Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

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Publication date
2017

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Unspecified

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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**

*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*.

- **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:**
  - LOVE
  - RELIEVED
  - EAT

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

\[ i_{AA} \text{ love}_{AA} \text{ him} \]

\[ \text{He \ loves}_{AA} \text{ me} \]

**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

An example of stimuli: stills from a cartoon

Examples of classifier predicates

**Sign Language Acquisition**

*Eveline Boers-Visker, Beppie van den Bogaerde*

**Body-Anchored Verbs**

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

**Classifier Predicates**

- **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?

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+This project is part of the project “The SIGN-HUB: preserving, recording and fostering the linguistic, historical and cultural heritage of European Deaf signing communities with an integrated resource”, funded by European Commission Horizon2020 grant no. 693349.

+This project is part of the project “Argument structure in three sign languages: typological and theoretical aspects”, funded by the Dutch Science Foundation (NWO), grant no. 360-70-520.

+This project is carried out in collaboration with the Deaf Studies research group at the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht.