

Inversion in Sayula Popoluca and Japanese Sign Language

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0. Introduction

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0. Introduction

In this paper, I will try to contrast Japanese Sign Language (hereafter JSL¹) and a spoken language, namely Sayula Popoluca (Mixe-Zoquean family) concerning inversion. What gave me the seminal idea of this paper was Tatsumi (2010). Tatsumi (ibid.) argued that Sayula Popoluca (and Algonquian) inversion has configurations with a great division between the SAP (speech act participants; namely the first person and the second person) and the third person. Right after reading her thesis, I thought that the situation is different from that in JSL. JSL seems to have a great division between the first person and the non-first person (namely the second person and the third person). I will try to demonstrate the contrast below in this paper.

1. Inversion in Sayula Popoluca

According to Tatsumi (2010: 48), inversion shows up in the morphosyntax of Sayula Popoluca. The description of inversion in Sayula Popoluca needs distinction of four separate configurations as follows:

¹ The abbreviations used in this paper are: A (actor), ASL (American Sign Language), COMP (completive aspect), DEF (definite), DIR (direct), EXCL (exclusive), HI (dominant hand), INCL (inclusive), INC (incompletive aspect), IND (independent clause), INT (intensified), INV (inverse), IRR (irrealis), IX (index(ing)), JSL (Japanese Sign Language), NEG (negative), O (nonactor), OBV (obviative), PI (pragmatic inversion), PL (plural), PROX (proximate), PSR (possessor), SAP (speech act participant), SI (semantic inversion), SG (singular), TOP (topic), TTM (Malagasy Sign Language, Tenin'ny Tanana Malagasy), V (verb).

(1)		Actor		Nonactor ²
	a. direct configuration	SAP	:	3
	b. inverse configuration	3	:	SAP
	c. local configuration	SAP	:	SAP
	d. 3:3 configuration	3	:	3

Actor equals to notional subject and nonactor equals to notional object (Tatsumi 2010: 49). When the actor is a SAP (speech act participant) and the nonactor is a third person, only direct marking is manifested (1a). When the actor is a third person and the nonactor is a SAP, only inverse marking is manifested (1b). When both the actor and the nonactor are SAPs, neither direct nor inverse marking is involved (1c). When the actor and nonactor are both third persons, either direct or inverse marking is chosen and this involves obviation.

Tatsumi (2010: 49) shows person and inversion markers in Tables 1 & 2:

<Table 1> Person and inversion markers in independent clauses

1EXCL: 2	tü=	2: 1EXCL	ix=
1EXCL: 3	tü=	3: 1EXCL	tü=x-
1INCL: 3	na=	3: 1INCL	na=x-
2: 3	in=	3: 2	i=x-
3PROX: 3OBV	i=	3OBV: 3PROX	igi=

² For the discussion of JSL, I will not use the terms actor and nonactor but stick to the more traditional terms transitive subject and primary object. (The term primary object may not be traditional. It is used in typological literatures meaning the object of a montransitive verb and the recipient (as opposed to the theme) of a ditransitive verb. Traditional direct object includes the object of a montransitive verb and the theme of a ditransitive verb. Traditional indirect object equals the recipient. Cf. Haspelmath (2011).) But actor and transitive subject probably overlap quite extensively and nonactor and primary object also overlap quite extensively but to a lesser extent.

<Table 2> Person and inversion markers in dependent clauses

1EXCL: 2	tü=	2: 1EXCL	ix=
1EXCL: 3	tü=x-	3: 1EXCL	tü=x-
1INCL: 3	na=x-	3: 1INCL	na=x-
2: 3	i=x	3: 2	i=x-
3PROX: 3OBV	igi-	3OBV: 3PROX	igi=

In main clauses, the inverse marker is *x-* except for the 3: 3 configuration where the inverse marker is *igi-* (Tatsumi 2010: 82). In subordinate clauses, the inverse marker *x-* loses its distinctive function as can be seen in the table 2 but the inversion is manifested in aspect marking etc. (Tatsumi 2010: 48). In the 3: 3 configuration, *i-* is the direct marker and the *igi-* is the inverse marker (Tatsumi 2010: 82).

Sayula Popoluca involves two hierarchies as shown below (Tatsumi 2010: 49):

(2) Argument hierarchy:

Actor > Nonactor

Saliency hierarchy:

1EXCL > 2

> 3PROX > 3OBV

1INCL

The saliency hierarchy manifests itself in the person and inversion markings and in the plural and aspect markings (Tatsumi 2010: 50). In the direct configuration (SAP: 3) and in the inverse configuration (3: SAP) only the SAP, which is higher in saliency than the third person, shows up in the morphosyntactic marking.

The person marker thus showing up is also marked for the actor/nonactor distinction (Tatsumi 2010: 51):

<Table 3> Person markers in direct/inverse configurations in the independent clauses:

	Actor (A)	Nonactor (O)
1EXCL	tün=	tü=
1INCL	na=	na=
2	in=	i=

Let us look at some examples (Tatsumi 2010: 52-53):

- (3) 1EXCL: 3 (direct)
tütünjatp ayüüpa yamayajw
üü tün=jat-p ayüüpa yamay ajw
I A1EXCL³=know-INC.IND this popoluca
'we know the Popoluca language'

In (3), the actor (A) set first person exclusive marker *tün=* appears.

- (4) 3: 1EXCL (inverse)
tüxche'jtaajkapama'
tü=x-che'k-taak-ka-p=ama'
O1EXCL⁴=INV-scold-INT-PL-INC.IND=DEF
'(they) scold me'

In (4), the nonactor (O) set first person exclusive marker *tü=* appears along with the inverse marker *x-*.

- (5) 1INCL: 3 (direct)
nagajawigap
na=ka-jawi-ka-p
A1INCL=NEG-know-PL-INC.IND
'(we) do not know (it)'

In (5), the actor (A) set first person inclusive marker *na=* appears.

- (6) 3: 1INCL (inverse)
je naxwangap
je na=x-wan-ka-p
she OINCL=INV-want-PL-INC.IND
'she loves (us)'

In (6), the nonactor (O) set first person inclusive marker *na=* appears along with the inverse marker *x-*.

³ A in A1EXCL means transitive agent and/or actor.

⁴ O in O1EXCL means transitive object and/or nonactor.

- (7) 2: 3 (direct)
 inpükaj mo'x
 in=pük-aj mo'x
 A2=grap-IRR.IND corn
 '(you SG) will grab a corn'

In (7), the actor (A) the second person marker *in=* appears.

- (8) 3: 2 (inverse)
 ixkayaj
 i=x-kay-aj
 O2=INV-eat-IRR.IND
 '(he) will eat you (SG)'

In (8), the nonactor (O) the second person marker *i=* appears along with the inverse marker *x-*.

Let us look at a couple of examples of 3: 3 configuration (Tatsumi 2010: 83):

- (9) 3:3 direct
 ikayp müjy
 i=kay-p müjy
 3PROX:3OBV=eat-INC.IND grass
 '(the rabbit) eats hay'

In (9), the third person proximate actor (A) and the third person obviative nonactor (O) and the directness are marked by *i=*.

- (10) 3:3 inverse
 tu'k tünkumparna'jat igita'nkot ayüü tu'k trumpuna' ita'niik
 tu'k tün=kumpar-na'-jat
 one PSR1EXCL=classmate-DEF-PL
 igi=ta'n-kot-0 ayüü tu'k
 3OBV:3PROX=foot-stick-COMP.IND this one
 trumpu-na'
 top-DEF
 'a top stuck on our classmate's feet'

In (10), the third person obviative actor (A) and the third person proximate nonactor

(O) and the inverseness are marked by *igi=*. In other words, *igi=* is the inverse marker in the 3:3 configuration.

Tatsumi (2010: 24) argues, citing Gildea (1994)⁵, that Sayula Popoluca has semantic inversion and pragmatic inversion. The semantic inversion is for direct configuration (SAP: 3) and inverse configuration (3: SAP) where the either direct marking or inverse marking is unanimously chosen according to the person hierarchy of the core arguments (actor and nonactor). The pragmatic inversion is for 3:3 configuration where either the direct marking or inverse marking is chosen according to pragmatic reasons.

2. Inversion in Japanese Sign Language

Inversion in JSL was first reported by Minoura (1998), but it covered the phenomenon only partially. Ichida (1999) gave a fuller picture of the phenomenon. The argument continued and the inversion in JSL was contrasted with the inversion in spoken languages in Minoura (2002). Before these arguments, our inversion used to be treated as passive (Yonekawa 1984: 214-216).

JSL, like other signed languages, has plain verbs, agreement verbs, and spatial verbs. Agreement verbs inflect for the transitive subject and the primary object (meaning the object of monotransitive verbs and the recipient of the ditransitive verbs)⁶. Spatial verbs inflect by incorporating the loci and the path of the movement. Plain verbs inflect neither for persons nor for loci/path.

Ichida (1999) and Minoura (2002) argued that JSL has the fourth person. But this fourth person is different from the obviative third person as seen in Algonquian languages and Sayula Popoluca. This fourth person is rather a marked third person pertaining to a higher locus in the signing space of the dominant hand (H1). The fourth person was argued to have higher agency, higher animacy, higher social status, and/or higher physical locus than the (non-fourth) third person. But at present I am rather skeptical of the concrete status of the so-argued fourth person⁷. Therefore I will put the fourth person aside for the moment and

⁵ Gildea, Spike. 1994. Semantic and pragmatic inverse: “inverse alignment” and “inverse voice” in Carib of Surinam. In: T. Givón. (ed) Voice and inversion. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.: pp. 187-230.

⁶ Direct/inverse analyses of agreement verbs in signed languages are not widespread at all among signed language linguists. Ichida’s and my arguments have gone unnoticed. When signed language linguists talk about agreement verbs, they talk about ${}_1V_2, {}_1V_3, {}_3V_1, {}_2V_1$, etc., but do not talk about directness and/or inversion. There is no argument of directness/inversion in signed language literature except for Ichida’s and mine.

⁷ The third person marking in this paper is a merger of the third person and the “fourth person” in Ichida (1999: 37, Minoura 2002: 49). Ichida (1999: 37, Minoura 2002: 49) actually has the examples in the “fourth person” and the (non-fourth) third person. The difference contributes to semantic differences e.g. of the verb SCOLD. With the “(non-fourth) third person” primary object SCOLD(DIR)₃ with an eye gaze toward the (non-fourth) third person, it means ‘scold.’

merge it with the third person in this paper. I will take a table from Minoura (2002: 46, Table 6):

<Table 4> JSL agreement verb paradigm

subject \ object	1	2	3
1	-	V(DIR) ₂	V(DIR) ₃
2	₂ V(INV)	-	V(DIR) ₃ ₂ V(INV)
3	₃ V(INV)	V(DIR) ₂ ₃ V(INV)	V(DIR) ₃ ₃ V(INV)

You can notice that there are only four forms in the table. Let me explain person areas in the signing space first. The first person area is the space right in front of the signer. The second person area is right in front of the interlocutor. The third person area is the areas to the right and to the left of the signer excluding first person area and the second person area. As for the movements of the agreement verbs, V(DIR)₂ starts from the first person area and ends in the second person area or for verbs with little such path movement, the sign is somehow directed from the direction of the first person area toward the direction of the second person area; V(DIR)₃ starts from the first person area and ends in the third person area or for verbs with little such path movement, the sign is somehow directed from the direction of the first person area toward the direction of the third person area; ₂V(INV) starts from the second person area and ends in the first person area or for verbs with little such path movement, the sign is somehow directed from the direction of the second person area toward the direction of the first person area; ₃V(INV) starts from the third person area and ends in the first person area or for verbs with little such path movement, the sign is somehow directed from the direction of the third person area toward the direction of the first person area. The starting point in the first person area of the direct verbs do not necessarily mean that the transitive subject is first person but rather it means that it is a direct verb. The ending point in the first person area of the inverse verbs do not necessarily mean that the primary object is first person but rather it means that it is an inverse verb. The table excludes verbs neither starting from nor ending at the first person area, i.e. ₂V₃, ₃V₂, ₃V₃. They are possible for some agreement verbs and are actually

With the fourth person primary object SCOLD(DIR)₄ with an eye gaze toward the fourth person, it means ‘complain.’ The argument of semantic differences instantiated by the choice of persons in Ichida (1999, Minoura 2002) is very interesting, but it does not fit in any ways in this paper, therefore it has been omitted. Please refer to these papers if you are interested in this argument. Ichida (1999) is in Japanese; Minoura (2002) is in English.

used. But they are physically unpronounceable and/or awkward for some agreement verbs, therefore they have been considered sporadic and have been excluded from the table.

Moreover, the direct verbs can appear with two core arguments (namely transitive subject and primary object), but the inverse verb cannot have an overt primary object in the same clause as the verb⁸. The primary object needs to be highly topicalized and needs to be understood from the context (Ichida 1999, Minoura 2002).

An example with two overt arguments for a direct verb is given in Ichida (1999: 34):

- (11) TANAKA IX₂ EXPLAIN(DIR)₂
 ‘Mr. Tanaka talks to you’
 (12) TANAKA SUZUKI EXPLAIN(DIR)₃
 ‘Mr. Tanaka talks to Mrs. Suzuki’

In the above examples of direct verbs (11, 12), you can notice that the predicate verbs do **not** inflect **both** for the subject and the primary object (= recipient) like *₃EXPLAIN(DIR)₂ and *₃EXPLAIN(DIR)₃, but the agreement for the subjects do not take place⁹. The forms EXPLAIN(DIR)₂ and EXPLAIN(DIR)₃ formally looks like ₁EXPLAIN₂ and ₁EXPLAIN₃, but the seemingly formal agreement with the first person does not codify agreement with the first person subject but rather it codifies that the verbs are in the direct forms¹⁰.

Examples with one topicalized and overt transitive subject and one covert primary object (understood from the context) for an inverse verb is given in Ichida (1999: 35):

- (12) TANAKA ₃EXPLAIN(INV), SUZUKI UNDERSTAND
 ‘(Mr. Suzuki) received Mr. Tanaka’s explanation and he understood’
 (13) IX₂, SUZUKI ₃EXPLAIN(INV)=IX₂
 ‘you, you got talked to by Mr. Suzuki didn’t you?’

⁸ It is not the topic of this paper, but Malagasy Sign Language (hereafter TTM, Tenin’ny Tanana Malagasy) allows overt primary object for inverse verbs. An example is YESTERDAY(TOP) HUSBAND(TOP) ABA ₃VISIT(INV) (As for my husband, ABA visited him yesterday). In this sentence, the inversion means that the object, HUSBAND, is more topical than the agent, ABA. But if you analyze this sentence by left dislocation of the topics, perhaps you can say that the main clause does not contain the object. Further investigation is needed to justify such argument for TTM

⁹ It is not the topic of this paper, but TTM has a verb form ₃V(DIR)₂, e.g. in a sentence PERSON ₃GIVE.MONEY(DIR)₂ EXIST? (is there a person who gives you guys money?). Ichida (1999) excludes such forms from his argument about JSL.

¹⁰ The direct forms are also used when the transitive subject is actually the first person.

In the example (12), the primary object SUZUKI does not appear in the position between the subject TANAKA and the predicate verb ${}_3\text{EXPLAIN}(\text{INV})$, which is the ordinary position of the primary object in the SOV-language, JSL, but manifests itself in the following clause as the subject of a different predicate verb UNDERSTAND. In the example (13) the primary object IX₂ does not appear in the position between the subject SUZUKI and the predicate verb ${}_3\text{EXPLAIN}(\text{INV})$, which is the ordinary position of the primary object in the SOV-language, JSL, but manifests itself in the sentence initial topic position and also as an encliticized indexing/pointing¹¹.

The form ${}_3\text{EXPLAIN}(\text{INV})$ formally looks as if it agrees with the third person subject and the first person primary object: ${}_3\text{EXPLAIN}_1$, but the seemingly formal agreement with the first person does not codify agreement with the first person primary object but rather it codifies that the verbs are in the inverse forms¹².

The translations may suggest that the predicate verbs are in the passive forms, but it does not mean that the JSL inverse forms are actually passive. Passive voice as such does not exist in JSL. But partial properties of passive voice can be expressed by other means. Topicalization of the patient can be achieved in JSL by sentence-initial placement, inversion, role shift (or referential shift), and/or pointing (= indexing) following the verb.

3. Reexamination of person marking and inversion in Japanese Sign Language

Ichida (1999) divided our third person into the third person and the fourth person. He, for some time, further divided our third person into eight “positions” (Ichida 2005: 94). His eight positions, according to him, can be dichotomically classified by [\pm uncontrollable], [\pm psychologically proximate], and [\pm socially authoritative]. His bipartite and octopartite descriptions of the third person seem to explain some semantic differentiation of verbs. But I am not too convinced that his two positions and his eight positions of our third person are “emically” concrete. In my humble opinion, they seem to be more of “etic” and somewhat fluid entities. So I treat the third person as one grammatical entity which can be formally and etically instantiated at numerous loci excluding the first person and the second person areas.

This argument of mine partially goes in line with Meier’s (1990) argument that there is even neither linguistic nor formal distinction between the second and the third persons in American Sign Language (hereafter ASL), but they form a single category of the non-first person.

¹¹ The pointing (= indexing) following the verb in JSL is sometimes called auxiliary (AUX). It conveys no lexical meaning but only the grammatical information of the person relationship of the verb (Minoura 2002: 48 fn. 8).

¹² The inverse forms are also used when the primary object is actually the first person.

<Table 5>ASL system of person categories (Meier 1990: 189):

1 st singular	1 st plural
Non-1st	

Whether JSL also has no distinction between the second and the third persons needs to be carefully examined following Meier's (ibid.) argument for ASL.

For the moment, I will stick to the traditional distinction of the second and the third persons, but I will not adopt Ichida's bipartite and octopartite treatment of our third person.

In JSL, only the direct forms are used for agreement verbs when the subject is the first person and only the inverse forms are used for agreement verbs when the primary object is the first person. When both the subject and the primary object of an agreement verb are the non-first person (i.e. the second and/or the third persons), either the direct or the inverse form is chosen according to the topicality of the persons involved.

To put it differently, JSL, like Sayula Popoluca, has semantic inversion and pragmatic inversion. Semantic inversion is for the cases where the first person is involved either as the transitive subject or the primary object and only either the direct marking or the inverse marking can be used exclusively. Pragmatic inversion is where both the transitive subject and the primary object are the non-first person. In the latter cases, either the direct marking or the inverse marking is chosen according to pragmatic reasons.

4. Conclusion

According to Tatsumi (2010), inversion configurations are divided into four parts in Sayula Popoluca. When both the actor and the nonactor are speech act participants (SAP, i.e. the first person and the second person), local configuration is used. When the actor is a SAP and the nonactor is a third person, direct configuration is used. When the actor is a third person and the nonactor is a SAP, inverse configuration is used. When both the actor and the nonactor are the third persons, the direct or the inverse form is chosen according to the topicality of the persons involved. Table 6 below is a tabulation of the example (1):

<Table 6> Inversion Configurations in Sayula Popoluca¹³

local configuration SAP: SAP	direct configuration (SI) SAP: 3
inverse configuration (SI) 3: SAP	3:3 configuration (PI) 3: 3

On the other hand in JSL, inversion configuration of agreement verbs are divided into three parts. When the transitional subject is first person, direct configuration is used. When the primary object is first person, inverse configuration is used. When both the transitional subject and the primary object are the non-first person (i.e. the second person and/or the third person), the direct or the inverse form is chosen according to the topicality of the persons involved¹⁴. Table 7 below is a product of reformatting Table 4:

¹³ What comes before the colon is actor and what comes after the colon is nonactor.

¹⁴ After I received comments from anonymous reviewers, I had little time to conduct a survey in JSL for I shortly went to Madagascar to conduct a survey in TTM. I have a good example from TTM that I obtained in August 2013 although TTM is not the language which is talked about in this paper. But I think it is relevant with TTM coming from the same group of languages as JSL, namely the signed languages. The TTM example that I obtained is like this: GANGSTER SHOOT(DIR)₃ OR ₃SHOOT(INV) (gangsters shoot or get shot). In this sentence the GANGSTER is the topic. When it is the topical agent, the verb takes the direct form and when it is the topical patient, the verb takes the inverse form. In SHOOT(DIR)₃ the index and middle fingers are pointed outward while in ₃SHOOT(INV) the index and middle fingers are pointed inward. These are not the cases of active and passive forms because the first person cannot induce a direct form when the first person is the primary object nor an inverse form when the first person is the transitive subject. When the first person is the primary object, the direct form V(DIR)₃ of the direct configuration is chosen. When the first person is the transitive subject, the inverse form ₃V(INV) of the inverse configuration is chosen.

<Table 7> Inversion Configurations in JSL¹⁵

-	direct configuration (SI) 1: non-1
inverse configuration (SI) non-1: 1	non-1:non-1 configuration (PI) non-1: non-1

To sum it up, the great division within the inversion configurations of Sayula Popoluca is between the SAP and the third person. In Sayula Popoluca, semantic inversion takes place when both the SAP and the third person are involved and pragmatic inversion takes place when only the third persons are involved. On the other hand, the great division within the inversion configurations of JSL is between first and the non-first persons. In JSL, semantic inversion takes place when first person is involved and pragmatic inversion¹⁶ takes place when only the second and/or the third persons are involved¹⁷. I suppose that the situation in JSL is conditioned by the visual-gestural modality of JSL (probably along with other signed languages). In JSL, the second person and the third person forms a natural class as opposed to the first person¹⁸. I am not sure what the motivation is for the great division between the SAP

¹⁵ What comes before the colon is transitive subject and what comes after the colon is primary object.

¹⁶ Klaiman (2005) categorized inversion in Algonquian together with Philippines-type voice system as pragmatic voice. Sayula Popoluca inversion is very similar to Algonquian inversion in many points, so it should be safe to categorize Sayula Popoluca inversion as pragmatic voice. By simply extending this, I dare call JSL (and other signed languages') inversion pragmatic voice.

¹⁷ No discussion on this direct/inverse analysis has been done on any other signed languages by any other signed language linguists than on JSL by Ichida and me. Therefore non-existence of the discussion has lead to no contrastive study of inversion between spoken and signed languages as far as I have noticed.

¹⁸ In signed languages including JSL and ASL, the second person and the third person form a natural class as opposed to the first person. Meier (1990) goes on further to conclude that there is neither linguistic nor formal distinction between the second person and the first person in ASL. I am not as radical as Meier is to conclude JSL and all the other languages lack any kind of linguistic or formal distinction, but the natural class that the seeming the second person and the seeming third person forms form is real. The first person is formally realized usually as pointing to the signer's chest (in JSL, it can be pointing to the signer's nose). The second person and the third person are realized by pointing to the non-first person areas. TTM is of no exception. When role shift takes place, the second person is realized not by pointing at the interlocutor, but somewhere else other than the first person area and the second person area. It resembles rakugo tellers (Japanese sit-down comedians) face right or left when talking to the

and the third person for Sayula Popoluca (and probably some other spoken “inversion” languages), with the first person and the second person forming a natural class. In any case, the great division for the inversion configuration is placed at different places in Sayula Popoluca, a spoken language, and JSL, a signed language.

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second person in a story but not actually to the audience. Then the distinction between the second person and the third person is really lost in TTM. In this way, signed languages have a natural class formed by the second and the third persons opposing the first person. Therefore the division between the first person and the non-first person is deep-rooted in the structure and the type not only of JSL but also of all the signed languages.

サユラ・ポポルカ語と日本手話の反転の対照研究

箕浦 信勝

巽 (2010)によると、サユラ・ポポルカ語の反転構成は4つの部分に分かれている。動作者と非動作者の両方が発話行動参加者(SAP)の場合ローカル構成を採る。動作者がSAPで非動作者が3人称の場合、順向構成を採る。(意味論的反転。)動作者が3人称で非動作者がSAPの場合、逆向構成を採る。(意味論的反転。)動作者と非動作者の両方が3人称の場合、両者の主題性に依って順向構成あるいは逆向構成が選ばれる。(語用論的反転。)

他方、日本手話では、反転構成は3つの部分に分かれている。他動詞主語が1人称の場合、順向構成を採る。一次的(primary)目的語(単他動詞の目的語あるいは、複他動詞の受領者)が1人称の場合、逆向構成を採る。(以上、意味論的反転。)他動詞主語と一次的目的語の両方が非1人称の場合、両者の主題性に依って順向構成あるいは逆向構成が選ばれる。(語用論的反転。)纏めると、反転構成における大きな境界線は、サユラ・ポポルカ語ではSAPと3人称の間にあり、日本手話では、1人称と非1人称の間にある。

日本手話のこのような状況は、この言語の視覚・身振りモダリティーに条件付けられているものだと考えられ、恐らくは他の手話諸言語にも見られるものと思われる。日本手話では、2人称と3人称が自然類を形成し、1人称と対立する。

サユラ・ポポルカ語の反転構成における大きな境界線が、SAPと3人称の間にあることの動機付けは、上記の日本手話の状況と同様には自明でない。サユラ・ポポルカ語では、1人称と2人称が自然類を形成し、3人称と対立する。このように、反転構成における大きな境界線の置かれる場所は、音声言語、サユラ・ポポルカ語と手話言語、日本手話で異なっている。