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.

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).

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

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 carelessness. Variables 2 and 3 do not vary according to context (syntactic elements and speed rate may respectively explain their variation).

FORMAL - METALINGUISTIC INTERACTION Results show an interaction between formality and the metalinguistic function for the disssymetry 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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