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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

**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 CAMPxFIRE (NGT or NL word order)
      - words: you walk to campfire
    - Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously
      - signs: YOU WALK TO CAMPxFIRE (usually NGT word order)
      - words: fire
    - Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously
      - signs: WALK CAMPxFIRE (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.

- 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?

**BIMODAL BILINGUALISM**

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  - Mixed signs and words are produced simultaneously, but content differs, e.g.
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**CLASSIFIER PREDICATES**

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An example of stimuli: stills from a cartoon

Examples of classifier predicates