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.

- 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.

**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.

**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

**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?