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.

### Body-Anchored Verbs

- **How does iconicity (form-meaning relation) affect sign language structure?**

    - **Body-anchored verbs:**
      (examples from NGT)

    - **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

### Sign Language Acquisition

- **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 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?**

### 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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