

## Second Language Acquisition of American Sign Language Verb Subject and Object Phi-Features

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American Sign Language (ASL) contains two sets of verbs with person phi-features that mark for both subjects and objects by signing them at and across their real or anaphoric spatial loci. AgrSOP verbs mark for subjects and objects and include information about subjects doing something with objects, and AgrIOP verbs mark for subjects, direct objects, and indirect objects and include information about subjects doing something with direct objects to indirect objects [1]. Successful production of verbs with dual person phi-features in spatial topology would require (a) linguistic knowledge and (b) spatial cognitive ability. No second language (L2) acquisition study exists in these ASL verbs. This study looks at L2 production of AgrSOP and AgrIOP verbs by  $n = 64$  beginning, intermediate, and advanced hearing college-level ASL learners whose L1 is English, age range 19-52. Their L2 productions were assessed to determine whether they are associated with their (a) class level, (b) linguistic knowledge of ASL grammar, and/or (c) spatial cognition abilities. Two experiments were conducted, one with AgrSOP verbs, and the other with AgrIOP verbs. The study participants first took PTSOT [2], a 12-item nonlinguistic spatial cognitive skills test. They next described 16 pictures and took 16-item Grammatical Judgment Test (GJT) in each experiment. Signed descriptions were transcribed. Using correlation statistics, results show significant correlations between (a) AgrSOP production and GJT, but not with PTSOT or class level, and (b) AgrIOP and PTSOT, but not with GJT or class level. Findings suggest that the successful production of different linguistic structures of verbs with the dual person phi-features are associated with different sources, ASL grammatical knowledge for AgrSOP, and spatial cognitive ability for AgrIOP.

**References:** [1]: Hegarty, M., Kozhevnikov, M., & D. Waller (2008). The Perspective-Taking/Spatial Orientation Test (PTSOT) University of California, Santa Barbara. Retrieved on November 18, 2018 from <https://docplayer.net/21820641-Perspective-taking-spatial-orientation-test-developed-by-mary-hegarty-maria-kozhevnikov-david-waller.html>. [2]: Rathmann, C. & G. Mathur (2002). Is verb agreement the same cross-modally? In R. Meier, K. Cormier, & D. Quinto-Pozos (eds.) *Modality and Structure in Signed and Spoken Languages*, 370–404. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.