Third *PRO-Sign2* Conference

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University of Belgrade, Serbia

Book of Abstracts

Keynote:

Filipovic, Jelena & Vuco, Julijana (University of Belgrade)

Sign language in academic contexts from the perspective of language and human rights

In this presentation, we look at language and human rights in relationship with sign languages on global, European and Serbian levels. We discuss the concept of sign language as a minority language, arguing for a definition of minority languages which would take into account the notion of autochthonous languages (regardless of their relationship with other national, regional or minority languages, or means of their transmission, territorial distribution, ethnicity, religion, etc.), thus defining sign languages in translocal and transnational rather than traditional nation-state-language terms. Finally, we discuss the status, the role and the relevance of sign languages in formal education, and focus on primary, secondary and higher educational systems of Serbia as a case study.

BALKSTAM, Eira; Bäckström, Joel; Gustafsson, Åsa; Ryttervik, Magnus & Willing, Josephine (University of Stockholm)

The link between expected learning outcomes, learning activities and examination based on CEFR

Stockholm University is home to a three-year sign language interpreter education programme that leads to a Bachelor degree. For the past year, we have reviewed aspects of sign language skill development as students progress across the three years of the programme. Our goal was to identify what best prepared students to move from novice learner to fluent signer in this time frame. Following Franck (2001) and Josefson (2005), who note the importance of documenting both teachers' and learners' experiences in facilitating the (re)evaluation of curriculum delivery, five Swedish Sign Language teachers at the Universty of Stockholm embarked on a process of self-reflection and documentation of experience, leading to evaluation of how and when we taught elements on our programme, and ultimately, to a revised curriculum. We have rolled out the first semester of this revised curriculum, which we report on here. In doing so, we will explore the link

between expected learning outcomes, learning activities and examination based on CEFR. We will also consider student reflections that relate to their self-evaluation using CEFR can-do statements.

CELO, Pietro (SGB-FSS Swiss Deaf Association)

LIS Syllabus: a proposal of a syllabus for teaching Italian Sign Language, A1 of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as L2 and testing and assessing L2 sign language competence

The aim of the proposal is to design some guidelines for a syllabus for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A1 level of Italian Sign Language with a particular focus on the testing and evaluation of the outgoing skills of non-native signers.

The report, in International Sign Language, will start from a collection of information on the A1 level of the Italian Sign Language in presence and absence version, both for the comprehension and production part. With respect to this knowledge and skills listed (cherological, morphosyntactic, vocabulary and use functions, communication functions, fundamental knowledge of the Deaf Culture) we will propose a verification of the global competences of the A1 level of LIS in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) from the cooperative and inclusive point of view of the hearing learner.

DAISS-KLANG Brigitte & Murk, Véronique (Swiss Deaf Association: SGB-FSS)

Adaptation of Existing Teaching Materials (A1) and Development of Swiss Sign Language Competency Certification

As part of a national strategy of the SGB-FSS, we will report from the process of aligning existing sign language teaching materials to the CEFR and will present the results of a survey how assessment has been realized in the past and how this could inform a certification system in the future.

DE MONTE, Maria (Istituto Statale per Sordi di Roma and Università degl Studi di Roma Tre)

Filling the gaps: Italian Sign Language education before and after the SignLEF and the ProSign project

The publication - by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) - of descriptors for Sign Language education following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the completion of the germinal work for course adaptation done within the SignLEF project (http://signlef.aau.at/en) has started a small but apparently irreversible process of change in Italian Sign Language (LIS) education.

Many schools of LIS have looked at the CEFR to measure their methodology, finding areas, especially at the B and C level, that were left uncovered by previous approaches. Some have tried to fill the gap by adding an extra level to their educational path. Others have focused more on evolving the methodology in use for both teaching and assessment, filling the gap by enriching existing paths with new didactic materials and more prepared teachers.

In this talk, I provide an overview of the changes occurred in LIS education starting from the publication of the first works based on the CEFR by ECML and the results of the SignLEF project, showing the positive outcomes of the new descriptors for sign language education and the areas where D/deaf teachers need a fast and effective update of their skills.

HAUG, Tobias (HfH Zurich, ProSign/ECML) & van den Bogaerde (HU-UAS, ProSign, ECML)

Sign Language Assessment II

This presentation considers work in preparation by another team working on a European Centre for Modern Languages'project, who are working Towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Teachers. We consider the competencies that language teachers need for formative and summative assessment, including competencies related to the procedure, content, and functions of assessment. We outline how these map to what sign language teachers need to know when assessing L2M2 learners. From here, we turn the floor over to conference participants and ask you to identify the key competencies for sign language teachers with respect to L2M2 sign language assessment.

LEESON, Lorraine (Trinity, ProSign/ECML) & Grehan, Carmel (Trinity)

Bridging the gap: The European Language Portfolio and L2 Irish Sign Language Learners at A2-B1 level

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a document in which language learners and users – at school or outside school – can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. It has been widely implemented to support the development of learner autonomy in the teaching and learning of spoken languages. Until 2017-18, the ELP had not typically been implemented with learners of sign languages. During this academic year, we developed and piloted a sample ELP for Irish Sign Language (ISL), mapped to the Prosign 1 CEFR for Sign Languages Descriptors (Leeson, van den Bogaerde, Rathmann, & Haug, 2016), published by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML). We introduced the ELP with a cohort of ISL learners in the second year of their 4 years of studies on the Bachelor in Deaf Studies, who perform at A2-B1 proficiency level. We met with participants from the student cohort on four occasions across the academic year to explore how/if use of the ELP in the ISL classroom supports the development of robust self-evaluation skills, and how the ELP enhances student-reported perception of motivation and autonomy. We also documented teacher reflections on the process of implementing the ELP to consider if/how that impacts on practice.

Taking a classic Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) approach to the focus group data set, we suggest that the key concern that students present is figuring out how they can bridge the linguistic gap between where they currently are and where they want to be. The ELP is experienced as a very helpful tool in this regard, offering signposts regarding progression, and offering landmarks that they can review their performance against so that they can reflect accurately on how they have progressed.

References

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1968). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. London,: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Leeson, L., van den Bogaerde, B., Rathmann, C., & Haug, T. (2016). *Sign Languages and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Common Reference Level Descriptors*. Graz: European Centre for Modern Languages.

LEESON, Lorraine; van den Bogaerde, Beppie; Haug, Tobias & Rathmann, Christian (ProSign/ECML)

Sign Language Teachers' Competencies

This presentation considers work in preparation by another team working on a European Centre for Modern Languages' project, who are working *Towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Teachers.* We consider how competencies are defined in the overview, drawing on Council of Europe (2018) definitions and look at the 5 dimensions of teacher competency proposed. We then challenge participants to consider how these competencies map to those required by sign language teachers. This collaborative work will inform the PRO-SIGN II products, to be published in 2019 by ECML.

References

Council of Europe (2018) Competences for Democratic Culture, vol. 1. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

LEESON, Lorraine; van den Bogaerde, Beppie; Haug, Tobias & Rathmann, Christian (ProSign/ECML)

Curriculum for Sign Language Teachers

In this session, we will draw on discussion that has taken place across the two days of the PRO-SIGN II conference at the University of Belgrade and consider how our work on sign language teacher competencies informs curriculum planning.

LEROSE, Luigi (UCLAN)

Teaching Sign Language through Cross-modality

This presentation is focused upon the process of teaching language to L2 learners, specifically in the domain of sign language, which comprises a different modality to spoken language and to explore the extent to which teaching modality differences to sign language learners, particularly

those who have not had prior exposure to sign language or to nonverbal communication during childhood, enhances the potential to achieve in a cross-modal environment.

It is self-evident that learners appear to have difficulties with the visual nuances of the language. Sign language learners in the main have acquired a language via auditory methods and this is therefore their first mode of learning. When learning sign language, teachers therefore must teach not only the language, which becomes the learner's L2, but also need to develop the learner's potential to communicate through a different modality, the learner's M2. In conclusion, the study identifies M2 learning as a crucial aspect of L2 sign language teaching and learning. People who want to learn a sign language as a second language, therefore, need to be prepared to learn a new modality alongside.

MATOS, Carew, Jade U (Cambridge Assessment English)

A snapshot of a typical Level 2 course from the learner's viewpoint

The provision of BSL courses for adult learners in the UK needs to increase to expand the use and awareness of BSL to offer much needed support to the Deaf community in education and society generally, and in the long term, fulfil the potential to deliver a BSL GCSE nationally. The time is right to find out exactly what is happening in the classrooms of a largely unregulated industry. Are learners receiving the quality language instruction they should be?

This informal case study will investigate this at a grassroots level, providing a snapshot of a typical Level 2 course from the learner's viewpoint. The results of a small focus group discussion will explore learner motivation, the effectiveness of teaching methodology, class materials and curriculum, their self-reflection of progress, and the impact/washback of assessments. This will be balanced against my own professional observational opinion as an English language teacher trainer and BSL learner. The study will give strength to the argument for national professional formation of BSL teachers and an accessible industry standard qualification which incorporates language teaching methodology to ensure teachers are equipped to teach BSL as a language and have the capacity to equip others to communicate in BSL.

NI, Dawei; Keller, Jörg; Bürgin, Petrea & Meili, Aline (Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Winterthur)

Descriptors for communicative competences in sign languages in the CEFR

Ever since the introduction of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for spoken language, there was a need for common learning objectives, curricula and teacher training in sign languages. A CEFR for sign languages is not only an instrument for a standardized and internationally consistent assessment, but a milestone in the development of vocational education standards. Through the integration of empirically developed and statistically verified descriptors for communicative competences in sign languages in the revision of the CEFR (CEFR Companion Volume) we have laid the grounds to achieve this goal.

The project reported empirically developed descriptors for sign languages that characterize second language proficiency levels in learning sign language as a second language. The descriptors were developed in cooperation with the deaf community. They were calibrated in a large survey. The resulting scales and level profiles of the CEFR will determine the further standardization and testing of language skills in sign languages.

Particular attention was paid to text competences in sign languages. Although sign languages do not have a writing system, sign language learners must acquire certain textuality features and text types to perform well. Video recordings of deaf text experts showed that descriptions, narrative stories, formal lectures, reports, arguments and artistic performances use different features and structural components to convey meaning. Specific descriptors were differentiated for receptive "reading - comprehension" and productive "writing – signing of video message" skills that were mapped to six competence levels and categorized in seven scales.

The findings are statistically founded and as such more reliable than any of the descriptions found elsewhere. They will be the basis for class-compliant sign language courses, topic-specific further training courses, professional qualifications of sign language teachers, standardized tests, recognized certificates, etc. The descriptors stand next to the spoken language and serve as a guide for the training and promotion of text competence in sign language in education. In addition to the didactic benefits of lesson planning, the juxtaposition of spoken and sign languages is a cornerstone in the political recognition of sign languages as full-fledged and worth learning languages.

RAIČEVIĆ, Dragana; Gordić, Mihailo; Nikolić, Gordana & Van Herreweghe, Mieke (University of Ghent)

Serbian Sign Language: the state of affairs

In this presentation we will give an overview of the current situation in deaf education in Serbia from the point of view of the Serbian Deaf Community. In giving this account we rely on Serbian Deaf people's experiences and testimonies regarding Serbian Sign Language use in classroom. For this purpose we interviewed 28 adult deaf signers at the deaf club in Belgrade and 25 deaf children in one of the schools in Belgrade. The testimonies reveal that there is frustration among the users because of the lack of access to information in Serbian Sign Lanuage and a pronounced need for the introduction of Serbian Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, we examine the history of sign language courses and materials in Serbia only to reveal that the efforts in this respect have been highly sporadic and unsystematic. The reasons for this should be sought in the medical model of deafness and language ideologies of special educationalists and policy makers which have promoted the attitude of paternalism toward deaf people. Finally, in the light of the Law on Sign Language that was passed in 2015 we examine what the future holds for Serbian Sign Language and its users.

RATHMANN, Christian (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, ProSign/ ECML) & Geissler, Thomas (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Sign Language Assessment I

In our talk we discuss four core issues which are pertaining to the design of language assessment in three domains: comprehension, reception and interaction:

(a) Role of CEFR-based descriptors for assessment in three domains
(b) Design of assessment in three domains: Computer-based tasks and real-life tasks
(c) Procedure of assessment tasks: efficiency and efficiacy for students and teachers
(d) Students' perspectives on assessment: results from focus group meetings

References:

Leeson, L., van den Bogaerde, B., Rathmann, C., & Haug, T. (2016). *Sign Languages and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Common Reference Level Descriptors*. Graz: European Centre for Modern Languages.

RATHMANN, Christian (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/ProSign, ECML) & Geissler, Thomas (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

eELP: Electronic European Language Portfolio and L2 German Sign Language Learners at B1 level

In this paper we present the final results from the implementation of Electronic European Language Portfolio (eELP) for German Sign Language in our running BA program *Deaf Studies* at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. The results are grouped into four categories

  i.   Design of eELP in the first version
  ii.   Effective use of eELP from learners' perspective
  iii.   Advantages of eELP for learners and teachers
  iv.   Design of eELP in the revised version.

Three focus group meetings with learners have been held in regular intervals. The discussions have been filmed, translated, annotated and analysed by using the qualitative-based approach (Mayring 2015).

Reference:

Mayring, P. (2015) *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*. Grundlagen und Techniken. 12. Auflage. Beltz, Weinheim/Basel 2015,

SAPOUNTZAKI, Galini (University of Thessali)

Narrative templates and community sense-making: teaching performative differences between Greek Sign Language and spoken/written Greek at B2 level

Narrative templates may follow classic Labovian functional categories but are realized in various ways across cultures, genders and linguistic genres. Narrative pragmatics deal with key points of

underlying regularities and organisational patterns that structure the shared everyday understanding and sense-making within a linguistic community.

The present study focuses on GSL narrative templates of B2 videotexts that have proven challenging to teach to students of GSL as L2. Parts of speech, paragraph structure and features of narratives as taught in examination tasks of aural/oral languages do not fully correspond to narrative features of GSL videotexts and do not provide students with adequate tools towards full linguistic understanding and production. For example, the structure of Abstract in narrative often reflects a different linguistic viewpoint in GSL and Complication looks unnatural unless intertwined with Evaluation throughout all phases in the signed modality, whereas regularities in lexical choices of narrative forms in GSL are often quite different from those of spoken / written Greek. These may be due to the communicative use of GSL, its visual-spatial modality and its unwritten/minority status. Nevertheless, teaching narrative forms at B level methodically as part of a syllabus has proven effective towards mastering the target language.

STAUB, Alexander (Melbourne Polytechnic)
Material development and use in the classroom
Alexander Straub from Melbourne Polytechnic (Australia), who is himself an Auslan-teacher, will be talking about the lack of sign language resources when Melbourne Polytechnic won the tender to teach Auslan - Australian Sign Language - 5 years ago. He will be reflecting how they developed materials over the last 5years. When Melbourne Polytechnic started to offer Sign Language Classes, they only had 3 weeks to develop resources before the classes commenced.

TURNER, Graham; Quinn, Gary & Cameron, Audrey (Heriot-Watts University)

Leveraging CEFR in the politics of sign language teaching and learning policy in Scotland
British Sign Language (BSL) teaching and learning moved onto a professional footing, led by Deaf experts, in the mid-1980s (https://www.signteach.eu/index.php/5-8-uk/clark-denmark-remembers). Twenty years later, it was reported to be the second most popular adult evening class subject (Sutton-Spence & Woll, 2004).

Unlike other countries, though (notably the US – Wilcox 1992; Rosen 2008), there has been no tradition here of teaching BSL as a language subject to school pupils. The headline goals of the Scottish Government's first National Plan for British Sign Language (BSL) include commitments to "developing Scottish Qualifications Authority awards in BSL" and "expanding the teaching of BSL as a language to hearing pupils in schools" (see http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00526382.pdf). These are exciting ambitions, but not easy to deliver. In 2015-16, we led a major national initiative (https://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/ViewProgramme/tabid/5828/pid/23/rdid/5827/Default.aspx) designed to work out a 'road map' setting out how it could be done. We articulated a vision for a coordinated, incremental set of actions that could put in place a sustainable national framework by 2030.

In this presentation, we will:

- Sketch the background for this development
- Outline the outcomes of the 2015-16 project
- Report on subsequent progress
- Reflect upon the challenges ahead
- Explore the part of CEFR and ProSign in achieving our ambitions.

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