Research group Sign Language Grammar & Typology

Aboh, E.O.; Boers-Visker, E.M.; van den Bogaerde, E.M.; Kimmelman, V.; Klomp, U.; de Lint, V.; Oomen, M.; Pfau, R.

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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.

**SIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR & TYPOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP**

**GRAMMAR & DESCRIPTION**

- 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-ANKHORED VERBS**

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

**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**

**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?


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