

Written Spanish by Deaf signers as a L2 Spanish variety

Miguel Rodríguez-Mondoñedo / Alexandra Arnaiz

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

Here we report and analyze several features of Written Spanish (WS) used by Deaf adults who are native signers of Peruvian Sign Language (LSP, Spanish acronym), and suggest that Deaf Spanish should be recognized as a variety of L2 Spanish.

Social context. LSP is a language indigenous to Peru, created by the Peruvian Deaf community. Its users have been subject to the heavy burden of discrimination and isolation for a long time. They had to adopt some hearing practices to survive in a predominant hearing community; among others, they had adopted literacy practices, like Written Spanish (WS). For older generations, WS has been self-taught, since education was almost nonexistent; in the last 20 years, the situation has improved, not only because Deaf education has been gradually implemented, but because internet expansion has created an opportunity to share written messages more easily, and therefore, WS has become a more longed-for skill. Many young Deaf Peruvians read and write in many social media outposts.

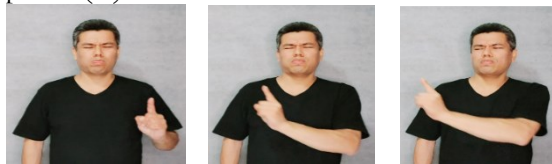
Previous works. As expected, WS by the Deaf exhibits specific properties, which reveal its second language (L2) nature, as it has been observed in several other cases of contact between sign language and written varieties of oral languages (Charrow & Fletcher 1974, Tovar 2000, Fernández & Pertusa 2005, Lissi et al 2001, 2012, Massone et al 2005, 2010, Morales 2015, Pérez 1997, Fernández y Pertusa 2005, Zambrano 2008, Serpa 2012, Guio 2014, Morales 2015, Rusell 2016, Herrera et al. 2016, Ortiz 2018, León 2019,). As for WS in contact with LSP, the only studies are Catalán 2021, describing WS morphosyntactic properties for Deaf school students; and Arnaiz 2021, analyzing patterns of prepositions, articles and verbs in WS in Deaf adults.

Methodology. For this study, we selected 7 Deaf consultants (20-43 years old; 4F, 3M), High School graduated. In an elicitation task, each of them watched one video with an animated short story (no sound). Also, each consultant was assigned a different video with a second story (animated, no sound). Their task was to watch both videos and narrate each story in LSP, first; then, they had to write down the same stories in Spanish by hand (so they would not use the grammar checker). This produced 14 different stories in WS, which we could compare with its corresponding LSP version.

Results and analysis. These texts show several properties specific to WS-LSP contact, including some ones with LSP structures. As other sign languages, LSP uses depictive verbs (verbs with an incorporated classifier: **CL**)—in the sense of Baker 1988, and Sandler & Lillo-Martin 2006. In (1) a **person-CL** is incorporated inside the WALK verb, which in turn consists in a movement from one side to a previously specified location (IX), i.e., a single sign expresses subject, the verb and the direction, something possible because LSP allows simultaneous morphemes. Since Spanish does not allow it, LSP users adopt a linear incorporation strategy, as we see in (2), where the preposition *hacia* (toward) has incorporated into the verb *camina* (walk), which we interpret as an attempt to create a directional verb in WS. In turn, (3) seems to allow for two verbs to share the same object; its corresponding LSP sentence starts with a handling **CL**, which simulates taking a coin, and continuously, without changing the **CL**, the verb transforms from picking to inserting. We hypothesize that the WS user tries to reproduce this continuity by making two verbs share the same object. In (4) there is a novel verbal structure with the complementizer *que* (that), which can be used in Spanish in a few combinations (*tener que*, *haber que*: “have to”); attempting to integrate into a single unit a sequence of predicates: it must be noted that it does not actually calque any LSP structure, but it constitutes an innovation by the SW user, creatively repurposing Spanish structures.

Conclusions and beyond. We have seen that SW users who have LSP as first language, when prompted to write a text in Spanish, sometimes reproduce LSP directly into their WS, but also produce novel structures, showing the same linguistic creativity than other second language learners. This allows us to suggest that Deaf WS should be included when considered the many varieties that Spanish takes when in contact with other languages, something that is never done, as even a cursory revision of the literature on contact Spanish varieties will show. We will also discuss the implications of this variety for the one-grammar model of acquisition (López 2022), since we believe Deaf WS has the potential to illuminate some theoretical issues with respect to language contact, as well as helping us to envision a more nuanced understanding of the social conditions of communities in contact with Spanish.

(1) *LSP*: person(cl)-WALKS-TOWARD-IX



(2) El oso gordito esta contento también hacia camina en el puente.
The bear fatty is happy also TOWARD WALK IN THE BRIDGE
“The fatty bear is happy; he also walks toward the bridge”

(3) Toma moneda ingresa a retirar galleta
Takes coin enters to take out cookie
“She takes the coin and put it (into the vending machine) to take the cookies out”

(4) Ellos logran que caminar a cruzar el puente
They achieve that walk to cross the bridge
“They manage to cross the bridge walking”

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