

A study of list buoys in the production of two Libras signers.

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Liddell (2003) identified five types of ASL signs produced with the non-dominant hand. He called them buoys because, in general, they persevere in the signing space. Buoys have been attested not only in ASL, but also in other signed languages among which are Brazilian Sign Language, Finland-Swedish Sign Language, French Belgian Sign Language, German Sign Language, Norwegian Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language and Québec Sign Language. In this paper, we analyze one of the five types of buoys, the list buoy, which consists of using the fingers of the non-dominant hand to refer to different entities. Specifically, our goal is to compare the productions of list buoys as produced by two deaf signers from the Brazilian state of Paraná, a man and a woman, in terms of the taxonomy of list buoys as proposed by Heitkoetter & Xavier (2020). According to this taxonomy, list buoys can be (1) fixed, produced as a simultaneous presentation of the list-fingers; (2) sequentially-built, articulated by a sequential presentation of the list-fingers; or a (3) mix thereof. Each of this type, in turn, can be (4) perseverating, in which the list-hand is held in place throughout a stretch of discourse or (5) non-perseverating, in cases in which the list-hand alternates with other signs. Our data were collected from Youtube videos. The male signer's data comprise 60 list buoy productions identified in videos that total 1 hour and 57 minutes. The female signer's data comprehend 25 list buoys productions identified in videos totalling 1 hour and 31 minutes. All these data were annotated in Elan in terms of the list buoys categories as proposed by Heitkoetter & Xavier (2020). In addition, we also coded our data in relation to the finger at which the list buoy starts (thumb, index or pinkie) and the type of movement the dominant hand produces when pointing to one of the fingers of the non-dominant hand (straight, circular or a mix thereof). The results show similarities and differences between the two signers. Among the similarities we can mention the occurrence of all types and subtypes of list buoys in the production of both the male and the female signer. In addition, similar frequencies were observed in some cases, for example, sequentially-built list buoys and straight movement are more frequent in the both signers' data. Among the differences we can cite the finger at which the signer starts the list buoy. Whereas both signers more frequently start at their index, we attested the thumb playing the same role only in the male's data and the pinkie only in the female's data.

References

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