

Brendan Costello

Language and modality

Effects of the use of space in the agreement system of lengua de signos española (Spanish Sign Language)

This thesis examines agreement in Spanish Sign Language (*lengua de signos española* – LSE) and provides a comprehensive description of the agreement mechanisms available to the language based on data collected from LSE signers from the Basque Country. This description makes it possible to compare agreement in LSE with what has been described for other sign languages, and also to offer a cross-modal comparison of the phenomenon, that is, to compare agreement in a signed language to agreement in spoken languages. Underlying this comparison is the issue of whether what we call agreement in sign languages is the same thing as what is called agreement in spoken languages.

The study provides a strong case that this spatial mechanism in LSE (i) is a type of agreement that is similar to what has been described for other sign languages, (ii) is comparable to agreement processes in spoken languages, and (iii) can be accounted for in syntactic terms. The thesis includes discussion of what the findings tell us about LSE, sign languages, and natural languages in general.

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