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.

**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**: (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.

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**Sign Language Acquisition**

**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.

**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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