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)
  - Example: 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

**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)
  2. Elicitation study (n=14, longitudinal) into classifiers and agreement verbs
  3. Intervention study (2018) - does explicit instruction help?