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A Sociolinguistic Corpus Based Investigation of Irish Sign Language Grammatical Classes

This paper provides an overview, and some preliminary findings from a sociolinguistic analysis of the Signs of Ireland (SOI) corpus (Leeson et al., 2006).

The work, accomplished using the ELAN media annotation tool (Brugman, 2004) and its various search features, investigates the demographic diversity available in the SOI corpus. The recent addition of grammatical-class transcriptions has for the first time, provided a window into how different social variables affect Irish Sign Language (ISL) performance. It is possible to measure, for example, how often a mature signer uses directional verbs against the frequency of use by signers from younger generations. Given the diverse historical and social context in which ISL has developed (Leeson and Saeed, 2012, pp. 28-57), much can be learned about the language from such sociolinguistic data.

This work presents a methodological approach and some preliminary findings of a wider research project, which explores the form and function of non-manual features in ISL.

The original contribution of this work comes in the form of a corpus-based, sociolinguistic analysis of ISL, carried out for the first time, with grammatical class transcription data. Furthermore, this work provides a practical contribution in further developing the SOI corpus, such that, the resource is more comprehensively equipped for future research projects.

References

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