Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

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UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (http://dare.uva.nl)
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.

**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?**

**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 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.

**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
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  - Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously
    - Signs: WALK CAMP FIRE (usually NL word order)
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- 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.

**Classifiers and agreement verbs**

- **Intervention study (2018) - does explicit instruction help?**

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*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 Horizon2020 grant no. 693349.

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