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## **Personal experience narratives in three West African sign languages: the influence of time-depth, community size and social interaction**

Dias Da Silva Morgado Pereira, M.

### **Citation**

Dias Da Silva Morgado Pereira, M. (2024, February 27). *Personal experience narratives in three West African sign languages: the influence of time-depth, community size and social interaction*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3719763>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## Personal experience narratives in three West African sign languages

The influence of time-depth, community size and social interaction

This book is about three West African sign languages with different time-depths, community sizes and patterns of social interactions. Adamorobe Sign Language (AdaSL), Ghana, is an old village sign language used by 33 deaf people. Langue des Signes de Bouakako (LaSiBo), Côte d'Ivoire, is a new village sign language, used by six deaf people. Língua Gestual Guineense, Guinea-Bissau, is an emerging school-based sign language used by around 500 deaf people.

In the three sign languages, 45 narratives of personal experiences were analysed to better understand how the time depth, the community size and the socialisation frequency influenced the three sign languages. Four different descriptive analyses of the narratives were carried out. Study 1 analysed the structure of the narratives, following Labov & Waletzky's model (1967) and Freytag's dramatic pyramid (1894). Studies 2, 3 and 4 focus on specific narrative devices that work to make narratives more convincing, as part of Labov's (1972) "evaluation" component. These devices refer to the moments when storytellers give dramatic prominence to narratives through the incorporation of characters, such as the use of different signing perspectives (Study 2), the use of role shifting between characters and constructed dialogues (Study 3) and the use of different types of descriptions of the animal (Study 4).

These studies show that AdaSL and male LGG signers use devices that reflect a greater ability to capture the audience's attention, while LaSiBo and female LGG signers tend to show similar patterns in using simpler or reduced devices.

This study shows that the frequency of social interaction between deaf peers is the most crucial factor in language change over time.

ISBN 978-94-6093-445-2

DOI <https://dx.medra.org/10.48273/LOT0661>



Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics  
Landelijke Onderzoekschool Taalwetenschap

LOT  
661

Marta Morgado

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Centre for Linguistics