

Analysis of interactive gestures, signs, and space among older Belgian French (BF) speakers and French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB) signers



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Gesture/sign interface

- Sign Languages (SLs) as an autonomous linguistic system (Stokoe, 1960)
- Gestures as an integral part of Spoken Languages (SpLs) (McNeill, 1992)
- Few comparative studies on gestures in SLs and SpLs (Bolly et al., 2015; Vermeerbergen & Demey, 2007) → Differences between manuals (e.g. palm-ups) and nonmanuals (e.g. facial expressions)

What roles of gestures in social interaction when including the addressee into the communication act (SpL and SL)?

Aging and language

- Physical and cognitive changes in aging (e.g., decrease in tonus/muscle mass, arthritis, hearing loss, attentional deficits, slowing of information processing, etc.)
- Age-related changes shared by older signers and gesturers → Impact on their language and communicative skills (Thornton & Light, 2006)

How does the normal aging process affects interactive gestures, signs, and space ?



Palm-Up with a planning and abstract deictic function
Speech: *je veux pas être la jeune (.) vieille qui s/ qui veut vivre [comme]*

Is there any correlation between the gesture/sign produced regarding their form and function?
Is space used for the same communicative purposes?



Interpersonal space

Data and method

Multimodal corpus-based approach

- Data: CorpAGEst corpus + LSFB corpus
- Participants: 9 older speakers (< 75 y. old), 15 older signers (< 66 y. old)
- Tasks: milestones in aging (BF) and explanation of a past memory (LSFB)
- Cross-task comparison: 6 speakers / 6 signers

First cross-linguistic study between LSFB and Belgian French

Nadine, 75 y. old

(2 interv.: first-acquaintance vs. family)

- ① More interactive gestures in first-acquaintance encounter
- ② More difficulties in processing speech and in finding words with her daughter
- ③ Gesture space: extensive use of personal space but wider use with first-acquaintance when doing interactive gestures

Tentative explanations: face management, empathic ability, personality traits, life experiences, self-disclosure

First insights in BF

- (1) Understand more about multimodal aspect of language interaction
- (2) Achieve a better understanding of the interactive world of older Belgian-French speakers and signers