

**11.30 – 12.00**

**Adam Schembri:** *Lexical Variation and Change in British Sign Language*

This presentation draws on work with Rose Stamp and other University College London colleagues on a corpus-based study investigating lexical variation and change in British Sign Language (BSL). Here, I report our findings from an investigation looking at BSL regional lexical variants for colours, countries, numbers and UK place names elicited as part of the BSL Corpus Project (Schembri et al., 2010). I discuss how we found that the signers' age, school location and language background (whether they had deaf or hearing parents) were significant factors driving the lexical variation we found in BSL, with younger signers using fewer traditional regional signs than older signers. This change appears to be happening faster in particular sub-groups of the deaf community (e.g., signers from hearing families, those educated outside the region in which they currently live) and semantic categories (e.g., signs for countries). Also, we find that for some UK place names, signers from outside the region use a different sign from those who live in the region. I discuss the implications of this work for an understanding of lexical variation and change in other sign languages.