

## **Verbal and gestural contributions to narrative structure in a Brazilian Sign Language narrative.**

Building on the concepts of real-space blends (Liddell 2003) and body partitioning (Dudis 2004) in American Sign Language, this presentation will show how verbal and gestural elements in Brazilian Sign Language combine to produce narrative discourse, with its overlays of narrative, metanarrative and paranarrative blends (McNeill 1992; Oakley 1998). In sign language linguistics, maintaining the distinction between the verbal and the gestural has traditionally been an issue of theoretical import in the effort to establish sign languages as natural languages. Liddell first showed how the rich use of the body-in-space in sign languages can solve linguistic problems using a different mix of verbal and gestural elements than has traditionally been thought of as falling within language proper. This study uses these insights to analyze an area of language use in sign language which has already been the site for attempts at rapprochement between the verbal and the expressive verbal and gestural envelope of performance in oral languages: narrative structure. In narrative, a matrix of multiple voices, thematic sources and points of view is built up and maintained through not only verbal but also performatic shifts which mark off distinct frames of time, setting and interpretation. Our analysis of a pear story told in Brazilian Sign Language investigates how the narrator manages these shifts in a seamless stream of signs and gestures.