

**14.00 – 14.30**

**Silvia Gabarro-Lopez: *Buoys in the “LSFB Sea”? Their Coordinates and Their Neighbours***

This paper aims to contribute to the study of discourse analysis in sign languages (SLs), particularly in French Belgian SL (LSFB), through the study of list buoys. List buoys are one of the five categories – the list, the fragment, the theme, the pointer and the depicting – that Liddell (2003) established for a group of signs in American SL that he called “buoys”. He defined them as “signs produced with the weak hand that are held in a stationary configuration as the strong hand continues producing signs. They help guide the discourse serving as conceptual landmarks as the discourse continues” (Liddell, 2003:223). Later on, Vogt-Svendsen and Bergman (2007) enlarged the group adding the point buoy for Swedish SL and Norwegian SL; and recently, Mesch and Wallin (2013) presented the delimit buoy for Swedish SL.

Nevertheless, buoys have been tackled for quite a limited number of SLs so far and their role in the construction of discourse remains open. The first study concerning exclusively buoys in LSFB discourse was that of Gabarró-López and Meurant (in press). In an attempt to classify genres according to intrinsic elements of SLs, the focus was put on buoys since they were considered to be good discourse marker (DM) candidates. Thus, a balanced small-scale (one hour) corpus of one signer containing two argumentative, two explicative, two narrative and two metalinguistic discourses was gathered. The results proved that buoys do not organize the discourse in the same way, i.e. they all have a semantic role which ensures local cohesion except for the list buoy that presents a great variability in terms of scope (i.e. extension of the marker through the discourse) and in terms of role within signed productions.

Our next step is aimed at going through list buoys in depth using the same corpus by tackling two issues which remain unanswered to date. The first is to point out the place of list buoys within the discourse. To do so, all the videos have been segmented into “discourse units” (DUs) following a protocol which was the outcome of another research focused on the segmentation of discourse in LSFB (Gabarró-López and Meurant, 2014). List buoys present a very different position within the discourse depending on whether they have an enumerative or a cohesive role. Our second question is what we find before and after list buoys, i.e. the immediate context. For this purpose, the signs surrounding the marker that were found within the same DU were annotated together with their grammatical category to establish patterns of collocations and combinations. Due to the different position of list buoys and to the DU’s length, a maximum of three signs right after the marker were taken into account if it was in beginning position, a maximum of three signs before the marker if it was in end position and a maximum of three signs before and three after if the marker was in middle position.

Since this is a pilot study which is part of a PhD project on DMs, we will combine a quantitative and a qualitative approach whose outcome is, to the best of our knowledge, unprecedented within the SL literature. In the future, results will be enlarged with the large-scale LSFb corpus and contrasted with the Catalan SL corpus to cast light on the role of list buoys in the construction of SL discourse.

## REFERENCES

Gabarró-López, S., Meurant, L. (2014) "When nonmanuals meet semantics and syntax: towards a practical guide for the segmentation of sign language discourse" in the *Proceedings of the Workshop on the Representation and Processing of Sign Languages: Beyond the Manual Channel. 9th International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation, LREC 2014, Reykjavik. Paris: ELRA.*

Gabarró-López, S., Meurant, L. (in press) "The Use of Buoys Across Genres in French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB)" in the *Proceedings of COLDOC 2013: La question des genres à l'écrit et à l'oral*, November 13 – 14, 2013, Paris.

Liddell, S. (2003) *Grammar, Gesture and Meaning in American Sign Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mesch, J., Wallin, L. (2013) "The non-dominant hand as delimitation between inner element and outer element". Poster presented at the *Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR) Conference 11*, London.

Vogt-Svendsen, M., Bergman, B. (2007) "Point buoys: the weak hand as a point of reference for time and space". In Vermeerbergen, M. *et al.* (eds.) *Simultaneity in Signed Languages*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.