Topics in the Grammar of French Sign Language (LSF)

Edited by

Kelepir Meltem

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- A Grammar of Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT)
- A Grammar of Turkish Sign Language (TİD)
- A Grammar of Catalan Sign Language (LSC)
- A Grammar of Italian Sign Language (LIS)

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Hauser Charlotte, post-doctoral researcher at Institut Jean Nicod (Part 5. Chapter 3.4. "Relative clauses" and Part 3. Chapter 3.7.6 "Relative pronouns")

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Introduction

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List of abbreviations

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List of notational conventions

List of conventions observed in this book

3.7.6. Relative pronouns

LSF uses both manual and non-manual markers to identify relative clauses. There are two different relative pronouns signs: ‘PERSON-CL’ and ‘PI’.

'PERSON-CL' is for human referents only and is used in appositive relative clauses [Syntax- Section 3.4.7]. An example is provided below.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER LITTLE GIRL PERSON-CL PET DOG.

'I prefer the little girl, who pets the dog.' (Hauser, 2019)

The second relative pronoun is the demonstrative sign glossed as 'PI' after the mouthing element marking it. The relative pronoun 'PI' is used for restrictive relative clauses and any type of head, whether human, non-human or inanimate, as shown in the following examples.

rel

a. IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** PI CURE DOG.

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.'

rel

b. IX$_1$ PREFER **DOG** PI MAN PET.

'I prefer the dog which the man pets.

rel

c. IX_1 PREFER **NAPKIN** PI COVER LIGHTER.

'I prefer the napkin which covers the lighter.' (Hauser, 2019)

Both relative pronouns come with a specific set of non-manual markings over them: a) at least one part of the upper body —shoulders or torso— is oriented towards the locus where the head of the relative is located in the signing space; b) eyebrows are raised; c) lips are tensed and d) chin is pointed upwards or downwards. What seems to matter the most is the contrast between the head of the relative clause and the rest of the relative clause.

A relative clause does not need to be introduced by a relative pronoun. The non-manual markers over the head noun suffice to identify the construction. This is illustrated in the following example.

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3.4. Relative clauses

The following subsections detail relative clauses in LSF.

3.4.1. Types of relative clause

LSF displays both internally headed relative clauses and, most frequently, post-nominal externally headed relative clauses. In internally headed relative clauses, the relative pronoun is frequently found within the relative clause, next to the head noun, but it can also appears at the periphery of the relative clause, in which case the sentence is degraded. An example of each possibility is presented here after: the relative pronoun (either PI or PERSON-CL) is underlined, the head noun is in bold and the relative clause is within square brackets.

rel

a. IX_1 PREFER [MAN **DOG** PI PET] *INT. HEAD.*

'I prefer the dog which the man is petting.'

rel

b. ? IX_1 PREFER PI [MAN PET **DOG**]

'I prefer the dog that the man pet.' (Hauser, 2019:59)

In post-nominal externally headed relative clauses the head noun precedes the relative clause that

modifies it. The relative pronoun occupies the initial position of the relative clause, as shown in the example below.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** [PI/PERSON-CL CURE DOG] *EXT. HEAD.*

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.' (Hauser, 2019:57)

Additionally, LSF exhibits relative clauses without a head, which are non-referential, called free-choice free-relatives. In this case, the clause is introduced by the wh-sign 'WHAT' (see the example below) and the set of non-manual markers differs from that of headed relatives: there only brows raising (br), spreading over the entire clause. In the example below the free-relative clause is within square brackets.

br

[IX$_2$ CAN EAT WHAT] PREFER *FREE-CHOICE FREE-RELATIVE*

'You can eat whatever (you) prefer.' (Hauser, 2019:63)

3.4.2. Presence or absence of a relativization sign

In LSF, manual signs of relativization are not mandatory, relativization can be expressed solely through non-manual markers, as in the following example.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** CURE DOG

‘I prefer the vet who cures the dog.’ (Hauser, 2019)

Relative clauses can also be marked through the use of relative pronouns. Their properties regarding their compatibility with human/non-human referents and singular/plural heads, their position(s), and their optionality in the construction are presented within each respective subsection.

3.4.2.1. List of relativization signs

Relative clauses in LSF can be marked through a) the relative demonstrative-like pronoun PI, or (b) the relative pronoun PERSON-CL, which is a classifier also used as a demonstrative, or (c) non-manual markers only. The elements that mark the relative clause are underlined in the following examples, while the modified noun is in bold.

rel

a. IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** PI CURE DOG

‘I prefer the vet who cures the dog.’

rel

b. IX$_1$ PREFER LITTLE **GIRL** PERSON-CL PET DOG

‘I prefer the little girl who pets the dog.’

rel

c. IX_1 PREFER **VET** CURE DOG

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.' (Hauser, 2019:55-57)

For all three strategies, the set of non-manual markers glossed as 'rel' is the same: a) at least one part of the upper body —shoulders or torso— is oriented towards the locus where the head of the relative is located in the signing space b) eyebrows are raised, c) lips are tensed and d) chin is pointed upwards or downwards.

The choice of the relative pronoun has an impact on the interpretation of the relative clause [Syntax – 3.4.7]: PERSON-CL yields an appositive reading while PI gives a restrictive interpretation. For non-human or inanimate heads, only the non-manual marking strategy is ambiguous between appositive and restrictive meaning.

3.4.2.1.1. Human/non-human specificity of the relativization sign

LSF exhibits both internally and externally headed relative clauses [Syntax- Section 3.4.1] and can use manual relative pronouns to mark the relative clause. LSF has two different relative pronouns: one for human referents (PERSON-CL: the classifier for person in LSF) and one for any kind of referents (PI: a demonstrative with the morphology of a pointing pronoun). In the examples below, both are accompanied by the set same set of non-manual markers, glossed as 'rel': upper body oriented towards the locus of the head-noun + eyebrows raised + lips tensed + chin pointed upwards or downwards.

rel

a. IX_1 PREFER LITTLE **GIRL** PERSON-CL PET DOG

'I prefer the little girl, who pets the dog.'

rel

b. IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** PI CURE DOG

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.'

rel

c. IX$_1$ PREFER **DOG** PI MAN PET

'I prefer the dog which the man pets.

rel

d. IX$_1$ PREFER PI **NAPKIN** LIGHTER COVER

'I prefer the napkin which covers the lighter.' (Hauser, 2019)

3.4.2.1.2. Singular/plural specificity of the relativization sign

In LSF, the relative pronoun PERSON-CL can modify both singular and plural heads, as shown in the following examples.

rel

a. IX$_1$ PREFER LITTLE **GIRL** PERSON-CL PET DOG *SINGULAR*

'I prefer the little girl, who pets the dog.'

rel

b. IX$_3$ MEET-PL **GIRL-PL** PERSON-CL-PL PLAY-PL-CIRCLE HOPSCOTCH *PLURAL*

'She (Mary) met the girls who were playing hopscotch.' (Hauser, 2019)

When inflected for plural, PERSON-CL is realized multiple times, either with one or with two hands alternating.

The second manual relative pronoun, PI, cannot modify a plural head. When the head is plural, PI has to be combined with the signs for AREA, GROUP or the quantifier ALL, as in the following example. In any case, PI cannot be inflected for plural.

rel

MEET-PL **GIRL ALL** PI PLAY-PL HOPSCOTCH

'She met all the girls who were playing hopscotch.' (Hauser, 2019)

3.4.2.2. Position of the relativization sign

The position of manual signs of relativization may vary in LSF. They are most often realized immediately before or after the head noun, as can be seen in the following examples. The relative pronoun PI is underlined, the head-noun is in bold, and the relative clause is within square brackets.

rel

a. IX_1 PREFER [MAN **DOG** PI PET]

'I prefer the dog which the man is petting.'

rel

b. IX_1 PREFER **VET** [PI CURE DOG]

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.'

rel

c. IX_1 PREFER PI **VET** [CURE DOG]

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.' (Hauser, 2019:58)

Relative pronouns can also be separated from the head noun to mark the relative clause periphery, but this option seems marginal and degraded. This is more frequent in internally headed object relative clause, as in the following example.

rel

?IX$_1$ PREFER PI[MAN PET **DOG**]

‘I prefer the dog that the man pet.’ (Hauser, 2019)

3.4.2.3. Optionality or obligatoriness of the relativization sign

In LSF, manual signs of relativization are not mandatory, relativization can be expressed solely through non-manual markers, as in the following example.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** CURE DOG

‘I prefer the vet who cures the dog.’ (Hauser, 2019)

3.4.3. Position of the noun phrase with the relative clause within the matrix clause

Relative clauses in LSF can modify subjects as well as direct objects within the matrix clause, as shown in the following examples, all containing the relative pronoun pi: the head noun is in bold, the relative clause is within square brackets and the position of the head in the matrix clause is indicated on the right of the example.

a. **DOG** [PI TODAY PLAY WITH CAT] RUN FAST *SUBJECT*

'The dog who plays with the cat today runs fast.' (Hauser, 2019: 63)

rel

b. IX_1 PREFER **VET** [PI CURE DOG] *OBJECT*

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.' (Hauser, 2019: 63)

3.4.4. Subject vs. object relativization

In LSF, any constituent can function as the head of a relative clause: subject, object, genitive, adjunct or even the whole clause. An example of each type is provided below. In what follows the head noun is in bold, the relative clause is within square brackets and the position of the head in the relative clause is indicated on the right of the example.

rel

a. IX_1 PREFER LITTLE **GIRL** PI PET DOG *SUBJECT RC*

'I prefer the little girl who pets the dog.'

rel

b. IX_1 PREFER **DOG** PI MAN PET *DIRECT OBJECT RC*

'I prefer the dog which the man pets.

rel

c. TODAY MEETING MET **GIRL** PI YESTERDAY $POSS_3$ COLLEAGUE SAY BRAVO
INDIRECT OBJECT RC

'At the meeting today I met the girl to whom yesterday my colleague said bravo.'

rel

d. **DATE** PI MEETING IX_1 NOT AVAILABLE SO MOVE
TEMPORAL ADJUNCT RC

'I am not available on the date in which the meeting was fixed, let's move it.'

rel

e. IX_1 PREFER **DOG** PI WITH WOMAN WALKS *ADJUNCT RC*

'I prefer the dog with whom the woman walks.'

rel

f. IX_1 PREFER [**VET CURE DOG TODAY**] PI_{center} *CLAUSE RC*

'I prefer situations in which a vet cures a dog.' (Hauser, 2019: 64-65)

Depending of the relative pronoun [Syntax- Section 3.4.2.1.1.], LSF does not have restriction on the type of head. Relative clauses can be headed by human, non-human and inanimate elements. An example of each type is illustrated in the following examples with object relative clauses and the relative pronoun PI.

rel

a. IX$_1$ PREFER **MAN** PI DOG LICK *HUMAN*

'I prefer the man that the dog lick.'

rel

b. IX$_1$ PREFER **DOG** PI MAN PET *NON-HUMAN*

'I prefer the dog that the man pet.'

rel

c. IX$_1$ PREFER PI **TOOTHBRUSH** BOY USE *INANIMATE*

'I prefer the toothbrush that the boy use.' (Hauser, 2019:64)

3.4.5. Displacement of relative clauses

Just like other nominals, relative clauses in LSF appear in the canonical matrix position corresponding to the argumental position they occupy, as shown in the examples below. Hence, a relative clause constructed over the subject of the main verb will be found in subject position (a.) while a relative clause modifying the object of the main verb is in object position (b.).

rel

a.**DOG** [PI TODAY PLAY WITH CAT] RUN FAST SUBJECT

'The dog who plays with the cat today runs fast.'

rel

b.IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** [PI CURE DOG] OBJECT

'I prefer the vet who cures the dog.' (Hauser, 2019:63)

Non canonical order are also attested, for example when the relative clause is topicalised. In this case, the set of non-manual markers typical of topics (raised eyebrows and chin up) spreads over the whole relative. An example is provided below with the head noun in bold and the relative clause between square brackets.

top

rel

[**DOG** PI SLEEP] IX$_1$ PREFER

'The dog that sleeps, I prefer it.' (Hauser, 2019:63)

3.4.6. Special non-manual marking

All relative clauses are marked through a set of non-manual markers glossed as 'rel' which contains: a) at least one part of the upper body —shoulders or torso— orientation towards the locus where the head noun of the relative is located in the signing space b) eyebrow raising, c) lips tensed and d) chin pointed upwards or downwards.

The body orientation and the eyebrow raising are the most prominent non-manual markers whereas the lips tensed and the chin movement can be omitted.

3.4.6.1. List of non-manual markers

The list of non-manual markers attested in relative clauses marking are the following:

Obligatory:

- at least one part of the upper body —shoulders or torso— is oriented towards the locus where the head noun of the relative is localized.
- eyebrows raising

Optional:

- lips tensed
- chin pointed upwards or downwards.

3.4.6.2. The spreading domain of each non-manual marker

In general, the various non-manual markers are aligned with each other. If there is a manual relative pronoun (pi or person-cl), the non-manual markers spread on the relative pronoun and can optionally extend over the head noun of the relative, as shown in the following example.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **DOG** PI MAN PET

'I prefer the dog which the man pets. (Hauser, 2019)

When there is no manual relative pronoun, only the head of the relative clause is marked through the set of non-manual markers, see in the example below.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **VET** CURE DOG

‘I prefer the vet who cures the dog.’ (Hauser, 2019)

3.4.7. Restrictive vs. non-restrictive relative clauses

A restrictive relative clause is one which restricts the possible entities that the head-noun of the relative clause can refer to. A non-restrictive relative clause provides additional information without narrowing down the set of entities that the head noun refers to. LSF instantiates both semantic types of relativization strategies, but the availability of each reading depends on the relative pronoun that is used. Relative clauses introduced by PI receive a restrictive interpretation, as shown in the following example. As a result, they cannot modify a proper name.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **DOG** PI MAN PET

'I prefer the dog which the man pets. (Hauser, 2019: 66)

Additionally, as is typical of externally headed restrictive relative clauses, PI-relatives can stack and be embedded into each other. In the following example, the clause boundaries of each relative clause are represented with square brackets, and the co-reference between head nouns and relative pronouns is indicated through coindexation.

rel rel

a. MAN$_i$ FORK-FORM STING PI$_j$ **DOG$_j$**[CHASE **CAT$_k$** [PI$_k$ BIRD CATCH]]

'The man stabbed the dog which was chasing the cat which caught the bird.'

foc

rel rel

b. IX$_1$ CHOOSE **CAT$_i$** [PI$_i$ PLAY WITH GIRL$_j$] [PI$_i$ CATCH BIRD$_k$]

‘I choose the cat which is playing with the girl which caught the bird.’ (Hauser, 2019: 66)

Relative clauses introduced by PERSON-CL receive an appositive interpretation, as shown by their compatibility with proper names head. This is a typical property of appositive relative clauses. PERSON-CL-relatives cannot stack.

rel

IX$_1$ PREFER **MARY** PERSON-CL PET THE DOG

‘I prefer Mary, who pets the dog.’ (Hauser, 2019: 67)

Regarding non-human or inanimate heads, only the non-manual marking strategy can give access to both appositive and restrictive readings.