

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages

Course code and title

BMBL2002 Sign Linguistics II: Morphology and Morpho-syntax (2024-25)

Course description

This course provides an overview of the major linguistic issues related to morphology and morpho-syntax in sign linguistics, with particular focus on how sign languages resemble and differ from spoken languages in these grammatical aspects. Areas to be covered include different word classes, word formation strategies, agreement, tense, aspect and modality, classifier constructions, the use of non-manuals at the morphological levels, and lexicalization / grammaticalization of gestures in sign languages.

Learning outcomes

Students completing this course will achieve a basic understanding of the followings:

1. Sign languages are natural human languages having striking grammatical parallels with spoken languages in terms of morphology and morpho-syntax.
2. Components of sign language lexicon.
3. The role of iconicity in the formation of lexical signs.
4. The simultaneous and sequential nature of different morphological processes in sign languages.
5. Use of classifier constructions as part of the productive lexicon.
6. How non-manuals perform morphological roles.
7. How gestures can be lexicalized and grammaticalized in sign languages.

Course Syllabus

Topic	Contents/fundamental concepts
Word class	Function words vs content words
Iconicity	Iconicity at the sub-lexical level
lexicon	Conventional signs, loan signs, character signs and classifier constructions
Verb classes	Agreement verbs, plain verbs and spatial verbs
Morphological processes	derivation, inflection, compounding, agreement, morphological markers for tense, aspect and modality, classifier constructions
Gestures	Co-speech gestures, gestures in signs, lexicalization and grammaticalization

Learning activities

Lectures (hr) in /out class	Interactive tutorial discussions (hr) in /out class	Field-trips, Visits & Deaf activities (hr) in /out class	Project Presentations (hr) in /out class	Web-based learning (hr) in /out class	Readings (hr) in /out class
24	15				30
M	M	M O	M O	M O	M O

M: Mandatory activity in the course O: Optional activity NA: Not applicable

Assessment scheme

Tasks	Description	Weight
Class participation	Students' active participation in class discussion	10%

Student presentation	Students will be asked to make a group presentation during tutorial sessions on the selected sign linguistics papers	20%
Final quiz	This final quiz covers the content of the entire course	40%
Paper	Students will write up a paper related to a chosen aspect of sign language morphology and morpho-syntax	30%

*The final grade attained will be adjusted downward for each unexcused absence or tardiness in submitting assignments.

*Students are encouraged to be punctual and there is a 15-minute allowance beyond which time the attendance is counted as zero.

Grade descriptor

Grade	Overall Course
A	<p>Outstanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes; ➤ Competent in theorisation, generalisation, hypothesization, and reflection upon issues; ➤ Skilled in creating, hypotheses and generating proposals to tackle issues with unanticipated extension.
A-	<p>Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes; ➤ Skilled in comparing and contrasting arguments, explaining causes, analyzing and relating concepts to general theories; ➤ Good at applying issues to relevant social contexts and predicting logically related outcomes.
B	<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, or high performance on some learning outcomes which compensate for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance; ➤ Able to enumerate, describe, list, and clarify concepts and topics; ➤ Capable of examining a topic from multiple perspectives.
C	<p>Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Satisfactory performance on a majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses; ➤ Able to state, recognize, recall, and tell single points of topics of discussion.
D	<p>Inadequate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes; ➤ Barely able to state, recognize, recall, and tell single points of topics of discussion.
F	<p>Fail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, or failure to meet the specified assessment requirements; ➤ Missing the points.

Recommended learning resources

There will be:

1. Handouts and reading materials to enhance understanding of the fundamental concepts about sign language research.
2. Micromodules on various topics to clarify issues surrounding deafness and sign language to stimulate students' critical analysis of the social situations involving sign language.

Useful references

A. Journals

1. Journal of Sign Language Studies (<http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/SLS.html>)
2. Journal of Sign Language and Linguistics (<https://benjamins.com/#catalog/journals/sll/main>)
3. Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education (<http://jdsde.oxfordjournals.org>)
4. Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research (<http://jslhr.pubs.asha.org>)
5. Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rbeb20/current#.Usn5tqVmsWY>)

B. Books

- Baker, A., B. van den Bogaerde, R. Pfau & T. Schermer. 2016. *The Linguistics of Sign Languages: an Introduction*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Pfau R., M. Steinbach and B. Woll. 2012. *Sign Language: An International Handbook*. De Gruyter Mouton.

C. Articles

- Fenlon, J., Kensy Cooperrider, J., Brentari, D. & Goldin-Meadow. S. 2019. Comparing sign language and gesture: Insights from pointing. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 4(1): 2. 1–26, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.499>.
- Fischer, S.. (2009). Sign language field methods: approaches, techniques and concerns. In James Tai and Jane Tsay (eds.) *Taiwan Sign Language and Beyond*. Chia-Yi, Taiwan: The Taiwan Institute for the Humanities, National Chung Cheng University.1-19.
- Herrmann, A. & Pendzich, N. 2014. 170. Nonmanual gestures in sign languages. In C. Müller, A. Cienki, E. Fricke, S. Ladewig, D. McNeill & J. Bressemer (Ed.), *Body – Language -Communication*, Volume 2. Berlin, München, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2149-2162.
- Liddell, S. (1995). Real, surrogate, and token space: Grammatical consequences in ASL. In Karen Emmorey & Judy Reilly (eds.), *Language, gesture, and space*. pp. 19–41. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- McNeill, D. 2013. Gesture as a window onto mind and brain, and the relationship to linguistic relativity and ontogenesis. In: Müller, C., Cienki, A., Fricke, E., Ladewig, S., McNeill, D., Teßendorf, S. (Eds.), *Body - Language - Communication*. Volume 1. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 28-54.
- Meir, I., Aronoff, M. Sandler, W. & Padden, C. 2010. Sign languages and compounding. In Sergio Scalise and Irene Vogel (eds). *Cross-Disciplinary Issues in Compounding*, pp 301-322. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Mohr, S.. 2014. Mouth Actions in Sign Languages: An Empirical Study of Irish Sign Language. Volume 3 in the series *Sign Languages and Deaf Communities [SLDC]*. (Chapter 4: Mouth actions in Irish Sign Language – A typology of mouthings and mouth gestures.)
- Morgan, G. & Woll, B. 2007. Understanding sign language classifier through a polycomponential approach. *Lingua* 117(7), 1159-1168.
- Orfanidou, E., Woll, B., & Morgan, G. (2015). *Research methods in sign language studies: a practical guide*. E. Orfanidou, B. (Bencie) Woll, & G. Morgan, (Eds.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Otte, F.; Müller, A.; Wähl, S.; Langer, G. Numeral Incorporation as Grammaticalization? A Corpus Study on German Sign Language (DGS). *Languages* 2023, 8, 153.

- Özyürek, A., Zwitserlood, I. & Perniss, P. 2010. Locative expressions in signed languages: a view from Turkish Sign Language (TI'D). *Linguistics* 48(5), 1111-1145.
- Pfau, R. & Quer, J. 2012. Non-manuals: their grammatical and prosodic roles. In D. Brentari (ed.) *Sign Languages*. Cambridge University Press, pp.381-402. (Chapter 17).
- Schembri A. 2003. Rethinking "classifiers" in signed languages. In: Emmorey K., editor. *Perspectives on Classifier Constructions in Sign Languages*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Mahwah, NJ: 2003. pp. 3–34.
- Tkachman, O. & Sandler, W. 2013. The noun-verb distinction in two young sign languages. In Haviland, John B. (ed.), *Where Do Nouns Come From? Gesture* 13:3, 147–180.
- Wilcox, S. 2004. Gesture and language. Cross-linguistic and historical data from signed languages. *Gesture* 4(1), 43-73.
- Wilcox, S. 2009. Routes from gesture to language. *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 7, 89–110.
- Wilcox, S. 2014. Gestures in sign language. In: Müller, C., Cienki, A., Fricke, E., Ladewig, S., McNeill, D., Bresse, J. (Eds.), *Body - Language - Communication*. Volume 2. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2170-2176.

Feedback for evaluation

1. There will be a midterm evaluation for the instructor to obtain students' feedback.
2. There is an end-of-term course evaluation.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Lecture Readings	Student presentation readings for tutorials
1	5 Sept	Morphology 1 Sublexical elements and lexical families	Pfau et al. (2012) Unit 5: word class and word formation	(extended lecture)
2	12 Sept	Morphology 2 Word classes in sign languages	Baker et al. (2016) Unit: 5: Constituent and word classes	(extended lecture)
3	19 Sept	Morphology 3 Determining word classes	Pfau et al. (2012) Unit 5: word class and word formation	Fischer (2009) Sign language field methods Orfanidou et al. (2015) • Chapter 7, Sign language field works
4	26 Sept	Morpho-syntax 1 Verb classification	Pfau et al. (2012) Unit 19: Use of sign space (Sections 1 and 2 only) Liddell (1995) Real, surrogate, and token space: Grammatical consequences in ASL Pfau et al. (2012) Unit 7: verb agreement	Orfanidou et al. (2015): • Chapter 9. Methods of research on sign language grammar • Chapter 10. Documentary and corpus approaches

5	3 Oct	Morpho-syntax 2 Morphological processes (i)	Pfau et al. (2012) Unit 5: word class and word formation Baker et al. (2016) Unit 9: morphology	Orfanidou et al. (2015) • Chapter 11. Methods in carrying out language typological research • Chapter 12. Data collection in sociolinguistics
6	10 Oct	Morpho-syntax 2 Morphological processes (ii)		Fenlon et al. (2019) Comparing sign language and gesture: Insights from pointing
7	17 Oct	Morpho-syntax 3 Classifiers (i)	Pfau et al. (2012) Unit 8: Classifier Morgan & Woll. (2007)	Tkachman et al. (2013) The noun-verb distinction in two young sign languages
8	24 Oct	Morpho-syntax 3 Classifiers (ii)	Understanding sign language classifiers through a polycomponential approach.	Meir et al (2010) Sign languages and compounding
9	31 Oct	Morpho-syntax 3 Classifiers (iii)		Otte et al. (2023) Numeral Incorporation as Grammaticalization?
10	7 Nov	Non-manuals at the morphological level	Herrmann & Pendzich (2014) Pfau, R. & Quer, J. (2012) Non-manuals: their grammatical and prosodic roles.	Özyürek et al. (2010) Locative expressions in sign languages
<u>11</u>	14 Nov	94th Congregation (No class)		
<u>11</u>	21 Nov	Gestures I: general introduction	McNeill (2013) Gesture as a window onto mind and brain Wilcox (2004, 2009) Gesture and language Route from gesture to language	Schembri (2003) Rethinking "classifiers" in signed languages
<u>12</u>	28 Nov	Gestures II: gestures, lexicalization and grammaticalization in sign languages	Wilcox (2014) Gestures in sign language	Mohr, Susanne (2014) Mouth actions in Irish Sign Language – A typology of mouthings and mouth gestures
	TBC	Final Quiz		

Contact details:

Instructor:	
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Lecture Time and Venue:

Lecture Time: Thursdays, 9:30 – 11:15 am

Tutorial Time: Thursday, 11:30 am – 12:15 pm

Course Venue: Y.C. Liang Hall G06

Details of course website:

Blackboard will be used to distribute the reading materials and course handouts, as well as to support discussions among students.

Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Plagiarism and use of AI in written assignments are strictly prohibited.

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign on the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.