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.

Chapter 6 – STUDY 3 Narrative devices: Role shifts and constructed dialogues

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to explore narrative devices used in the evaluation component of personal experience narratives in three sign languages in West Africa. The data analysed in this study is the same as from Studies 1 (Chapter 3) and 2 (Chapter 5). Here, in Study 3, I focus on the narrative devices of role shifting (changing between characters) and constructing dialogues (reporting speech), which are related but not dependent on each other.

Just like in the previous study, the devices analysed here are also related to constructed actions, but in different ways. In this study, **role shift** designates, "the punctual transition between character roles within constructed action" (Puupponen et al. 2022, 20), while **constructed dialogue** is considered a form of **constructed action** involving quotations (Metzger 1995, 258).

Role shifts occur mainly in constructed dialogues, but not always because they can also occur between instances of action embodiments by different characters. In turn, constructed dialogues entail mostly role shifts between characters, but not entirely since they can also include monologues.

The present analysis does not include transitions between the roles of the narrator and a character because they were already treated in **Study 1**. Transitions between characters were not handled in Study 2 since the representation of characters was focused on the embodiment itself whether of single characters in the real scale and the simultaneous perspectives or of multiple characters at the same time. In this study, I look at sequential representations of characters, and the transitions occurring in between. In **Study 2**, quoted material, or constructed dialogues, was included in the time calculation of the real scale perspective, as overt constructed actions, for being completely embedded in the character. However, such material is only analysed here. Figure 49 clarifies the relationship between the concepts involved.

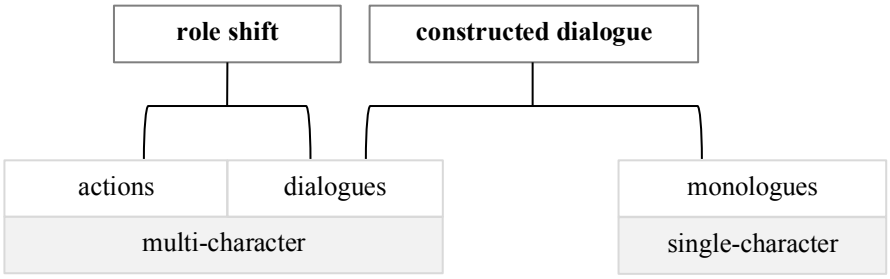


Figure 49. Relationship between the concepts related to role shift and constructed dialogue

Character embodiment is one of the most enhancing narrative devices since it conveys emotional intensity to engage the interlocutor with the past event (see Chapter 5 for more details). Signers seem to easily embody characters as observed in the preferential use of the real scale perspective (in Chapter 5). However, to convey unambiguous narratives, enacted characters need to be clearly indicated. Identifying referents and maintaining their reference adequately throughout a story requires linguistic and narrative skills that take time to develop (Morgan 2005, 327). Thus, such a phenomenon typical of storytelling is usually mastered only by skilled signers (Lillo-Martin 2012, 368). Similarly, while it is more straightforward to reproduce one's own quotes whether as thoughts or addressed at someone else, only highly skilled storytellers will be able to report what others have said in such an embedding of evaluation (Labov 1972, 373).

I begin Study 3 with the literature review (§6.2) on role shift (§6.2.1) and constructed dialogue (§6.2.2). Then, I pose the research questions for this study (§6.3) and describe the methods for the analysis (§6.4). Afterwards, I describe the analysis (§6.5). In the end, I synthesise the results (§6.6), discuss them concerning the literature (§6.7) and draw the relevant conclusions about this study on the three sign languages (§6.8).

6.2 Background on role shift and constructed dialogue

The constant alternation between narration styles, including descriptions of what characters do, think or say, is typical of stories told in spoken languages. Signed narratives express these descriptions through constructed actions and dialogues, involving shifts between characters (Lillo-Martin 2012, 373).

Role shift could be generally defined as a device where "the signer 'assumes' the 'role' of a 'character'" (Padden 1986, 49, quotation marks on the original) or, in other words, becomes someone else (de Vos 2012, 206). Such a device can express both

non-quotational and quotational information (Pfau & Quer 2010, 396). The non-quotational use refers to the reproduction of a character's doings, commonly designated as **constructed actions**, while the quotational use of role shift corresponds to a character's sayings, known as **constructed dialogue** (Lillo-Martin & Quadros 2011, 625). Following up on this idea, Schlenker (2017) termed them, respectively, as **action role shift** and attitude role shift. What they have in common is that they both represent the event from the character's viewpoint (Lillo-Martin 2012, 370) and what distinguishes them is the form of the reported material, whether full body enactments or speech quotations (Pyers & Senghas 2007, 282).

However, role shift will not refer here to the material reported in character enactments, but to the "overt operation by which the signer signals that he adopts the perspective of another individual" (Schlenker 2017, 2). I will, crucially, distinguish between **action role shifts** (as termed by Schlenker 2017), i.e., changes between characters expressing **constructed actions** (as introduced by Metzger 1995), and **quotational role shifts** (as designated by Pfau & Quer 2010), involving constructed dialogues (as coined by Tannen 1986) between at least two characters. Constructed dialogues include reported speech produced by a single character, as quotes of thoughts or feelings, that, inevitably, do not entail role shifting (just like an individual action does not). To clearly distinguish multi from single-character quotational instances without role shift, I propose the term **constructed monologues**. Finally, the **transition** between characters (as put by Puupponen et al. 2022, 20) is indicated by specific **manual** and **non-manual markers** (as used by Emmorey & Reilly 1998).

As seen in the previous study, constructed actions refer to character embodiments, of both human and non-human referents (anthropomorphism), usually of one character at a time (in the real scale and simultaneous perspectives) but also of more than one character at the same time (in **multiple perspectives**). As a form of constructed action that includes quotes, constructed dialogue (Metzger 1995, 258) was included in the previous study for the sake of calculating the proportional durations of signing perspectives within the narratives. Similarly, role shift was also interpreted as a "sub-case of constructed action" (Lillo-Martin & Quadros 2011, 626) and was, thus, equally, included in the overall time computing. These devices are analysed in detail here and will include information on the duration of such embodiments from a real scale – or eventually a multiple – perspective.

Figure 50 seeks to clarify the relationship between Studies 2 and 3 on narrative devices that are interconnected by different forms of constructed action, whilst illustrating how the two devices in this study relate to each other and, finally, how the taxonomy used here is operationalised.

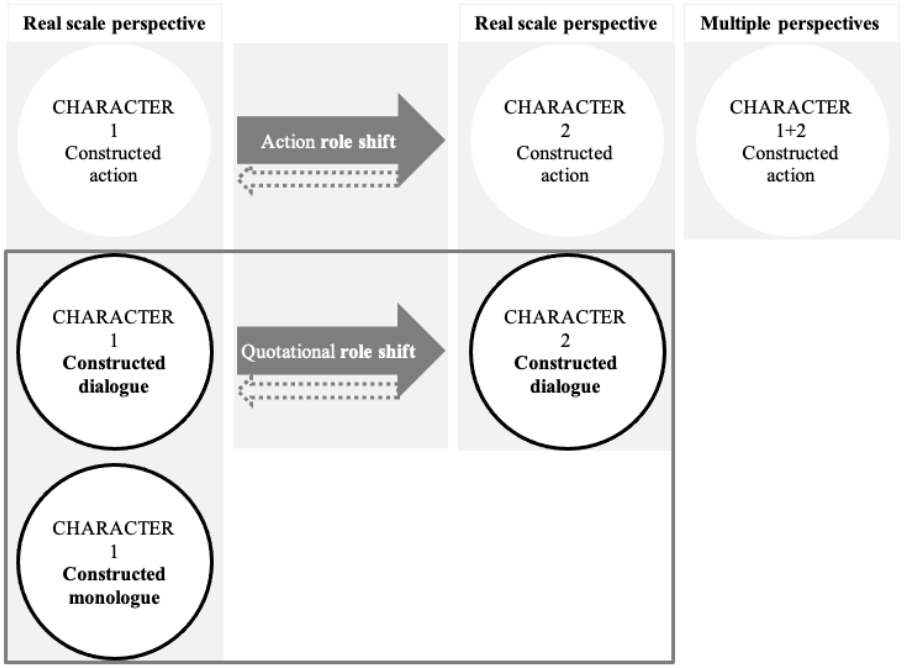


Figure 50. Taxonomy used in this study to describe types of role shifts and of constructed dialogue in relation to signing perspectives

As in Study 2, I continue to use the notions of character embodiments, enactments or dramatisations interchangeably as equivalent terms to constructed actions. Although constructed dialogue is generally used as a larger category that includes any kind of quoted speech (as stated in the title of this study), it is also used specifically here to address multi-character contexts in opposition to single-character ones in constructed monologues. Monologues can also be referred to as self-talk. Quotational material of all sorts includes quotations, quotes, quoted speech, reported speech and propositions indistinctly.

Finally, I recall that shifts between the narrator and characters are not analysed here as they were already treated in Study 1. The present study focuses only on shifts between characters and on quotational material. The literature review concerning role shift and constructed dialogue is presented next separately, keeping in mind that there are aspects where they touch each other.

6.2.1 Overview of role shift types

The act of shifting into a role can be seen as both taking (Pfau & Quer 2010, 396) and maintaining that role (Morgan 2005, 319) or simply as the "punctual transition" into a role (Puupponen et al. 2022, 20), which is the approach I adopt here. Such a transition can occur between the narrator and a character or between characters. Again, this study analyses only shifts between characters (see Study 1 for more details on the changes between the narrator and the character's roles). Finally, characters may be either doing or saying something.

When signers shift from the narrator role, in which they address the audience, to a character role, they take on the viewpoint and actions of a specific character. Thus, from a **neutral narration** or a description in a reduced scale perspective, the signer can dramatise the actions of a character from a real scale or simultaneous perspective. These constructed actions may represent someone driving a car, holding a life-sized steering wheel, and focusing on an imaginary road. Or else they may enact a character as if swimming in the sea, their cheeks filled with air holding their breath, and watching imaginary fish.

When the signer embodying the driver waves at someone, or the swimmer reaches out to touch what could be a fish, an interaction is triggered, i.e., a single-character context becomes a **multi-character** one. However, the signer only shifts to the other character involved in the interaction to convey some kind of response. In this sense, the signer can shift into the person on the sidewalk waving back at the driver or into the fish nibbling the diver's finger. From a real scale perspective, the fish can be the object of anthropomorphism, for instance, if the mouth of the fish is mapped on the signer's mouth with the finger in it. Otherwise, the fish can be represented by the signer's hand grabbing the signer's finger from multiple perspectives. This shows that there are different ways in which signers represent more than one character: either one at a time, such as giving a book to another character and then acting as if receiving it, or simultaneously, like walking side by side with someone else (Liddell 2003). However, the shift between characters has necessarily to occur sequentially since, even if represented in multiple perspectives, the focus has to change from one character to the other. The most usual way is for signers to become one character first and then become a second one in sequential order. Shifts occurring between constructed actions by different characters have been designated as action role shifts (Schlenker 2017) or non-quotational role shifts (Pfau & Quer 2010).

In that example above involving the embodiment of a driver, if instead of waving at someone, the driver stops the car to ask for directions and then another character responds, the signer, besides expressing the characters' actions, is also reporting a dialogue between them. Role shifts in dialogues are especially common (Bahan & Petitto 1980). To distinguish them from action role shifts, the ones in dialogues have

been called attitude role shifts (Schlenker 2017) or quotational role shifts (Pfau & Quer 2010). These will be further discussed in the next subsection.

Role shifting between constructed actions by different characters has been shown to emerge earlier in life than those involving reported speech (Lillo-Martin & Quadros 2011, 632-3). Either way, the transition between characters' constructed actions or dialogues should implicate "an overt operation by which the signer signals that he adopts the perspective of another individual" (Schlenker 2017, 2). It is through such a contrastive role shifting (Padden 1986, 50) that character reference is made clear during a narrative.

Role shift markers

Explicitly identifying whose role is being played and maintaining that identification throughout a story is a skill that seems to appear only later in childhood (Lillo-Martin & Quadros 2011, 632-3). Passages from one character to the other that are not signalled in any way lead to ambiguities. Thus, storytellers have to develop the ability to inform about who is acting or speaking to create clear and engaging sequences of events.

To prevent ambiguities about who the character enacted is, signers have at their disposal both **manual** and **non-manual markers** (Lillo-Martin & Quadros 2011). Even though these markers are connecting constructed actions or dialogues, they are not necessarily part of the character embodiment per se since they aim foremost at informing about the change occurring in between (Kocab et al. 2015, 2). Role shifting marked manually includes lexical and indexical signs, while the one signalled non-manually involves body shifts, changes in the eye gaze and specific facial expressions.

Manual markers rely on lexical labels and descriptions to identify the character being referred to, along with pronominal shifts, which are also used in spoken languages. Such pronominals are expressed in the signed modality by indexical points to the self or to a location in space to indicate an additional character, which Kocab and colleagues designated as point-to-chest and point-to-space (ibid.).

Non-manual markers were first described as contrast types in body changes, which Padden distinguished as forward-back and side-to-side. In the first one, more straightforward, the signer changes between characters by moving the body slightly forward and then slightly to the back. In the second type of contrast, the signer turns slightly from one side to the other, assigning each side of the body to a character (1986, 50-51). A change in body position – affecting also the position of the shoulders and, eventually, the head – tends to accompany a change in the role that the signer is adopting.

Besides body changes, modifications in the direction of the eye gaze (c.f., Bahan and Supalla 1995) can also be considered essential clues in tracking the shift between roles in sign language discourse (Padden 1986; Bahan & Supalla 1995; Lillo-Martin & Klima 1980; Lillo-Martin 1992; Pyers & Senghas 2007). The switch between the gaze at the audience, in the narrator's role, and the character's gaze, embedded in the narrated event, clearly distinguishes narration roles (see Study 1 for the type of narration role associated with each structural component). Thus, the character's gaze is crucial in ascertaining that someone other than the narrator is being dramatised (see Study 2 for character embodiment in the signing perspectives, namely, in real scale, multiple and simultaneous perspectives). What changes occur, then, in multi-character contexts? While assuming a character's role interacting with an additional character, the eye gaze may turn to the assigned location of that referent (Padden 1986, 53; Liddell and Metzger 1998, 672). In this way, in a sequential interaction between characters, the gaze at the referent is an important cue in identifying who is taking the floor at that moment.

Another common non-manual marker in role shifting is a change in the facial expression which is usually entrenched in the character's enactments. Thus, when signers switch from one character to the other, their facial expressions are likely to accompany that shift (e.g., Schlenker 2017, 20).

Kocab, Pyers and Senghas (2015) looked at the emergence of referential markers in ISN, the young sign language of Nicaragua, by comparing language performances in deaf adults divided into two age groups. Their study showed that role shift markers required time to develop in range and frequency (ibid., 10). Nonetheless, manual marking, especially in lexically labelling referents – appears before the non-manual (ibid., 9). In these, consistently shifting between facial expressions associated with distinct characters seems to be acquired only later (Emmorey and Reilly 1998, 89).

6.2.2 Overview of constructed dialogues

As a form of constructed action involving quotations, constructed dialogue reproduces past quotations, not precisely as they were told, but as similarly as possible (Metzger 1995, 256–258). Tannen argues that "reported speech is a misnomer" (1986, 311) because when speakers quote what they said in a past event, they are not retelling the exact words but rather the same message by constructing a facsimile of the dialogue. Thus, she proposed to replace the term reported speech with constructed dialogue.

Like dialogues created by fiction writers where characters and lines are constructed, accounts of actual events in personal experience narratives – the subject of this thesis – are also repeated not as initially told but as close reconstructions. Tannen also references Labov's (1972) work when noting that the first-person dialogues in

personal experience narratives are more vivid than third-person ones. A dialogue can be reproduced only from one of the character's viewpoints, especially if storytellers are quoting themselves.

When the storyteller reports propositions from more than one intervener in multi-character contexts, a role shift is bound to occur. These two phenomena are so interconnected that the quotational use of role shift has been the most described in the literature (Quer 2018, 277).

Constructed monologues

In its general sense, the notion of constructed dialogues does not imply exclusively speech interactions in multiple-character contexts. It can also refer to monologues produced by a single character. To distinguish them from dialogues entailing role shifting, we might call these **constructed monologues**. They can express inner thoughts, feelings, emotions or self-talk while the embodied character experiences events alone.

Such constructed monologues in sign language can be mistaken for comments from the narrator since this happens when the signer uses lexical signs while acting as a character. Cormier and colleagues exemplify this with a signer, within a narrative, saying "I want to cook something" (2015, 4). In this case, the signer does not represent just an action because there is also quoted speech, or dialogue because there is no additional character, but rather the character's own thought about the event.

As a final note, research in the emerging sign language of Nicaragua and the acquisition by deaf children of the narrative devices analysed here have shown that the operations implicated in this study develop differently over time. Thus, shifts between constructed actions by different characters are acquired before clear representations of dialogues and, here, the first-person viewpoint is more straightforward than reproducing someone else's. Also, manual markers in character shifting precede non-manual markers, where changes in body postures seem to be easier to express than in facial expressions. Based on these assumptions, I present, in the next section, the research questions for Study 3.

6.3 Research questions

In the previous section, I described role shifts and constructed dialogues as rich tools used by storytellers to enhance their narratives. Here, I revisit the research questions

leading to the analysis of specific narrative devices in emerging and village sign languages.

The motivation for the research in this thesis is that sign language narratives are understudied outside of a few dominant national sign languages, and at the same time such narratives can be linguistically very rich. The overarching research question of this thesis is what types of narrative linguistic structures are found in sign languages like the three in this study (AdaSL, LaSiBo, LGG) that have different community sizes, language ages and interaction habits? Specifically, for the study of narrative devices, I ask **how do signers of the three sign languages enhance their narratives through particular evaluative devices.**

In Study 3, I analyse how signers make use of role shifts and constructed dialogues in personal experience narratives in the three languages. The specific research question is: **To what extent do signers of the three sign languages produce role shifts and constructed dialogues to enhance their narratives?** I hypothesize these narrative devices may require time and regular social interactions to develop. Therefore, emerging sign languages with little socialisation between peers, i.e., LaSiBo, may still need to be able to **shift between roles** and **construct dialogues** effectively to convey clear and engaging narratives.

As described further in the next section, the three levels of analysis in this study are focused on (1) time proportions dedicated to the character's role in constructed actions and dialogues, including for each type of character enacted; (2) the number of characters represented and of role shift markers, in terms of range and frequency; and (3) a description of different ways of reporting events – actions and dialogues – in multi-character contexts and monologues.

The prediction is that the sign languages with more interactions, either throughout their lifetimes (AdaSL) or as a result of a relatively large population in constant interaction with each other (LGG men) will use role shifts and constructed dialogues more often and effectively than in sign languages with fewer interactions overall (LaSiBo, LGG women). To analyse such narrative devices, I explain next what methods were used in this study.

6.4 Methods for the analysis of role shifts and constructed dialogues

To test the hypothesis for this study, I recall now the methods described in subsection 2.5.5 (but see Chapter 2 for more information about how the narratives were collected, processed, and coded). Study 3 uses the same data as in the other studies; that is, personal experience narratives that describe animal encounters. The number of

narratives is as follows: 17 AdaSL narratives, 12 LaSiBo narratives and 16 LGG narratives.

As in the other studies, this analysis relies also on ELAN annotations. Five ELAN tiers are common to all studies (translation, glosses for both hands, eye gaze and role), one is shared with Study 2 (character) and two are specific to Study 3 (role shift and constructed dialogue). Table 29 describes briefly each tier indicating the corresponding annotation type.

Table 29. Overview of ELAN tiers for Study 3

Parent tiers ↳ Children tiers	**Controlled vocabulary**	**Brief description**
Translation	text	Free translation
RH gloss	text	Narrow translation
LH gloss		
Eye gaze	- gaze on the audience - character's gaze	Identifies the narrator's role Identifies the character's role
Role	- narrator - overt constructed actions - partially overt constructed actions	Specifies the signer's role type
Character	text	Specifies who the character is
↳ gaze at referent		Identifies who or what the character is looking at
Role shift	- lexical label - point-to-self - point-to-space - body shift - facial expression	Specifies the marker in the role shift
Constructed dialogue	Dialogue: text Monologue: text	Duplicates translated quotations in dialogues and monologues

I recall that Study 1 had already observed role switches between the narrator and the character when moving on from the first structural component to the second one. In other words, the narrator begins by setting up the who, when and where and then

introduces the character within the event. At the end of the narrative, the embodied character typically switches to the narrator by directing the eye gaze back to the audience. In such shifts between the narrator's and the character's roles, the direction of the eye gaze is, in fact, an important cue.

The analysis for this study focused only on the **character's role** which was identified by the character's gaze (in the eye gaze tier) and the use of constructed actions – both overt and partially overt (in the role tier) and, crucially, in the character tier. The character tier distinguishes who is being 'played' or embodied so it contains an open value where every character is named as (HIM/HER)SELF, FATHER, SNAKE, and so on. Considering that these narratives are about personal experiences, the main character is expected to correspond to the signer him/herself in the past.

In **multi-character** contexts, the interaction could be further distinguished if the character's gaze at referent tier named an additional character. Also, the role shift tier identified the first marker – whether manual or non-manual – signalling a change between characters. As a side note, in multi-character contexts with a role shift where characters are represented at the same time in multiple perspectives, the characters from and to which the shift occurs are named in the character tier, even though they are further identified in the children tiers of the character tier, concerning both hands, body and face representations (see §2.5.5 and §5.4 for further details). The character named in the character tier is the one leading the focus in the shift.

Multi-character contexts include dialogues, whose translations were duplicated in the constructed dialogue tier. To differentiate these from **monologues** occurring in a single-character context, translated quotations were preceded in the annotation by 'dialogue:' or 'monologue:'.

With these annotations in hand, I proceeded with different approaches to analyse the data. Following up on the proportional distribution of signing perspectives in the narratives, in Study 2, I focused in this study only on the time dedicated within the narratives to the characters' roles. I recall that characters can be represented on a real scale (in overt and partially overt constructed actions), with multiple and simultaneous perspectives. Of these, the most used perspective was the real scale. There were then very few occurrences of multiple perspectives in the three sign languages and even fewer of simultaneous perspectives only in LGG. Thus, nearly all instances of constructed dialogue and role shift are produced in the real scale perspective.

The reduced scale perspective and neutral narrations are told by the narrator. The total time of narratives told in the character's role, as shown in Table 30, maintains the actual values obtained in Study 2 in each language (see Table 28 in §5.5). Importantly, the number of narratives decreases in LaSiBo and by female LGG signers because two narratives in each group were told entirely in the narrator's role.

Table 30. Proportional time told in the character's role in the three sign languages

Perspectives in the **character's role**	AdaSL			LaSiBo			LGG					
							men			women		
	Narratives	Time	Proportion	Narratives	Time	Proportion	Narratives	Time	Proportion	Narratives	Time	Proportion
Real scale	17	11:17:44	75%	10	03:11:42	41%	8	02:09:23	45%	6	02:18:31	50%
Multiple	9	00:22:16	2%	4	00:04:39	1%	6	00:22:10	8%	2	00:07:19	3%
Simultaneous	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	00:17:24	6%	2	00:03:29	1%
TOTALS	**17**	**11:40:00**	**77%**	**10**	**03:16:21**	**42%**	**8**	**02:48:57**	**59%**	**6**	**02:29:19**	**54%**

Within the total time dedicated to the characters in each narrative, I began by **(1)** distinguishing the **time told with constructed actions** from the one involving quotations in **constructed dialogues** (and monologues). Then, **(1a)** within each of these proportions, I divided the time spent on the character representing the **self** from the time spent on the embodiment of additional characters. In the latter, **(1b)** I further distinguished the time portraying **other people** from the one referring to **animals** – the main topic of the narratives collected in this thesis.

Afterwards, **(2)** I calculated the **number of characters** embodied in each narrative and the **number of times that each character was enacted**, in both constructed actions and dialogues. Based on this, **(2a)** I counted the number of **role shifts** and occurrences of each **marker type**.

Finally, **(3)** I looked at the **reported material** and how it was expressed. Within a multi-character context, I analysed whether the interaction occurred **(3a)** in a one-way directionality when only the **first-person viewpoint** is represented, or **(3b)** by embodying the **other character responding** as well. As a last point, I observed **(3c)** the types of **monologues** reported in the narratives. To provide a general view of the different levels of analysis, Figure 51 systematises how they relate to each other.

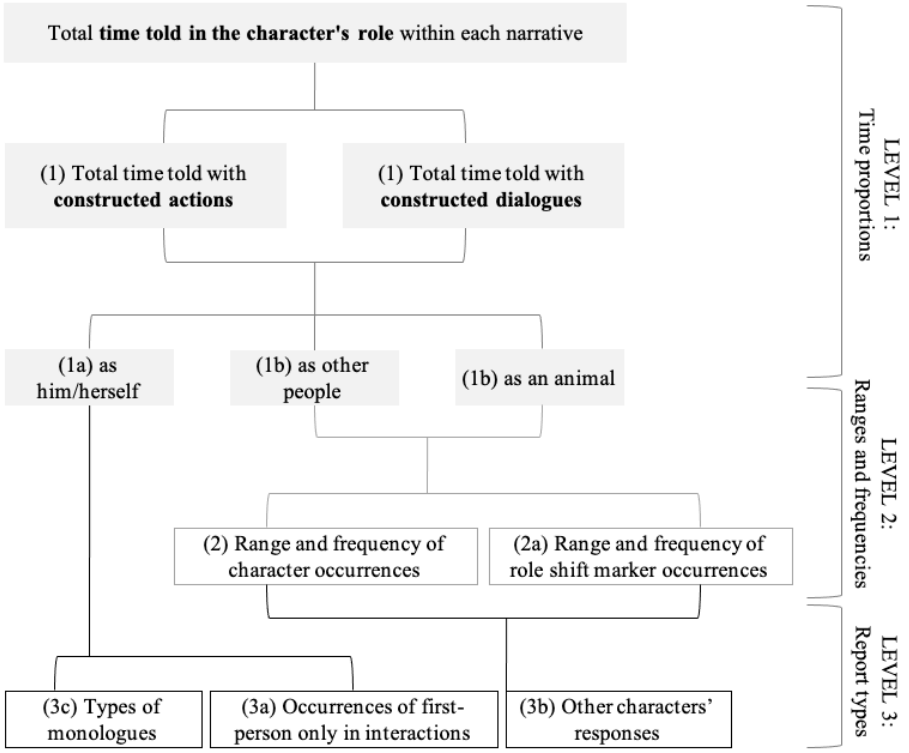


Figure 51. Levels of analysis in Study 3

Based on these levels of analysis, the results per language will be presented in the next section first for **action role shifts**, i.e., concerning the interactions between characters embodying **constructed actions**, (§6.5.1); then for **constructed dialogues**, involving quotations in interactions between characters (§6.5.2); and finally for **constructed monologues**, concerning quotations in self-talk (§6.5.3).

6.5 Descriptive analysis of role shifts and constructed dialogues

The present section focuses on describing additional devices enriching narratives. Role shift is one of those devices in which the storyteller has to make clear to the audience who is who. Dialogues usually make use of role shifts between characters. Otherwise, storytellers can construct monologues or express the character's thoughts. Labov & Waletzky (1967) argued that constructed dialogues made the narrative come alive, stimulating the audience's interest. How do signers in these three sign languages

proceed when there is more than one character in the play? And how effectively do they report quotations?

Looking only at character embodiments in the narratives collected for this study, in Table 31, it is not surprising that constructed actions are produced much more frequently than constructed dialogues. No quotations were observed in LaSiBo and only two female LGG signers reported speech in their narrative. What is more, signers are enacting themselves in the past in the majority of the time dedicated to the character role. Only on a few occasions do they enact a character other than themselves, and mainly while doing something rather than talking. Here, in LaSiBo, there is only one narrative where the signer enacts one other character, an animal. Finally, included in the constructed dialogues where signers quote themselves, there are five instances with monologues in AdaSL and one in each gender group in LGG.

Table 31. Proportional distribution of character embodiments in constructed actions and dialogues in the three sign languages

		AdaSL			LaSiBo			LGG					
								men			women		
Constructed actions	Self	17	09:49:49	**65%**	10	03:09:39	**41%**	8	02:00:29	**42%**	6	01:42:49	**37%**
	Other	12	00:51:16	**6%**	1	00:02:03	0,4%	5	00:32:09	**11%**	5	00:30:29	**11%**
Constructed dialogues	Self	8	00:49:53	**5%**	-	-	-	6	00:15:29	**5%**	1	00:00:35	0,2 %
	Other	1	00:09:02	**1%**	-	-	-	2	00:00:50	0,3%	2	00:04:38	**2%**
TOTALS		**17**	**11:40:00**	**77%**	**10**	**03:16:21**	**41%**	**8**	**02:48:57**	**59%**	**6**	**02:29:19**	**54%**
		Narratives	Time	Proportion	Narratives	Time	Proportion	Narratives	Time	Proportion	Narratives	Time	Proportion

In multi-character contexts, involving the embodiment of other characters, role shifts were strikingly marked with lexical labels, in both AdaSL and LGG. These manual markers were followed from a distance by the non-manual ones, namely body shifts. Changes in facial expressions occurred only in AdaSL and significantly. There is only one role shift observed in LaSiBo involving an animal, where the human character changes back to herself with a body shift. Importantly, a small part of these non-manuals and the point-to-chest markers referred back to the self, i.e., the character representing signers in their past experiences. It must also be noted that all role shifts that were not marked concern constructed dialogues told in the first-person only, without getting any response back.

Again, as was the case in the previous study, the proportions of character embodiments, in each language, consist of different numbers of narratives and corresponding durations. This affects foremost the situations where actual numbers

are compared, as in occurrences of role shift markers in 12 AdaSL narratives, one in LaSiBo and five in each gender group in LGG. Table 32 shows a high divergence in the total amount of role shift markers. However, by looking closely at the differences between categories, it is possible to see that lexical labels are the preferred marker, followed by changes in facial expressions in AdaSL and body shifts in LGG. The latter is also the only role shift marker used in LaSiBo.

Table 32. Range and frequency of role shift markers in the three sign languages

		AdaSL	LaSiBo	LGG	
				men	woman
Manual markers	Lexical label	24	-	6	7
	Point-to-chest	2		1	2
	Point-to-space	-		1	-
Non-manual markers	Body shift	5	1	4	2
	Facial expression	12	-	-	-
	None	6	-	4	2
	Total manual	**26**	**-**	**8**	**9**
	Total non-manual	**18**	**1**	**4**	**2**
	Narratives	12/17	1/12	5/8	5/8

This general overview of the results reveals distinctions between the three languages that have been unveiled over the previous two studies. In what the narrative devices studied here are concerned, LaSiBo signers are shown to be especially unprepared as effective storytellers in comparison to signers of the older sign language and the larger deaf community.

Results are described next for action role shifts (§6.5.1), between characters dramatising constructed actions in the three sign languages. Afterwards, constructed dialogues are presented for instances in the first-person only and with quotational role shifts (§6.5.2) in AdaSL and LGG. Lastly, monologues are illustrated in AdaSL and one by a male LGG signer (§6.5.3).

6.5.1 Action role shifts

The embodiment of their own character in life-sized constructed actions occurred in all narratives except for two in LaSiBo and two by female LGG signers that were told as neutral narrations. However, additional characters interacting in constructed actions appear in even lesser narratives, namely in a bit more than half of them in AdaSL and LGG and in only one in LaSiBo. In AdaSL, almost half of these involve interactions with the animal, as does the only one in LaSiBo and only one per gender in LGG. All action role shifts observed are marked, mostly with a lexical label, but also with a change in the facial expression.

Since action role shifts occurred in all three sign languages, results are presented first in AdaSL, then in LaSiBo and finally in LGG. Findings show which additional characters are represented and how they are referenced by the signer.

Action role shifts in AdaSL narratives

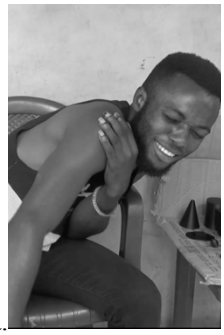
Twelve out of the 17 AdaSL narratives contain role shifts between characters. However, the time dedicated to embodying other characters is very little (6%). This time was evenly distributed between the representation of an additional person (in 11 of the 12 narratives with embodiments of others) and the animal (in 7 of 12 narratives). The other human character was usually a man or the character's father. In fact, two of the narratives are actually vicarious in that they tell the father's experience with an animal attack. Of the animals, snakes are as expected the most mentioned one, followed by a lion in two narratives.

Every time a new character was introduced it was signalled explicitly, in the large majority of the occurrences through lexical labels. Out of 19 references to other characters (11 people and 8 animals), all but three were previously labelled. Shifts to and from animals were also marked by body shifts and changes in facial expressions, more than in human characters. What is more, of the 12 narratives involving the enactment of others, signers went back to the character representing themselves in half of those narratives, signalling the shift mainly with their facial expressions (in nine of 12 markings).

The example in (81) illustrates role shifting between the signer's own character and another person, in this case, between himself in the past event and his father. In this story, he was putting his hand in a hole in the ground as a young boy. Playing himself, as if with his whole arm inside a hole, he expresses effort through his face, in (81a). He then signals that his father is entering the scene with a lexical label, i.e., by signing FATHER, and enacts him right away, in (81b). When his father saw what he was doing, he walks quickly and in distress towards him to warn him of the danger. When the

signer goes back to himself with the arm on the hole there's a clear-cut change in his facial expression, in (81c).

(81) Action role shifts between (a and c) himself and (b) his father marked by a lexical label and facial expression in AdaSL (ADA_07 narrative)

a.  b.   c. 

gloss	HAND-IN-HOLE	FATHER	WALK	HAND-IN-HOLE
character	**himself**	**father**		**himself**
gaze at referent	-	at himself		-
role shift		**lexical label**		**facial expression**

'I was putting my hand in a hole. My father saw me and came to me. I kept putting my hand in the hole.'

In (82) the signer is telling the experience of her father in being attacked by a snake. So, in this vicarious narrative, she enacts her father as the main character and, in the particular moment illustrated by this example, her father had just been attacked by a snake and was expressing pain, in (82a). She then introduces a new character, with the sign MAN, a lexical label, and readily enacts him as if running to the victim and picking him up, accented by her body and facial expression, in (82b).

(82) Action role shift between (a) her father and (b) a man marked by a lexical label in AdaSL (ADA_11a narrative)

a.  b. 

gloss	PAIN	MAN	RUN	TAKE
character	**father**	**man**		
role shift		**lexical label**		

'He kept screaming. A man ran to him and picked him up.'

In (83), the signer shifts roles between her own character and the snake, in (83a) and then between another human character and the snake, in (83b). She is first enacting the snake together with an entity classifier in real scale and then marks the shift with a point-to-chest for ME, and continues saying she sees the snake, in (83a). Later on in the same narratives, the signer embodies an additional character as if shooting the snake and, with a body shift, she becomes the snake dying, in (83b).

(83) Action role shift between (a) the snake and herself marked by a point-to-chest and (b) between a man and the snake marked by a body shift in AdaSL (ADA_09 narrative)

a. 

gloss	BIG-SNAKE	ME	SEE
character	**snake**	**herself**	
role shift		**point-to-chest**	

'I saw a big snake.'

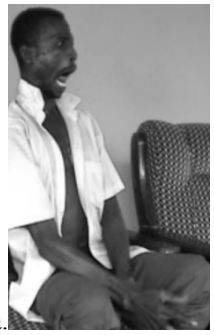
b. 

gloss	SHOOT		DEAD	
character	**man**		**snake**	
role shift		**body shift**		

'The man shot the snake and it died.'

Similarly, in (84), the AdaSL signer shifts between himself and the snake and then back to himself by marking it only with a change in facial expression. He tells about the moment when he came across the snake, leaning back with his body and expressing fear with his face, in (84a). Immediately after, he embodies the snake while representing the snake's tongue with his hand as an entity classifier, by clearly changing his facial expression to show threat, in (84b). As he portrays a menacing snake, he returns to himself being scared, pointing at the snake with, again a distinct facial expression of fear, in (84c).

(84) Action role shift between (a and c) himself and the (b) snake marked by a change in facial expression in AdaSL (ADA_14 narrative)

a.  b.  c. 

gloss	-	SNAKE-TONGUE (CL)	POINT
character	**himself**	**snake**	**himself**
gaze at referent	at the snake	at himself	at the snake
role shift	**facial expression**		**facial expression**

'I was afraid. (…) The snake's head stood up and poked its tongue out, moving sideways. (…) I was afraid.'

These examples show that AdaSL signers switch between themselves and another person or the animal encountered, and then, eventually, back to themselves, with ease taking advantage of both manual and non-manual markers. They shift roles in different ways, usually with a lexical label, but also with changes in facial expressions and body shifts. This shows that AdaSL signers seem to effectively change between characters by signalling it clearly. How is this device handled in LaSiBo, a much younger and used by a much smaller population than AdaSL?

Action role shifts in LaSiBo narratives

After observing a significant range of role shifting between acting characters in AdaSL, a high contrast becomes evident with LaSiBo. Only one of the 12 narratives shows the embodiment of a character other than the self, an animal with horns. This embodiment is introduced by a lexical label, in (85a), though it is not preceded by the human character but by a neutral narration, thus it is not a switch between characters. However, after enacting the animal walking by, in (85b), she switches to her own character in the past with a body shift, in (85c).

(85) Action role shift introduced by (a) a lexical label for (b) an animal with horns and (c) herself (c) marked by a body shift in LaSiBo (LAS_01b narrative)

a.  b.  c. 

gloss	ANIMAL	WALKING	WALK
character	**animal**		**herself**
role shift		**body shift**	

Thus, in the one instance in LaSiBo where a character other than the self, an animal, is embodied right after being labelled, it shifts back to the self by leaning back. This minimal occurrence is strikingly different from the diversity of examples observed in AdaSL. I now turn to the even younger LGG used by a macro deaf community.

Action role shifts in LGG narratives

The previous subsection showed that in the family sign language used in the village of Bouakako, only one signer embodied a character other than the self, concerning the animal, contrasting with a high variety of occurrences in AdaSL narratives. What do action role shifts look like in the emerging sign language of Guinea-Bissau? Are there differences between genders?

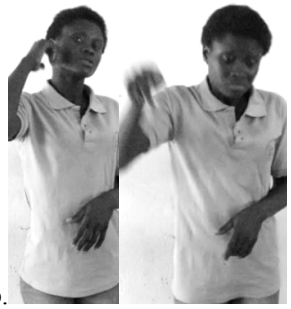
The results of the analysis show that five signers in each gender group embodied other characters in a proportion higher (11%) than in AdaSL. However, unlike AdaSL, LGG signers enacted other people, usually hearing men, much more often (in all five narratives) than the snake (in two narratives told by men and one by a woman).

Similar to AdaSL, there are 19 references to other characters (11 by men and 8 by women), but much fewer to animals. Again, all human characters were previously labelled. In addition, subsequent mentions could involve a body shift and on one occasion (by a deaf man) a pointing sign was also used. Body shifting was the only non-manual observed in LGG and also the only one signalling the switch to the snake. Shifts to and from animals were also marked by body shifts and changes in facial expressions, more than in human characters. Less expressively than in AdaSL, only a

few LGG signers (two men and one woman) went back to the character representing themselves, signalling the return either with a point-to-chest or a body shift. Interestingly, two LGG male signers change roles with the snake within multiple perspectives, as the only occurrences in the data analysed here.

To illustrate role shifts between the character representing themselves and the additional human character, the signer in (86a) signals herself with a point-to-chest before telling that she was walking to call a hearing person after spotting a snake. Then, she signs HEARING and enacts that other character walking back to the place where the snake was, in (86b). At that location, she shifts her body and returns to her own character and as if looking at the hearing, she points at the snake, in (86c).

(86) Action role shifts introduced by a point-to-chest for herself (a) and by a lexical label for the hearing (b) and with a body shift back to herself (c) in LGG (LGG_16 narrative)

a.  b.  c. 

gloss	ME	WALK	HEARING	WALK	POINT
character	**herself**		**hearing**		**herself**
gaze at referent				at the snake	at the hearing
role shift			**lexical label**		**body shift**

'I walked to the hearing. The hearing came and I pointed at where the snake was.'

Although, in (87), the markers are similar to the previous example, here the embodiment of his own character in the past is in multiple perspectives together with a snake represented by his right hand as an entity classifier. In this example, the signer switches between himself, as the son, and his father. He begins by telling that he was up on a tree harvesting cashew while unknowingly he had a snake hanging over him, in (87a). He then signs FATHER and enacts his father on the ground looking up at the tree, noticing the snake right next to his son and throwing something at it, in (87b). At

the end of this excerpt, he goes back to embody his own character seeing the snake in front of him, again in multiple perspectives, in (87c).

(87) Action role shift between (a) himself and (b) his father marked by a lexical label and then (c) a return to himself with a body shift in LGG (LGG_06 narrative)

a. b. 

gloss	SNAKE	FATHER	LOOK	SURPRISE	THROW	SNAKE
RH character	snake	**father**				snake
LH character	**himself**					**himself**
gaze at referent			at himself			at the snake
role shift		**lexical label**			**body shift**	

'The snake was over me. Father was below and looked up at it surprised: He threw [something]. The snake was by my side and I saw it.'

In (88), the signer shifts between himself hitting the snake, in (88a), and the snake being hit, using also multiple perspectives, in (88b). Unlike (88c) where the focus is on his own character being surprised by the snake, in (88b) the focus is on the snake being hit with rocks. Here he first enacts himself by throwing rocks at the snake, in (88a). With a body shift, he becomes the snake being hit, while his left keeps throwing rocks, in (88b) and gradually he embodies solely the snake dying, in (88c). This is followed by a point-to-chest signalling the shift back to himself where he then acts as if picking the snake up, in (88d).

(88) Action role shift between (a) himself and (b and c) the snake marked by a body shift and then (d) a return to himself with a point-to-chest in LGG (LGG_03 narrative)

a. b. c. d.

gloss	THROW -ROCK	BE-HIT	DIE	ME	GRAB
RH character	**himself**	**snake**	**snake**	**himself**	
LH character		himself			
gaze at referent	at the snake				at the snake
role shift		**body shift**		**point-to-chest**	

'We threw stones at it. The snake felt the beatings and slowly died. I grabbed it.'

Although proportionally LGG signers dedicated much more time than AdaSL to the embodiment of other characters, they did less so with the snakes and without relying on facial expressions as non-manual markers in role shifts. What is striking in LGG, especially in men, is role shifting involving multiple perspectives. LaSiBo signers enacted another character with constructed actions only once, making it hardly surprising that there are no occurrences of reported speech in this language. Thus, the following subsection presents role shifts with constructed dialogues in LGG and AdaSL.

6.5.2 Constructed dialogues

Having observed that both AdaSL and LGG signers do embody other characters, though in a small proportion of the total time of the narratives, and mark role shifts effectively within constructed actions, I now analyse role shifts between constructed dialogues in these two sign languages. Both AdaSL and LGG (especially male) signers do show a small time proportion of reported speech in their narratives, most of it in the first person and without getting a response from the interlocutor. The few

two-way dialogues are marked with a lexical label or a change in the facial expression when switching characters.

In contrast, in the 12 LaSiBo narratives, just as there was only one character embodied by the signer other than themselves in the past, none presents quotational material. Female LGG signers also show a minimal percentage of quotations when compared to men or AdaSL signers. This lack of occurrences indicates the underdevelopment of such narrative devices in these two groups.

In the previous subsection, the results were shown only for the instances where other characters in constructed actions were represented as naturally implicating a role shift. Differently, the present subsection describes all instances that contain quotations, which include those produced only in the first person. Here, I present such occurrences whenever they are explicitly directed at someone. This is distinct from self-talk whose results are described in §6.5.3. Results on quotations in constructed dialogues are described first in AdaSL and then in LGG.

Constructed dialogues in AdaSL narratives

Although with the same time proportion as constructed actions by other characters (6%), constructed dialogues are observed in fewer narratives (eight of 17). Of these, a third are treated here (the remaining are monologues).

In AdaSL data, there is only one dialogue where both parties are represented and, consequently, a role shift occurs, first indicated with a lexical label and then with a change in facial expression. Five narratives present only the first-person viewpoint in a dialogue, even if two instances refer to one-way interventions of others.

I begin by illustrating a quotation told by the character enacting the signer in the past event. In her story, shown in (89), she had just seen a lion and rushed to warn her mother. At this moment in the storyline, she is telling her mother that the lion was there and she had to leave or she could risk being eaten. This is just a small part of a longer speech report told in the first person. However, she does not inform her audience of how her mother reacted to such a warning.

(89) Constructed dialogue in the first person only told by herself to her mother in AdaSL (ADA_11b narrative)

gloss	LION	GO-AWAY	LOOK	CL:LION-BITE
character	**herself**			
gaze at referent	at her mother		at the lion	at her mother
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: "The lion is there and you have to leave. When it sees you, it can eat you."			

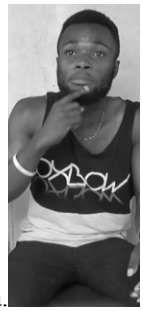
In another narrative, the signer, enacting himself, tells a woman that his leg hurts, and then signs WOMAN. After this introduction, while keeping his left hand on his hurt leg, he embodies the woman and, from multiple perspectives, reports her speech. Thus, in (90), the woman is telling him how worried she was, asks him about the attack, and expresses relief in the end. Again, his character does not react to the woman's propositions. It is also curious that all the signs reproducing the woman's line exist as gestures in Ghana. Hence the signer may be reporting here a hearing person's way of talking.

(90) Constructed dialogue in the first person only told by a woman to him in AdaSL (ADA_08 narrative)

RH gloss	LONG-AGO	AH	HOW?	KILL?	GOOD	GOD	BLESS
LH gloss	-	HOLD-LEG					
RH character	**woman**	**woman**					
LH character		himself					
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: "I waited for a long time. What happened? Did you kill it? God bless you."						

The one dialogue where the two characters intervene occurs between his father and himself. The signer begins by indicating that his father is taking the stage next with a lexical label, in (91a). He then embodies his father reproaching him with gestures for having put his arm in the hole, warning him of the danger of a snake appearing and biting him to death, in (91b). In the end, he replies briefly as his young self, in (91c). This shift is marked by a change in his facial expression.

(91) Constructed dialogue with role shift introduced with (a) a lexical label between (b) his father and (c) him in AdaSL (ADA_07 narrative)

a.  b. 

gloss	FATHER	YOU	PUT-ARM-IN-HOLE	NO	HEAR
character	**father**				
gaze at referent		at himself			
role shift					
constructed dialogue		**Dialogue**: "Don't put your arm in the hole! Do you hear? (...)"			

gloss	HEAR	NO	SNAKE-BITE
character	**father**		
gaze at referent	at himself		
role shift			
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: "Do you hear? If the snake bites you (...)"		


c.

gloss	DIE	SEE	NO	OK
character	**father**			**himself**
gaze at referent	at himself			at his father
role shift			**facial expression**	
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: (…) you die. You have to see, don't touch."			"Ok"

When looking at the narratives as a whole, dialogues reported in AdaSL correspond only to a small time proportion. However, the few occurrences include reconstructed lines told by other characters and one dialogue with a role shift marked by a change in the facial expression for a response from the interlocutor. These may indicate that AdaSL signers do use these devices in their narratives with some ease.

Considering that the findings in the action role shifts were quite similar between AdaSL and LGG, I now turn to this macro-community sign language to analyse the occurrences of constructed dialogues in both genders.

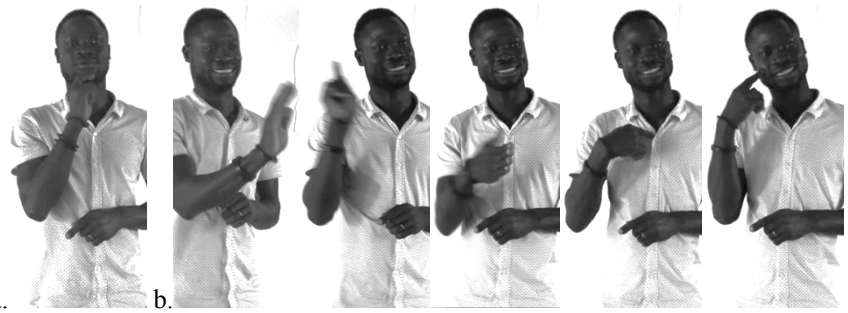
Constructed dialogues in LGG narratives

Unlike action role shifts that showed quite similar results in men and women, the use of constructed dialogues is strikingly different. This way, male LGG signers present again similar proportions of constructed dialogues to AdaSL. Like AdaSL, men in LGG partake in four dialogues only in the first person (as themselves) and in two dialogues with feedback. In these dialogues, the role shift is usually introduced by a lexical label. In contrast, there are just two women reporting speech in the first person only, but as told by a character other than themselves.

Most commonly, signers report speech told by their own character in the past in the first person only, i.e., without getting a propositional response from the interlocutor. In (92), the signer tells how he had just seen a snake and goes back to his father to

warn him. When he addresses his father, he identifies him with a lexical label, in (92a), before quoting himself, in (92b). Although there is no response from his father, the character representing himself takes him to the snake's location after the warning.

(92) Constructed dialogue in the first person only addressed at his father identified with (a) a lexical label told (b) by himself in LGG (LGG_02 narrative)

a. b. 

gloss	FATHER	CALL	THERE	SNAKE	I	SEE
character		**himself**				
gaze at referent		at his father				
constructed dialogue		**Dialogue**: "I saw a snake there."				

In the next example, the signer is saying goodbye to his mother before leaving for work – he will encounter the snake on his way there. Differently from the previous example, the signer embeds the identification of the addressee, his mother, in (93a), within his own quotation, in (93a,c). Again, there is no reaction from his mother in this one-way dialogue.

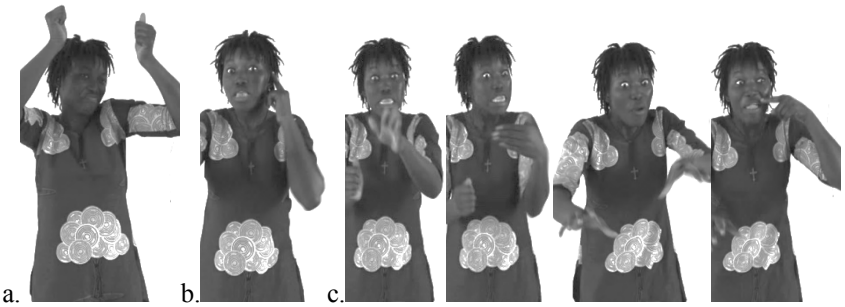
(93) Constructed dialogue in the first person only told (a and c) by himself to his mother identifies with (b) a lexical label in LGG (LGG_05 narrative)

a.  b.  c. 

gloss	BYE	MOTHER	I	WORK	GO
character	**himself**				
gaze at referent	at his mother				
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: "Goodbye, mother! I am going to work."				

Although there are only two women reporting dialogues in LGG narratives, they both quote a character other than themselves. One of them is warned by someone else about a big snake nearby, as shown in (94). While she was embodying her own character walking with a bowl on her head, in (94a), she shifts role by signing HEARING, in (94b). Then, she quotes the hearing warning her about a snake in their whereabouts, in (94c).

(94) Constructed dialogue in the first person only with a role shift between (a) herself marked by (a) a lexical label (c) told by a hearing to her in LGG (LGG_11 narrative)



gloss	HOLD-BOWL	HEARING	CALL	SNAKE	BIG	LOOK
character	myself	**hearing**				
gaze at referent		at herself				
role shift		**lexical label**				
constructed dialogue			**Dialogue**: "There is a big snake. Look!"			

Interestingly, many of the male signers from Guinea-Bissau had similar experiences when encountering snakes. They pulled back, called out for help, told the other people where the snake was, and everyone came and killed it. Thus, the two constructed dialogues with role shifts by male LGG signers include depicting more than one person as the interlocutor.

The example below, in (95), is one of those cases. The signer's character was up on the tree harvesting cashew. There, he sees a snake and scared descends quickly, falling, in (95a). He then signs HEARING and indicates that is going to tell it to everyone, in (95b). After this introduction, he begins to quote himself saying that there was a big snake on the tree, in (95c). At the end of his statement, he switches roles to the hearing with a lexical label, in (95d), and enacts the other character to reply, in (95e).

(95) Constructed dialogue preceded by (a) a constructed action, and (b) the identification of the addressee, with (c) the quotation told by himself followed by a role shift marked with (d) a lexical label to (e) the other character in LGG (LGG_07 narrative)

a.  b. 

gloss	DESCEND-TREE	FALL	HEARING	TELL-EVERYONE
character	himself			

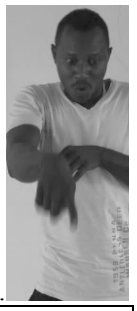
c.  d.  e. 

RH gloss	SNAKE	BIG	SNAKE	HEARING	REALLY?
LH gloss			THERE		
character	**himself**				**hearing**
gaze at referent	at the hearing	at the snake			at himself
role shift				**lexical label**	
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: "There's a big snake on the tree, It's there."				"Really?"

The other example in the LGG data with a marked role shift depicts a similar situation, but the signer's character tells everyone from up the tree about a snake on the ground,

in (96a). Therefore, when he signs HEARING, he immediately embodies (one of) the characters on the ground responding while looking up, in (96b). He then shifts again to his own character pointing down at the snake's location, in (96c) and closes the reported quotations by shifting one last to the hearing character(s), signalling it one more time with a lexical label to say that the snake had been finally spotted, in (96d).

(96) Constructed dialogue between (a and c) himself and (b and d) hearing people marked with (b and d) a lexical label and (c) a body shift in LGG (LGG_03 narrative)

a.  b.  c. 

gloss	TELL-EVERYONE	HEARING	WHAT?	THERE
character	**himself**		**hearing**	**himself**
gaze at referent	at the hearing	at himself		at the hearing
role shift		**lexical label**	**body shift**	
constructed dialogue			**Dialogue**: "What?"	"There!"

d.

gloss	SNAKE	THERE	HEARING	LOOK	THERE
character	**himself**		**hearing**		
gaze at referent	at the hearing		at himself	at the snake	
role shift			**lexical label**		
constructed dialogue	**Dialogue**: "There's a snake over there."				"It's there"

In sum, women in LGG produced but two dialogues in the first person only, which distinguishes them slightly from the total absence of reported speech in LaSiBo. On the other hand, male LGG signers' occurrences were quite similar to AdaSL in terms of time proportion within the narratives collected and the type of examples observed.

Most instances containing constructed dialogues refer to quotations addressed at someone but without getting any response back from the interlocutor. These quotations were in most cases told by the signers' own characters. However, on two occasions, in both AdaSL and LGG narratives by women, the embodied character is someone other than themselves in the past event. Finally, there are very few constructed dialogues where both parties intervene and there is role shifting between them, one in AdaSL and two by male LGG signers. Similarly, in the next subsection, it is shown that monologues are observed in these same groups.

6.5.3 Constructed monologues

Besides reporting speech in the first person addressed at someone else, the signers' own characters also produce monologues, usually related to the encounter with the animal. In AdaSL there are five monologues, whereas in LGG there is one in each gender group. All monologues – except for one – are very short and either express a rhetorical question about what could it be before actually seeing the animal or express

surprise at how big the animal is. The only long monologue is in AdaSL and reproduces a prayer in fear when facing the snake. Again, findings are shown first in AdaSL and then in LGG.

Constructed monologues in AdaSL narratives

There are five monologues in AdaSL all related to the moment where the signers' characters encounter the snake. Three of them are produced before seeing it, and they wonder what it is. One occurs at the encounter itself when the signer begins praying and the fifth one is produced afterwards showing surprise about the snake's size.

In the monologues told before the encounter with the snake, the characters representing the signers in the past event express curiosity about something strange. In (97a), she acts as if looking at the bushes where something seemed to be moving and wonders to herself what could that be (ADA_06 narrative). Similarly, the character, in (97b), after looking into a hole and seeing something moving, asks himself what was there in that hole that he was pointing to. This signer produces two similar monologues in different moments of his narrative (ADA_07 narrative).

(97) Constructed monologues occurring before encountering the snake in AdaSL

a. 

gloss	POINT	WHAT?	MOUSE?
character	**herself**		
gaze at referent	at the bushes		
constructed dialogue	**Monologue**: "What is it? Is it a rat?"		

b. 

gloss	POINT	WHAT?
character	**himself**	
gaze at referent	at the hole	
constructed dialogue	**Monologue**: "What could that be?"	

In another monologue, the longest one in AdaSL, the character had just seen the snake and, terrified, starts praying, as if asking for divine salvation from that life-threatening situation, in (98). Here, only an excerpt showing the main content of the whole prayer is presented for space's sake, since it is quite repetitive (ADA_14 narrative). Again, such propositions are produced in the character's role to himself in what could be an internal thought or self-talk.

(98) Constructed monologue occurring during the encounter with the snake in AdaSL

gloss	PRAY	BLESS	JESUS-CHRIST
character	**himself**		
constructed dialogue	**Monologue**: "I pray to you to bless me with life, Jesus Christ."		

In the last monologue, in (99), the character playing the signer in the past event reacts to seeing the snake, by commenting to himself about its big size (ADA_08 narrative). As it will be described in the next study on the description of the animals encountered, this would be a strategy used by signers to convey the animal's size and shape (see Chapter 7 for more details).

(99) Constructed monologues occurring after encountering the snake in AdaSL

gloss	AH	BIG
character	**himself**	
gaze at referent	at the snake	
constructed dialogue	**Monologue**: "Ah! It was big".	

To conclude, AdaSL signers quote themselves in the past in the form of monologues, whether to express internal thoughts, as when wondering what could something out of the ordinary be, or to pray for help in a situation of great distress or to emotionally react to something surprisingly unexpected, such as a big a snake. Next, I look at how LGG signers express their monologues.

Constructed monologues in LGG narratives

In AdaSL, a few characters reliving their past experience talk to themselves right before, during and after encountering the snake. Similarly to AdaSL, one man in LGG asks himself in the narrated event what was it that he was seeing, and one woman expresses surprise about the size of the snake.

In the first example, shown in (100a), the signer acts as if walking, seeing a snake on the ground, and, while signing SNAKE, he expresses doubt with his body and face, as an internal thought (LGG_05 narrative). In the second example, just like it occurred in AdaSL, the character embodied representing herself shows great surprise at the size of the snake, in (100b). This last instance will also be analysed in the next study on the strategies used to depict the animals (see Chapter 7 for more details).

(100) Constructed monologues in LGG

a.

b.

gloss	SNAKE	BIG
character	**himself**	**herself**
gaze at referent	at the snake	at the snake
constructed dialogue	**Monologue**: "Is it a snake?"	**Monologue:** "It's big!"

To summarise, although men and women show similar occurrences in constructed monologues and even in role shifts between constructed actions, quotations reported in dialogues revealed major differences between genders. Overall, male LGG signers patterned more like AdaSL, while women's instances were closer to LaSiBo's. Such findings strengthen general tendencies distinguishing the four groups that have been unveiled throughout the previous studies. In the following section, the results of the use of role shifts and constructed dialogues are synthesised in the three sign languages.

6.6 Synthesis of the results

The narratives of the three sign languages were told most of the time in the character's role, as shown in Study 2 on signing perspectives. In the present study, that character

embodiment is analysed more closely in terms of the embodiment of characters other than themselves and subsequent interactions between characters within the stories.

Character enactment can be done especially in the real scale perspective, both overt and partially overt, but also in multiple and simultaneous perspectives (see Chapter 5 for more details). With that in mind, the time proportion in each language for such constructed actions was looked at as the time signers dedicated to constructing their own actions in the narrated events or the actions of others. In addition, all time spent in constructing dialogues was also taken into account, both told by themselves and by others.

As the narratives collected refer to personal experiences, it was no surprise to observe that the embodiment of their own characters in the past was expressed much more often than that of other characters. Figure 52, also makes clear that constructed actions were produced overwhelmingly more than constructed dialogues in the three languages. Only one LaSiBo signer is enacting an animal very briefly. The proportion of constructed actions played by other characters was equivalent in the two LGG gender groups and almost double the proportion in AdaSL narratives. In contrast, AdaSL and male LGG signers quoted equally in the first person, though the women in LGG were able to quote others in a larger proportion.

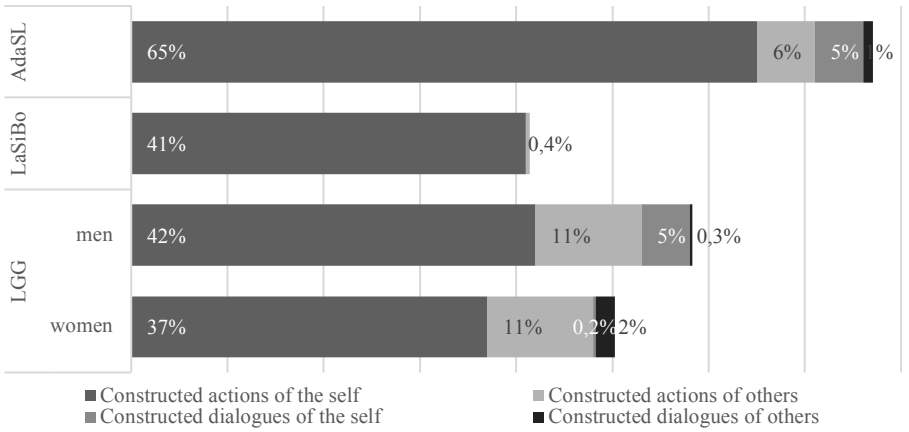


Figure 52. Proportion of constructed actions and constructed dialogues by their own character and of others in the four groups: AdaSL, LaSiBo and LGG per gender

When looking now at multi-character contexts, where role shifts are expected to occur if not frequently at least effectively, results are presented again proportionally for AdaSL and LGG per gender. As already mentioned above, in LaSiBo, there is only

one animal embodiment. This LaSiBo signer produces a role shift and marks it with a body shift. As shown in Figure 53, in the narratives where other characters were enacted (calculated as 100%), AdaSL and male LGG signers enacted other characters more often than the group of women (in dark grey in Figure 53). A striking difference, though, is in the use of markers in switching from one character to the other. Lexical labels are by far the preferred way of signalling a shift (in dark pink in Figure 53), especially in AdaSL. This older sign language presents also a remarkable use of non-manual markers, namely by relying on changes in the facial expression (in light pink in Figure 53). This is significantly different from LGG, where the men shift between characters with their bodies, while women hardly do so.

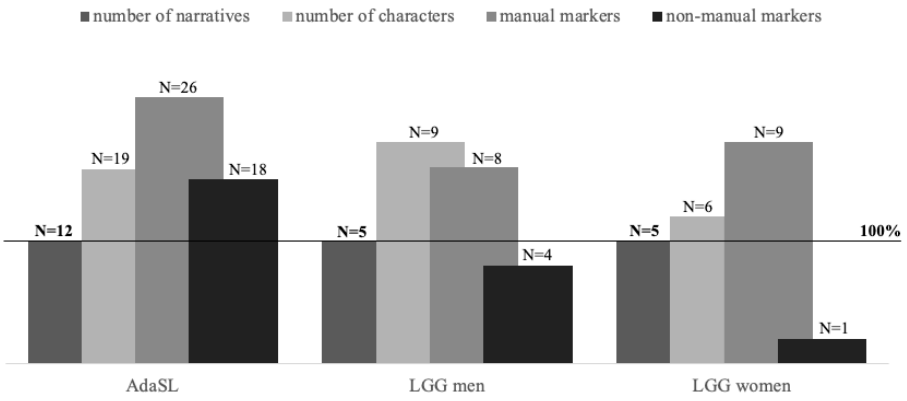


Figure 53. Proportion of narratives, other character embodiments, manual and non-manual markers in the three groups: AdaSL and LGG per gender

In all 12 AdaSL narratives, except one, signers embody an additional character, usually a man or the signer's father. Inclusively, in two of these narratives, signers tell vicariously about their father's experience with an animal attack. In only half of those narratives (seven of 12) do signers embody the animals (five snakes, two lions and one snail). All shifts to other characters, except for one man and two animals, are marked with a lexical label and subsequently, in half of the narratives, with non-manual markers, mostly in shifts to animal characters and by changing the facial expression. Marking switches to human characters with lexical labels also occurs preferentially in the ten LGG narratives (five in each gender group). However, the use of non-manual markers is highly distinct from AdaSL. In LGG, only a few body shifts occur to signal the change to the animal character (two by men and one by a woman). Importantly, even though there are fewer animal embodiments in LGG, the two men that interact with the snake do so from multiple perspectives.

Quotations are reported much less than actions. LaSiBo signers do not quote in their narratives, and only two female LGG signers do so in the first person only. AdaSL and male LGG signers pattern similarly: five narratives in AdaSL and four by male LGG signers are told in the first person only, without getting any response back. The difference is that, in two instances, AdaSL signers are enacting other characters, just like in the two instances produced by women in LGG. Also, the only bidirectional dialogues in the collected data are observed in one AdaSL narrative and two in LGG told by men. Shifts in such two-way dialogues are marked lexically, especially in LGG, and with a change in facial expression, mostly in AdaSL. Finally, five monologues were observed in AdaSL and only two in LGG, one by each gender. Nonetheless, the content of these constructed monologues was very similar in the two languages. Here, signers wonder what would be something that would turn out to be the snake or they react after seeing it to its big size.

To understand eventual idiosyncrasies in the narratives collected, Figure 54 presents them with their real time and the corresponding distribution of action role shifts involving the embodiment of other characters (subtitled as CA by other) and constructed dialogues in the first person, in monologues and in two-way dialogues with role shifting (subtitled as dialogue with RS). All narratives are shown for AdaSL (in Figure 54a) and LGG (in Figures 54c and d). The ones with instances where these devices occur are bordered with a box. In LaSiBo, only the narrative where the role shift with an animal character is shown (in Figure 54b).

At first glance, there are longer narratives in AdaSL (the longest has a bit more than two minutes) when compared to LGG (where the longest has a bit more than one minute). Despite differences in length, it becomes clear that the embodiment of characters other than themselves is evenly distributed within the narratives. In addition, instances of first-person only in dialogues are more spread out along the narratives in both AdaSL and male LGG signers.

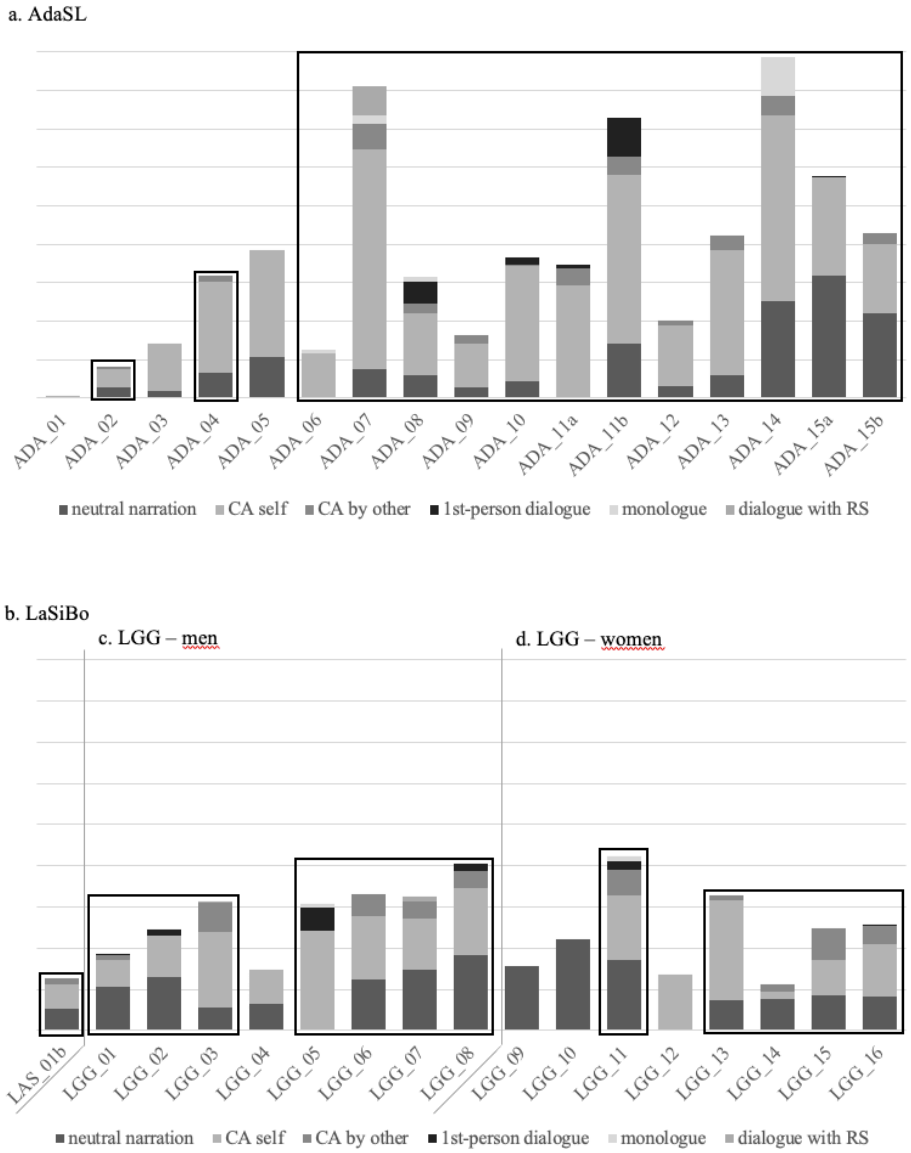


Figure 54. Distribution of neutral narrations, constructed actions (CA) by their own character (self) and by others, constructed dialogues in the first person, with role shift (RS) and monologues in the four groups: AdaSL, LaSiBo and LGG per gender, with the occurrences within squares

When trying to capture patterns in the use of reported speech in AdaSL (in Figure 51a), what is highlighted are individual narratives, such as ADA_07. This personal experience is told by the young bilingual deaf young man who has been the only one so far in Adamorobe to enter university. Similarly, ADA#08, although older than ADA#07, has also had much access to Ghanaian Sign Language. The remaining narratives involving reported speech are told by ADA#14, ADA#11 (with two narratives) and ADA#10, who are some of the elders in Adamorobe. This may indicate that, in AdaSL, older signers tend to be more skilled storytellers, as much as those who have had more socialising opportunities outside the village.

The LaSiBo signer LAS#01 had already shown similar results to AdaSL in Study 2 on signing perspectives. Her outperformance was hypothesised then to be due to having an older deaf brother. Also, as it was difficult to find justifications for different performances in male LGG signers in Study 2, so it is here. However, what is made clear here is that reported speech in this group is overall very short, except for LGG_05, corresponding to the only narrative told by men that did not use any neutral narration. Finally, in the women, LGG_11 stands out again for quoting more than her female peers as was already the case in Study 2. I recall that, in the use of signing perspectives, LGG#11 presented higher diversity, including the reduced scale. For that reason, it was suggested that this particular signer may socialise more outside school than the other women included in this study.

In sum, role shifts are practically inexistent in LaSiBo, whereas in the other languages, though in a small proportion, they occur effectively for being almost always signalled, especially by lexical labels. AdaSL signers distinguish themselves from LGG by using much more non-manual markers in action role shifting. As hinted at by the two previous studies in this thesis, gender groups in LGG show some differences. In this study, the distinction is made clear only in what concerns constructed dialogues, where men were more productive, as much as AdaSL signers were too. For being less used in the narratives, reported quotations appear to be the hardest narrative device to master by storytellers.

All in all, both language age in AdaSL and the frequency of social interactions by men in LGG seem to play a crucial role in developing this ability, as was already suggested in the two previous studies in this thesis. This is consistent with AdaSL signers being used to telling stories to each other for generations and with male LGG signers doing it also intensely daily with a large variety of interactive partners (see Chapter 1 for more details). Next, I relate the results from this study with the literature.

6.7 Discussion

In the previous section, I provided a synthesis of the results obtained in the descriptive analysis of role shifts and constructed dialogues in the three sign languages, illustrating the differences between the four language groups: AdaSL, LaSiBo, LGG women, and LGG men.

The present study confirms previous statements from the literature related to role shifts and constructed dialogues. Overall, in reporting both actions and quotations, the first-person viewpoint is preferred, as expected. In particular, it is demonstrated here that shifting between acting characters arises first than the one involving quotations, paralleling language development by a community with its acquisition in children (e.g., Lillo-Martin & Quadros 2011).

For narratives to be easy to follow and engage the interlocutor, storytellers have to be able to avoid ambiguities when referring to different characters, marking role shifts between them. Again, previous studies have shown that lexical labels to signal role shifts appear before non-manual markers (e.g., Kocab, Pyers and Senghas 2015 for the emerging sign language of Nicaragua), which matches the tendency in the young LGG for lexical marking in comparison to the older AdaSL favouring non-manuals, especially changes in facial expressions. This way, AdaSL corroborates observations for language acquisition in that consistent use of facial expressions in character shifting requires time to develop (e.g., Emmorey and Reilly 1998). Non-manuals in LGG refer mainly to body shifts, thus previewing that such a marker may precede the signalling of role shifting with facial expressions.

To briefly relate the literature, the present findings and the research questions and hypothesis for this study, I present next Table 33. It shows the proportion in the use of role shifts and constructed dialogues and the number and range of role shift markers used in the personal experience narratives in the four language groups according to the order in which they are expected to develop. This way, it becomes clearer that a pattern is emerging from the studies presented so far in distinguishing the four groups from each other. In other words, the smaller deaf group using LaSiBo is systematically lacking certain devices, while AdaSL, in contrast, seems to have developed most of them. In between, female LGG signers tend to patter more like LaSiBo and men like AdaSL signers.

Table 33. Order of emergence of role shift and constructed dialogue devices in the four groups: AdaSL, LaSiBo and LGG per gender

Emergence order	AdaSL		LaSiBo		LGG			
					men		women	
first-person actions	x	65%	x	41%	x	42%	x	37%
action role shifts	x	6%	x	0,4%	x	11%	x	11%
first-person quotations	x	5%			x	5%	x	2%
quotational role shifts	x	1%			x	0,3%		
lexical marking	x	24/44			x	6/13	x	7/11
body shift marking	x	5/44	x	1/1	x	1/16	x	2/11
facial expression marking	x	12/44						

To answer the research question for Study 3, the narrative devices studied here – role shifts and constructed dialogues – seem to develop differently in the four groups. I thus revisit my hypothesis that narrative devices may require regular social interactions to develop. Concerning the **amount of time** needed for a language to develop, the hypothesis holds for the young and emerging LaSiBo because of its limited narrative devices, but not for LGG, which is even younger but patterns more like AdaSL. In the older AdaSL, signers spontaneously produce role shifts and constructed dialogues in their narratives, and so do LGG signers – but LGG male signers in particular. In contrast, these narrative devices were almost completely absent in LaSiBo.

If time alone does not explain the development of narrative devices, then it seems likely that **interaction between deaf people** is a crucial factor to develop sign language. LGG is younger than LaSiBo, but its signers interact intensively in a larger deaf community. This hypothesis is further strengthened by looking at the difference between male and female LGG signers. As explained in §1.6, the young and growing LGG deaf community in Bissau is made up equally of both male and female signers, but they have different social patterns Men are more able to spend a lot of time with other deaf interlocutors, while women have fewer opportunities to interact due to household duties, childcare, and other aspects of female gender roles. I propose that this also explains the smaller proportion of narrative devices that women LGG signers produce.

Yet what is it specifically about frequent interactions that might lead to the development of narrative structure? Recall Labov's theory that such devices are rich instruments in the evaluation part of storytelling because they enhance narratives and make them more compelling to the listener or viewer. If this is correct, then it may be that frequent interactions are pivotal because they provide a training space for signers to try out new linguistic strategies and see how interlocutors react. Or it may be that there is a competitive aspect that prompts signers to try different strategies to pull attention toward themselves. Or perhaps when small innovations occur in storytelling and there is a large audience, these new techniques more easily take hold and get re-used. This is a topic for future research.

When it comes to role shifts and constructed dialogues, why would more use of these specific linguistic devices be more compelling? For one, only highly skilled storytellers seem to be able to embed other people's quotations in their narratives conveying dramatic force (Labov 1972, 373). Representing other characters by embodying them and interacting with them as a multifaceted actor is sure to grasp an audience's attention. Thus, it is unsurprising that more engaging stories rely on the type of devices that make interlocutors relive the narrated event as if they were themselves experiencing it.

6.8 Conclusion

Studies 2 and 3 focus on narrative devices as part of the evaluation component responsible for enhancing stories and captivating the audience's attention. The personal experience narratives told spontaneously and without preparation in the three West African sign languages object of this thesis have been looked at from different angles. Study 3 focused on two narrative devices, role shift and constructed dialogue, confirming distinctions between the language groups already revealed in the previous two studies.

This study showed that, in LGG, a very young sign language, deaf men use more narrative devices than women. Their signing resembles AdaSL signers, where the language is many generations old, at least in these two narrative devices. In both cases, signers produced role shifts and constructed dialogues spontaneously and without planning. In LaSiBo, only one signer did a role shift, and no constructed dialogues were found in the narratives. In fact, in what the narrative devices are concerned, LaSiBo signers – and most female LGG signers – seem to be especially unprepared as effective storytellers in comparison to AdaSL and male LGG signers.

The ability to use such devices effectively, in AdaSL and LGG, even if in small proportions, confirms the hypotheses concerning the factors leading to its development. Thus, with time, as in AdaSL, and over frequent social interactions

between deaf peers, as in AdaSL and LGG, especially in the men, stories come to be told without ambiguities and resorting to a greater variety of devices to reproduce actions and quotations by different characters.

From this, I conclude that the development of narrative devices may be a consequence of interaction habits in different sign language communities. I move now to the next chapter and the last study on narrative devices and of this thesis which continues to investigate different aspects of the evaluation component in sign language narratives.