

The Influence of Spoken Languages on Signed Languages: Loans in Chinese Sign Language (CSL) and Korean Sign language (KSL)

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As we know, we are surrounded by an audio-oral based spoken language that is a powerful dominant language, while sign language is a minority visual-spatial (gestural) based language which deaf people use. It is obvious that the dominant language has substantial influence on this minority language and the two sides make language contact, so if we take a close look, grammatical borrowings from spoken language can be found across most sign languages. These are the cross-modality outcomes between sign languages and spoken languages. As for the earlier domestic and other research in this area, especially in eastern Asian countries, there is very limited research that has been done about how this grammatical borrowing works.

It is well established that sign languages are distinct languages with their own structure, but also like spoken languages they have non-native vocabulary and foreign word forms using their own constraint parameter rules or strategies. Thus, the author will start from analyzing the lexical properties of these loan words by comparing Chinese Sign Language (CSL) and Korean Sign Language (KSL). The forms examined commonly appear as a combination of loan translation and the use of manual alphabet such as Chinese character signs and English alphabet fingerspelling signs (that is, Pinyin) and Korean alphabet (Hangul) fingerspelling signs respectively. The data of the two sign languages comes from individual personal video recordings involving two or more signers from each of the countries. In addition signing broadcast programs were analyzed to yield instances to increase the size of the corpus. Almost all of the stories were annotated under the guidance of two native deaf researchers in 2015-2016, using ELAN software.

In sum, Chinese Sign Language (CSL) and Korean Sign Language (KSL) commonly offer a unique perspective in discovering how aspects of cognition interact with spoken languages, as well as the degree to which modality shapes this interaction. As we discuss here, what defines sign language lexicons is not wholly the iconicity of the gestural events but also the complicated arbitrariness of the visual events caused by cross-linguistically different structures continuously influenced by surrounding spoken and written languages. This is a critical point of close linguistic contact between the deaf community and the rest of hearing society. This presentation can provide another point of view to properly guide people who will be engaged in the sign language linguistics area. Additional scientific and logical research on the cross-modal linguistic study of sign language is also obviously needed.

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