BiBiBi Project ASL Annotation Conventions
Deborah Chen Pichler and Julie A. Hochgesang (Gallaudet University) and Diane Lillo-Martin (University of Connecticut)

**Introduction**

These conventions have been developed by a team of researchers at Gallaudet University and the University of Connecticut (GUC). The primary purpose is for the annotation of longitudinal spontaneous production data from Deaf children of Deaf parents and from bimodal bilingual hearing children of Deaf parents. Data collection and annotation is ongoing.

**Current data set**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th># sessions</th>
<th># annotated (sign)</th>
<th># annotated (speech)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D/D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1:05-4:02</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H/D</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0:11-8:06</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/D (CI)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0:9-8:09</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Annotation conventions**

Annotation conventions take into consideration our analysis goals, and our attempt to use a format as consistent as possible with both common sign language annotation symbols and those used in CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000). The initial annotation passes focus on ID glossing of signs and words as well as translations. We are working toward use of an ID Gloss lexicon.

**Tier hierarchy**

Our tier hierarchy starts with the ASL Utterance, with automatic tokenization for the ASL individual tier based on spaces between annotations. RH/LH are used only when necessary (simultaneous constructions). This provides information from annotators about utterance groupings, and saves time compared to annotation of all two-handed signs twice.

**Annotator responsibilities**

We aim to ask annotators to do as little analysis as possible. Our intention is to include basic information in the sign tiers, with additional details about use of space, non-manuals, etc. left to subsequent analysis passes. This principle guides our decisions. Annotators should use ID glosses and use the translation tier for further information about their interpretation of each utterance.

**Capitalization**

Capitalization systematically represents a conventionalized sign (e.g., SIGN) or type of sign (e.g., DS (for depicting sign) or FS (for fingerspelling)). Lower case signifies that additional information is presented. For conventionalized signs, the lower case portion that follows the capitalized gloss indicates something about its form when distinguishing between variants (SOONnose, SOONchin). For information enclosed in parentheses following codes, aspects of the meaning expressed by the signed is presented in lower case. From a human-readability perspective, this allows the user to perceive patterns in the data just from scanning. Non-sign communicative acts (when annotated) use lower-case (e.g., show(toy)).

**Partly/non-lexical material**

Following our principles, upper-case codes identify the type of sign, with lower-case information added, or supplementary information in additional tiers. For example, the annotation for a depicting sign indicates its category (DS), and the additional information conveys a rough approximation to meaning: DS(car-goes-down-street). Pointing signs are annotated using IX(referent). Further analysis takes place independently on separate tiers.

**References**
