

**From Sign-in-Interaction to Grammar:
Fictive Questions for Relative Clauses in Signed Languages**

Maria Josep Jarque and Esther Pascual

*By “meanings” I understand answers to questions.
That which answers no question is meaningless to us.
(Mikhail Bakhtin [1979] 1986)*

We discuss the use of the question-answer pattern for relativization across signed languages, with special attention for Catalan Sign Language. These are cases in which grammatical features of the interrogative construction used for genuine information-seeking questions also appear as the most unmarked, frequent, or only linguistic means of expressing restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, as well as appositives. This is intriguing, since relative clauses occur within one sentence and thus within one conversational turn, whereas the question-answer construction is prototypically intersubjective, representing turn-taking between addresser and addressee. We thus analyze non-information seeking interrogatives as involving ‘fictive interaction’, the use of the conversation frame to structure cognition, discourse, and grammar (Pascual, 2006a, 2014). We suggest that the nonmanual feature of eyebrow raising, which marks both information-seeking questions and relative clauses in Catalan Sign Language, became grammaticalized from a common non-obligatory gesture in the spoken Catalan of the surrounding hearing community. This is presented as illustrating the emergence of grammar from talk-in-interaction (cf. Li & Thompson, 1976; Sankoff & Brown, 1976). This paper is based on the bibliographic study of 14 signed languages from different families and the qualitative analysis of own naturalistic data from Catalan Sign Language from different discourse genres.

Keywords: non-information-seeking questions, sign languages, Catalan Sign Language, relativization, grammaticalization, intersubjectivity, fictive interaction