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Register variation in LSFB
The influence of the metalinguistic function

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We formulate the hypothesis that, if two discourses have similar conditions of production and formality levels but differ in their use of the metalinguistic function, the metalinguistic discourse would exhibit the lower rate of phonological deviance compared with the non-metalinguistic one.

Contexts

	+ Metalinguistic	- Metalinguistic	
C1	LSFB grammar sequences	pamphlet about the situation of SL interpretation	C2
			+ Formal
			- Formal
C3	discussion on technical terminology	spontaneous conversation about people	C4

Methodology

FOUR CONTEXTS We compared four productions of the same signer, two of them displaying an extensive use of the metalinguistic function.

VARIABLES On the basis of a preliminary analysis, six phonological features were selected. These were assumed to be potentially sensitive to contextual variation. Variables were coded for three contextual factor groups : formality factor (+/- formal), metalinguistic factor (+/- metalinguistic) and context factor (C1, C2, C3, C4).

CODING In each context, at least the first 30 occurrences of variables 3 and 6 were coded, as well as at least the first 60 occurrences of variables 1, 2, 4 and 5 (Total : 1329 tokens).

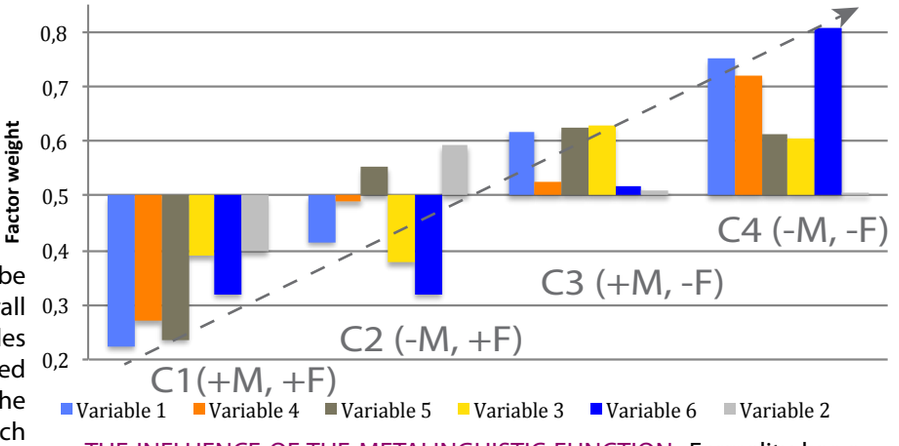
ANALYSIS Two independent Rbrul analyses were conducted on each set of variables. The first analysis investigated the overall significance of context on variation, while the second analysis calculated the respective strengths of the metalinguistic and the formality factors on variation compared to each other.

Selected variables

V1 Behavior of the non-dominant hand
V2 Suppression of movement repetition
V3 Contact in symmetric signs
V4 B handshape loosening
V5 Location dissymmetry of 2-handed signs
V6 Lowering of forehead located signs

Results

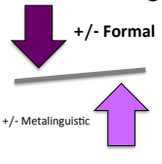
Context influence on deviant forms

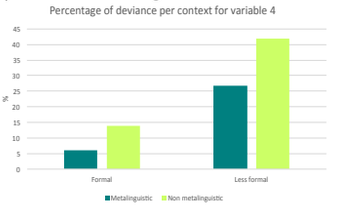


THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT Four variables appear to be very sensitive to context and share the same overall pattern of variation. Deviant forms of these variables gradually increase while the degree of emphasis placed on the language itself decreases. The behavior of the non-dominant hand is a significant indicator of speech carefulness. Variables 2 and 3 do not vary according to context (syntactic elements and speed rate may respectively explain their variation).

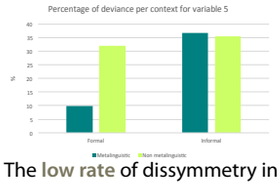
THE INFLUENCE OF THE METALINGUISTIC FUNCTION Formality has a greater impact on variation than the metalinguistic function.

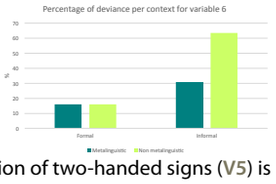
The variable that is the most influenced by the metalinguistic function is the loosening of the B handshape (V4).





FORMAL - METALINGUISTIC INTERACTION Results show an interaction between formality and the metalinguistic function for the dissymetry in two-handed signs (V5) and the lowering of forehead located signs (V6).





The **low rate** of dissymmetry in the location of two-handed signs (V5) is a marker of **very careful speech productions**. Conversely, the **high rate** of lowering of forehead located signs (V6) marks **very relaxed speech**.

Results suggest that the metalinguistic function is a factor of register variation in LSFB. This factor distinguishes between more and less careful speech productions in discourses with the same level of formality. The formal to informal continuum has been refined by taking this factor into account.

However, the difference between the formal and the less formal contexts might be due to the difference between the monologue and the dialogue modality. The study should be expanded with more interaction formats.

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