# Here There be Monsters: Indexical Shift in American Sign Language

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**The Issue**    Pronominal reference in American Sign Language (ASL) is quite different from spoken language. Referents are assigned a spatial location, or locus, in between conversants; these loci would be the equivalent of overt referential indices in a spoken language. In certain embedded clauses, ASL has been argued to show signs of logophoricity. This occurs under role shift, where a signer's body moves toward an already established locus. As described by Lillo-Martin (1995), ASL first person signs under role shift refer to the individual at that locus, rather than the signer. After reviewing literature on various signed languages, and completing new fieldwork with ASL users, we make the following claims: i) ASL role shift also alters second-person reference; ii) instead of logophoricity, role shift is best analyzed via an indexical shift operator, or monster; iii) the overt monster provides evidence for a covert predicate similar to quotative "like" in English.

**Previous Analyses**    According to Lillo-Martin, role shift occurs with or without an overt matrix verb (angled brackets indicate signs produced under role shift):

(1)    $\text{MOM}_a$ (SAY) $\langle \text{POV}_a$    $[_{CP}\ \text{Op}_a$ 1-PRONOUN$_a$ BUSY]$\rangle$
       Mom    say    SHIFT-a        1ST.SG        busy
       'Mom said *I'm busy*.' or 'Mom's like *I'm busy*.'

Lillo-Martin claims that the onset of role-shift denotes a POV-predicate with a pro-dropped subject. POV takes a CP complement whose specifier is occupied by a covert pronominal operator bound by the higher clause subject; this operator binds all logophoric pronouns in its scope. Under this analysis, where the matrix SAY is overt, the sentence has two layers of embedding; where SAY is absent, POV itself is the matrix predicate. In a discussion of similar facts in Catalonian Sign Language (LSC), Quer (2005) argues that assuming logophoric and non-logophoric versions of pronouns (an implication of the Lillo-Martin analysis) is unnecessary, and instead treats LSC role shift as an instance of indexical shift (Schlenker, 2003).

**Findings**    First, we adapt tests from Anand and Nevins (2004) and Shklovsky and Sudo (2014) to confirm that role shifted clauses are not quoted speech. We also report elicited ASL translations of dialogues involving reported speech. As in Lillo-Martin's data, we observed first person signs to be sensitive to role shift. Our dialogues also contained scenarios where signers must refer to themselves within role shift, equivalent to *John said (to me), "you're smart"*. Under role shift, this second person pronoun uses the signer's original body position as its locus. We take this deviation from canonical second person reference (using addressee as locus) to be evidence of indexical shift also altering second person. We thus propose that Lillo-Martin's analysis for ASL be updated:

(2)    $\text{MOM}_a$ SAY/$\emptyset$    $\langle[_{CP}\ \text{Op}$        1-PRONOUN$_a$ BUSY]$\rangle$
       Mom    say/is like    MONSTER 1ST.SG        busy
       'Mom said *I'm busy*.' or 'Mom's like *I'm busy*.'

Here, the embedded CP is headed by a monster, overtly marked by role shift, altering all indexical references in its scope. However, unlike the LSC data Quer reports, ASL also uses role shift without any overt matrix predicate. We claim that ASL can have a covert verb in place of SAY, which obligatorily selects a CP headed by the indexical shift operator. We argue that the overt C head signals the presence of the covert selecting verb, following Lillo-Martin in treating the covert verb as quotative "like". This has the advantage of making (2) uniformly a two-clause structure.

**Conclusion**    This analysis brings ASL in line with contemporary analyses of other signed languages, suggesting that perhaps all signed languages contain monsters. This could be a result of the nature of the pronominal system more generally, as overt loci plus an overt role shift may facilitate the use of indexical shift, which can be difficult to track in spoken language.

# References

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