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.

**SIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR & TYPOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP**

**GRAMMAR & DESCRIPTION**

ENOCH ABOH, VADIM KIMMELMAN, ULRIKA KLOMP, VANJA DE LINT, MARLOES OOMEN, ROLAND PFAU

- **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?
  - **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**

EVELINE BOERS-VISKER, BEPPIE VAN DEN BOGAERDE

- **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 CAMP**\(^{^\text{FIRE}}\) (NGT or NL word order)
      - words: you walk to campfire
    2. Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously
      - signs: **YOU WALK TO CAMP**\(^{^\text{FIRE}}\) (usually NGT word order)
      - words: fire
    3. Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously
      - signs: **WALK** CAMP \(^{^\text{FIRE}}\) (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.

- **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:**
  1. Fully signed and fully spoken
    - signs: **YOU WALK TO CAMP**\(^{^\text{FIRE}}\) (NGT or NL word order)
    - words: you walk to campfire
  2. Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously
    - signs: **YOU WALK TO CAMP**\(^{^\text{FIRE}}\) (usually NGT word order)
    - words: fire
  3. Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously
    - signs: **WALK** CAMP \(^{^\text{FIRE}}\) (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.

**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?

+This project is part of the project “The SIGN-HUB: preserving, researching and fostering the linguistic, historical and cultural heritage of European Deaf signing communities with an integral resource”, funded by European Commission Horizon2020 grant no. 693349.
+This project is carried out in collaboration with the Deaf Studies Research group at the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht. 
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