Course A: "The syntax of natural languages: the contribution of sign linguistics"

1. Contact information:
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2. Content of the course
2.1. Course title: The syntax of natural languages: the contribution of sign linguistics
2.2. Course description:
The course looks at the interaction between syntax and modality of natural languages, and whether a language's modality – be it visual/gestural or acoustic/auditory – affects the language's structure.

To illustrate how the syntax of sign languages fits into the bigger picture of natural languages, we will start by looking at universal principles shared by spoken languages. Against this framework, we can verify that sign languages conform to the same defining properties and that the parametric variation observed for spoken languages is mirrored in the syntax of sign languages. The classes will take in different phenomena (such as word order, negation and agreement) using data from various signed languages. We analyze these data from a typological point of view in order to compare the structures found in sign languages with the syntactic possibilities of spoken languages.

We will pay specific attention to non-manual markers (such as head shakes, eye gaze and eyebrow raise) to discover how a modality-specific feature can reveal underlying similarities in syntactic structure across modalities. Time permitting, this will lead us to talk about methodological considerations when collecting and working with sign language data for syntactic analysis.

3. Literature recommendation:

Boudreault, Patrick. & Rachel I. Mayberry. 2006. Grammatical processing in American Sign Language: Age of first-language acquisition effects in relation to syntactic structure. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 21, 608-635.

Lillo-Martin, Diane. 2001. One syntax or two? Sign language and syntactic theory. *Glot Internacional* 5 (9–10), 297–310.

Lillo-Martin, Diane. 2002. Where are all the modality effects? In Richard Meier, Kearsy Cormier & David Quinto-Pozos (eds.)*, Modality and Structure in Signed and Spoken Languages*, pp. 241-262. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lillo-Martin, Diane & Richard Meier. 2011. On the linguistic status of 'agreement' in sign languages. *Theoretical Linguistics,* 37(3-4), 95-141. And responses by various authors.

Neidle, Carol, Judy Kegl, Dawn Maclaughlin, Benjamin Bahan & Robert G. Lee. 2000. *The syntax of American Sign Language: Functional categories and hierarchical structure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pfau, Roland. 2008. The grammar of headshake: a typological perspective on German Sign Language negation. *Linguistics in Amsterdam,* 1(1), 37-74.

Sandler, Wendy & Diane Lillo-Martin. 2006. *Sign Language and Linguistic* Universals. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.