Attitude ascriptions and role shift in sign languages

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Across sign languages role shift (RS) is often identified as the genuine means at their disposal to report utterances or thoughts (Lillo-Martin 1995, in press; Herrmann & Steinbach 2007, 2010, Quer 2005, 2011). Its hallmarks are the array of non-manual markers that signal the report itself and the shift in indexical reference with respect to the context of utterance. Despite the surface resemblance with direct quotation, it has been convincingly argued that RS structures do not constitute a uniform class and that they actually serve the expression of both direct and non-direct reported discourse (Quer 2011). At the same time, it has been recently proposed that role shift is more akin to free indirect discourse (FID) in spoken languages (Hübel 2012, Steinbach 2012).

On the basis of Catalan Sign Language (LSC) data, I show that RS is a cover term for a phenomenon that transcends the limits of pure reports and serves the general function of encoding propositional attitudes more generally, by signalling an individual's perspective overtly.

Apart from identifying the different verbs introducing direct and indirect reports, it will be argued that there are distinctions among RS structures that contrast with those of "classical" embedded reports (indirect discourse): (i) possibility of fronting of the report; (ii) shiftability of indexicals in the report (Quer 2011).

In addition, RS is shown to display one important property that has been neglected in most of the existing accounts of RS: it can appear in the scope of negation, which is not prototypical for direct report or quotation. In opposition to pure quotes under negation, a RS fragment in the scope of a negative does not necessarily yield a corrective/contrastive reading of the embedded proposition, as in (1)-(2).

RS-i

(1) NOONE_i SAY IX-1_i AGR-1 SCARED DARKNESS

'Noone says he's scared of darkness.'

RS hs

(2) IX-arc WARN-arc [CLASS CANCEL] NEG2

'Noone warned them that the class was cancelled.'

Similarly, RS can also appear in the scope of a quantified subject and a modal, as in (3):

RS-i

(3) SOME THINK CAN IX-1; EXAM FAIL 'Someone may think he has failed the exam.'

These are properties that arguably take RS to the broader domain of attitude ascription marking.

While locative and temporal indexicals can shift under certain circumstances in some sign languages like LSC, 1st person indexicals strictly flag the RS fragment and they obligatorily shift. However, in FID discourse 3rd person pronouns stand for the attitude holder, as in standard indirect discourse (Sharvit 2008: 354):

(4) John looked at my picture. <u>Yes</u> (, he thought,) **he** want**ed** to marry me <u>today</u>.

Despite sharing some properties with FID, I argue that RS cannot be reduced to it, either. An alternative analysis of the partial shifting in terms of free direct

quotation/unquotation as in Maier (2012) is potentially problematic too, because it would render the overt marking of the RS fragment inconsistent with its interpretation.