Jordanian sign language : aspects of grammar from a cross-linguistic perspective
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Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

7.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the use of signing perspective in narrative discourse in LIU. In both spoken and sign languages, linguistic devices are used to indicate whether utterances express the point of view of the speaker/signer or of someone else. These devices can be at the lexical level (e.g. deictic words ‘I’ vs. ‘you’ or ‘he/she’, ‘here’ vs. ‘there’), at the syntactic level (active vs. passive structures), and at the discourse level (different literary styles). All these devices appear to be present in both spoken and sign languages. As Emmorey (1996:184) remarks, however, “[t]he linguistic mechanisms used to express point of view in sign languages appear to be more explicit than in spoken languages.” One of the ways in which sign languages can overtly mark perspective, is through referential or role shifts. Also, whereas in spoken languages the choice of different perspectives is limited mainly to reporting speech, thoughts or emotions, sign languages also have the option to report events and actions from different perspectives.

The data used for the analysis in this chapter is described in Section 7.2. In Section 7.3 I introduce the different perspectives that are available to signers and give an overview of terminology used in the literature. I will distinguish between spatial perspective in event structures (Section 7.3.1) and non-spatial perspective in reporting a character’s emotions, thoughts or words (Section 7.3.2). In Section 7.4 I will take a look at non-spatial means to introduce character perspective in LIU narratives. In Section 7.5 I will describe the way referents are introduced and localized, and the way perspective is signalled spatially in event structures in LIU. Since signing perspective is most particularly evident in classifier constructions, deictic signs, and agreement verbs, the focus of this section will be on constructions involving these linguistic devices. In Section 7.6 cases of ‘mixed’ or ‘double’ perspective, which are quite frequent in LIU, are discussed. In each of the sections, the description of perspective in LIU and the way it is expressed in narrative discourse is supplemented by a comparison with other sign languages. In Section 7.7 I will present the conclusions from these comparisons.
7.2 Data and methodology

This chapter is based on an analysis of 42 short elicited stories. The stories were signed by 13 different signers, all fluent signers in their teens (between age 14 and 19). They were all students at the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf and either had a Deaf parent or Deaf siblings. Signers were paired and took turns re-telling a cartoon story which was shown on DVD or a picture story on paper. The resulting signed stories vary in length between about 20 seconds and five minutes. The total length of the elicited data is about 45 minutes. The stories that were shown were taken from three sources. Firstly, Canary Row (Warner Brothers 1949), an episode from the Tweety and Sylvester series, was shown on DVD to one of a pair of signers, who subsequently signed it to the other person. This story was signed by five different signers in total. Secondly, a one-page picture story of a little boy (by the French cartoonist Sempé) was signed by three different signers. Thirdly, nine different Mouse stories (selected from Die Sendung mit der Maus, a German children’s television program broadcast by Westdeutscher Rundfunk) were each signed by four signers (except for two stories which were signed by three signers), resulting in the remaining 34 signed stories. Images from the Mouse cartoons discussed in this chapter and a copy of the picture story are shown in Appendix C.

The Mouse stories were chosen because they are short stories containing a limited number of characters (in the stories that were selected usually two or three), interacting with each other in a fairly simple way. The story of the little boy was particularly interesting for eliciting the way a signer shifts from one character to another. Canary Row is a cartoon that has been used to elicit data from several different sign languages. It was included both to allow for comparison with other sign languages and because it is longer than the Mouse stories and contains more complicated actions. All stories were glossed and analyzed using ELAN. In the analysis, particular attention was paid to role shift devices, as well as classifier types and perspective.

Most of the signed stories in my corpus involve a mix of narrator and character perspective. There are a few signers, however, who produce entire stories in narrator perspective and there is one signer who uses only character perspective in one of the Mouse stories. Pyers and Senghas (2007:283) mention that character perspective enriches narratives “by providing multiple perspectives on a single event.” Likewise Liddell (2003:175) states that character perspective (‘surrogate blends’ in his terminology) has “the potential to add interest, drama and humor to the discourse” and Quinto-Pozos (2007:1287) mentions that character perspective (“becoming the object”) can provide various types of affective
information about a character. These comments are confirmed by my data, in that, in my opinion, the stories that are produced entirely in narrator perspective are less interesting to watch (and are also significantly shorter) than those that include character perspective. This would imply that not all signers in my corpus are equally good story-tellers. Although this is not surprising, the different levels of skill in story-telling among the signers may influence the analysis of perspective to some extent. However, in this chapter I will try to give a general description of perspective in LIU based on what the signers have in common. Where there are significant differences between signers, I will provide examples from several signers to illustrate the range of variation.

7.3 Types of perspective in sign language narratives

As mentioned in the introduction, there are basically two kinds of perspective that a signer can choose when narrating a story. The signer can be outside of the story itself, as the narrator, and depict the characters in the story at different locations in the signing space in front of him. Alternatively, the signer can get ‘inside’ the story and take the role of one (or more) of the characters. These two perspectives have been given various names in the sign language literature. Liddell (1995, 2000) refers to the first as ‘token space’ and to the second as ‘surrogate space’, Schick (1990) refers to ‘model space’ versus ‘real-world space’, Emmorey (2002) to ‘diagrammatic space’ versus ‘viewer space’, Slobin et al. (2003) label these perspectives as ‘narrator perspective’ and ‘protagonist perspective’, Janzen (2004) to ‘narrator perspective’ versus ‘character perspective’, and Perniss (2007b) applies the terms ‘observer perspective’ versus ‘character perspective’, just to name a few. It must be noted, however, that both Schick (1990) and Perniss (2007b) deal with spatial perspective only, notably with location and motion events expressed by classifier constructions, and this is reflected in their terminology. In this chapter I will adopt the terms ‘narrator perspective’ and ‘character perspective’, as used by Janzen (2004). The term ‘character perspective’ is used to refer to a signer who views the story from ‘inside’, that is, a signer who has taken on the role of one of the characters, expressing that character’s location, action, words, emotions or thoughts, using either lexical signs or imitative gestures and facial expressions. I will use the term ‘narrator perspective’ to describe the signer’s view from outside the story. This term is used in a general sense, including the signer as observer in a location or motion event, the signer as narrator in non-spatial constructions, or the signer directing an interjection at the addressee.
Whereas narrator perspective is objective, in the sense that the signer is outside the story, character perspective requires that the signer takes on the role or the point of view of one of the characters in the story. The mechanism by which a signer does this has been referred to as ‘role shifting’ (Engberg-Pedersen 1993, 1995), ‘referential shift’ (e.g. Poulin and Miller 1995; Emmorey 1996), or ‘point of view shift’ (Lillo-Martin 1995). Padden (1990:192) notes that the term ‘role shift’ is unfortunate because it “suggests a global description for what are most certainly several different structures”. It is true that the term ‘role shift’ has been used with different meanings. In the narrow sense it appears to refer to non-manual markers, such as body shift or facial expression, of character perspective. This is the way the term seems to be used by most researchers (e.g. Emmorey 1996). Engberg-Pedersen (1993, 1995), however, uses the term in a broader sense and distinguishes three different phenomena within the category of role shifts in DSL. These three phenomena are: (1) shifted reference, that is, the use of the first person pronoun to refer to somebody other than the signer; (2) shifted attribution of expressive elements, that is, the use of the signer’s face and body posture to express the emotions or attitude of someone other than the signer; and (3) shifted locus, that is, arranging the signing space in such a way that the point of view of someone other than the signer is expressed. In my opinion, shifted reference is a subtype of shifted locus. In shifted locus, the signer’s position in the signing space becomes identified with someone other than the signer. This means that when the signer points at himself, he is not referring to himself but to the character with whom his position (and in a sense his body) has become identified. This kind of character perspective, which involves shifted reference and shifted locus, I will refer to as ‘spatial perspective’ because it involves the way the signing space is structured. In the sections below I will avoid the terms role shift and referential shift altogether when talking about character perspective and instead make a distinction between spatial and non-spatial perspective. The latter involves non-manual expressions like body shift, eye-gaze and facial expressions and is used mainly to represent a character’s words, thoughts or feelings. The term ‘body shift’ will be used in a strictly phonological sense, namely the turning of the body (or parts of the body) in a certain direction.

7.3.1 Spatial ways to signal perspective in events

Perspective in sign languages determines the way in which the signing space is structured for spatial representations (cf. Perniss 2007b). This structuring of the signing space is particularly important in the description of events. Thus, the signer can decide to view an event or a spatial lay-out from the perspective of one of the characters in a story or from the perspective of an
observer (the narrator). In a story in which a mouse and an elephant throw a ball at each other, for example, the signer can choose to have the ball move between two characters placed in front of him, or he can, as it were, become one of the characters and alternately throw the ball forward and receive it back. Spatial perspective is typical for sign languages, since these are produced spatially and can therefore use space to talk about space.

In both narrator perspective and character perspective, the signer associates characters within a narrative with particular locations in the signing space, thereby creating an event space. Many descriptions of perspective focus on role shifts (in the form of body shifts) to distinguish between narrator perspective and character perspective, although Janzen (2004) claims that body shifts in ASL are optional and that the difference between narrator perspective and character perspective is mainly expressed spatially. Although body shifts may accompany character perspective in a spatial construction, the focus in this section is on the way the signing space itself is organized to express perspective.

One of the ways in which perspective is expressed in the signing space is through the size of the event space. In observer perspective, the event space is reduced in size (which is reflected by Schick’s (1990) term ‘model’ space) and mapped out in front of the signer’s body. In character perspective, the signer’s location coincides with that of one of the characters and therefore the event space is seen through the eyes of that character. This means that the event space is not reduced in size but life-sized (cf. Schick’s (1990) term ‘real-world’ space). This difference in the size of the event space is particularly clear in the use of classifiers (cf. Van Dijken (2004); Hendriks (2004) and Chapter 3.3.2 for an overview of classifiers in LIU). In her dissertation on the use of space and iconicity in DGS, Perniss (2007b) has done groundbreaking work on perspective in a sign language, using systematic elicitation tasks and quantitative data. She has found prototypical co-occurrences (which she refers to as ‘alignments’) between observer perspective and entity classifiers on the one hand, and character perspective and handling classifiers on the other hand.

“...the correspondence between the use of classifiers and signing perspective is apparent. With handling classifiers, the entity in motion is represented on the hands through a depiction of its manipulation by the character mapped onto the body. The representation of motion and action correspond to the character’s own experience, and are depicted from the character’s perspective. On the other hand, when entity classifiers are used, the entity in motion is represented directly, through a depiction of the whole entity on the hand. The location/motion of the entity is represented through the movement/position of the hand. This
corresponds to the signer’s external vantage point in observer perspective.” (Perniss 2007b:194)

A second way in which a signer can express perspective spatially is by using different axes. Perniss (2007b) found that when a scene was represented on the lateral axis in front of the signer (e.g. one character was placed on the left, the other on the right), this prototypically corresponded with observer perspective, whereas use of the sagittal axis (e.g. motion towards or away from the signer’s body) corresponded to character perspective. These two axes are shown in Figure 7.1.

![Figure 7.1: the lateral and sagittal axes](image)

The difference between character and narrator perspective in spatial constructions is not only found in classifier constructions, however. Agreement verbs can also be spatially modified. Again, this spatial element can be combined with non-spatial characteristics of perspective which are discussed below. According to Liddell (2003), for example, a key element of character perspective in ASL is directing the eye-gaze away from the addressee.

Likewise, the use of indexical signs can indicate whether a signer is using narrator perspective or character perspective, although to date no studies have focused on the use of indexes in relation to the use of perspective. A signer can use indexical signs to point to the location of characters or objects in the story. For example, the signer can place two characters on the lateral axis in front of him, in which case indexes
localizing these characters will point forward/left or forward/right. This indicates the use of narrator perspective. However, the signer can also choose to take on a character perspective and ‘become’ one of these characters himself. In that case he will point at himself to indicate one of the characters, and to the addressee or some other point (usually in front of him) to indicate the location of the other character (this is what Engberg-Pedersen (1993, 1995) refers to as ‘shifted reference’).

This chapter will focus on spatial ways to signal perspective in narrative discourse in LIU, which means that classifier constructions, agreement verbs and indexes will figure prominently in the description of LIU data. However, spatial ways to express perspective are often combined with non-spatial features, such as changes in facial expression or body-shifts. These non-spatial ways to signal perspective are introduced in the next section.

### 7.3.2 Non-spatial ways to signal perspective

Creating spatial lay-outs and thereby expressing a certain perspective is typical for sign languages. However, both sign languages and spoken languages make use of non-spatial ways to express perspective. In spoken languages a speaker can choose between different perspectives when reporting someone’s speech, thoughts or emotions. When reporting what someone said, for instance, a speaker can use ‘direct speech’ or ‘indirect speech’. In the use of direct speech, the speaker, as it were, becomes the person who uttered the words he is reporting, whereas when using indirect speech, he remains himself. Thus, in the English example (7.1a) the pronoun ‘I’ means something different than in (7.1b). In the indirect speech in (7.1b) ‘I’ refers to the speaker, whereas in the direct speech of (7.1a) it refers to Mary.

(7.1a) Mary said: “I used to be a liar”

(7.1b) Mary said that I used to be a liar.

Direct speech in spoken languages can be uttered with special intonation or vocal changes (Tannen 1986) as if the speaker is incorporating aspects of the speech and emotions of the person he is reporting. Speakers can also use gestures to imitate the person who uttered the speech. In spoken languages this has been referred to as ‘constructed dialogue’ (Tannen 1989) and it is marked in written texts by the use of quotation marks.

In sign languages, likewise, a signer has the option to report emotions, thoughts or speech as himself (narrator perspective) or as the person whose emotions, thoughts or feelings he is reporting (character
Additionally, signers can report a character’s actions as if they were that character, or as the narrator. The use of character perspective to depict a referent’s actions has been referred to as ‘referent projection’ by Engberg-Pedersen (1993) and ‘constructed action’ Metzger (1995) and Aarons and Morgan (2003) among others. In this chapter I will distinguish between constructed action and constructed dialogue as subtypes of character perspective, as do Pyers and Senghas (2007). Note that constructed action may be gestural, that is, an imitation of the action of a referent without the use of lexical signs, but it may also co-occur with the use of lexical signs.

The use of character perspective in sign languages, then, takes the place of special intonation in spoken languages, although it can be used more widely than intonation. Quinto-Pozos (2007:1287) says that

“[i]ntonational features in spoken languages can certainly communicate affective, attitudinal, and emotional states of the speaker (Laver, 1994) but they do not appear to be equipped to portray the actions, movements or relative size of an object.”

In other words, intonation in spoken languages can only express constructed dialogue, whereas character perspective in sign languages can also express constructed action.

The literature on character perspective is mainly based on ASL and focuses on body shifts, that is, a signer turning his shoulders (or in some cases his whole body) slightly to the left or to the right to express the viewpoint of different characters localized in the signing space. Thus, Lillo-Martin (1995) talks about character perspective as a ‘Point of View (POV) predicate’ in which a body shift functions as a complement-taking predicate. In their overview of sign language grammar, Sandler and Lillo-Martin (2006:379) claim that “by shifting the body position, and possibly changing aspects of the facial expression, the signer presents another’s words, thoughts or ‘point of view’”. However, body shifts may not be the only or even the most common non-spatial way in which character perspective is expressed in ASL or cross-linguistically. Emmorey (1996) mentions four ways in which non-spatial character perspective (which she refers to as referential shifts) can be expressed in ASL: through a shift in body position, and/or through changes in eye-gaze, head position or facial expression. As mentioned above, Janzen (2004) says that body shifts are optional in ASL and perspective is expressed mainly spatially and by means of eye-gaze. Likewise, Poulin and Miller (1995:120) found that in LSQ “the breaking of eye-gaze with the addressee is the most consistent change to indicate that the signer has entered a referential shift”. Pyers and Senghas (2007) observe several differences between the way character perspective is expressed in
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

ASL and Nicaraguan Sign Language (NiSL) and wonder whether these differences reveal domains of cross-linguistic variation, or whether they are due to the age difference between the two languages, ASL being about 200 years old and NiSL being an emerging sign language. One of the objectives of this chapter is to shed more light on this question by describing the way character perspective is expressed in LIU and comparing the attested patterns to both ASL and NiSL. In Section 7.4, I will give some examples of the way character perspective is expressed non-spatially in LIU. In Section 7.5, I will discuss to what extent LIU signers use spatial means to express perspective and how they create spatial set-ups.

7.4 Non-spatial ways to express character perspective in LIU

This section will focus on non-spatial ways to express character perspective in LIU. Three strategies will be discussed in particular, namely body shift (Section 7.4.1), the lexical introduction of referents (Section 7.4.2) and the use of non-manuals to express perspective (Section 7.4.3). These strategies are then compared to those used in other sign languages (Section 7.4.4).

7.4.1 Body shift

As was stated in Section 7.3.1, descriptions of Western sign languages have focused on body-shifts as a marker of character perspective, although non-manual features such as eye-gaze and facial expression are also said to be important in distinguishing between different perspectives. LIU, however, does not appear to have a systematic system of body shift to express narrator perspective. In the data I have analyzed (cf. Section 7.2) there is only one signer out of 13 who fairly consistently marks character perspective by a body shift (turning movement) or body lean to the right or left. This same signer also uses more indexical pointing than other signers (cf. Section 7.5.1). In general, then, she seems to make spatial relationships more explicit than other signers. Figure 7.2 shows how she employs body-shift to take on the role of the cat (Figure 7.2a) and the bird (Figure 7.2b) in the *Canary Row* narrative. Although this signer uses body shifts, she tends to do this only when two characters in a story are located opposite each other. In Figure 7.2 the cat and the bird are looking at each other through binoculars.
In one of the mouse stories, in which a mouse and an elephant are standing opposite each other building a tower (Appendix C, mouse story: blocks), she initially uses a body shift to the left for the mouse and a body shift to the right for the elephant. When a bird comes along, however, the body shift to the left is used for the bird, and the character perspective of the mouse is no longer clearly expressed with a body shift, except once when the mouse is interacting with the bird and a slight body shift to the right is used. In other stories, when the interaction of the characters is more complex and the characters are not located opposite each other, she does not use consistent body shifts at all. Also, she does not generally use body-shift as the only way to mark perspective, but tends to combine it with other strategies. Other signers sometimes use a body-lean forward or backward to distinguish between different referents, as can be seen, for instance, in Figure 7.7 below.

In this example, the signer reproduces the actions of the father, who is sitting in a chair, with a body-lean backward, whereas his body leans slightly forward to express the son’s actions.

Many signers, however, do not use body shifts at all, or not consistently. One signer introduces the main characters of the Canary Row cartoon by naming them and mentioning their colour, as shown in (7.2). Again, this is an example which illustrates that the spatial relationships of referents are not necessarily specified when the characters are introduced.

(7.2) FIRST SUBJECT CAT // YELLOW CHICK // CAT BLACK
“First, it’s about a cat and a yellow chick, the cat is black.”
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

She then signs (7.3) and continues after this example with a lengthy enactment of the cat looking through binoculars. Next she signs (7.4). Note that in (7.2) she has introduced the cat as being black and the bird as yellow, and sometimes she refers to these characters by their colour.

(7.3) \text{BLACK CAT BINOCULARS HOUSE LOOK-AROUND-WITH-BINOCULARS}  
\text{“The black cat looked at the houses with binoculars.”}

(7.4) \text{YELLOW LOOK-AROUND-WITH-BINOCULARS SAME LOOK}_\text{reciprocal}  
\text{“The yellow (bird) also looks around through binoculars and they look at each other.”}

The verbs this signer uses are shown in Figure 7.3. She uses no body shift at all. The signer rotates her head from left to right for both characters to show that they look around through their binoculars. At the end of (7.4) a reciprocal verb is added to show that the bird and the cat are looking at each other from opposite sides.

Instead of using body shifts, this signer uses a different strategy to change perspectives. This strategy will be explained in the next section.

7.4.2 Lexical introduction of referents

The examples in (7.3) and (7.4) above show a common strategy for changing perspective in LIU. Rather than introducing referents at a certain position in the signing space and then systematically using body shift to distinguish between the perspectives of these different referents, the signer introduces the referent by means of a lexical sign and then assumes the perspective of this referent. The use of lexical signs to introduce character perspective is widespread in LIU. It appears to be the most important way of marking
perspective, although non-manuals such as eye-gaze and facial expression are also important. In some cases, the lexical sign is accompanied by an indexical point (cf. also Section 7.5.1). In (7.5), part of a re-telling of a picture story is presented (pictures 5-8 of the Boy story in Appendix C). In this example, the lexical signs that mark a perspective change are marked with italics.\[^{56}\]

\[(7.5)\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dh:} & \quad \text{MOTHER \ TRY} \ \text{SHOUT-AT} \text{right \ WHY \ HIT} \\
\text{ndh:} & \quad \text{FATHER} \\
\text{dh:} & \quad \text{WIFE \ right} \ \text{SHOUT-AT} \text{1 \ WHAT \ ALLOWED \ SHOOT-AT} \text{1} \\
\text{ndh:} & \\
\text{dh:} & \quad \text{MOTHER \ CORRECT} \text{right \ SLAP}_{\text{forward}} \ \text{BOY \ SMALL} \\
\text{ndh:} & \quad \text{CL:} \text{HOLD-BOY \ SECOND-TIME} \\
\text{dh:} & \quad \text{INDIGNANT \ WALK}_{\text{up}} \ \text{WANTS \ GRANDPARENTS}
\end{align*}
\]

“Mother (says): ‘I’ll try’ and shouts at (father): ‘Why did you hit him?’ Father, who gets shouted at by his wife, (says): ‘What, is he allowed to shoot at me?’ Mother (says): ‘You’re right’ and slaps the boy for the second time. The small boy is indignant and walks up the stairs, he wants his grandparents.”

In this example the lexical signs introducing character perspective clarify which character is speaking or acting. Note that dominance reversal can be used as an additional way to mark perspective change, although in this example the reversal of dominance is limited only to the lexical sign FATHER. The passage in (7.5) consists entirely of character perspective, except for the lexical items that introduce a change of perspective. These are employed by the signer for clarification and are therefore best analyzed as being produced in narrator perspective. The use of character perspective in (7.5) is signalled both non-spatially, by means of non-manuals, and spatially through the use of first person agreement verbs. Non-manuals expressing character perspective, however, may already be visible during the production of the introductory lexical items. The sign \text{WALK}_{\text{up}} which contains an entity classifier and would therefore be expected to express narrator perspective in

\[^{56}\] In this example I have shown the signs produced on the non-dominant hand on a separate line. In other examples the non-dominant hand is not shown separately. I show the non-dominant hand separately only when the two hands produce different signs simultaneously or when there is a case of dominance reversal. Note that this example also contains spatial ways to mark perspective. These will be discussed in more depth in Section 7.5.
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

the framework used by Perniss (2007b), appears in this example to be part of a stretch of discourse expressing character perspective. An important clue that this verb is within the range of character perspective introduced by the signs BOY SMALL comes from the fact that it is both preceded and followed by a verb expressing the inner state of the boy, with appropriate facial expressions continuing during the production of WALK\up (cf. Section 7.6, especially Figure 7.9). This example, then, shows that non-manuals are also important in signaling perspective and perspective changes. Non-manual markers of perspective are discussed in more depth in the next section.

7.4.3 Non-manual markers of perspective

Non-manuals, such as facial expression and eye-gaze, play a role in determining what perspective a signer is expressing. In general, it appears that narrator perspective is often accompanied by eye-gaze at the addressee. When signers use a construction with entity classifiers, however, they tend to direct their eye-gaze at their hands. When signers use character perspective, eye-gaze is directed away from the addressee when the referent whose perspective is adopted is interacting with other referents (unless one of those referents has been associated with the locus of the addressee). However, eye-gaze by itself is not a completely reliable indicator of perspective, since there are several occasions where a signer directs his eye-gaze at the addressee during an utterance in character perspective. To determine what perspective a signer is using it is important to look at the combination of lexical signs, eye-gaze and facial expressions, as well as spatial expressions of perspective such as the direction of agreement verbs, indexes and classifier constructions (cf. Section 7.5).

Non-manuals, as well as gestures, are particularly important in signaling a change from character perspective to narrator perspective, since the latter is not lexically introduced. They are also important in those cases in which a change to character perspective is not introduced lexically. When a signer changes from character perspective to narrator perspective, this is sometimes signalled spatially by indexing or entity classifiers, but this is not always the case. In some cases it is very hard to distinguish between character perspective and observer perspective. This is due largely to the fact that there does not appear to be a very clear-cut spatial difference between the two perspectives, as will be shown in Section 7.5, and to the fact that

57 Note that examples of constructed action accompanied by entity classifiers are also given by Quinto-Pozos (2007) for ASL and by Pyers and Senghas (2007) for NiSL.
most signers do not consistently use body-shifts to mark character perspective. An example of eye-gaze, facial expression and gestures signaling perspective change is presented in Figure 7.4.

*Figure 7.4: “The elephant looks around. The mouse comes up and pulls his tail. He looks around annoyed: who (did that)?”*

In this example, eye-gaze and facial expression signal the change from character perspective to narrator perspective. During the production of the verb LOOK-AROUND and the start of the sign TAIL, which is initially made at the signer’s back, the eye-gaze is away from the addressee as the signer has assumed the perspective of the elephant, lexically introduced by the sign
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

ELEPHANT. However, partway through the sign TAIL the signer directs her eye-gaze at the addressee and then produces the sign TAIL again in neutral space. This indicates that she has now taken on narrator perspective. She then switches back to character perspective to show the mouse coming and pulling the elephant’s tail. The fact that eye-gaze is directed away from the addressee during the verb COME and the first part of the sign PULL-TAIL is the only indicator of the use of character perspective. Eye-gaze is directed to the addressee halfway through the sign PULL-TAIL, although this does not appear to introduce a change in perspective. Note that the facial expression is gleeful, expressing the perspective of the mouse, who enjoys teasing the elephant. As mentioned above, signers sometimes direct their eye-gaze at the addressee even when they use character perspective. Next, the signer takes on the role of the elephant, but in this case, the change in perspective is not lexically introduced. Instead it is marked by yet again directing eye-gaze away from the addressee and with a gesture (hand on hip) and the appropriate facial expression showing the attitude of the elephant.

7.4.4 Summary of LIU data and cross-linguistic comparisons

The previous sections have shown that character perspective in LIU is not generally marked by body shifts, although it is possible to do so and some signers may use them occasionally. Instead, character perspective tends to be introduced lexically. The signer names one of the characters and then continues to use the perspective of that character. Non-manuals play an important role in this. When a perspective change is not introduced lexically, it tends to be marked by non-manuals, such as eye-gaze and facial expression. These non-manuals may show a change in perspective before the change is expressed manually. Because perspective changes are mainly marked lexically and non-lexically in LIU, spatial set-ups do not play as important a role as they do in sign languages that do not mark perspective changes lexically. As will be shown in Section 7.5.3, LIU signers are not always completely consistent in their use of spatial set-ups.

Cross-linguistically, the use of a lexical sign to introduce the character whose perspective is being taken on by the signer has also been reported for TID (cf. Perniss and Özyürek, in press). Interestingly, TID is geographically close to LIU, although the two languages do not appear to be closely related, at least at the lexical level (cf. Chapter 2). Perniss (2007b) also mentions that signers of TID use a high proportion of narrator

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58 The signer is free to choose the way he names the character. In (7.4), for example, the signer chooses to introduce character perspective by naming the character’s colour.
perspective compared to DGS signers. She hypothesizes that this may be due to the fact that DGS has a body shift mechanism to express changes in character perspective, while TID appears to lack such a system. According to Perniss (2007b:191), the availability of such a body shift system may motivate a continuous use of character perspective. The data from LIU, however, shows that, although some of the signers predominantly use narrator perspective, this cannot be explained by the absence of a body shift mechanism in the language. Even when signers do not use a body shift mechanism, they may predominantly use character perspective and lexically mark perspective changes. The absence of a body shift system, then, does not necessarily result in a predominant use of narrator perspective.

Pyers and Senghas (2007) found that, like LIU and TID, NiSL does not use body shifts in the same way as ASL. Instead, NiSL signers use a break in eye-gaze (similar to ASL and to LIU), a change in body position, and an ‘indexical point’ (an index pointed at the signer) to mark a shift from narrator perspective to character perspective. Sometimes the indexical point is followed by the lexical sign for the represented character. The indexical point itself is outside of the constructed action. Thus, like LIU, NiSL tends to mark changes into character perspective lexically. An important difference between LIU and NiSL is that LIU usually marks such changes with a noun, whereas NiSL uses a first person pronoun.

Having looked at non-spatial ways which signers use to shift into character perspective, the next section will take a closer look at spatial ways of expressing perspective in LIU and to what extent spatial set-ups are used consistently.

7.5 Introducing referents and creating spatial set-ups

Pyers and Senghas (2007) note that the way in which character perspective is expressed phonologically as well as its function in narrative discourse appears to be very similar across different (Western) sign languages. However, when comparing ASL with NiSL, they found significant differences in the use of spatial information. Thus, it appears that

“[a]nalyses of perspective shift in sign languages other than American Sign Language […] typically focus on those features that are shared with ASL, while those that differ from ASL seem absent from the discussion (cf. Engberg-Pedersen 1993; Poulin and Miller 1995).” (Pyers and Senghas 2007:279)
In this section I will show that perspective in LIU has many features that are different from those reported for ASL. I will briefly compare these findings to those reported for other sign languages and discuss their cross-linguistic implications. In Section 7.5.1 I will focus on the use of indexical pointing in narrator perspective to introduce characters at the beginning of a narrative, in Section 7.5.2 I will give some examples of referents being introduced by means of verbs in either narrator or character perspective. In Section 7.5.3 I will show how spatial lay-outs can be created in character perspective by means of agreement verbs and indexical pointing. In Section 7.5.4 I summarize my findings for LIU and compare them with descriptions of other sign languages.

**7.5.1 Indexical pointing in narrator perspective**

In descriptions of different Western sign languages, notably ASL, narrator perspective is said to occur early on in narratives in order to, as it were, ‘set the scene’ (cf. Emmorey and Falgier 1999; Morgan 1999). In narrator perspective a signer can explain how characters and objects are spatially related to each other. This is often achieved by means of indexing and entity classifiers. Only when the spatial lay-out of a scene has been established in narrator perspective will a signer switch to character perspective. Poulin and Miller (1995), discussing LSQ, therefore refer to narrator perspective as the ‘main frame of reference’ and to character perspective as ‘dependent frames of reference’. Descriptions of sign languages other than ASL and LSQ have revealed strikingly similar patterns.

Although in LIU most stories appear to start out in narrator perspective, indexical pointing to establish spatial relationships is not a common strategy. In my corpus of 34 mouse stories (with a total length of more than 24 minutes) indexical pointing to establish spatial relationships is used with narrator perspective only 31 times, which means on average less than once per story. Out of these 31 instances, only seven are used right at the beginning of the narrative to introduce characters and ‘set the scene’. An example involving two cases of indexical pointing to introduce two characters is given in (7.6). Such explicit localization of two characters in narrator perspective, however, is quite rare. In some other cases only one character is localized using an indexical point.
(7.6) dh: FIRST ELEPHANT IX_right CL:ROUND-OBJECT_right
    ndh: IX_left MOUSE CL:ROUND-OBJECT_right
    dh: CL:ROUND-OBJECT_left
    ndh: CL:ROUND-OBJECT_left

    “First, the elephant is on the left and the mouse on the right.”

In this example the elephant is introduced on the left by a simultaneous construction, and the mouse is located on the right in a similar way. The index establishing the location of the mouse is made on the dominant hand and is held during the production of the lexical item MOUSE on the non-dominant hand (cf. also Chapter 6.5.1 on simultaneously produced indexes). Thus, not only are the elephant and the mouse introduced on opposite sides of the signing space, they are also introduced by different hands. The function of the two-handed classifier constructions following the simultaneous constructions with the indexes is not altogether clear. The classifiers do not appear to provide additional information. Example (7.6) is the most explicitly localizing construction in all 34 stories, but after the signer has established the location of the mouse and the elephant, she does not use indexical pointing to the left and right to refer back to these characters. Thus, the loci established in (7.6) do not fulfill a function in the remainder of the discourse.

In the remaining 24 cases indexical points are not used to introduce a referent, but only occur later on in the story. In 22 of these cases, the index that localizes a character is immediately followed by, and in some cases preceded by or made simultaneously with, the lexical item for that character, as in (7.7). Hence, localization is not used to uniquely identify a referent in these cases, but functions as additional information.

(7.7) IX_left MOUSE IDEA

    “The mouse has an idea.”

There are just two cases in the Mouse stories in which the index occurs by itself and its referent is not explicitly signed. Only in these two cases the addressee needs to actually be aware of the location of the referents in the signing space to understand which character is being referred to.

In order to test whether the lack of indexical pointing in narrator perspective is related to the duration of the stories (cf. Pyers and Senghas (2007:292), who state that signers of NiSL do not use classifiers or indexical points to set up spatial relationships “at least not in short narratives” like the ones they analyzed), I compared the 34 mouse stories (with an average length of about 42 seconds) with the five Canary Row narratives, which are
much longer (on average 3 minutes and 25 seconds). In those five stories I found 28 instances of indexical pointing in narrator perspective to localize referents. Out of these, 16 were produced by one signer while the other signers used this strategy between one and four times. Of the 28 instances, only two were used at the beginning of a narrative to introduce the main characters in the story. These two were produced by the signer who used indexical pointing most. Note that this signer also produced more indexes than most of the other signers in the Mouse stories. It does not seem, then, that the duration of the stories makes a difference in whether or not indexing in narrator perspective is used as an important strategy for localizing referents.

### 7.5.2 Introducing referents using verbs

The infrequent use of indexical pointing in LIU to establish spatial relationships in narratives, be it to introduce characters at the beginning of the narrative or to refer to them later on in the narrative, contrasts with what has been found in many Western sign languages. This contrast appears to be related to the fact that LIU has a preference for lexically introducing character perspective, as was explained in Section 7.4.2. In fact, using narrator perspective to introduce and localize the main characters of a narrative right at the beginning of the story, and only switching to character perspective later on, is not common in LIU. This strategy is found in only 7 out of 42 stories. Two examples of the introduction of referents right at the beginning of a narrative are presented in (7.8a) taken from the blocks story, and example (7.8b), taken from the Mouse story duck and elephant, in which the duck rides on the back of the elephant (Appendix C). Note that the signer who produces (7.8a) signed the entire story in narrator perspective. In these examples the verb WALK is used to localize referents in narrator perspective.

(7.8a) dh: ELEPHANT MOUSE WALK right-left
     ndh: WALKleft-right________________________
         “An elephant comes walking from the left, and a mouse comes walking from the right.”

(7.8b) dh: ELEPHANT WALK DUCK(2h) WALKin front
     ndh: DUCK(2h) WALKbehind
         “An elephant is walking, and a duck is walking behind him.”

59 It would be interesting to know what the influence of sign language education is on these kinds of differences.
In (7.8a,b) as well as in (7.6), localization is established through a simultaneous construction, whereby the location of the character corresponds with the hand that is used. In (7.8a) the elephant is located on the left using the non-dominant (left) hand and the mouse is located on the right, using the dominant (right) hand. Likewise, in (7.8b), a simultaneous construction is used to locate the second character with respect to the first. Thus, dominance reversals and simultaneity are used frequently for contrastive purposes in LIU when characters are introduced in narrator perspective.

Although the signer of (7.8a) explicitly localizes both the mouse and the elephant by means of the verb WALK, she continues to mention only the elephant explicitly in the remainder of this story. Moreover, she is not consistent and localizes the elephant once on the left and once on the right, even though the elephant does not change his location in the cartoon. Thus, although the mouse and the elephant are localized at the beginning of the story, these locations are not used consistently throughout the story. It is interesting that in (7.8a) the verb WALK is used to localize the mouse and the elephant, because in the cartoon story the elephant and the mouse do not come walking into view at all. This can be seen in Figure 7.5 below, which shows the first frame of the blocks cartoon.

![Figure 7.5: initial frame in blocks cartoon](image1)

Another example in which the verb WALK is used to introduce a referent is shown in (7.9), taken from the Boy Story (Appendix C). Again, although the

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60 Note that the actual locations of the mouse and elephant in Figure 7.5 are the opposite of the locations used by this signer to introduce them.
verb WALK is used in this example, the first picture in the picture story does not show the boy walking at all (cf. Figure 7.6).

(7.9) dh: AFTER\textsuperscript{61} BOY WALK WATER \hspace{1cm} CL:POUR-INTO GUN // BOY WALK

   ndh: \hspace{1cm} CL: HOLD-GUN

   dh: SEE\textsubscript{forward} FATHER // \hspace{1cm} CL: HOLD-NEWSPAPER

   ndh: \hspace{1cm} CL: HOLD-NEWSPAPER

“A boy walks up, holding a gun with water poured into it. The boy walks and sees his father with a newspaper.”

Apparently, the verb WALK can be used even if its referent is not actually seen walking. It is possible that the verb WALK in these cases simply functions as an entity classifier expressing the location of the referents (cf. Perniss (2007b) for a similar function of the sign LOOK in DGS). The use of entity classifiers for localization is also common in Western sign languages.

Examples (7.8a,b) and (7.9) show how referents are introduced in narrator perspective using a construction with an entity classifier (the sign WALK). However, as I mentioned above, this strategy of introducing and localizing the main characters of a narrative right at the beginning of a story in narrator perspective, and only then switch to character perspective is not commonly used by LIU signers. In fact, this can be seen in (7.9) where the boy is introduced in narrator perspective, but the father is introduced, as it were, through the eyes of the boy. The father is localized as being forward from the boy (on the sagittal axis), through the use of the verb SEE which is directed ahead of the signer. In some cases, characters are introduced at the beginning of the story, but not localized at all, as in (7.10), which is taken from the horizontal bar story. In other cases only one character is localized, as in (7.11), taken from the chair story.

(7.10) ELEPHANT SMALL MOUSE BIG // MOUSE BIG WANT SPORTS

“There’s a small elephant and a big mouse, the big mouse wants to do sports.”

(7.11) dh: FIRST ELEPHANT SIT SLEEP//

   ndh: \hspace{1cm} AFTER IX\textsubscript{left} MOUSE \textsubscript{left} COME

“First, an elephant is sitting, asleep, then a mouse comes from the left.”

\textsuperscript{61}This is actually the first word in the story. Most signers start their stories with the sign FIRST and use the sign AFTER to mark new developments in the story. In this case, the signer starts her story with the sign AFTER, which I have not translated.
Examples (7.9) and (7.11) illustrate the use of verbs when introducing characters. In fact, most signers introduce the characters in the story lexically and then describe their actions, rather than explicitly localizing them. The verbs used in these descriptions can be signed in either narrator perspective (e.g. the first instance of the verb WALK in (7.9)) or in character perspective (e.g. the verb SEE\textit{forward} in (7.9)).

The fact that LIU tends to introduce animate referents by giving a description of their actions, this description being given either in narrator or in character perspective, shows that the ASL ‘rule’ that characters are first localized in narrator perspective and that character perspective in some way ‘depends’ on this spatial set-up, does not hold for LIU. In the examples below I will contrast the way two different signers introduce the characters in the picture story of the boy. The signer who signed (7.12) ‘sets the scene’ using narrator perspective in a way similar to what has been described for Western sign languages. She starts by introducing all the characters in the story and localizes some of them. This signer is the only signer in my corpus who consistently introduces the main characters in the story before she describes their actions (cf. also (7.10) which was signed by the same person). Note that she localizes the mother and the grandparents but not the father and the son, who occur in the first picture of the story.

\begin{align*}
(7.12) & \text{FIRST FATHER GUEST SIT NEWS PAPER // SON BOY LITTLE} // \\
& \text{MOTHER WHERE WASH-DISHES IX\textit{forward-right} // GRANDPARENTS WHERE IX\textit{up ROOM SEPARATE}} \\
\text{"First, the father is sitting in the guest(room) with a newspaper, he has a little son. Mother is washing dishes over to the right and the grandparents are upstairs in a separate room."}
\end{align*}

Most signers, however, introduce the characters consecutively, in the course of the story. They switch back and forth between narrator perspective and character perspective, introducing a character and then reproducing the actions of that character. This strategy is exemplified by the sequence of pictures in Figure 7.7.
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

**dh:** FIRST  FATHER //  CL:OPEN-PAPER  READ //  
**ndh:**  CL:OPEN-PAPER  

**dh:**  SUBJECT  NEWS //  NEWS  SPECIFIC //  
**ndh:**  

**dh:**  CL:OPEN-PAPER  //  BOY  SMALL //  GUN  
**ndh:**  

**dh:**  REAL  NO  PLAY  WATER  

185
In this example, the father is introduced first, followed by a description of what he is reading. This description is partly in character perspective, which is clear from the facial expression and the eye-gaze of the signer. Then, the signer switches back to narrator perspective and introduces the boy. He even addresses the addressee directly to check that she has understood the concept of a water pistol. He then goes back to character perspective and imitates the boy shooting his gun. Likewise, in contrast to the signer who signed (7.12), the mother and the grandparents are only introduced as they appear in the story.

7.5.3 Creating spatial lay-outs in character perspective

LIU signers tend to do a great deal of their localization in character perspective. They show the location of the characters relative to each other, rather than absolute locations in the signing space. In character perspective, signers use agreement verbs, in particular SEE (cf. example (7.9)), indexical points, and non-manuals like eye-gaze, to establish the relative position of one referent with respect to another. An example of the verb SEE (with accompanying eye-gaze) used this way, occurs in the horizontal bar story (Appendix C). The mouse is trying to swing on the horizontal bar, but does not succeed. One signer introduces the elephant, which appears behind the back of the mouse partway through the story, as in (7.13). This signer produces the sign COME, which is not a classifier verb but can be spatially modified, with a starting point behind him. Thus, the location of the elephant is signed from the perspective of the mouse, that is, the signer has taken on the role of the mouse.
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

(7.13) dh: CL: HOLD-BAR  SEE_{right-back} ELEPHANT  SMALL(2h) _behindCOME
  ndh: CL: HOLD-BAR  _______________ SMALL(2h)

  “He’s holding the bar and sees a small elephant coming up behind him.”

In (7.14), which is taken from a Canary Row narrative, the cat is localized by directing the verb SEE (with accompanying eye-gaze) and an indexical point upwards, thereby indicating that the location of the cat is lower than the location of the previously introduced bird and old lady. In this case, the relative position of the cat is established by the signer taking the cat’s perspective.

(7.14) BIRD HOUSE UP  // OLD-PERSON SIT  // CAT  SEE_{up} IX_{up} WANT GRAB BIRD

  “The bird is up in the house, an old lady is sitting there and a cat sees them there (from down below) and wants to grab the bird.”

Example (7.5), here repeated as (7.15), also shows the use of agreement verbs in character perspective to create a spatial set-up. Note that, in contrast to (7.5), here the relevant agreement verbs are presented in italics.

(7.15) dh: MOTHER TRY _SHOUT-AT_{right} WHY HIT
  ndh: FATHER

  dh: WIFE_{right} _SHOUT-AT_{1} WHAT ALLOWED SHOOT-AT_{1}
  ndh: 

  dh: MOTHER _CORRECT_{right} _SLAP_{forward} BOY SMALL
  ndh: CL: HOLD-BOY SECOND-TIME

  dh: INDIGNANT WALK_{up} WANTS GRANDPARENTS

  “Mother (says): ‘I’ll try’ and shouts at (father): ‘why did you hit him?’ Father, who gets shouted at by his wife, (says): ‘What, is he allowed to shoot at me?’ Mother (says): ‘You’re right’ and slaps the boy for the second time. The small boy is indignant and walks up the stairs, he wants his grandparents.”

In this example, the father is associated with a location to the right of the mother by means of agreement verbs. When verbs are directed from the mother to the father, they are directed to the right. Thus, the verb _SHOUT-AT_{right} is an agreement verb, which is directed from the signer (who has taken on the mother’s perspective) to the father’s location to the right of the signer.
Similarly, when producing the sign CORRECT, the signer turns to the right, as if addressing the father. The verb SLAP forward shows that the boy is located in front of the mother. The spatial set-up created in this way is shown in Figure 7.8

![Figure 7.8: spatial set-up created in (7.15)](image)

This spatial set-up, however, is rather ad hoc, in that it has not been introduced previously in narrator perspective and is also not entirely consistent. The verb rightSHOUT-AT1, which expresses the perspective of the father, is produced with a starting point to the right of the signer, even though the mother (the one who is doing the shouting) should be located to the left of the father in a consistent spatial set-up. Note that the signer’s eye-gaze is on the addressee throughout this example (cf. Section 7.4.3 where eye-gaze by itself was said not to be a reliable indicator of character perspective), and therefore does not contribute to the localization. However, because characters are introduced lexically before their actions or words are described, referents can still be identified without a consistent spatial lay-out.

Note also that there are two verbs rightSHOUT-AT1 and SHOOT-AT1 that are directed towards the signer. Because these two verbs are within the passage that has been lexically introduced by the sign FATHER, it is clear that the signer has taken on the perspective of the father and the first person reference functions in the same way as first person reference in direct speech (constructed dialogue) in English. In fact, the second verb is part of a direct speech by the father and can be directly translated into English using first person reference: “shoot at me”. The first verb, however, is not part of direct
speech, but rather expresses an action happening to the father. Since English, and spoken languages in general, cannot use character perspective for actions (there is no such thing as ‘constructed action’ in spoken languages), this cannot be translated using a first person pronoun. Instead, it is best translated with a passive construction to make clear that the father is the undergoer of the action.

Besides using agreement verbs to establish spatial set-ups, signers can also use indexical pointing in character perspective to show the position of two referents relative to each other. An example of indexical pointing in character perspective is given in (7.16), which is taken from the Canary Row narrative. The cat is looking around through his binoculars and spots a bird up on a window-sill. The direction of the index and the following agreement verb GRAB shows the position of the bird in relation to the cat.

(7.16)  LOOK-WITH-BINOCULARS SPOT IX\textsubscript{forward-up} THINK GRAB\textsubscript{forward-up} HOW

“He (the cat) looked through the binoculars and spotted him (the bird) up there and thought: ‘How can I grab him?’”

Apart from pointing at locations in the signing space, the signer can also use first person indexical pointing in character perspective to refer to the character whose perspective he has taken on. Compared to indexing in narrator perspective to localize referents, which is not very frequently used, as we have seen, first person indexing in character perspective is quite common in LIU. In my corpus of 43 stories, first person referencing in character perspective occurs 78 times, mostly in longer narratives. An example is given in (7.17). In this example a first person index on the non-dominant hand is followed by a two-handed first person index.

(7.17)  dh: CAT LOOK\textsubscript{forward} EASY IX\textsubscript{1} MONKEY IX\textsubscript{1} 
ndh: COME-HERE IX\textsubscript{1} IX\textsubscript{1} 

   dh: CLOTHES(2h) EXCHANGE(2h) IX\textsubscript{right-up} OLD-LADY 
ndh: CLOTHES(2h) EXCHANGE(2h) 

   dh: BELIEVE IX\textsubscript{1} MONKEY IX\textsubscript{1} 
ndh: 

“The cat looks ahead of him (and thinks): ‘It’s easy, I will beckon the monkey to come over and I will exchange my clothes. The old lady up there will believe I am the monkey.’”
In (7.17) first person referencing takes place within a constructed dialogue, albeit an internal dialogue, going on in the cat’s mind. Engberg-Pedersen (1993) mentions that shifted reference can only take place in constructed dialogue and never in constructed action in DSL. Likewise, Poulin and Miller (1995) observe that a first person pronoun in LSQ signals constructed dialogue. The same is apparently true for ASL (Pyers and Senghas 2007). In LIU, however, first person referencing can be used in constructed action, as illustrated in (7.18), which describes the last two pictures of the Mouse story with the chair (Appendix C).

(7.18) dh: CL:PUSH-OVER CHAIR CL:PUSH-OVER IX1 SIT(2h) ndh: CL:PUSH-OVER CL:FALL SIT(2h) SLEEP MOUSE dh: ndh: UPSET “He pushes over the chair and it falls. He sits down and sleeps, and the mouse is upset.”

Previously in this story, the elephant was the last referent to be mentioned, so it is clear that the first person indexical point refers back to the elephant. Note that in English it is impossible to translate the first person reference with “I”, whereas in the constructed dialogue in (7.17) this is no problem.

7.5.4 Summary of LIU data and cross-linguistic comparisons

In this section, I have shown how referents are introduced and localized in LIU. Although different signers have different preferences with respect to indexical pointing and introducing characters at the beginning of a narrative, LIU appears to employ strategies that are quite different from those described for Western sign languages. Most LIU signers do not introduce and localize referents at the beginning of a narrative in narrator perspective. In fact, most signers introduce characters only when these start playing an active role in the story. When signers do localize referents, they regularly use dominance reversals and simultaneous constructions to localize and contrast different referents. However, the locations that are established for referents when they are introduced in narrator perspective are not always referred back to later on in the story and appear not to play an important role in distinguishing between different characters (cf. Van Dijken 2004). Indexical pointing and the use of entity classifiers, in particular the verb WALK, to introduce or refer to referents both occur, but are relatively uncommon. There appears to be a great deal of variation between signers in this area. Many signers of LIU use character perspective and localize...
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

referents in relation to each other, using the verb SEE and other agreement verbs, as well as indexing, to create spatial set-ups. These spatial set-ups, however, are quite ‘ad hoc’ and are not always consistently used across multiple perspective shifts. In character perspective, a signer can also use first person reference, that is, indexical pointing at the signer, to refer to the character whose perspective he has taken on. This is possible not only when the signer relates the words or thoughts of a character (constructed dialogue) but also when he imitates the actions of a character (constructed action).

Cross-linguistically, as pointed out at the beginning of Section 7.5, most descriptions of perspective in Western sign languages have focused on features shared with ASL. Only recently have researchers started to look for differences between sign languages. Perniss (2007b) found that, like LIU, DGS prefers to use character perspective over narrator perspective for scene-setting. Pyers and Senghas (2007) report that narrator perspective in NiSL is rarely used to give spatial information, either to set the scene at the beginning of a narrative, or later on in the narrative. Indexical pointing in narrator perspective is rare in NiSL, just as in LIU. In contrast to LIU, however, entity classifiers were hardly used in NiSL and never with the objective of establishing spatial relations. 62 Aronoff, Meir, Padden and Sandler (2003) compare ASL and ISL and find that, in ordinary conversation, ISL uses more character perspective (referent projections) than ASL. They suggest that the use of entity classifiers (signaling narrator perspective) in a sign language is linked to the age of the language. ISL being a younger sign language than ASL uses more handling classifiers (i.e. character perspective). This fits in with the fact that in NiSL, a very young sign language, entity classifiers are very rare. However, the LIU data does not fit neatly into this theory, since it does use both abstract entity classifiers and character perspective, as shown by Van Dijken (2004). It would seem, then, that the predominant use of character perspective for scene-setting in narrative discourse in LIU (and DGS) is independent of language age. The use of narrator versus character perspective for scene-setting in narrative discourse simply appears to be one of the aspects in which sign languages can differ cross-linguistically. Moreover, at least in LIU, individual signers can differ in the way they use perspective.

As far as spatial set-ups are concerned, there appear to be a number of similarities between LIU and NiSL. According to Pyers and Senghas (2007) NiSL signers are not consistent in the spatial lay-out they use within a narrative across perspective shifts. Such inconsistencies are also found in LIU, although they may not be as common as in NiSL. In contrast to this, 62 Note that Pyers and Senghas (2007) do qualify their findings somewhat by saying that these strategies were not found in short narratives like the ones they analyzed.
DGS signers, who also tend to use character perspective for localizing, are consistent in the way they use spatial loci. Also, NiSL signers did not use spatial means to indicate whether narrator or character perspective was being used, but rather used a break in eye-gaze (similar to ASL and to LIU), a change in body position, and an ‘indexical point’ (an index pointed at the signer) to mark a shift from narrator perspective to character perspective. Sometimes the indexical point was followed by the lexical sign for the represented character. The difference between this first person indexical point in NiSL and a first person pronoun used in character perspective in LIU (as in (7.17) and (7.18)) is that in NiSL, the indexical point is produced before the character perspective, whereas in LIU it is part of the character perspective. Likewise, LIU and NiSL are similar in that they can use first person referencing not only in constructed dialogue, but also in constructed action. This has been claimed to be impossible in other sign languages, like DSL, ASL and LSQ.

7.6 Multiple perspectives

When signers describe the actions of one of the characters in a story, they frequently use what has been called ‘multiple perspectives’ to represent actions or events from more than one perspective simultaneously. Aarons and Morgan (2003:128) mention that the creation of multiple perspectives involves the simultaneous occurrence of three phenomena; the signer’s use of a handling classifier, the signer’s use of an entity classifier, and the signer’s use of his face or body to express “the first-person point of view”, that is, character perspective. However, it is also possible to express multiple perspectives when only two out of these three phenomena occur simultaneously. I briefly discussed an example of this in Section 7.4. The relevant part of this example is repeated here with accompanying illustrations as Figure 7.9. Note the facial expression and head position indicating the use of character perspective.
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

Figure 7.9: “The small boy is indignant and walks up the stairs, he wants his grandparents.”

Aarons and Morgan (2003:152) mention that “constructed action can occur either accompanied or unaccompanied by linguistic items.” They note that when it is accompanied by entity classifiers this usually means more than one perspective is expressed simultaneously. The sign WALK up in Figure 7.9 occurs in the middle of a sequence of signs expressing character perspective and is signed with the facial expression of the boy whose perspective the signer has taken on. The sign WALK up, which involves an entity classifier, is a description of the boy’s action by the signer as narrator, while at the same time the signer expresses character perspective non-manually. It can, therefore, be viewed as an instance of multiple perspectives. Liddell (2003) refers to such constructions as ‘partial blends’, suggesting that the signer is taking on character perspective only partially. The reason that the signer uses multiple perspectives in this example is that she cannot express the path movement of the boy going up the stairs in character perspective without actually climbing a set of stairs herself. Perniss (2007b) observes that the depiction of path movement is something that can only be expressed in narrator perspective using entity classifiers.

The use of multiple perspectives is quite common in LIU. Not only can a signer ‘be’ a character non-manually and describe the actions of that character as narrator manually, but a signer can also express character perspective with one hand and narrator perspective with the other hand in a simultaneous classifier construction. An example of this is presented in (7.19), taken from the horizontal bar narrative (Appendix C).
Jordanian Sign Language: Aspects of grammar from a cross-linguistic perspective

(7.19) dh: MOUSE WANT CL:GRAB-BAR IX1 CL:GRAB-BAR CL:LEGS-SWING  
        ndh: CL:GRAB-BAR CL:GRAB-BAR  
        dh: LIKE CL:LEGS-MAKE-SUMMERSAULT HOW  
        ndh:  

“The mouse wants to grab the bar: I grab the bar and swing. I would like to make a summersault, but how?”

In this example, the first sign is a lexical item introducing character perspective. The rest of the example is signed in character perspective, as can be seen from the use of the first person pronoun.63 Throughout most of the example the signer holds the non-dominant hand over his head, using a fist-shaped handling classifier, as if he is holding on to the horizontal bar. With his dominant hand he describes the actions of the mouse using an entity classifier, as well as describing the thoughts of the mouse. Obviously, the mouse swinging on the bar or making a summersault cannot be described by the signer in character perspective, using real space. In that case, the signer would have to have a horizontal bar present and dangle in the air or actually make a summersault.

In fact, any actions involving the legs cannot be made in character perspective, unless the signer actually uses his legs. In most sign languages the use of the legs is not permitted, and the legs are not even used as a location for signs. Meir, Padden, Aronoff and Sandler (2008:370), for example, observe that

“[b]ody parts that are lower than the waist […] hardly ever function as locations for signs. Therefore, actions which are performed by the legs and feet of the subject are not articulated by these appendages; rather, the legs and feet are represented by the arms and hands.”

In my data, there are only two signers who use their feet, in a Mouse story in which the elephant and the mouse kick the ball to each other. One signer uses a classifier to depict the ball and brings this hand to his foot. This

63 I have chosen to translate this example using the first person in English in order to make the translation consistent with the glosses and to indicate that this example uses character perspective (after the first sign which introduces character perspective). Because English, unlike sign languages, cannot use first person referencing to express constructed action, the normal English translation of this example would have a third person pronoun: “The mouse wants to grab the bar and swing, he grabs the bar and swings, he wants to make a summersault, but (doesn’t know) how.” This translation, however, obscures the fact that the signer uses character perspective to report the mouse’s actions.
entails him having to bend forward repeatedly and lift his foot from the ground. Another signer simply makes a kicking movement with her foot and does not attempt to depict the ball at the same time. Such activity of the legs is quite rare, however, and never occurs when path movement is involved. A third signer signing this story touches his leg once, to indicate that the ball is being kicked, and then uses his non-dominant hand to depict his foot. This representation is more well-formed phonologically. In fact, most of the examples of the use of multiple perspectives in my data involve the use of the ‘legs’ classifier. It seems that, when it is phonologically impossible for a signer to use character perspective, the nearest thing he can do is to use multiple perspectives, with one hand expressing character perspective (representing the hands of the character with his own hands), while the other hand describes the actions of the character as a whole with an entity classifier.

Another situation in which multiple perspectives are used occurs in the representation of the Mouse story duck and elephant, in which a duck jumps on the neck of an elephant (Appendix C). The signer does not use the two hands to express different perspectives, but places an entity classifier on her own body. In this case, the reason to use multiple perspectives appears to be that the signer wants to be exact about the location of the duck with respect to the elephant. She first uses narrator perspective to clarify the spatial locations of the two animals with respect to each other, representing the back of the elephant with the back of her non-dominant hand and using a legs classifier for the duck jumping onto the back of the elephant. This representation, however, does not clearly show that the duck jumps onto the neck of the elephant. She therefore clarifies the position of the duck by representing the elephant with her own body (i.e. in character perspective) and uses the legs classifier to represent the duck jumping onto her own neck. The first picture in 7.10 shows her depicting the situation in narrator perspective, the second picture shows her using multiple perspectives. Note that another signer uses exactly the same strategy to depict this situation, except that he reverses the order and uses multiple perspectives first, followed by narrator perspective.
Additionally, in both pictures of Figure 7.10, the expression on the signer’s face is the gleeful expression of the duck jumping onto the elephant. Thus, if we take into account the facial expression, three perspectives are expressed simultaneously in the second picture; that of the signer as narrator, expressed by the entity classifier on the dominant hand; the signer as duck, shown by the facial expression; and the signer as elephant (the signer’s neck representing the neck of the elephant). Likewise, Van Dijken (2004:46) has found some examples of three perspectives being expressed simultaneously in LIU. She also presents a very interesting example in which two different character perspectives are expressed simultaneously. I cite her example here as (7.20).\textsuperscript{64}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ccc}
\text{tongue out} & \text{leap backward} & \text{leap forward} \\
\text{MAN LEASH} & CL: HOLD-LEASH & PAW \\
\text{ndh: DOG CL: HOLD-LEASH} & \underline{\text{PAW}} & \underline{\text{PAW}} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\text{“A dog is holding a leash, a man is at the end of the leash and walks like a panting dog.”}

The signer, describing a picture of a dog walking upright keeping a man on all fours on a leash, first uses constructed action to show the dog holding the leash on her non-dominant hand. She holds this hand in place and then imitates the panting of the man on the leash non-manually, while using her

\textsuperscript{64} In this example, I have adapted the glosses somewhat so that they fit in better with the conventions used in this dissertation. I have also added a free translation.
dominant hand to show the leash on his neck using a handling classifier held next to her own neck. At this point she is simultaneously representing the perspective of the dog holding the leash and the perspective of the man at the end of the leash. Note that she lexically introduces both character perspectives, but the character perspective of the dog is continued on her non-dominant hand while she produces the lexical sign MAN, as well as when she shifts into the character perspective of the man with her dominant hand and her non-manuals. Note also the dominance reversal in this example to contrast the two perspectives.

Another example in my data of two different character perspectives being expressed simultaneously occurs in the Boy Story, where the boy runs to his mother in the kitchen to complain about his father hitting him (picture 4 in the Boy Story in Appendix C). One signer signed this as shown in Figure 7.11.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dh:} & \quad \text{MOTHER WASH-DISHES} \quad \text{CL:PULL-APRON}_{\text{behind}} \quad \text{CL:PULL-APRON}_{\text{forward}} \\
\text{ndh:} & \quad \text{WASH-DISHES} \quad \text{iX}_{\text{left}}
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 7.11: “Mother is washing the dishes and gets pulled on her apron, (the boy) pulls her apron and points (to the father).”

In this example the perspective of the boy and the mother are mixed in a complex way. The facial expression of a whining boy is made simultaneously with the sign WASH-DISHES and continues during the rest of the utterance. However, the signer also turns her head whilst signing CL:PULL-APRON$_{\text{behind}}$, like the mother in the picture. Thus, even the signer’s non-manuals express multiple perspectives at this point: with her facial expression she represents the boy, while the head-turn represents the mother. Also, the action of pulling the apron is made first at a location representing the mother’s perspective, and then made again at a location representing the boy’s perspective. Rather than calling this a multiple perspective construction, it might be better to refer to ‘merged’ perspectives, as does Van Dijken (2004).

In a sense, certain agreement verbs inherently express multiple character perspectives simultaneously. An example of this is the sign SHOOT-AT$_1$, in (7.5). This sign is directed at the signer, who has taken the role of the
father in the *Boy Story*. This is shown by the facial expression of the signer. Non-manually, then, the signer expresses the father’s perspective. Simultaneously, the signer manually expresses the action of the boy holding the gun and pulling the trigger. However, such constructions are not normally considered multiple perspective constructions. Rather, the sign *SHOOT-GUN* can be viewed as a lexicalized handling classifier. (For a discussion on the role of the body and the hands in agreement verbs, cf. Meir et al. (2008)).

Multiple perspectives can be expressed simultaneously, as in the examples above, but a signer may also choose to express multiple perspectives on the same event sequentially. An example of this has already been given in Figure 7.11 where the signer imitates the pulling of the apron twice, once from the perspective of the mother and once from the perspective of the boy. The expression of narrator and character perspective sequentially also occurs. This happens, for instance, when a signer needs to use both hands to depict the actions of a referent in character perspective. A nice example is found in a re-telling of the Canary Row cartoon, in which the cat climbs up a rain-pipe to reach the bird. To describe the cat’s actions, the signer alternates between character perspective and narrator perspective. She first imitates the manner in which the cat climbs up the rain-pipe, putting her arms around an imaginary pipe and moving them down several times. She then switches to narrator perspective to describe the path movement of the cat up the rain-pipe using two entity classifiers. Finally, she switches back to constructed action again (Figure 7.12). Other signers describing this event choose to either only express the path movement of the cat in narrator perspective or represent the cat climbing in character perspective.

LIU, then, uses multiple perspective constructions frequently. Such constructions may be either simultaneous or sequential. The focus of this
section has been on simultaneous constructions expressing multiple perspectives. Most descriptions of such constructions deal with the simultaneous expression of narrator and character perspective in classifier constructions, or with the simultaneous production of imitative constructed action and a lexical sign expressing narrator perspective. The LIU data, however, shows that it is also possible to express multiple character perspectives simultaneously. Such constructions can be quite complex, with the different perspectives merged in both the non-manuals and the manual signs. It is even possible, albeit not very common, to represent three perspectives simultaneously in LIU, as shown in Figure 7.10.

The expression of multiple perspectives simultaneously is something unique to sign languages, but does not occur in all sign languages. In fact, Nyst (2007a) states that in AdaSL no entity classifiers are found at all. This means that simultaneous constructions involving narrator perspective and constructed action cannot occur in this language. Pyers and Senghas (2007) mention that the ability to hold multiple perspectives is present in both ASL and NiSL, although in the latter it appears to be an emerging feature, since these structures appear more frequently in younger signers, who learned NiSL from the first generation of signers. They present a NiSL example, in which a signer takes on the facial expression and body rhythm of a child walking while simultaneously producing the sign WALK-FORWARD. This is an example of a sign that expresses path movement in narrator perspective produced simultaneously with constructed action, expressed non-manually. Since NiSL signers use entity classifiers very infrequently, there are no examples of a simultaneous construction in which the signer produces an entity classifier on one hand and a handling classifier on the other hand, as in (7.19). Note that the presence or absence of entity classifiers and the resulting ability or inability to manually express multiple perspectives appears to be independent of language age, since AdaSL is a relatively old sign language. Aarons and Morgan (2003) give examples of the use of multiple perspectives in South African Sign Language (SASL), and state that signers “invariably use constructed action in conjunction with classifier predicates to create simultaneous perspectives on an event” (Aarons and Morgan 2003:153). They also mention that signers use classifier constructions and constructed action sequentially within a single utterance. Perniss (2007b) describes ‘double-perspective’ constructions in DGS in which signers take on character perspective (expressed through handling classifiers and appropriate facial expressions) but use the spatial lay-out appropriate to narrator perspective. However, none of these authors give

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65 These later signers, who learned the language in the mid-1980s and later, are referred to as the ‘second cohort’ in studies that track the changes and developments that have occurred in NiSL since its beginning (e.g. Senghas 1995).
examples of the expression of three perspectives simultaneously. In fact, this phenomenon, which occurs in LIU, has thus far not been described for any other sign language. Similarly, to the best of my knowledge, the complicated ‘merged perspective’ constructions presented in (7.20) and Figure 7.11 have not been described for other sign languages.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to give a detailed description of the use of perspective in narrative discourse in LIU. Although my data shows that there is considerable individual variation between signers in the way they structure their narratives, there are still general trends that I have been able to observe. Overall, the LIU data reveals that there are considerable differences between LIU and ASL. Pyers and Senghas (2007) observe that descriptions of perspective in most Western sign languages appear to be based on ASL, stressing the similarities with ASL rather than the differences. Consequently, a description of a non-Western sign language which does not follow the ‘rules’ of ASL is particularly interesting cross-linguistically. Although LIU has several features of perspective, such as the use of eye-gaze and facial expressions, in common with Western sign languages, there are also some important differences.

One difference between LIU and descriptions of Western sign languages relates to the way referents are introduced in a narrative. Rather than using narrator perspective and indexical points to introduce referents at the beginning of a narrative before switching to character perspective, most LIU signers introduce a referent without explicit localization, and express the actions of that referent in character perspective before they introduce the next referent. In this respect LIU is similar to DGS, which also tends to use character perspective for the introduction of referents. However, compared to DGS, the use of indexes in narrator perspective to localize referents is relatively rare in LIU. Moreover, DGS signers appear to be more consistent in their use of spatial lay-outs than LIU signers.

Also, most LIU signers do not express the perspective of different referents by means of role-shift, as has been described for ASL, DGS and other Western sign languages. Instead, they tend to introduce the referent whose perspective they are assuming lexically before shifting into character perspective. In character perspective referents are localized with respect to each other by means of indexing, agreement verbs and non-manuals. This localizing appears to be quite ad hoc, however, and is not always used consistently throughout a narrative.
Chapter 7: Perspective in narrative discourse

It is interesting that LIU has certain characteristics in common with other non-Western sign languages like TID and NiSL. All three languages introduce character perspective lexically, although LIU and TID use a noun, whereas NiSL uses a first person indexical point, optionally followed by a noun. A similar pattern has not been described for Western sign languages. Another similarity between LIU and TID is the absence of body-shift, although certain LIU signers do use this mechanism to some extent. A difference between LIU and TID, however, appears to be that the former uses a great deal of character perspective (although there is considerable variation between signers), at least in narrative discourse, whereas the latter apparently uses narrator perspective to a greater extent.

Some of the similarities between NiSL and LIU are quite striking. The fact that spatial set-ups are not always used consistently in both languages may be related to language age (although we know very little of the age of LIU) but this is not necessarily the case. Inconsistencies in spatial set-ups can be compensated for by the fact that character perspective is introduced lexically in both LIU and NiSL. Signers of both languages do not regularly use narrator perspective to set up referents in space, although some LIU signers use this strategy more than others. This indicates that NiSL signers and most signers of LIU are less concerned about spatial lay-outs than signers of ASL or other Western sign languages. However, it does not appear that intelligibility is impeded by spatial inconsistencies or the absence of localization, at least in LIU.

As far as the use of multiple perspectives is concerned, LIU has some striking features that have not been previously described for other sign languages. In particular, the expression of three perspectives simultaneously, as well as the expression of multiple character perspectives simultaneously is something I have not encountered in the literature. If the ability to express multiple perspectives simultaneously is something that gradually evolves during the development of a sign language, as suggested by Pyers and Senghas (2007) in their account of NiSL, this would be an indication that LIU is, in fact, older than NiSL. This would imply that the similarities between LIU and NiSL are not due to the fact that they are both emerging or young sign languages, but are related to other structural properties, as I suggested above. Rather than reflecting language age, it may well be that differences between LIU and NiSL on the one hand, and languages like ASL on the other hand, simply show that there is much more cross-linguistic variation in sign languages in this area than appears from the literature.