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Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

Aboh, E.O.; Boers-Visker, E.M.; van den Bogaerde, E.M.; Kimmelman, V.; Klomp, U.; de Lint, V.; Oomen, M.; Pfau, R.

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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**

ENOCHE ABOH, VADIM KIMMELMAN, ULRIKA KLOMP, 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:

\[ \text{I} _{AA} \text{love} _{AA} \text{him} \]

\[ \text{He} \ _{AA} \text{love} _{AA} \text{me} \]

**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

An example of stimuli: stills from a cartoon

Examples of classifier predicates

**SIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

EVELINE BOERS-VISKER, BEPPIE VAN DEN BOGAERDE

*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\(^{\text{FIRE}}\) (NGT or NL word order)
  - words: you walk to campfire
- **Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously**
  - signs: YOU WALK TO CAMP\(^{\text{FIRE}}\) (usually NGT word order)
  - words: fire
- **Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously**
  - signs: WALK \_ CAMP\(^{\text{FIRE}}\) (usually NL word order)
  - words: you walk to campfire

**BIMODAL BILINGUALISM**

*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)

- **HE**
- **LET**
- **BID**

He let me know that he missed me / He let me know: “I miss you”

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 integral resource”, funded by European Commission Horizon 2020 grant no. 693549.

#This project is carried out in collaboration with the Deaf Studies research group at the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht.

**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)

- **HE**
- **LET**
- **BID**

He let me know that he missed me / He let me know: “I miss you”

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?