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 Klop, 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?
  - Body-anchored verbs (examples from NGT):
    - LOVE
    - RELIEVED
    - EAT
  - **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

- **BiModal Bilingualism**
  - How do deaf mothers and their deaf and hearing children combine spoken and signed language?
  - **Results:** utterances can consist of following combinations:
    - Fully signed and fully spoken signs: YOU WALK TO CAMP FIRE (NGT or NL word order) words: you walk to campfire
    - Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously signs: YOU WALK TO CAMP FIRE (usually NGT word order) words: fire
    - Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously signs: WALK CAMP 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?

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