

Producing Spoken English Interpretations of Classifier-based Texts

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What we hope to
accomplish today:

- not learn all the different kinds of applications of classifiers in ASL (Dan's class)
- Understand basic **notional** and **functional** roles of classifiers in ASL discourse
- Understand how spoken English discourse deals with notional and functional roles
- Create personal strategies for working with classifiers in signed texts
- Set up group terminologies in preparation to
- Produce interpretation work

Functional and notional roles of classifiers in ASL discourse

How/Where do ASL
users use classifiers?

(1) ASL users use
classifiers to
(simultaneously) satisfy
notional purposes.

Classifier Predicates

Predicates say something about nouns/noun phrases ('the boy is sick'; 'is sick' is the predication on the noun); types of CL predicates:

- whole entity (object as a whole)
- surface
- instrumental
- depth and width
- extent (amounts or volumes)
- perimeter-shape
- on-surface (groups of objects)

Base Classifier Phonemes

A	fist (A, S, T)	L	thumb + index (L, L ²)
B	flat hand (B, 4)	3	vehicle (3)
5	spread hand (5)	O	tapered (O, M)
C	cupped (C, C ²)	R	crossed fingers (R)
E	claw (E, E ²)	V	index + middle (V, V ²)
F	"okay" (F, F ²)	W	thumb + pinkie (W, W ²)
G	point (G, D, 1)	X	hook (X, X ²)
H	index + middle (H, N, U)	Y	ix/thumb + pinkie (Y, Y ² , ILY)
I	pinkie (I)	8	bent middle (8, 8 ²)
K	"chopsticks" (K, P)		

Pronominals

Subject Pronouns

Pronoun	English	ASL
First person singular	I	PRO.1
First person plural	we	WE, TWO-OF-US, THREE-OF-US...
Second person singular	you	PRO.2 (singular)
Second person plural	you	PRO.2 (plural), TWO-OF-YOU, THREE-OF-YOU...
Third person singular	he, she, it	PRO.3-IX, PRO.3-thumb
Third person plural	they	THEY, TWO-OF-THEM, THREE-OF-THEM

Object Pronouns

Pronoun	English	ASL
First person singular	me	PRO.1
First person plural	us	WE, TWO-OF-US, THREE-OF-US...
Second person singular	you	PRO.2 (singular)
Second person plural	you	PRO.2 (plural), TWO-OF-YOU, THREE-OF-YOU...
Third person singular	him, her, it	PRO.3-IX, PRO.3-thumb
Third person plural	them	THEM, TWO-OF-THEM, THREE-OF-THEM

- 'X persons': CL:{#}
- **not #-OF-US**

Verbs

- 'put an object up':
(2h)CL:C"raise overhead"
(note initial nominal clarification)
- 'blender movement':
CL:1"spinning {part}"
(see SN 16: How things work)

Adjectival modifiers

- 'big car,' $(2h)CL:L$ or $(2h)CL:C$
- 'small cars from an airplane,' $CL:G$ "size"

Adverbial modifiers

(closely tied to
verbal information)

- 'blender movement':
CL:1"spinning {part}"
- 'car in and out of traffic'
CL:B"car weaving in traffic"
(how the car moves)
- Police story (Martin)
CL:B"car weaving in traffic"
(CL:Y""airplane", how the plane flies
around; (2h)CL:3, how the cars are
pulled over)



“David Meets The Police”

<http://teach-asl.blogspot.com/2007/02/asl-storytelling-scary-experience-with.html>

Adpositionals/Locatives

most commonly perceived
usage of ASL classifiers

Specificity in ASL locative
units is **very efficient**.

ASL's implicit phonology
and morphology
(pronunciation) allows for
near absolute specificity.



“New York School f/t Deaf”
watch (2h)CL:A'school and hospital'



“Deaf Ninja”

watch for multiple locative relationships

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L91KVUXRBq8>

(2) ASL users use
classifiers to satisfy
functional purposes.

not to make ~~ASL~~ “look cool”

~~not to make ASL
“look more ASL”~~

To satisfy/represent
pronominal object
spatial or conceptual
relationship agreement.



“New York School f/t Deaf”

(spatial and conceptual relationships)

To satisfy/represent
descriptive size and
shape specifier (SaSS)
descriptions.

- SaSSes themselves don't function as pronominals
- Describe pronominals' / objects' character, not its movement or "objectness"
- e.g. 'CL:1' or 'CL:V²' doesn't indicate its nominal nature

Why?

Because ASL employs a
topic/comment
syntactical structure,
spatial relationships
and SaSS descriptions
must be defined.

How does **spoken**
English discourse deal
with similar functional/
notional roles?

Pronominals

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Some English subject
pronominal hangups:

Singular 'they':
"When I tell a joke,
they laugh."

gender-neutrality:
“That student finished
his/their homework.”

Object Pronouns

Pronoun	English	ASL
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Verbs

Lexically:
concrete action words
(`run', `jump,' `sing')

Lexically:
abstract action words
(`love,' `think,' `grow')

Lexically:
verbification/verbing
(`Fedex,' `email,' `chair')

Modifiers

Lexically:
adjectival lexemes and
phrases: 'small,' 'blue,'
'oversized,' 'bouncing
baby boy,' 'once in a
lifetime'

- adjectival lexemes may also be **positive, comparative, and superlative**: 'rich,' 'richer,' 'richest'; 'beautiful,' 'more beautiful,' 'most beautiful'
- specificity in English adjectival modifiers is **inefficient** ('deciduous' vs. 'evergreen,' 'computer' vs. 'laptop') but **lexically rich**

Lexically:
manner adverbial
lexemes and affixes:
'really,' 'very,' affix 'ly'

Lexically:
redefined nominal
and verbal lexemes:
'so,' 'much,' 'wicked,'
'butt,' 'way,' 'sick,' 'phat'

Lexically:
redefined interjectory
or intensifier lexemes
(`damn,' `f*****g,')

Lexically:
determiners/articles
(`a,' `the,' `that,' `those')

Lexically:
nominal/pronominal
possessives
(‘his,’ ‘yours,’ ‘the girl’s’)

Lexically:
portmanteau
(abso-f*****n-lutely,
podagogical, funtastic)

Lexically:
-like and -ish affixes
(`rainbow-like,' `five-ish')

Tonally:
phonemic/morphemic
extensions
'be-you-tiful,' 're-hee-
heelly," "that was
awwwesome!"

Tonally:
insinuate alternative
meaning—sarcasm,
feigned interest
(‘great,’ ‘uh,’ ‘right’)

Metaphorically:
comparative phrases
(‘hot as hell,’ ‘soft as a
baby’s bottom’)

Other modifier types?

Adpositions/Locatives

Lexically: prepositionals and prepositional phrases

- time, location, movement
- typically always in a prepositional phrase
“[preposition] the [object]”

Samples of English prepositionals:

before, in front of, on, behind,
under, beneath, beside, next to,
before, between, on, into, near,
through, off, over, upon, across,
of, concerning, like, except,
about, in, for, without, toward,
to, around, by, past, at, against,
during, until, throughout, after

Specificity in English
prepositional units is
inefficient.

more specificity = more
prepositional lexemes

'the ball is next
to the glove.'

{preposition}

'the ball is next
to the glove.'

{prepositional phrase}

'the ball is extremely close to the glove, about three inches from the top of the webbing, not on the right side, but over on the left side.'

'the ball is extremely
close to the glove, about
three inches from the
top of the webbing, not
on the right side, but
over on the left side.'

Create personal
strategies for working
with classifiers in
signed texts

interpretation = "work"

interpretation \neq "me"

Avoiding judgmental language in interpreter talk

Evaluative/judgmental

- S/he/you/me
- Could have, should have
- I would have...
- Clear, good, right/wrong, more/less, better/worse
- I liked the way...
I thought it worked

Non-evaluative/-judgmental

- The interpret -ation/-er
- When I saw/heard _____, I understood it to mean...
- I saw a pattern; here is an/are example(s) that might help illustrate
- I saw/heard _____; to me that means _____

Group text analysis/
interpretation of signed
classifier-based texts

Additional Readings

- onlineslangdictionary.com
- etymonline.com
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/english_grammar
- Valli, C. & Lucas, C. (2000). "Classifier Predicates and Locative Verbs" (ch. 7) and "Classifier Predicates and Signer Perspective" (ch. 8). In Linguistics of American Sign Language. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Thank you.
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