

Use of signing space in  
simultaneous sign language  
interpretation: marking discourse  
structure with the body.

(VR 421-2011-2286)

# Outline

- Producing your own discourse vs. producing somebody else's discourse
- Data collection; some considerations
- Differences in first impression; L1 vs. L2
- Three movement patterns used by the L1-interpreters
- The L2-interpreters

# Producing your own discourse, or somebody else's

- A speaker knows, or at least decides himself/herself
  - who/what s/he will talk about
  - if things will be compared, or not
  - and much, much more...
- An interpreter
  - does not know any of this for certain
  - finds out the discourse content piece by piece, while already interpreting
- A majority of the interpreters are L2-learners of SSL

## Data collected

- Simultaneous interpretation of monologues; from spoken Swedish into Swedish Sign Language
- 12 "skilled, experienced interpreters"
  - 6 L1 users of SSL
  - 6 L2 users of SSL
- Appr. 12 hrs
- Some pros and cons of naturalistic data

# First analysis

- Striking differences between L1- and L2-interpreters:
  - amount of movement
  - types of movement
  - movement "quality" and movement patterns
- Focus for this presentation; three movement patterns embodying the discourse content:
  1. left – right comparison
  2. forward – backward comparison / backwards movement
  3. sideways movement

## **Movement pattern 1; 'left – right comparison'**

- movement starts from a "middle-position", then to one side, then back past the middle and to the other side
- two entities compared
  - with or without stating the number of entities
  - not necessarily the same "type" of entities
- this movement can be combined with '*separate hands*'
- optional use of height difference (embodied metaphor; embodied iconicity)

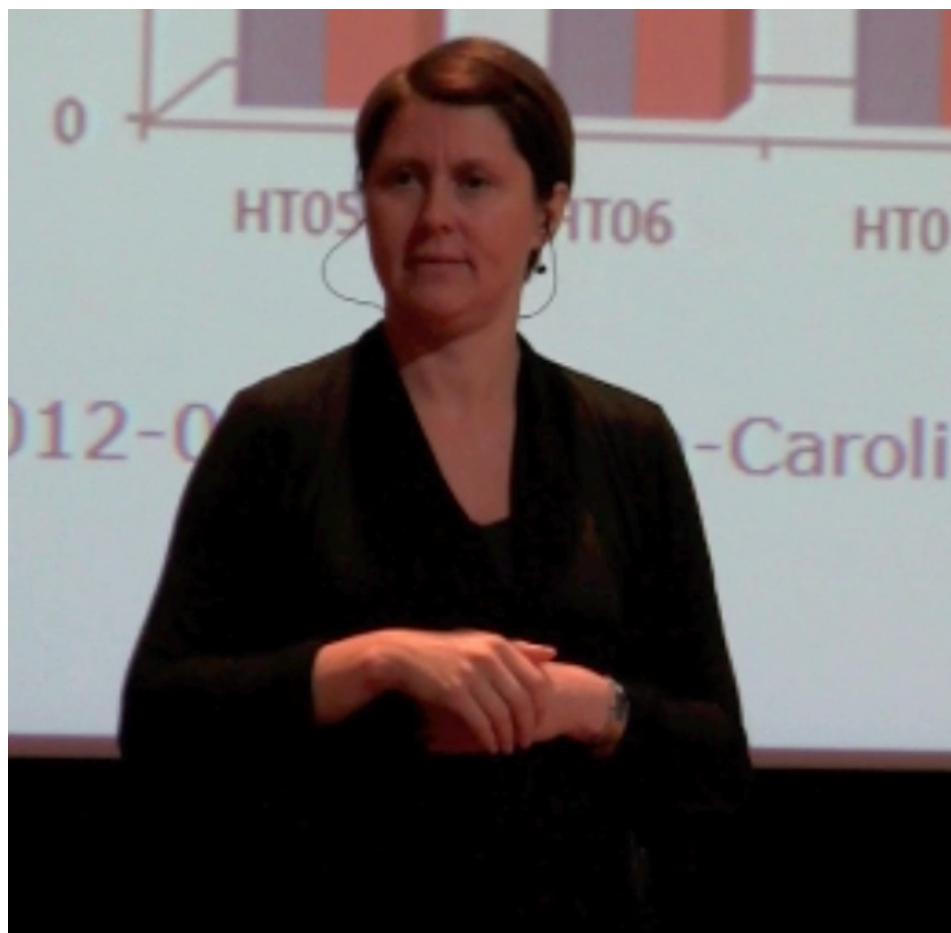
# **left – right comparison + separate hands + height difference**



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## **left – right comparison + separate hands + height difference**



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# Movement pattern 2; '*forward – backward comparison*'

- Movement starts from a "middle-position"
  - then movement in one direction
  - then back past the middle and then in the other direction
- Also: '*backwards movement*' only
  - movement starts from a "middle-position", then movement back
- Expresses:
  1. time; use of metaphor for time (FUTURE = forward, PAST = behind)
  2. I/me/we/here = backwards, (vs. something else = forward)

# forward – backward comparison + height difference



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# backwards movement



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## **Movement pattern 3; *sideways movement***

- movement from "where the interpreter is" to one side
- movement during sign production
  - always sideways movement of the hands, sometimes also of the body
  - can be combined with signs like: FROM-TO-DASH or BECOME-LESS
- expresses e.g. 'change from to' or 'time period from to'

# sideways movement + BECOME-LESS + height difference



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# sideways movement + FROM-TO-DASH



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# What about the L2-interpreters?

- Stand "too still" + hardly any use of *body follows sign*
- The hands/arms seem "detached" from the body
- Attempt to use fewer of the movement categories, e.g. do not use *forward – backward comparison*
- All attempts to use *left – right comparison* and *sideways movement* fail

Do they know what the "target movement" looks like?

Not 'embodying the discourse content'?

# Thank you!

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