

Preface

Since the beginning of the phonological study of sign language in the 1960s, it has become increasingly clear that sign language, though silent and expressed by means of gestures and facial expressions instead of vocal signals, has phonological structure in much the same way as spoken language. Nowadays, sign language phonology has become an important part of phonological studies in general linguistics, and there are now many linguistic studies of different sign languages from around the world. This book is the first attempt to present a systematic study of the phonology of Shanghai Sign Language (SHSL) and is also the first book-length study of sign language phonology from mainland China.

This book is a rewritten version in English based on *The Phonology of Shanghai Sign Language* (上海手语音系), the result of a completed national Chinese project (project number 12BYY104). The project started in 2012 by collecting data on individual signs and running sign in SHSL and was finished in 2019 with the publication of *The Phonology of Shanghai Sign Language* (Zhang et al. 2019) in Chinese, published by East China Normal University Press and funded by the Publication Fund for New-century Academic Works of East China Normal University (ECNU).

The present book is an updated and extended version of Zhang et al. (2019). It attempts to present a systematic over-all phonological structure of SHSL, based on naturalistic SHSL data and adopting the framework of the prosodic model (Brentari 1998), focusing on the handshape inventory of SHSL, both in terms of phonological representation and phonetic realization, the inventory of location, palm orientation, and movement, the role of the syllable, other suprasegmental features such as non-manual markers, and phonological processes such as assimilation, epenthesis, deletion, coalescence, weak hand spreading, and weak drop. Finally, the role of the prosodic hierarchy in SHSL is investigated, focusing on the prosodic word, the phonological phrase and the intonational phrase.

It is hoped that this book will not only contribute to the linguistic study of SHSL itself, but also provide a framework for future studies on other Chinese Sign Language varieties and inform the study of sign linguistics and linguistics in a broader sense.

In this book, all the photos of signs come from three main sources: First, most photos were selected from the data we collected in our own field work, which were also used in the Chinese book titled 上海手语音系 (*The Phonology of Shanghai Sign Language*) (Zhang et al. 2019), published by East China Normal University Press. Second, a number of photos of SHSL signs are cited from *The Textbook of Chinese Sign Language (Elementary)* (Ni 2020) and *The Textbook of*

Chinese Sign Language (Intermediate) (Ni 2022), both published by Fudan University Press. These photos are used instead of those from our own data because they are better quality. Third, a small number of photos, mostly of other sign languages, are cited from published books, acknowledged in the text where they are cited.

We thank East China Normal University Press for giving permission to use all the photos of SHSL from *The Phonology of Shanghai Sign Language* (Zhang et al. 2019). We thank Fudan University Press for giving permission to use the sign language pictures from *The Textbook of Chinese Sign Language (Elementary)* (Ni 2020) and *The Textbook of Chinese Sign Language (Intermediate)* (Ni 2022). We also thank the ECNU Project of Publication Abroad (project number 2021ECNU-HWCBFBWY 001) which provided the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, making it possible to complete and publish this book with De Gruyter Mouton.

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