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.

**GRAMMAR & DESCRIPTION**

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- **Project**: Descriptive grammar of Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT). Implementing previous research & conducting original research, e.g. on conditional clauses.
- **Results**: What are nonmanual markers of conditionals in NGT?
  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.

**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 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
- 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.

**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

**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?