+++ BURN]_{right_space} [CAKE CHOCOLATE VERY-GOOD]_{right_space}
'Although Giorgia burnt a fruit cake, she made a very good chocolate cake.'
'Giorgia burnt a fruit cake, but she made a very good chocolate cake.'



Disambiguation possible using the following signs:

- BUT
- ALTHOUGH



- **Conjunctive coordination** and **consecutives**:

_____ central
(7) ROSA HUNGRY, IX3 CROISSANT BUY
'Rosa was hungry, and/so she bought a croissant.'

Disambiguation possible using the sign **SO**.

- When available, a superficial structural ambiguity can be solved using a specific overt marker (6 and 7 vs. 5)

Conclusions

- The combination of head tilts, body leans, and the use of opposite sides of the signing space is marking contrast and not coordination.
- The markers of contrast can be found in coordination and subordination when parallelism between the elements is present (1-2).
- Parallel conjunctive coordination and temporals expressing simultaneity of events (5) are the only structures showing structural ambiguity in LSC, other types of subordinate clause can be disambiguated using an overt marker (6-7).

References

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