

1) Is there something similar for Fricke's "gestures in grammar approach" and for grammaticalization of gestures in sign languages?

Both approaches are interested in "grammatical functions". There are diachronic changes on the phonological, lexical and syntactic level in sign languages – Fricke considers similarly lexical and particularly syntactic level (but she does not mention phonological level at all). Moreover, I have problems with the connection of phonological level and grammaticalization – this is maybe the reason why there are only "diachronic changes" mentioned regarding phonological level and not the term "grammaticalization" itself, which means something with a grammatical function.

2) Are there any differences between Fricke's "gestures in grammar approach" and grammaticalization of gestures in sign languages?

Fricke deals with syntactic relationship between spoken language and accompanying gestures, particularly with pointing (deictic) co-speech gestures, which may substitute verbal expression, e.g. when describing a shape of a tower. Thus, if we would construct a grammatical description "from the top" (from concrete utterances to a system of rules) and when we have that kind of constructions (noun "tower" + a gesture describing a shape) in our data, we must say that this gesture takes over grammatical functions of an adjective in this particular noun phrase. So, when co-speech gestures can function alone (without verbal accompaniment) and the information is transmitted without problems from a source to an addressee, we can consider it grammaticalized.

In Fricke's approach, a gesture is rather a substitute for verbal expression, while it is not a substitution in the case of grammaticalization of a gesture in a sign language, but rather an enlargement of a system of given sign language.

3) Do you see a concept of grammaticalization (in general or specifically in spoken/sign languages) without problems or are there any?

Grammaticalization is not suitable principle for categorization linguistics (like structuralism or generative grammar), because they like to see language phenomena in closed categories, so they prefer "black and white" viewpoint, not a scale one like e.g. construction grammar does.

In sign languages, we do not have much material for observation of historical changes of signs; in general, we sometimes only assume that there were certain shapes/forms/meanings of language phenomena in the past, because we do not have evidence to prove it in spoken languages as well.

I also recommend Pfau and Steinbach (Modality-Independent and Modality-Specific Aspects of Grammaticalization in Sign Languages, 2006, 87) - they compare grammaticalization of manual gestures in sign languages to grammaticalization of acoustic gestures in spoken languages. But when we realize that we can class e.g. applause as acoustic gesture, where is any grammatical function considering applause? You can strain your brain with this question, if you want to 😊