Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

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We study aspects of the grammar of natural sign languages, their acquisition and diachronic change, and in how far sign languages differ from each other in various grammatical domains.

**NGT Grammar**

- **Project:** Descriptive grammar of Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT). Implementing previous research & conducting original research, e.g. on conditional clauses:

- **What are nonmanual markers of conditionals in NGT?**

  - **Results:**
    1. Raised eyebrows seem optional (unlike in other sign languages);
    2. Head movement and/or tilt seems obligatory;
    3. When a manual marker is present, nonmanual markers are used less frequently.

**Body-Anchored Verbs**

- **How does iconicity (form-meaning relation) affect sign language structure?**

  - **Body-anchored verbs:**
    (examples from NGT)

  - **Result:** only first person subject ('I') can be dropped due to iconic associations:

**Classifier Predicates**

- **Classifier predicates: verbs of movement/location; the handshape classifies an argument**

  - Research on ASL: systematic connection between argument structure and classifier type

  - **Results:** classifier predicates in Russian Sign Language & 4 other sign languages have complex event/argument structures

**Sign Language Acquisition**

- **Second Language Acquisition**

  - **How do adults who acquire a sign language as a second language learn to use the signing space to express grammatical relations?**

    1. Case studies (n=2, longitudinal)
    2. Elicitation study (n=14, longitudinal) into classifiers and agreement verbs
    3. Intervention study (2018) - does explicit instruction help?

**Bimodal Bilingualism**

- **How do deaf mothers and their deaf and hearing children combine spoken and signed language?**

  - **Results:** utterances can consist of following combinations:
    1. Fully signed and fully spoken
       - signs: YOU WALK TO CAMP²FIRE (NGT or NL word order)
       - words: you walk to campfire
    2. Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously
       - signs: YOU WALK TO CAMP²FIRE (usually NGT word order)
       - words: fire
    3. Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously
       - signs: WALK CAMP²FIRE (usually NL word order)
       - words: you walk to campfire

- **Mixed signs and words are produced simultaneously, but content differs, e.g.**

  - signs: HUGGING............
  - words: you sweet rabbit

Both signs and words are necessary for complete message.

**Sign Language Grammar & Typology Research Group**

- Enoch Aboh, Vadim Kimmelman, Ulrika Klopman, Vanja de Lint, Marloes Oomen, Roland Pfau

- Eveline Boers-Visker, Beppie van den Bogaerde

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