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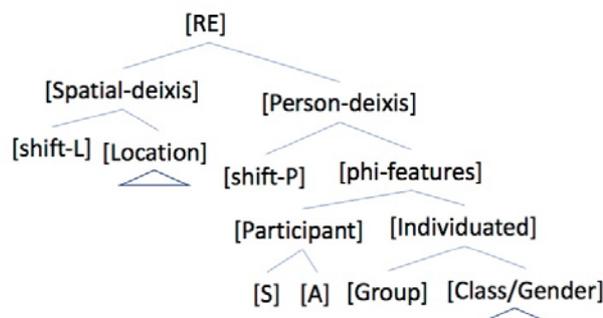
Referring Expressions at the Interfaces: A Feature-Geometric Approach

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ABSTRACT

This proposal argues for a unified feature geometric analysis of systems of referring expressions (RE) in signed and spoken languages, developed from the analysis of Harley and Ritter (2002) and the analysis of the linguistic/gestural interface of Rathmann and Mathur (2011). In spoken languages, RE are categorical morphemes encoding person, number and class/gender features (phi-features). It has been argued that SL RE are partially gestural, distinguishing only 1st and non-1st persons and marking locative contrasts, in addition to phi-features. In the proposed feature geometry, grammatically-relevant contrasts are represented as hierarchically organized nodes that distinguish between: participants (speaker/signer [S] and addressee [A]) and non-participant individuals ([Individuated]) in the discourse; single and groups of multiple referents; and language-specific class/gender distinctions. Individual RE are represented as sub-structures of this geometry. In spoken languages, interfaces between sub-structures and forms are lexicalized pronouns or agreement morphemes, with the component nodes determining category and interactions within the system. SL RE may be lexicalized as well, for example whole entity classifier handshapes marking class/gender contrasts (i.e. **Z**:vehicle vs. **h**:aircraft in ASL) and 1st person singular and plural RE. Non-1st person contrasts are indicated with RE's place of articulation (POA), determined by context through an interface with gestural space, rather than lexicalized POA. Role-shift is represented by shifting the Person-deixis of the RE, represented in the sub-structure dominating the [phi-features] node. Locative RE in SL are incorporated into this analysis with a [Spatial-deixis] node, which can also be shifted and which dominates a node for location features, which in SL interfaces with gestural space and gestural systems. This basic structure is represented below:



In this view, both locative and non-locative RE in SL are assumed to have been derived from non-linguistic gestural pointers (Pfau and Steinbach, 2011) but rather than assuming that the latter was grammaticalized from the former, this analysis assumes

that locative and non-locative person and number RE evolved in parallel from gestural pointers. Class/gender distinctions by contrast are later language-specific elaborations of RE systems.

REFERENCES

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- Rathmann, C. and G. Mathur. 2011. A featural approach to agreement in signed languages. *Theoretical Linguistics* 37(3/4).