

# Contents

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Acknowledgements.....        | v     |
| List of figures .....        | xiii  |
| List of tables.....          | xvii  |
| Abbreviations.....           | xviii |
| Sign language acronyms ..... | xix   |
| Glossary .....               | xxi   |
| Notational conventions ..... | xxii  |

## Part I: Introduction

|                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1 Introduction.....                               | 3  |
| 1.1 Research aims and objectives .....            | 5  |
| 1.2 Outline of the book .....                     | 7  |
| 2 Sign language types .....                       | 10 |
| 2.1 Deaf community sign languages.....            | 12 |
| 2.2 Emerging sign languages .....                 | 13 |
| 2.3 Village sign languages .....                  | 15 |
| 2.3.1 Socioeconomic and demographic settings..... | 15 |
| 2.3.2 Social homogeneity.....                     | 16 |
| 2.3.3 (Socio-)Linguistic context .....            | 17 |
| 2.3.4 Degree of endangerment .....                | 18 |
| 2.4 Alternate sign languages .....                | 19 |
| 2.4.1 Sawmill Sign Language.....                  | 20 |

|                                                  |    |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| 2.4.2 Monastic sign languages .....              | 21 |
| 2.4.3 Plains Indian Sign Language .....          | 22 |
| 2.4.4 Keresan Pueblo Indian Sign Language .....  | 23 |
| 2.4.5 Australian Aboriginal sign languages ..... | 23 |
| 2.5 Shared sign languages .....                  | 28 |
| 2.6 Summary .....                                | 30 |

## **Part II: Sociolinguistic Background & Methodology**

|                                                           |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 3 Cultural and sociolinguistic context .....              | 35 |
| 3.1 Previous studies .....                                | 35 |
| 3.2 Historic & demographic background .....               | 37 |
| 3.3 Cultural background .....                             | 40 |
| 3.4 Linguistic context .....                              | 41 |
| 3.5 The use of YSL in Yolngu communities .....            | 46 |
| 3.5.1 Communication with deaf Yolngu .....                | 47 |
| 3.5.2 Interaction over distance .....                     | 50 |
| 3.5.3 Further aspects of YSL origin and use .....         | 50 |
| 4 Data collection .....                                   | 54 |
| 4.1 Fieldwork .....                                       | 54 |
| 4.1.1 Fieldwork sites .....                               | 54 |
| 4.1.2 Cultural issue .....                                | 57 |
| 4.2 Stimulus materials .....                              | 58 |
| 4.2.1 Spontaneous signing .....                           | 59 |
| 4.2.2 Elicited signing .....                              | 59 |
| 4.2.2.1 Visual materials .....                            | 59 |
| 4.2.2.2 Questionnaires and games .....                    | 62 |
| 4.2.2.3 Translation from English and Djambarrpuyngu ..... | 63 |

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| 4.3 Participants.....    | 64 |
| 4.4 Data annotation..... | 67 |

### **Part III: Selected Aspects of YSL Grammar**

|                                                    |     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 5 Phonological aspects.....                        | 75  |
| 5.1 Handshapes.....                                | 75  |
| 5.1.1 Basic handshapes.....                        | 78  |
| 5.1.1.1 Token frequency.....                       | 79  |
| 5.1.1.2 Type frequency.....                        | 80  |
| 5.1.1.3 Non-dominant hand frequency.....           | 80  |
| 5.1.2 Marginal handshapes.....                     | 82  |
| 5.2 Sign types: preference for one-handedness..... | 84  |
| 5.3 Nonmanual markers.....                         | 90  |
| 5.3.1 Mouth gestures.....                          | 90  |
| 5.3.2 Mouthings.....                               | 94  |
| 5.3.3 Head movements.....                          | 96  |
| 5.3.3.1 SLEEP vs. EXIST.....                       | 96  |
| 5.3.3.2 BÄYDU vs. YAKA.....                        | 98  |
| 5.4 Summary.....                                   | 100 |
| 6 Syntactic aspects.....                           | 101 |
| 6.1 Negation.....                                  | 101 |
| 6.1.1 Negation in Djambarrpuynu.....               | 101 |
| 6.1.2 Negation in YSL.....                         | 102 |
| 6.1.3 Summary.....                                 | 106 |
| 6.2 Interrogatives.....                            | 106 |
| 6.2.1 Content questions.....                       | 107 |
| 6.2.1.1 Question word paradigm.....                | 107 |

|                                                   |     |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 6.2.1.2 Syntactic position of question signs..... | 111 |
| 6.2.2 Polar questions.....                        | 114 |
| 6.2.3 Nonmanual marking .....                     | 117 |
| 6.2.4 Summary.....                                | 118 |

## **Part IV: Use of Space**

|                                                                          |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 7 The size of signing space .....                                        | 123 |
| 8 Pronominal reference.....                                              | 127 |
| 8.1 Pronouns in spoken languages.....                                    | 127 |
| 8.2 Pronouns in sign languages.....                                      | 128 |
| 8.2.1 Metaphorical pointing.....                                         | 134 |
| 8.2.2 Cross-linguistic variation in metaphorical pointing.....           | 136 |
| 8.3 Pronouns in Djambarrpuyŋu.....                                       | 137 |
| 8.4 Pronouns in YSL.....                                                 | 139 |
| 8.4.1 Person.....                                                        | 139 |
| 8.4.2 Number .....                                                       | 142 |
| 8.4.3 Clusivity.....                                                     | 144 |
| 8.4.4 Case.....                                                          | 145 |
| 8.4.5 Summary & comparison to NCDSLs .....                               | 147 |
| 8.4.6 Pointing to a house: the use of metonymic pointing<br>in YSL ..... | 147 |
| 8.5 Summary.....                                                         | 154 |
| 9 Verb directionality.....                                               | 156 |
| 9.1 Verb agreement in spoken languages.....                              | 156 |
| 9.2 Verb directionality in sign languages.....                           | 159 |
| 9.2.1 Sign language verb classes .....                                   | 159 |

|                                                                                                                    |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 9.2.2 Disagreements on agreement .....                                                                             | 163 |
| 9.3 Verb directionality in YSL .....                                                                               | 166 |
| 9.3.1 YSL verb classes: plain vs. non-plain .....                                                                  | 166 |
| 9.3.1.1 Frequency of spatial modification in<br>non-plain verbs.....                                               | 169 |
| 9.3.1.2 Directional verbs.....                                                                                     | 175 |
| 9.3.1.3 Absence of number marking .....                                                                            | 178 |
| 9.3.1.4 Optional object or location marking on<br>YSL verbs .....                                                  | 179 |
| 9.4 Constituent order in transitive clauses .....                                                                  | 179 |
| 9.4.1 YSL constituent order .....                                                                                  | 180 |
| 9.4.2 Djambarrpuyngu constituent order .....                                                                       | 182 |
| 9.4.3 Discussion .....                                                                                             | 183 |
| 9.5 Summary .....                                                                                                  | 184 |
| 10 Expression of motion .....                                                                                      | 186 |
| 10.1 Classifiers in spoken languages .....                                                                         | 186 |
| 10.2 Classifiers in sign languages .....                                                                           | 188 |
| 10.2.1 Entity classifiers.....                                                                                     | 189 |
| 10.2.2 Handling classifiers.....                                                                                   | 191 |
| 10.3 Expression of motion in YSL.....                                                                              | 193 |
| 10.3.1 YSL Directionals.....                                                                                       | 193 |
| 10.3.2 YSL Classifiers.....                                                                                        | 196 |
| 10.3.2.1 Entity classifiers in YSL.....                                                                            | 197 |
| 10.3.2.1.1 The  handshape ..... | 198 |
| 10.3.2.1.2 The  handshape.....  | 200 |
| 10.3.2.1.3 The  handshape.....  | 202 |
| 10.3.2.2 Handling classifiers in YSL.....                                                                          | 204 |
| 10.4 Summary .....                                                                                                 | 207 |

|                                                       |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 11 Expression of size and shape .....                 | 209 |
| 11.1 Size and Shape Specifiers in sign languages..... | 209 |
| 11.2 Size and Shape Specifiers in YSL.....            | 210 |
| 11.3 Summary .....                                    | 214 |

## **Part V: Discussion & Conclusion**

|                                                                    |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 12 YSL in cross-linguistic perspective.....                        | 217 |
| 12.1 The use of space in shared sign languages.....                | 218 |
| 12.1.1 The lack of metaphorical pointing.....                      | 218 |
| 12.1.2 Limited use of spatial modification in transitive verbs.... | 218 |
| 12.1.3 Restricted use of entity classifiers.....                   | 219 |
| 12.2 Language-external factors and sign language structure.....    | 220 |
| 12.2.1 Age of language .....                                       | 221 |
| 12.2.2 Frame of reference .....                                    | 223 |
| 12.2.3 Size of community and context-dependency .....              | 225 |
| 12.2.4 Proportion of hearing signers.....                          | 226 |
| 13 Concluding remarks .....                                        | 229 |
| Appendix I: List of YSL handshapes .....                           | 231 |
| Appendix II: Figures.....                                          | 233 |
| Appendix III: Data .....                                           | 234 |
| Notes .....                                                        | 235 |
| References.....                                                    | 247 |
| Index .....                                                        | 275 |
| Curriculum vitae .....                                             | 279 |