Chapter 6
Syntactic aspects

6.1. Negation

Negation in sign languages can be realized at the manual and non-manual levels (for non-manual negation markers in YSL see section 5.3.3.2). Cross-linguistic variation has been found in the combination of these two types of negation and in the extent, to which they can encode sentential negation independently of each other (Quer, 2012). The majority of documented sign languages to date appear to be of a non-manual dominant type according to specific typological classification proposed for sign language negation by Zeshan (2004a). Non-manual dominant sign languages are languages in which a clause can be negated by a non-manual negation alone. This type of negation has been attested in languages such as DGS (Pfau, 2008), ASL (Neidle, Kegl, MacLaughlin, Bahan, & Lee, 2000) and others (see Zeshan, 2004a; 2008 for examples). Manual dominant type of sign language negation is much less widespread cross-linguistically than the non-manual dominant systems. In manual dominant languages, a non-manual marker is insufficient to negate a proposition, and so a manual negator must be present in the sentence. In such languages, the use of the manual negative is obligatory. The manual dominant pattern for negation has been reported for TİD (Zeshan, 2003b; Gökgöz, 2011), LIU (Hendriks, 2008, p. 96), Kata Kolok (Zeshan, 2004a, p. 18) and IUR (Schuit, 2013).

In this section, after briefly addressing negation in Djambarrpuyŋu in 6.1.1, I provide an overview of YSL negation in 6.1.2.

6.1.1. Negation in Djambarrpuyŋu

Negation is a domain where sign languages differ considerably from spoken languages. Nonmanual negation is clearly a modality-specific phenomenon. Nevertheless, this section provides some available information on negation in Djambarrpuyŋu in order to compare the paradigm of negators or the syntactic realization of negation in Yolngu signed and spoken languages.

The information on negation in Djambarrpuyŋu or other Yolngu matha (for the description of the term and information about Yolngu spoken varieties
see section 3.4) is unfortunately very sparse. In her comprehensive study on Djambarrpuyŋu, Wilkinson (1991, p. 356) deals with the interaction between verb inflection and negation and provides only some basic information on two negative particles, namely bäyŋu and yaka. Both negative particles may appear in spoken Djambarrpuyŋu as propositional negators as shown in (1)–(2) (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 261; 357).

(1) ga bäyŋu ḋayi gi nhini barpuru dhiyal
and NEQG 3SG IMPV-2ND sit-2ND yesterday PROX.LOC
‘and s/he wasn’t there yesterday’

(2) yaka ḋarra nhuna wäwun’kuŋ barpuru [Djambarrpuyŋu]
NEG 1SG 2SG.ACC promise-2ND yesterday
‘I didn’t promise (to get) you (something) yesterday’

Bäyŋu also appears to be used for negation of existence or as a negative quantifier as in (3), whereas yaka occurs in negative imperatives (see example in (4)) (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 357; 271).

(3) bäyŋu ḋarraku gi ḋorri ḋula dhiyal
NEGQ 1SG.DAT IMPV.2ND lie.2ND INDEF2 PROX.LOC
wäŋaŋurnydja
place.LOC.ROM
‘I don’t have any here’

(4) yaka ḋayathul dhuwali [Djambarrpuyŋu]
NEG touch.TR.2ND MED
‘Don’t touch that/there (a hot stove)’

Any further information on negative particles in Djambarrpuyŋu such as their syntactic position is unfortunately not available.

6.1.2. Negation in YSL

Two manual signs were found to function as clause negators in the YSL data: BÄYDU ‘no, none, nothing, not have, there is not’ and YAKA ‘no, not’. BÄYDU is produced with a Blax handshape. The hands are flipping from palms down
to palms up twisting the wrist as shown in Figure 43 on the left. Some occa-
sional instances of single sideways movement with both hands were also
attested (see Figure 43 on the right).

Figure 43. Two variants of YSL clause negator BÄYDU

YAKA is usually one handed. It is articulated with a \textsuperscript{80} handshape, palm
facing downwards\textsuperscript{80} (cf. Figure 44).

Figure 44. yaka

YSL data analysis has revealed interesting differences in nonmanual nega-
tion occurring with these two negative signs. As already discussed in section
5.3.3.2, the two YSL negative particles BÄYDU and YAKA are accompanied
by different nonmanual markers: YAKA occurs in the majority of cases in the
dataset with a repeated side-to-side head movement\textsuperscript{81}, furrowed eyebrows
and wrinkled nose as depicted in Figure 44 (see also example (5)). The
negative particle BÄYDU (see Figure 43) is usually accompanied by a single sideward head turn, pulled down corners of the mouth and a corresponding mouthing (see example (5) – (6)).

(5) \[\text{[YSL]}\]

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{DHARRWA} & \text{GUNDA} & \text{IX}_{3a} & \text{DARRA} & \text{YAKA} & \text{DIR-GO-THERE} \\
\text{many} & \text{stone} & \text{there} & 1SG & \text{NEG} & \text{go} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘There are too many rocks on the beach, I am not going there’

Sequence06_D_2009.mpg

(6) \[\text{[YSL]}\]

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{BÄYDU} & \text{IX}_{3a} & \text{LAKARA} & \text{BÄYDU} \\
\text{NEG} & 3SG & \text{tell} & \text{NEG} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘She didn’t say anything’

Sequence12_G_sentences_2009.mpg

The manual signs BÄYDU and YAKA do not require the nonmanual components and can stand on their own to negate a proposition by themselves. YSL does not allow for the possibility of expressing negation entirely by nonmanuals, as it is the case, for example, in Greek Sign Language (Antzakas, 2002 in Zeshan, 2004a) or DGS. The nonmanuals are not sufficient to negate a YSL clause in the absence of any manual negative particle. Given this observation, YSL, thus, belongs to a typologically rare type of manual dominant sign languages (see Zeshan, 2004a for a typology of negation strategies in sign languages around the world). Other rural sign languages such as Kata Kolok (Zeshan, 2004a) and IUR (Schuit, 2013) have also been described as manual dominant sign languages. Deaf community sign languages with a manual dominant negation pattern are, for example, Turkish Sign Language, Chinese Sign Language or Italian Sign Language (Zeshan, 2004a). As mentioned above, the use of the manual negative in such languages is obligatory.

YAKA can be considered a negative particle in YSL that conveys basic clause negation. It negates a whole clause rather than a particular constituent only and appears to convey negative polarity without any other meaning components. In the widest variety of context, including an example in (7), YAKA can be regarded an instance of basic clause negation.

(7) \[\text{[YSL]}\]

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{DARRA} & \text{DHIDKID} & \text{YAKA} & \text{MÄNA} & \text{YAKA} \\
1SG & \text{think} & \text{NEG} & \text{shark} & \text{NEG} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘I think it is not a shark’

Sequence1_13JUL_G_2010.mpg
Similarly, BÄYDU can also negate a whole clause as shown in (8).

(8) BÄYDU  NHÄMA  IX.LOC  MIYALK  [YSL]
    NEG    to know/ to see this/that woman

   ‘I don’t know this woman’

Sequence13_16JUL_W_2010.mpg

In some cases, however, BÄYDU has an additional meaning and functions as a negative existential as illustrated in (9).

(9) BÄYDU  RRUPIYA  GANA  BÄYDU  RRUPIYA  [YSL]
    NEG    money enough NEG    money

   ‘There is not enough money’

Sequence14_19JUL_L_2010.mpg

Given the intimate connection between existential and possessive functions (Zeshan, 2004a), ‘not have’ and ‘not exist’ are expressed in the same way in YSL (see (10)). BÄYDU can thus be regarded a special clause negator, which can convey negative polarity and has an additional function of negative existential.

(10) WÄWA  IX.PRO2  QS?  [YSL]
    son  2SG  where

   ‘Where is your son?’

BÄYDU.  DHIDGA
NEG    dead

   ‘I don’t have any. He passed away’

Sequence05_10JUL_Mapuru3_2010.mpg

Due to the small amount of data, clear syntactic position of YSL clause negators could not be determined in this study. Sometimes it was difficult or even impossible to decide whether a negative particle in a given YSL utterance is in post-predicate or in clause-final position. Moreover, since basic word order has not been clearly established (see section 9.4 for some information on word order in YSL) in YSL, no definite statement with regard to syntax of clause negators can be made here. Nevertheless, preliminary observation shows that the two negators behave differently. BÄYDU occurs in most of the cases in pre-predicate position (see example in (8)). YAKA, however, shows a slight preference for post-predicate or clause-final position (see example in (7)). Additionally, YAKA appears in many elicited YSL utterances in a
double construction in both pre-predicate and clause-final position. Similar doubling patterns are reported to be very common in various sign languages (Zeshan, 2004a).

A preliminary cross-modal comparison suggests that both languages, YSL and Djambarrpuyŋu, have two negative particles: 1) a basic clause negator YAKA and 2) a negative existential BĀYDU. Comparing YSL and spoken Djambarrpuyŋu in the domain of negation, it should be noted, however, that more data from both languages is needed. Due to the lack of information on syntactic patterns of negation in Djambarrpuyŋu, no comparison can be drawn. A comparison has to be deferred until more information becomes available.

6.1.3. Summary

This section offered a short overview of negation systems in Djambarrpuyŋu and YSL. Possible manual (see 6.1.2) and nonmanual (see 5.3.3.2) mechanisms for sentential negation in YSL have been presented.

Based on the collected data, YSL can be characterized as manual dominant sign language similar to other shared sign languages such as KK or IUR. Similar to Djambarrpuyŋu, YSL has two negative particles. A basic clause negator YAKA is produced by a side-to-side waving hand. In addition to the manual sign, there is a non-manual side-to-side headshake that usually appears with it. BĀYDU is a negative existential, usually articulated with Blax hands rotating from palm down to palm up. BĀYDU is usually accompanied by the single sideward head tilt, a distinctive mouth gesture (corners of the mouth are pulled down) and mouthing. These nonmanuals, however, cannot be used for negation independently of the manual signs.

With regard to the position of negators, the analysis of the YSL data was far from conclusive, given the small set of data. In the majority of cases, YAKA was observed to follow the predicate which it negates and BĀYDU was usually produced before the predicate.

6.2. Interrogatives

The structure of interrogative sentences, in particular WH-questions (content question containing WH-words such as ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘where’ etc.) has
received considerable attention in the sign language literature on DCSLs and shared sign languages (Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006; Zeshan, 2004b; Meir, 2004; Nonaka, 2011; Šarac Kuhn & Wilbur, 2006), thus allowing to compare YSL with other sign languages described in the literature.

This chapter is concerned with the issue of how questions are marked in YSL. I will discuss in turn the following aspects: (i) the structure of YSL content questions in 6.2.1 considering the size of question word paradigm in 6.2.1.1 and the syntactic position of question words in 6.2.1.2; (ii) the structure of polar questions in YSL in 6.2.2 and (iii) the nonmanual marking of questions in 6.2.3. These aspects are selected for description here because they seem particularly interesting in the light of cross-linguistic (comparison with other sign languages) and cross-modal (comparison with the surrounding spoken language) comparisons.

6.2.1. Content questions

6.2.1.1. Question word paradigm

In the first broad typological study based on data from thirty-five genetically unrelated sign languages, Zeshan (2004b) finds that signed languages show extensive variation with regard to the size and structure of question word paradigms in content questions. Three different types can be identified here: sign languages with minimal, intermediate or large question word paradigms (cf. Zeshan, 2004b, p. 23). A sign language with a minimal paradigm has “only one question word that covers the entire range of interrogative meanings” (Zeshan, 2004b). This pattern is considered to be largely exceptional across sign languages and has been found so far in PROVISL, IPSL, Kata Kolok and PISL82 (Washabaugh, Woodward, & DeSantis, 1978; Aboh, Pfau, & Zeshan, 2005; Marsaja, 2008; Davis, 2010). The languages mentioned above are described as having a minimal question word paradigm with a single question word. In IPSL, for instance, one general wh-sign shown in Figure 45 is used to express the whole range of question words such as ‘why’, ‘where’ etc. Its interpretation needs to be inferred from the context. Consider examples in (11) (Aboh, Pfau, & Zeshan, 2005, p. 23).

(11) a) CHILD ANGRY G-WH  b) INDEX GO G-WH  [IPSL]
    ‘Why is the child angry?’    ‘Where are you going?’
Similar discourse-linked interpretation of question signs is observed in Kata Kolok, which also possesses only one manual question sign. However, this WHQS can also be combined with a number of noninterrogative signs such as time marker PIDAN to express the meaning of ‘when’ as shown in (12).

(12)  

\[
\begin{array}{ccccc}
\text{WHQS} & \text{PIDAN} & \text{CAI} & \text{TEKE} \\
\text{WHQS} & \text{time-marker} & 2SG & \text{come} \\
\end{array}
\]  

[Kata Kolok]  

‘When did you arrive?’  

(Marsaja, 2008, p. 207)

In languages with an intermediate question word paradigm, a general interrogative is used for some interrogative meanings. Additionally, other interrogative signs are also used for further meanings. This type can be best exemplified by Ban Khor Sign Language with two manual question signs: \(\text{WH1} \) and \(\text{WH2} \) (Nonaka, 2007, p. 124). While \(\text{WH1} \) covers the meaning of ‘what’, ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘why’, ‘which’, ‘when’ and ‘how’, the meanings of ‘how many’ and ‘how much’ are conveyed by \(\text{WH2} \). Nihon Shuwa (NS) is also described as a type of language with an intermediate question word paradigm (Zeshan, 2004b, p. 23; Morgan, 2006).

Languages such as ASL with large question word paradigms are very common cross-linguistically (Zeshan, 2004b). These languages typically have a full paradigm of monomorphemic question signs at their disposal. RSL has, for instance, distinct question words such as \(\text{KTO} \ kto^{84} \) ‘who’, \(\text{ČTO} \ što^{84} \) ‘what’, \(\text{GDE} \ gde \) ‘where’, \(\text{OTKUDA} \ otkuda \) ‘from where’, \(\text{ZAČEM} \ začem \) ‘what for’, \(\text{KOĠDA} \ kogda \) ‘when’, \(\text{KUDA} \ kuda \) ‘where to’, \(\text{POČEMU} \ počemu \)
'why', чей чей ‘whose’ etc. plus some lexicalized interrogative phrase such как дела kak dela ‘how are you?’ (Zaitseva/Зайцева, 2004; Viktorova/Викторова, 2007).

YSL patterns with PROVISL, IPSL, Kata Kolok and PISL and can be classified as a language with a minimal question word paradigm. There is one single question sign in YSL. It is formed by quickly turning one or two open ϖ-shaped hands from a palm downward to a palm upward position as shown in Figure 46.

![Figure 46. YSL question sign (QS)](image)

Interestingly, Zeshan (2004b) finds some similarities in the formation of interrogative signs across distinct signed languages. A certain type of movement (the whole hand or parts of it, fingers wiggling) seems to be very common cross-linguistically in sign languages. In fact, the YSL general question sign shown in Figure 46 appears to be very similar to the question particle PALM-UP found in FSL (Zeshan, 2004b, p. 33), DSL (Engberg-Pedersen, 2002), NZSL (McKee & Wallingford, 2011) or in Urubú Kaapor Sign Language (Kakumasu, 1968, p. 249). Interestingly, Franklin, Giannakidou, & Goldin-Meadow (2011) find that homesigners systematically use a similar flip gesture to convey question meanings. The flip form is, however, not restricted to questions, but is also a broad-ranging wh-form. In Warlpiri the question sign (also used for many types of questions) is a hand, in which thumb and indices are extended and the forearm is rotated rapidly until palm of hand faces upwards. Speakers in places such as Italy and England, when using a gesture as they ask certain kinds of questions also use an action, in which forearm is roated to bring an open palm to face upwards (Kendon, 2004). It is conceivable, that such flip hand gesture presents a kind
of universal gesture, however much more systematic investigation is needed both among signers and speakers (Kendon, personal communication).

The YSL question sign (glossed here as Qs\textsuperscript{87}) can be interpreted as any question word. Consider the following examples in (13)–(14):

\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{ccc}
nhä & nhe & bitjan \\
\text{QS} & \text{IX.PRO}_2 & \text{BATHAN} \\
\text{what} & 2\text{SG} & \text{cook} \\
\end{array}
\end{equation}

\text{[YSL]}

(13) \text{nhä} \text{ QS} \text{nhe} \text{ bitjan} \quad \text{[YSL]}

\text{what} \quad \text{2SG} \quad \text{cook}

‘What do you cook?’

\text{Sequence3\_G\_2009.mpg}

\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{cccc}
litja & balanya & bitjan & wanha \\
\text{DALI.INCL} & \text{DAPIPI} & \text{EXIST} & \text{QS} \\
\text{DU.INCL} & \text{mother’s brother} & \text{stay} & \text{where} \\
\end{array}
\end{equation}

\text{[YSL]}

(14) \text{litja} \text{ DALI.INCL} \text{ balanya} \text{ DAPIPI} \text{ bitjan} \text{ wanha} \quad \text{[YSL]}

\text{DU.INCL} \text{ mother’s brother} \quad \text{stay} \quad \text{where}

‘Where is our uncle?’

\text{Sequence10\_14JUL\_T\_2010.mpg}

In (13) the question sign is interpreted as ‘what’ and in (14) it has the meaning of “where”. Notice that both signs are accompanied by mouthings of the Djambarrpuyu words \text{nhä} ‘what’ and \text{wanha} ‘where’ respectively. The YSL question sign is obligatorily accompanied by mouthings, i.e. articulation of the corresponding Djambarrpuyu interrogative pronoun, in order to disambiguate the question signs (see also Cooke & Adone (1994) for a similar observation). The importance of mouthings in the question-word paradigm has been noticed for other sign languages as well, i.e. PROVISL (Washabaugh, Woodward, & DeSantis, 1978) or ISL (Meir & Sandler, 2008). In rare cases, noninterrogative signs can be added to convey a more specific meaning in YSL such as Qs\textsuperscript{+}TIME ‘what time’ as shown in Figure 47.

\begin{center}
\text{Figure 47. YSL complex wh-sign ‘what time’}
\end{center}
6.2.1.2. Syntactic position of question signs

With respect to the syntactic position of question words, YSL exhibits quite intriguing characteristics. The data reveal three possible positions of a question sign in a YSL clause: clause initial, clause final and a doubling construction of the question sign. This finding is in accord with the majority of sign languages around the world (Zeshan, 2004b; Sandler & Lillo-Martin, 2006). Wh-signs in DGS may, for instance, also appear clause initially, clause initially and clause finally, or clause finally (Happ & Vorkörper, 2006, S. 321). However, the preferred position of a question sign in YSL appears to be clause final as shown in Figure 48. Cooke & Adone (1994, p. 10) have already noted the preference of the clause final position of the YSL question sign by analyzing a sample of 25 sentences. This study has substantiated their claims by the analysis of a larger set of elicited and spontaneous YSL data (cf. Figure 48).

![Figure 48. The position of the QS within the YSL clause (n=90)](image)

As can be seen in Figure 48, more than half of all question signs appear clause final in the YSL data (54%, n=49) as exemplified by the examples in (15)–(17). The clause final position of a question sign is commonly observed in many DCSLs (Zeshan, 2004b).

(15) balanyamirr [YSL] litjalaj litjalaŋ nhamunha [YSL]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YAPA</th>
<th>DALL.INCL</th>
<th>DU.INCL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td>how-many</td>
<td>'How many sisters do we have?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sequence13_16JUL_W_2010.mpg
Additionally to the findings of Cooke & Adone (1994, p. 10), who almost find YSL question sign to be exclusively in sentence-final position, the data of this study reveal that question sign in YSL can also appear clause initially and both, that is, clause initially and clause finally. A number of question signs (30%, n=27) in the data were placed clause-initially as shown in (18).

(18)        

want       xpro  2    
bathan     [YSL]  

What do you cook?"

Sequence3_G_2009.mpg

A small portion of question signs (14%, n=14) occupied both positions, initial and final, creating the so-called doubling position of the question sign, as shown in (19)–(20).

(19)        

how-many    2sg    sister  yapa  
balanyamirr  [YSL]  

‘How many sisters do you have?’

Sequence13_16JUL_W_2010.mpg

(20)        

who        2sg    talk/speak  who  
yol        [YSL]  

‘Who are you talking about?’

Sequence12_15JUL_L_2010.mpg
The finding that the question sign in YSL preferably appears clause-finally is particularly intriguing from a cross-modal point of view. According to Wilkinson (1991, p. 659), the position of interrogative words in the ambient spoken language, Djambarrpuyŋu, is always clause initial, as displayed in example (21).

(21) **Nhä ngayi gan djämany** [Djambarrpuyŋu]

    *what* 3SG IMPV.3SG *work.*PROM

    ‘What (work) was he doing?’

Contrast the two sentences displayed in (22)–(23) in YSL and Djambarrpuyŋu conveying the same meaning.

(22) **nhä marrtji nhä** [YSL]

    *where* 2SG MARRTJI *where*

    ‘Where are you going?’

(23) **Nhälil nhe ga marrtji** [Djambarrpuyŋu]

    *where* 2SG IMPERF *go*

    ‘Where are you going?’

While in the YSL sentence in (22), the general question sign appears clause-initially and clause-finally, the wh-word in the Djambarrpuyŋu sentence in (23) takes the clause initial position.

This finding suggests that YSL and the surrounding spoken language differ greatly with respect to the syntactic position of the question word in content questions. These differences between YSL and Djambarrpuyŋu at the syntactic level can be viewed as additional support for the claim that YSL is not a representation of a spoken Yolngu language, but an independent mode of discourse (Cooke & Adone, 1994). Furthermore, it is noteworthy, that the sentences with the clause-initial position of the QS sign (30%, see Figure 48) were mostly produced by the hearing participants during elicitation sessions using translation from the surrounding spoken lingua franca (see section 4.2 for information about stimulus material). Hence, it appears reasonable to believe that YSL was influenced by Djambarrpuyŋu with respect to the initial position of the QS.
6.2.2. **Polar questions**

While YSL appears to be different from the ambient spoken language in the syntactic structure of content questions, the data show some parallels between signed and spoken languages in case of polar questions (or “yes/no-questions”).

There are two strategies in Djambarrpuyŋu to mark polar questions. Polar question may be indicated by intonation. In that case, the last word of the sentence is marked by rising-falling contour as shown in (24) (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 623).

\[(24)\] *yaka nhuyu d-----n+dhu lakaranha*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEG</th>
<th>2SG.DAT</th>
<th>person’s name.ERG</th>
<th>tell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘Didn’t D-----n tell you?’

Besides, Djambarrpuyŋu polar questions can be indicated by interrogative pronouns, which are as well used in content questions. In this case, the initial interrogative pronoun is marked by a falling contour on the first syllable and the last part of a clause has a rising-falling contour (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 624). Wilkinson (1991) reports that such polar questions basically consist of two parts: an information question part, equivalent to “what’s that?” followed by a part with a clause offering a potential answer. An example of a Djambarrpuyŋu polar question with an interrogative pronoun is presented in (25) (ibid, p. 625).

\[(25)\] *nhä nhuma ga luka+ny bodiny*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>what</th>
<th>2PL.IMPV.1SG</th>
<th>eat.1SG.PROM</th>
<th>tame/non-poisonous</th>
<th>what are you eating (something) non-poisonous?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

‘Is what you are eating non-poisonous?’

All polar questions in the YSL data were indicated by the same question sign (qs) that was used in content questions (see 6.2.1.1). Crucially, in contrast to content questions described earlier, the question sign in polar questions always occurred clause-initially similar to Djambarrpuyŋu as seen in the examples (26) – (29).
(26) \[
\begin{array}{ccc}
le & \text{IX.PRO}_2 & \text{IX}_3a \\
\text{QS} & 2\text{SG} & \text{there} \\
\text{QS} & \text{WURKIRRI} & \text{write/school} \\
\end{array}
\]
‘Do you go to school?’

Sequence9_14JUL_L_2010.mpg

(27) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{le} \\
\text{bitjan} \\
\end{array}
\]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{QS} & \text{SMOKE} \\
\text{QS} & \text{smoke} \\
\end{array}
\]
‘Do you smoke?’

Sequence9_14JUL_L_2010.mpg

(28) \[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{le} & \text{IX.PRO}_2 & \text{YOTHU} \\
\text{QS} & 2\text{SG} & \text{child} \\
\text{QS} & \text{YOTHU} & \text{Op} \\
\text{QS} & \text{eat} \\
\end{array}
\]
‘Are you pregnant?’

Sequence12_15JUL_L_2010.mpg

(29) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{nhä} \\
\text{QS} \\
\text{QS} \\
\end{array}
\]
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{mg: op} \\
\text{LUKA} \\
\text{eat} \\
\end{array}
\]
‘Have you eaten?’

Sequence9_14JUL_L_2010.mpg
The YSL data suggest that the question sign (qs) as depicted in Figure 46 can serve as both question word in content questions and as a question particle in polar questions. The usage of a question sign in YSL polar questions might be a possible instance of spoken language influence.

In her recent typological study, Zeshan (2011c) discovers that only a fourth of all signed languages in her data (n=38) possess question particles. With regard to the geographical distribution, she notices a high occurrence of question particles in East Asian sign languages (in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Japan) which parallels to a prevalence of question particles in the eastern Asian spoken languages (Zeshan, 2011c), such as the question particle 马 (ma) in Mandarin. For example, Taiwan and Hong Kong Sign Languages have a question particle HAVE+NOT-HAVE (see (30)) which is astonishingly similar to the Sinitic “A-not-A construction” exemplified by Mandarin Chinese in (31).

\[
\text{(30) INDEX-2 FATHER, MONEY \underline{HAVE-NOT-HAVE} \quad \text{[TSL]}}
\]

‘As for your father, has he got money?’

\[(Zeshan, 2004b, \text{p. 35})\]

\[
\text{(31) 你 有 没 有 时间 啊} \quad \text{[Mandarin Chinese]}
\]

ni you mei you shijian ma
2SG have not have time Qpart

‘Do you have time?’

Even though the above examples demonstrate striking correlation in the occurrence of question particles between spoken and signed languages in Taiwan, Zeshan (2011c) concludes that “unless more instances of question particles are discovered in the future, it is hard to see any regional or genetic patterns here”.

The usage of a question sign as a question particle in YSL polar questions corresponds to the use of interrogative proforms as a question particle in polar questions of the surrounding spoken language. Such an instance leads to a tentative generalization that cross-linguistically sign languages seem more likely to have a question particle if a question particle is used in the ambient spoken language. However, as already noted by Zeshan (2011c), there is no direct link. For there are languages such as ASL or Urubú Kaapor Sign Language which do use a question particle in polar questions unlike the surrounding spoken languages, i.e. English and Urubú Kaapor (Zeshan, 2011c).
6.2.3. **Nonmanual marking**

Another interesting aspect to be discussed here is the use of nonmanuals to mark questions in YSL. It has been argued that facial expressions are not used in the grammars of the alternate sign languages at all (see Kendon 1988, p. 155 for NCDSLs; Bakker, 2012a, p. 129 for PISL). However, section 5.3 of this book has already shown in that nonmanual markers do represent an integral part of the YSL grammar. In the case of question marking, cross-linguistic studies suggest that sign languages make extensive use of nonmanual marking (Pfau & Quer, 2010). A typological analysis reveals that nonmanual markers mark polar questions in various signed languages, whereas in content questions nonmanuals “play somewhat less important role” (Zeshan, 2004b).

My preliminary analysis of nonmanual marking in YSL reveals that polar questions in the data tend to be marked nonmanually by a distinct eyebrow position as compared to declarative sentences (about 70% of all polar questions in the data). Figure 49 illustrates this nonmanual marking, namely lowered or furrowed eyebrows (abbreviated as $le$ in annotations) typically accompanying the initial question sign in YSL polar questions. Occasionally head movement has also been observed.

Figure 49. Nonmanual marking in YSL polar question

It is interesting to note that typologically YSL seems to be unusual by marking polar questions with the lowered or furrowed eyebrows. In most sign languages, the eyebrows are raised in yes/no-questions (Zeshan, 2004b), as for example in Croatian Sign Language (Šarac Kuhn & Wilbur, 2006).
The YSL polar questions are usually indicated by the lowered eyebrows as shown in (32) (see also Figure 49).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>BUTHURU</th>
<th>IX3a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le nhä</td>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>deaf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Are there deaf (people) here?’

Sequence9_14JUL_L_2010.mpg

There is, however, a great deal of variation among signers with regard to the scope of nonmanual marking in polar questions. Sometimes the lowered eyebrows co-occur with the question sign only (see (32)); in other cases the nonmanual can spread over the whole clause as shown in (26)–(28).

Both polar and content questions are marked by mouthing in YSL. Additionally, polar questions are indicated by the nonmanual marking (furrowed eyebrows) accompanying the initial question sign. The nonmanual marking to indicate content questions is found to be largely optional. About half of all question signs in content questions appear to be accompanied by the lowered eyebrows.

To summarize the findings presented with regard to question markings in YSL, four aspects concerned with question formation in YSL have been discussed here. First, YSL is identified as a sign language with a minimal question word paradigm having a single question sign (qs) that covers the whole range of interrogatives. Secondly, this single question sign shows preference to appear clause finally in content question, which differs from the position of a question word in the surrounding spoken language. Thirdly, YSL polar questions are obligatorily marked by the same manual question sign, which occurs clause-initially. The use of the question sign in YSL polar questions and its syntactic position may be interpreted as influence from the spoken vernacular, Djambarrpuyŋu, which also uses initial question particles in polar questions (Wilkinson, 1991). Finally and more importantly, it has been shown, that YSL employs nonmanual marking for the formation of polar questions. The majority of polar questions in the YSL data are found to be marked by lowered or furrowed eyebrows.

6.2.4. **Summary**

This chapter has presented an overview of two syntactic structural aspects of Yolngu Sign Language. Section 6.1.2 introduced two negative particles
in YSL: BĀYĐU and YAKA. This section also presented a description of the nonmanual markers accompanying the negative particles. The nonmanuals appear to be not sufficient to negate an YSL clause in the absence of a manual negative particle. Therefore, YSL has a cross-linguistically exceptional manual dominant pattern for negation (see Zeshan (2004a) for a typology of negative constructions across sign languages).

Section 6.2 described four aspects concerned with question formation in YSL. YSL has a minimal question word paradigm with a single question sign (QS) covering the whole range of interrogatives in content questions. Both polar and content question are indicated by the general question sign: in content questions it appears clause finally and in polar questions clause initially. In case of polar question marking, the manual sign is additionally accompanied by lowered eyebrows.