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:
  - **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 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?

**Bimodal Bilingualism**

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    - 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...........
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**Each 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. 693949.**

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