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Interrogative and Negative Constructions of Indian Sign Language

Abstract

This paper deals with the negative and interrogative constructions found in the Indian Sign Language (ISL). Manual and non-manual components have been used to describe these constructions, which reveal a structurally rich system.

ISL employs various morphological devices apart from the use of its core lexical terms to expand the basic vocabulary of negation and question. These devices are suffixation and compounding. Head and body posture, facial expressions and mouthing comprise the non-manual component. Mouthing is extensively used in ISL, which is interesting. What is peculiar here is the use of the same feature as a word formation process while also as a

grammatical marker for negation. All three non-manual components interact with each other in myriad ways

As sign language varies at lexical level with respect to question and negation, therefore, in this paper, focus will be given to the form and their meanings along with the use of the lexical terms for negation and question. Inspect question and negation lexicon in ISL. Earlier the system looked bit confined but later upon closer observation it seemed simpler than anticipated.

Sign Language

Sign languages are natural languages and exhibit traits similar to any other spoken languages. Differences can only be seen at the level of mode and structure where we see the sign languages as visual gestural and spoken languages as vocal and auditory. The structure of the sign languages is simultaneous while that of the spoken languages is linear. Sign language does not necessarily mean replicating the structure of any spoken language and signing accordingly, they have their own syntactic constructions, which follows a specific word order.

There are few cases where at the early stage of acquisition of sign language, people begin signing by using the word order of the spoken language used around them. But, such use of signs is often ungrammatical. Bejan (2001) says that, "Whether we refer to speaking or writing, the words follow a fairly linear pattern: in time or on paper." That is the main reason behind the easiness in the analysis of these languages. According to Sandler and Lilo-Martin (2006), "When we look at sign languages, we notice that their way of creating meaning is rather characterized by simultaneity". The meaning is not only conveyed solely by the movement of hands but rather involves a combination of characteristics expressed

simultaneously employing features such as: hand orientation and direction, facial expression, lip movement, body posture, eyebrow and use of space and so forth.

It has already been proven that the sign languages do fulfill all the functions and uses required of the language as is present in the use of any particular spoken language. It can be used to serve as a means of communication as well as for explanation, description, entertainment, humor creation etc. Only hearing people, until recently have benefitted from all the technological advancement.

Indian Sign Language

Since 2001, there are few institutions who have been working on ISL. Like Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH) which works to train teachers in ISL equipping them with proper teaching materials. Other institutions like Ishara foundation and Rehabilitation Council of India also work for the same cause. They provide valuable training to interpreters also incorporating English been taught through ISL.

A majority of traditional institutes like, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing still heavily rely on oralism, but the new school of thought can be seen emerging in the vocational schools like ITI Secunderabad which have started using ISL for teaching.

Some legitimacy has been given to ISL in India in 2005 by the National Curricular Framework (NCF). The Framework hinted at sign language (SL) becoming a part of the academic curriculum where students can choose SL as optional subject. And, as proposed, in March 2006, NCERT included a chapter on sign language for class III students, which clarifies on some misconceptions about sign languages, they are not mime and exhibit characteristics similar to any other mode of communication. So, the endeavour was aimed to create a healthy environment towards differently abled people.

There are many varieties of sign language in the South-East Asia region, including many pockets of home sign and local sign languages. However, the urban varieties of India, Pakistan, Nepal (Nepalese Sign Language), and Bangladesh are clearly related (though, for Nepalese Sign Language, it is not clear whether the relation is genetic, or perhaps rather one of borrowing compounded by extensive incorporation of a shared South Asian gestural base). Woodward (1993) found cognacy rates of 62–71; he concluded that the different varieties are separate languages belonging to the same language family. However, Zeshan (2000) talks about Indo-Pakistan Sign Language (IPSL) where the varieties of sign language used in urban parts of India share 75% of their vocabulary. The urban varieties used in Pakistan and Bangladesh and Nepali Sign language, are all related. There are various dialects in India varying from state to state or region to region. Mumbai variety and Delhi variety are most influential. Then the Calcutta and Bangalore-Madras Sign Language.

Some elements and forms in ISL are derived from international signs like the British and the American Sign Languages, an example of extensive borrowing through recent contact situation. ISL signers have now adapted themselves with the use of British fingerspelling system. Because of prevalence in use of ASL in schools of Bengaluru, the scenario is such that signers are entirely using ASL at lexical level as signed English, but at grammatical level it's still ISL.

Academic Institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru University and The Delhi Association of the Deaf are constantly striving towards identifying a standard Indian Sign Language. The ISL shares its simultaneity structure, use of space and grammatical features along with all the phonetic and phonological parameters with other sign languages. Also, non-manual features like mouthing, head movement and facial expression etc. are seen to be shared.

Interrogative constructions of ISL

According to Abbi (2001), “Interrogation is a sentence type used in the expression of questions. The function of question is to elicit information. The term interrogative is used to refer to construction type which have the semantic function of questions. It can be divided into yes/no questions and wh-questions. Intonation is widely used for the same purpose.”

Interrogation means to ask by using some interrogative markers which is of two types: a) yes/no questions (polar questions)

b) wh-questions

In Indian sign languages, interrogative constructions use both question words and non-manual markers which comprise the lexical item. The polar interrogatives like yes-no questions and declarative sentences only differ in the use of specific facial expressions. As polar interrogatives employ only facial expression and wh-questions are formed by using sign for particular question words along with certain non-manual features and that is referred to as simultaneity.

Polar Question

The yes-no types of questions are called polar questions which have only one of the two choices. Whether the sentences are valid or invalid, whether something is true or not, polar questions are meant to just answer that.

As any other standard sign languages, ISL also uses specific facial expressions for polar and content questions. And these expressions are prototypical for every kind of interrogatives. The features include open eyes, raised brow and forwardly tilted head and shoulders. To answer polar questions, one or all of these expressions are used.

In ISL, the boundary looks very fuzzy to mark the scope of the facial expression in polar questions as it sometimes typically the entire clause and sometimes the predicate and sometimes the last word of the sentence.

For e.g.

1) NME: Hs and Reb

Gloss: (Ix) 2P.SG work able

Eng.trans: YOU JOB ABLE

Mouthing: -----

“Are you able to do the job?”

2) NME: Reb

Gloss: today college go.FUT important

Eng. Trans: TODAY COLLEGE GO IMPORTANT

Mouthing: -----

“Is it important to go college today?”

3) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG come.FUT tomorrow

Eng. Trans: YOU COME TOMORROW

Mouthing: -----

“Will you come tomorrow?”

4) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG help.FUT (Ix)1P.SG

Eng. Trans: YOU HELP I

Mouthing: -----

“Are you alright?”

Question Words (Wh-questions)

A wh-question can have any number of answers, it is a characteristic of an open question. The gap or the missing information needed by the speaker is filled by wh-questions. Several elements of sentence like object, subject, verb, place, manner, purpose etc. are utilized by the same.

Seven signs constitute the basic paradigm of ISL's question words which are as follows:

a) WHAT:

Phonology : HS- 5

LOC- NS

MOV- Twisting

ORT- ORT-Ps, Front/Upward

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

E.g.

5) NME: Reb

Gloss: 2P.SG.POSS name INT
 Eng. Trans: YOUR NAME WHAT
 Mouthing: -----

“What is your name?”

6) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG here.PT(LOC) INT
 Eng. Trans: YOU HERE WHAT
 Mouthing: -----

“What are you doing here?”

Or

NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG FgSp here.PT(LOC) INT
 Eng. Trans: YOU DO HERE WHAT
 Mouthing: -----

“What are you doing here?”

Variation has been found in this sentence because some of the signer who are educated, and whose signs are influenced by ASL’s (American Sign Language) fingerspelling, they themselves has invented the fingerspelling for D-O (-do verb),

which is not native sign. This can might be the influence of English over Sign Language. Other informants didn't use fingerspelling for DO, in their case it was incorporated. Pointing sign in ISL is of two types: one is of G hand shape and other is of B hand shape. For pronouns G hand shape and for demonstrative determiners B hand shape is used. It occurs in the signing space and there is no fixed locus for the occurrence of pointing sign.

b) WHY:

Phonology: HS- 5

LOC- NS

MOV- To and fro

ORT- ORT-Ps, Front/Upward

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

E.g

7) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG laugh-RED INT

Eng. Trans: YOU LAUGH++ WHY

Mouthing: -----

“Why are you laughing”?

In this example, progressive aspect is shown by reduplication.

8) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG go there.PT(LOC) INT
 Eng. Trans: YOU GO THERE WHY
 Mouthing: -----

“Why you went there?”

c) WHEN:

Phonology: HS- bend B^

LOC- side of the face

MOV- Static

ORT- ORT-Ps, Front

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

E.g

9) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG go Delhi INT
 Eng. Trans: YOU GO DELHI WHEN
 Mouthing: -----

“When will you go to Delhi?”

10) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG play INT

Eng. Trans: YOU PLAY WHEN

Mouthing: -----

“When will you play?”

d) WHERE: This is a compound sign comprise of “PLACE+WHY”. It has two variations.

Phonology: HS- 8b and G

LOC- NS

MOV- First touches the non-dominant hand, and then alternate up and down

ORT- ORT-Ps, Back

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

And

HS- 8b and 5

LOC- NS

MOV- First touches the non-dominant hand, and then to and fro

ORT- ORT-Ps, Front/Upward

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

E.g.

11) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG come from INT

Eng. Trans: YOU COME FROM WHERE

Mouthing: -----

“Where are you coming from?”

12) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG live INT

Eng. Trans: YOU LIVE WHERE

Mouthing: -----

“Where do you live?”

e) WHICH: this is also a compound sign, “POINTING+WHY”

Phonology: HS- G and 5

LOC- NS

MOV- Away from the signer, to and fro

ORT- ORT-Fs, Back and then ORT-Ps, Front

NME- Frowned eyebrow, mouthing

E.g.

13) NME: Feb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG India state like INT
 Eng. Trans: YOU INDIA STATE LIKE WHICH
 Mouthing: -----

“Which state you like most in India?”

14) NME: Feb

Gloss: 2P.SG.POSS Delhi place favorite INT
 Eng. Trans: YOUR DELHI PLACE FAVORITE WHICH
 Mouthing: -----

“Which is your favorite place in Delhi?”

f) WHO: This is a compound sign, “FACE+WHY”

Phonology: HS- G and W

LOC- Face and NS

MOV- Circular and to and fro

ORT- ORT-Fs, Front and ORT-Ps, front

NME- Frowned eyebrow, mouthing

E.g.

15) NME: Reb Feb

Gloss: 2P.SG.POSS actor best INT
 Eng. Trans: YOUR ACTOR BEST WHO
 Mouthing: -----

“Who is your best actor?”

16) NME: Feb

Gloss: 2P.SG.POSS brother INT
 Eng. Trans: YOUR BROTHER WHO
 Mouthing: -----

“Who is your brother?”

g) HOW:

Phonology: HS- 5

LOC- NS

MOV- Semi circle

ORT- ORT-Ps, Front

NME- Frowned eyebrow, mouthing

E.g.

17) NME: Feb

Gloss: 2P.SG.POSS health INT
 Eng. Trans: YOUR HEALTH HOW
 Mouthing: -----

“How is your health?”

18) NME: Feb

Gloss: 2P.SG go INT

Eng. Trans: YOU GO HOW

Mouthing: -----

“How will you go?”

- h) WHOM and WHOSE: They both have similar sign, a compound sign with
“POINTING+FACE”

Phonology: HS- G

LOC- NS and face

MOV- Away from signer and circular near the face

ORT- ORT-Fs, back and then front

NME- Frowned eyebrow, mouthing

E.g.

19) NME: Feb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG love INT

Eng. Trans: YOU LOVE WHOM

Mouthing: -----

“Whom do you love most?”

20) NME: Feb

Gloss: this book INT

Eng. Trans: THIS BOOK WHOSE

Mouthing: -----

“Whose book is this?”

Gloss: today school go INT.RED

Eng. Trans: TODAY SCHOOL GO WHO++

Mouthing: -----

“Who all will go to school today?”

Hindi: “aʃ skul kən kən jæga?”

24) NME: Reb

Gloss: (Ix)2P.SG eat INT.RED

Eng. Trans: YOU EAT WHAT++

Mouthing: -----

“What all will you eat?”

Hindi: “tum kja kja k^haoge?”

25) NME: Reb Feb

Gloss : today homework NEG INT.RED

Eng. Trans: TODAY HOMEWORK NOT WHO++

Mouthing: -----

“Who all didn’t do the homework today?”

Hindi: “aʃ kis kis ne homvərk nəhi kija?”

Some data are really amazing where in the same sentence double interrogative markers occur.

There are constructions in which interrogative and negative particles were also signed in the

same sentence. Therefore, it can be said that, at sentential level, two negative and two interrogative particles can occur together. Examples are as follows:

E.g.

26)NME:	Feb			Reb	
Gloss:	(Ix)2P.SG	think	INT	(Ix)1P.SG	work
Eng. Trans:	YOU	THINK	WHAT	I	WORK
Mouthing:			-----		-----
	“What do you think, how would I do this work?”				

In this sentence one interrogative construction is very clear and the another one in the embedded clause is incorporated with only non-manual expression.

27)NME:	Feb			Reb	
Gloss:	go.REP	work	INT	and	INT
Eng. Trans:	GOING	WORK	WHO	AND	WHEN
Mouthing:			-----		-----
	“Who is going to do this work and when?”				

Here both the question word is occurring in sequential manner at the last position of the sentence and showing the occurrence of double interrogative particles in ISL. It also shows that manual and non-manual both equally participate in the formation of this type of construction.

“He is not eating, isn’t he.”

Negative Constructions of ISL

The lexeme Negation itself gives the meaning of denial, denial of the truth of the sentence, with the use of negative word for e.g. in Hindi, /na/, /nəhi/, /mət/ and in English, not, no, never. According to Dr. Anvita Abbi (2001, pg no 180), “Negation opposes affirmation. By using a negative expression a speaker may deny the hearer’s belief or the scope of proposition.”

We can understand it this way, when lexical item denies the meaning of other lexical item and the operation that takes place is morphosyntactic which is known as negation, similarly the lexical item that expresses negation is known as negator for e.g. no, not are known as negators of English.

Negation in ISL

Manual and non-manual component both are involved in ISL’s negative constructions, same as the case of interrogatives. Basic signs as well as the signs derived by affixation are what includes the negators vocabulary. Each non-manual feature has their distinct function.

In ISL, there are three types of negative markers and are as follows:

- a) NO: The sign for ‘no’ is more like fingerspelling. And there are two varieties of no is used in ISL.

Phonology: HS- fO

LOC- NS

MOV- Static

ORT- ORT-Ps, Back

NME- Frowned eyebrow, mouthing, head shaking

In other variety of NO, only movement differs which includes both the hands and they repulse from each other.

b) NOT: The sign for 'not' also has two varieties.

Phonology: HS- 5

LOC- NS

MOV- Shaking

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

And

HS- 5

LOC- NS

MOV- Repulsion of both the hands

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

Here, the signs can occur with one or both the hands. And other thing is that for NOT, non-manual expression varies on the basis of context like if it comes in declarative sentences the eyebrow is raised and just opposite in prohibitive sentence it is frowned but mouthing is there in both kind of cases.

c) NEVER: It also has two variations.

Phonology: HS- B

LOC- NS

MOV- Drawing R alphabet in the air with dominant hand

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

And

HS- B

LOC- NS

MOV- Downward

NME- Raised eyebrow, mouthing

Here in first variety, NEVER can only be signed by one hand which is dominant and the other variation require both the hands but the dominant one moves and the other remain static.

E.g.

31)NME:

Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG like 2P.SG.M(REF) NEG

Eng. Trans: I LIKE HIM NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I don’t like him.”

32)NME:

Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG want go NEG

Eng. Trans: I WANT GO NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I don’t want to go.”

33)NME:

Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG well NEG

Eng. Trans: I WELL NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I am not well.”

34) NME: Reb

Gloss: 3P.SG.F good NEG

Eng. Trans: SHE GOOD NOT

Mouthing: -----

“She is not a good girl.”

35) NME: Reb

Gloss: FgSp(R-A-M) intelligent NEG

Eng. Trans: RAM INTELLIGENT NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Ram is not intelligent.”

36) NME: Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG like play NEG

Eng. Trans: I LIKE PLAY NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I don’t like to play.”

What is inferred here from these sentences is that if NOT is followed by a verb then the nonmanual feature is extended from verb to negative marker else nonmanual expression is restricted to only negative marker. As interrogative words, negative words also occur at sentence final position. Similar to ASL, ISL have two types of negation: a) Declarative and b) Prohibitive.

Real state of affairs is referred by Declarative negation.

37) NME:

Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG play well NEG

Eng. Trans: I PLAY WELL NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I cannot play well.”

38) NME:

Feb

Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG run fast NEG

Eng. Trans: I RUN FAST NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I cannot run fast.”

Contrary to the declarative, prohibitive instead of referring real state of affairs is used to prevent the realization of the same, like:

39) NME:

Reb

Gloss: go.PR there.PT NEG

Eng. Trans: GO THERE NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Don’t go there.”

40) NME:

Reb

Gloss: tell lie NEG

Eng. Trans: TELL LIE NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Don’t tell a lie.”

These sentences can also be signed with adding fingerspelling for “do” as well like:

Reb _____

Reb _____

DO (FSp.- D-O) GO THERE NOT and

DO (FSp.- D-O) TELL LIE NOT.

Negativized Morphology of ISL

ISL’s negativized morphology consists of suffixes and negative verbs. In addition to the various negators described, ISL has a negative suffix. This morpheme is very similar in form to the sign NOT.

E.g.

_____ Reb _____

41) Unkind - KIND^NOT

Reb

42) Unwell- WELL^NOT

Reb

43) Impossible- POSSIBLE^NOT

Reb

44) Unwanted- WANT^NOT

Reb

45) Unequal- EQUAL^NOT

Reb

46) Unable- ABLE^NOT

Reb

47) Uneducated- EDUCATED^NOT

Reb

48) Unlucky- LUCKY^NOT

These signs are not independent sign rather they are using suffix. Its actual form is determined by the form of the base sign, which is a very common phenomena in spoken languages known as affixation. The base word in ISL basically determines whether the sign(suffix) is one-handed or two-handed. And if the base sign is one-handed, the suffix will be one-handed as well; a two-handed base sign requires the suffix to be two handed.

Sentential Negation

A type of negation that affects the meaning of an entire main clause. Sentential negation is commonly indicated by negative particle NO and NOT. And neither.....nor type of construction does not exist in ISL.

E.g.

49) NME:

Reb

Gloss: homework 1P.SG like NEG

Eng. Trans: HOMEWORK I LIKE NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I don’t like to do homework.”

50) NME:

Reb

Gloss: child++ outside NEG

Eng. Trans: CHILDREN OUTSIDE(GO) NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Children, don’t go outside.”

In this sentence GO is incorporated with OUTSIDE.

51) NME: Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG.POSS father come NEG 1P.SG.POSS mother

Eng. Trans: MY FATHER COME NOT MY MOTHER

Mouthing: -----

Or, Reb

MY FATHER MOTHER COME NOT

“Neither my mom came nor my dad.”

52) NME: Reb Reb

Gloss: FgSp (R-A-M) study well NEG play NEG

Eng. Trans: RAM STUDY WELL NOT PLAY NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Ram neither studies well nor play.”

The example (c) and (d) are clearly showing that the construction of neither... nor doesn't exist in ISL.

Constituent Negation

It does not negate the sentence as a whole, rather a constituent. And this construction does exist in ISL, for example,

E.g.

53) NME: Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG like FgSp (R-A-M) NEG but FGSp(S-H-Y-A-M)

Eng. Trans: I LIKE RAM NOT BUT Shyam

Mouthing: -----

“Ram didn’t like Ram but Shyam.”

In this example, NOT is attached to the main verb and the interpretation is that Ram not but Shyam is liked by me (I).

54) NME: Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG buy pen NEG but pencil

Eng. Trans: I BUY PEN NOT BUT PENCIL

Mouthing: -----

“I didn’t buy pen but pencil.”

Here also the same process is going on like example (a), but one thing to notice here is that in constituent negation construction the negative particles come between the sentence not at the sentence final position.

Imperative Construction

55) NME: Reb

Gloss: play here.PT NEG

Eng. Trans: PLAY HERE NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Don’t play here.”

56) NME: Reb

Gloss: lie NEG

Eng. Trans: LIE NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Don’t lie.”

There is a postverbal negation in the imperative construction in ISL.

Other types of negative construction like contrastive function of negation doesn’t exist in ISL for e.g., for the sentences like “He didn’t eat, will eat”. It couldn’t be found in ISL, instead signers are just signing “HE EAT NOT” (NOT with raised eyebrow).

Negation in Compound Sentences

57) NME: Reb Reb

Gloss: 1P.SG want play NEG because that(Ix)

good game not

Eng. Trans: I WANT PLAY NOT BECAUSE THAT

GOOD GAME NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I don’t want to play because it is not a good game.”

58)NME: Feb Reb

Gloss: think 1P.SG NEG that FgSp(R-A-M) good boy NEG

Eng. Trans: THINK I NOT THAT RAM GOOD BOY NOT

Mouthing: -----

“I don’t think so that Ram is not a good boy.”

These sentences are compound sentences, and both part of the sentence comprises negative particles and negating their parts.

Negative Quantifiers, according to Jespersen (1940), “negation of a simple quantifier generally results in the meaning of less (sometimes more) than the quantifier in question, it rarely means the negation of its exact quantificational value.” Quantifiers are the words that are used to state the quantity or amount of something without stating the number actually. As per available data, only ‘Nobody’ and ‘never’ has been found, for example:

59)NME: Feb Reb

Gloss: body NEG able eat NEG

Eng. Trans: BODY NOT ABLE EAT NOT

Mouthing: -----

“Nobody will be able to eat this.”

60) NME:

Reb

Gloss:	1P.SG	see	beauty	NEG
Eng. Trans:	I	SEE	BEAUTY	NEVER
Mouthing:				-----

“I have never seen this beauty.”

Now, for ISL it can be said that neither manual nor non-manual system of negation is dominant because both takes part equally. We can say that sometimes only non-manual can give the negative meaning but it's more like a gesture that is used in spoken language as well. Therefore, the dominance of one of the systems cannot be stated.

- *When NOT is an independent sign....*
 - it is of comparatively longer duration (that is, fully syllabic).
 - it is articulated in neutral signing space and has a two-handed and a one-handed variant (that is, it is subject to optional weak hand drop, the dropping of the non-dominant hand in symmetrical signs).
- *When NOT is a Clitic....*
 - It is of much shorter duration.
 - It is assimilated to the preceding host sign in hand orientation and location;
 - It must be two-handed after a two-handed host sign and one-handed after a one-handed host sign (assimilation of handedness);
 - The non-manual marking spreads over the whole host-clitic combination.

Non-manual Features

In sign language linguistics, the term “non-manual marking” refers to the use of any part of the body other than the hands for the purpose of marking grammatical functions. This may be in the form of facial expressions, head movements, body posture, eye gaze, or a combination of several of these.

When non-manual configuration is used to mark a particular grammatical function, then it is known as “non-manual marker”.

“Non-manual markers in sign languages are suprasegmental, that is, they spread over a smaller or larger string of manual signs in a clause, just as intonation in spoken languages is superimposed on spoken words”, Sandler 1999a.

Another important term which comes with the non-manual marking is the notion of “Scope” of the marker (non-manual). The extent of co-occurrence of non-manual marker with the string of manual signs defines the scope, which means all the manual signs with the non-manual marker fall under its periphery. But in ISL the boundary for this is fuzzy.

For the production of negative and interrogative constructions, mainly three non-manual features are used, those are facial expression, head shake and mouthing.

Head-shake: With the variation in the scope and intensity, headshake is a very important aspect of forming interrogative sentences. The minimal scope for the headshake is the negation sign itself, but it can also spread over the negated element, or the entire clause. Topics are outside the scope of the headshake. Not all interrogative sentences are accompanied by headshake. No use of headshake for negative construction. Usually there is also a brief brow raise and lowering for both interrogative and negative construction.

Mouthing: Mouthing is very prominent in negation and interrogation words as it varies from signer to signer but for those who are born deaf and are acculturated in different environment that is in the environment of hard of hearing people, they use it frequently.

Facial Expression: Frowning of eyebrow and raising of eyebrow, these particular facial expressions are used in many negative constructions. Grammaticality of this expression is confirmed as a marker of negation.

Conclusion

ISL is very rich in grammar as any other sign languages and spoken languages as well. There are so many variations in the signs that may varies from community to community. As far as the constructions for interrogation and negation is concerned, we saw how manual and non-manual markings are of great importance. There are variations for the signs of interrogative particles and negative particles. Negative signs behave as an independent sign but in negativized morphology it behaves as a clitic. Reduplication and compounding is used to expand lexeme in ISL. When we talk about the non-manual features, headshake, facial expression and mouthing plays a very important role and are grammatical.

Appendix

Abbreviations and Symbols

ISL- Indian Sign Language

NME- Non-manual expression

P- Person

SG- Singular

PL- Plural

Hs- Handshape

Reb- Raised eyebrow

Feb- Frowned eyebrow

Ix- Indexing

FUT- Future

PR- Present

PST- Past

INT- Interrogation

NEG- Negation

POSS- Possession

LOC- Locative

MOV- Movement

ORT- Orientation

Ps- Palmer surface

Fs- Finger surface

FSp- Finger spelling

X++- Reduplication

NS- Neutral space

F- Feminine

M- Masculine

PT- Pointing Sign

REP- Repetition

REF- Referential

QUAN- Quantifier

NDS- Noida Deaf Society

IGNOU- Indira Gandhi National Open University

SYMBOLS

XYZ – Non-manual expression

----- - Mouthing

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