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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- **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-VIS KER, BEPPIE VAN DEN BOGAERDE

- **NGT GRAMMAR +**
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- **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
  - **Result:** mixed signs and words are produced simultaneously, but content differs, e.g.
    - signs: HUGGING...........
    - words: you sweet rabbit

- **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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