

ABSTRACT

Selected features of Konchri Sain Morphology and Syntax

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This thesis presents a preliminary description of selected features of the morphology and syntax of Konchri Sain, an endangered language used by a small number of deaf and hearing Jamaicans in the south-western parish of St. Elizabeth. Konchri Sain, like all natural human languages, has a structured morphological and syntactic system.

With regard to morphology, this thesis draws attention to non-manual lexemes that are largely undocumented in the sign linguistics literature. The presence of these signs in Konchri Sain challenges the definition of what constitutes a sign. The thesis also describes complex signs in Konchri Sain, with a focus on compounding and verbal agreement. Whilst concatenative and simultaneous morphology are to be found in the language, there is a preference for concatenative morphology. In addition, the body of a signer functions as a key reference point in verb agreement.

With regard to syntax, the simplex clause in Konchri Sain is described. Konchri Sain prefers an Actor-Predicate-Undergoer order of constituents, and it is not necessary for signers to project referents in articulatory space in order to refer back to them. Konchri Sign signers depend on context heavily, thus, information structure plays a key role in identifying the participants in a situation or activity.

The description of KS morphology and syntax is framed within the constructionist theories of Construction Morphology and Role and Reference Grammar respectively. Both theories seek to account for all linguistic phenomena without being biased toward any particular morphological or syntactic pattern. They, therefore, allow for a description of KS that allows the data to speak for itself.

Keywords: Bertram Omar Gayle; Rural Sign Language; linguistics; sign languages; Jamaica; St. Elizabeth