Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

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Citation for published version (APA):
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:**
    - *LOVE*
    - *RELIEVED*
    - *EAT*
    - **Result:** only first person subject ('I') can be dropped due to iconic associations:
      - *I* love, *he loves*.

**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:
      1. Fully signed and fully spoken
        - signs: *YOU WALK TO CAMP™FIRE*
        - words: *you walk to campfire*
      2. Mainly signed, with words produced simultaneously
        - signs: *YOU WALK TO CAMP™FIRE*
        - words: *fire*
      3. Mainly spoken, with signs produced simultaneously
        - signs: *WALK CAMP™FIRE*
        - 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?**