

A Study of Phonological Processes in Shanghai Sign Language

Wang ZHONGNAN
(Fudan University, PRC)

Since most segments must be in a sequential process in communication, variations in phonological processes are very subtle but common in linguistics. Some kinds of diachronic variations in spoken language have been found in sign language as well such as assimilation and metathesis. To study the phonological processes in sign language will make a contribution to sign language research and linguistics universals. This paper will try to explore phonological processes by comparing spoken language and sign language based on the framework of existing research in spoken language in order to clarify variation. In the first section of the paper, general phonological processes in spoken language will be described, especially their classification. Variations in syllable segments and sandhi will be discussed respectively. After that, in the main section of the paper is an analysis of the phonological processes. In this part, we begin with the a basic introduction to the theory of sign language phonology and the model that is adopted in the paper. Different kinds of variations in phonological processes in sign language will be demonstrated under the classification guided by research of spoken language. Finally, we will conclude that most kinds of variations in spoken language can find a corresponding form in sign language, but some differences must exist because of the orientation of modality such as the Weak Drop and spread of non-dominant hand. The corpus on which this paper is based are from natural Shanghai Sign Language used by Deaf people.