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# Repetition of signs in French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB) and Flemish Sign Language (VGT)

## Typology and Annotation protocol

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Repetition was described in the nineties by a limited number of sign linguists: Vermeerbergen & De Vriendt (1994) looked at a small corpus of VGT data, Fisher & Janis (1990) analysed “verb sandwiches” in ASL and Pinsonneault (1994) “verb echos” in Quebec Sign Language. More recently the same phenomenon has been the focus of research in a growing number of signed languages, including American (Nunes and de Quadros 2008), Hong Kong (Sze 2008), Russian (Shamaro 2008), Polish (Filipczak and Mostowski 2013), Jamaican (Cumberbatch 2013), Italian (Branchini & al. 2013), and French Sign Language (Risler 2014) and Sign Language of the Netherlands (Crasborn 2009). Other studies have investigated “reduplication” in ASL (Wilbur 2009), in Swedish (Börstell 2011) or in German Sign Language (Pfau & Steinbach 2006). Among the numerous works on repetition in spoken languages see Tannen (2007), Betz (2008), Hurch (2008) and Dovicchi (2011). Examples of cross-linguistic analyses of sign languages are Šarac et al. (2007) and Kimmelman (2014). However, to our knowledge, within sign linguistics, the phenomenon has not been studied from both a cross-genre and cross-linguistic perspective.

Therefore, we decided to analyze corpus data from different text genres and from two sign languages: LSFB and VGT. We first had to build an annotation protocol going back and forth between the literature and our own cross-linguistic data to analyse the use of repetitions from the more local realizations (at phrase and clause levels) to the broader ones (at discourse level). On the poster, this protocol will be explained in detail.

We established a typology of two formal categories:

- *Contiguous repetition* (XX): both Xs are (near-)contiguous (possibility of the insertion of a pause or a palm-up sign);
- *Non-Contiguous repetition* (XYXZ or X ABC X DEF X GHI...): the repeated components are separated by at least one sign.

Moreover, within the second category, we identified *framing repetitions* (XYX), i.e. the repeated components act as symmetrical “braces” around a central element made up of one sign to one or several clauses so that the repeated component closes the chunk the first one had begun.

We considered as a structure of repetition a sign and its repeated occurrences which are part of the same signing turn. We used a system of codes, brackets and numbers to annotate the

repetition structures on a unique tier in ELAN (based on Crible, Dumont, Grosman & Notarrigo 2015). This system allows extracting in Excel a visual layout of the arrangement of all repetition structures across a turn. We added a *part of speech* annotation on a first child tier (based on Johnston & Ferrara 2012), and we tagged the *functions* of repetition structures on a second child tier. We established a typology of functions according to linguistic domains (grammar, semantics and pragmatics).

Using this annotation protocol and the corpora recently collected for LSF and VGT, we are now in the process of carrying out detailed analyses on narratives and conversations in both languages. This work is part of a broader project on (dis)fluency (Notarrigo, forthcoming).

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