Lithuanian Sign Language Literature: Metaphors at the Phonological Level

Authors : Anželika Teresė

Abstract : In order to solve issues in sign language linguistics, address matters pertaining to maintaining high quality of sign language (SL) translation, contribute to dispelling misconceptions about SL and deaf people, and raise awareness and understanding of the deaf community heritage, this presentation discusses literature in Lithuanian Sign Language (LSL) and inherent metaphors that are created by using the phonological parameter –handshape, location, movement, palm orientation and nonmanual features. The study covered in this presentation is twofold, involving both the micro-level analysis of metaphors in terms of phonological parameters as a sub-lexical feature and the macro-level analysis of the poetic context. Cognitive theories underlie research of metaphors in sign language literature in a range of SL. The study follows this practice. The presentation covers the qualitative analysis of 34 pieces of LSL literature. The analysis employs ELAN software widely used in SL research. The target is to examine how specific types of each phonological parameter are used for the creation of metaphors in LSL literature and what metaphors are created. The results of the study show that LSL literature employs a range of metaphors created by using classifier signs and by modifying the established signs. The study also reveals that LSL literature tends to create reference metaphors indicating status and power. As the study shows, LSL poets metaphorically encode status by encoding another meaning in the same sign, which results in creating double metaphors. The metaphor of identity has been determined. Notably, the poetic context has revealed that the latter metaphor can also be identified as a metaphor for life. The study goes on to note that deaf poets create metaphors related to the importance of various phenomena significance of the lyrical subject. Notably, the study has allowed detecting locations, nonmanual features and etc., never mentioned in previous SL research as used for the creation of metaphors.
Keywords : Lithuanian sign language, sign language literature, sign language metaphor, metaphor at the phonological level, cognitive linguistics