

Strong and weak definiteness among monolingual and bilingual signers of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras)

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In this study, I collected spontaneous and elicited data in order to find out how the two kind of definiteness (Schwarz 2013) are encoded in Libras. Spontaneous data collected from 10 videos from signing blogs brought us evidences to conclude that DPs in Libras are not always realized in the bare form. We find four main types of realization of DPs in the language: bare nouns, dislocated bare nouns, nouns preceded by IX and nouns succeeded by IX. I hypothesized that the two latter realization of DPs accompanied by IX signs could be a consequence of the Portuguese influence, as they are often translated by meaning ‘*The N*’ or ‘*That N*’. Thus, I expected that only those deaf who regard themselves as bilinguals would exhibit such pattern, with the overt realization of determiners.

In order to elicit data, 20 bilinguals (Portuguese and Libras frequent users, Undergraduation students) and 20 monolinguals (libras frequent users, varied educational levels) participated of one production task and two comprehension tasks. The tests proposed by Gillon (2015) were adapted to Libras in order to confirm the existence of article-like items in the language. The production task consisted of telling a story based on a non-verbal stimulus, presented with specific methodological cares, and aimed to capture how the contrast between novel and familiar referents is realized. The comprehension tasks consisted of two acceptability tests. The first set of sentences with anchored and non-anchored verbs were used to find out whether the bare, the pre-IX or the post-IX DPs would be compatible with definite article functions and retrieve the anaphoric referents. The second set of sentences aimed to verify whether IX signs were acceptable in non-anaphoric contexts.

The results show that the bilingual grammar is on the way to a language of generalized determiners (Jenks 2018), that can be used in both anaphoric (strong) and non-anaphoric (weak) contexts. Yet the monolinguals behave like Fering or Mandarin languages, in which that are exclusive marking for anaphoric (strong) contexts, but there are no evidences for an explicit D.

References: Gillon, Carrie (2015). Investigating D in languages with and without articles. *Methodology in Semantic Fieldwork*, 175–205. Jenks, Peter (2018). Articulated definiteness without articles. *Linguistic Inquiry* 49(3), 501–536. Schwarz, Florian (2013). Two kinds of definiteness cross-linguistically. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7(10), 534–559.