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Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

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SIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR & TYPOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP



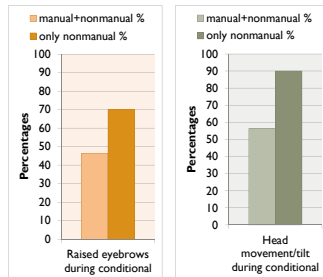
We study aspects of the grammar of natural sign languages, their acquisition and diachronic change, and in how far sign languages differ from each other in various grammatical domains.

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:**
 - Raised eyebrows seem optional (unlike in other sign languages);
 - Head movement and/or tilt seems obligatory;
 - 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)

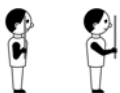


- Result:** only first person subject ('I') can be dropped due to iconic associations:



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



An example of stimuli: stills from a cartoon



Examples of classifier predicates

SIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

EVELINE BOERS-VISKER, BEPIE 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)



He let me know that he missed me / "He let me know: "I miss you"

2. Elicitation study (n=14, longitudinal) into classifiers and agreement verbs



3. Intervention study (2018) - does explicit instruction help?