Workshop ID :   15

Workshop Duration :   Workshop - 1.5 Days

Workshop Title :   **Signed Language Linguistics: Taking Stock**

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Signed language linguistics is a relatively young field, which started in 1960 with the first modern study of a signed language (Stokoe 1960). Since signed languages were often considered as primitive gesture systems, early research focused on demonstrating that they were indeed full, complex, independent languages. This research emphasised the equivalences between signed and spoken languages. In later years, researchers turned more towards issues of modality, investigating the modality-specific properties of signed languages, such as the use of space and simultaneous constructions. More recently still, we observe an increasing interest in comparing different (related and unrelated) signed languages, comparing typological properties of spoken and signed languages, as well as comparing aspects of signed languages to aspects of co-speech gesture. At the same time, new technologies and tools facilitate, for example, the construction of large-scale signed language corpora, which offer opportunities to address new research questions. Naturally, new theoretical developments and advances within the field of spoken language linguistics have been applied to signed language studies as well.

Fifty-eight years after the first modern signed language linguistic publication, this workshop invites us to take stock of what we have done and look forward to where we are going.

We propose a workshop in three parts:

1.   Part one presents an overview of the history of signed language linguistics as a field, showing the distance travelled in such a short period of time.

2.   Part two aims to offer a selection of presentations illustrating the current state of the art, focusing e.g. on multimodality, the gesture-sign interface, composite meaning construction, "embodiment" and/or presenting work from a range of more recent approaches and theoretical frameworks such as cognitive and corpus linguistic approaches, construction grammar, pictorial semantics, etc.

3.   In part three of the workshop a selection of notions and terminology used in current signed language studies will be discussed in detail. The aim is to compare the different understandings of these notions and terms within the field as well as compare their use to potentially comparable concepts addressed in spoken language studies as well as gesture studies. For example: Do we all mean the same thing when we talk about "constructed action" and "constructed dialogue"? Is this the same for spoken and sign language research? For gesture studies?

This workshop targets signed language as well as spoken language linguists, including those who are not (yet) familiar with signed language linguistics, but who would like to learn about where signed language linguistics comes from and where it is now. Today, it is clear that all questions relevant to the study of spoken languages are also relevant for signed languages, and that research questions addressed by signed language researchers may - and maybe should - also be asked for spoken languages.