Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

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Publication date
2017

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Download date: 13 Jun 2021
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 Klopman, Vanja de Lint, Marloes Oomen, Roland Pfau

- 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:
  - He loves me
  - I love him

**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

- Project: Descriptive grammar of Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT). Implementing previous research & conducting original research, e.g. on conditional clauses:
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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
  - 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)
    - 1st person subject
      - lEA love3RA him
      - He loves me
  2. Elicitation study (n=14, longitudinal) into classifiers and agreement verbs
    - standing person(s)
    - sitting person(s)
  3. Intervention study (2018) - does explicit instruction help?

+This project is part of the project “The SIGN-HUB: preserving, researching and fostering the linguistic, historical and cultural heritage of European Deaf signing communities with an integrated resource”, funded by European Commission Horizon2020 grant no. 693349.

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