

Segmentation of the Intonational Phrase in Shanghai Sign Language

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An intonational phrase is a unit marked by clearly perceptible breaks, informally often called “intonational breaks”, that set off clauses and other constituents (Nespor & Vogel 1986). This paper attempts to find the segmentation markers of the intonational phrase in Shanghai sign language, such as body lean, pause, hold, head nod, eye blink, eye gaze and so on. Collecting discourse from four deaf people who lost their hearing as children and analyzing them by ELAN, the paper tries to analyze the properties between two adjacent intonational phrases and their syntactic constituent. The reliable markers include hand holding, hand amplitude, hand repeat, head nod, eye blink and other facial expression changes. They are not always isomorphic with an intonational phrase break, but appear in several of them. The intonational phrases are often topic structures, appositive phrases, coordinate phrases, parenthesis and so on.

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