MARCH – APRIL – MAY 2021

EU Digital Framework for Sign Languages

OUTPUT 1 – IS language framework for digital and ICT

IO1/A3 Selection of glossary items

In the application, we promised that while we were working on the 500 terms, we would have made a research for other existing glossaries on the net:

> *As soon as the first corpus is complete, the partners will be called to perform a deeper and more detailed lexicographic work and lemma selection to identify the (at least) 500 terms that are going to form the final version of the glossary. To do so, a two-phases check will need to be executed:*
>
> *1) Firstly, partners will review the rough version of the corpus put together and pick (at least) 500 terms that would be fully necessary to accomplish a proper language expression related to the ICT and digital domain;*
>
> *2) Then, on a second stage, IS's current dictionary will be searched to look for signs equivalent to the terms previously selected, i.e. carrying the same meaning with the less ambiguity as possible. National sign languages, in case it is required, will also be searched, allowing for the broadest scope of the research as possible, and given the "inclusive" nature of the IS.*
>
> *Thus, it will be possible to identify the terms that already have a translation in a sign language and those that still miss it.*
>
> *P0 and P1 will work on this second phase of the analysis due to their internal knowledge of sign languages' framework. P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6, on the other hand, will finalise the first phase of the analysis.*

A short introduction to International Sign

The term "International Sign" (IS) is used for the visual communication between deaf persons of different nationalities who have a necessity of a shared sign language. We can say that International Sign (IS) is both a "pidgin" communication - because it develops from a mixture of more languages, and a "lingua franca" - because it serves as a common language for communication between people who have different native languages.

IS is used in formal contexts, for example during meetings of the World Federation of the Deaf, Deaflympics, UN conferences, UN Committee sessions related to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other events. However, World Deaf Community don't formally recognize IS, that's why we can't call it "International Sign Language": the main reasons are that IS don't have defined territorial place, also a specific grammar is missing, each national language's grammar is used as support of international signs.

One myth among hearing people is that Deaf people has a "universal" Sign Language. National Sign Languages evolved separately, as well as oral languages and again, in the same way, an attempt to formalize a unique language failed: as for "Esperanto", "Gestuno" formed by selecting "naturally spontaneous and easy signs" in common use by deaf people of different countries born in Rome in 1951, but almost immediately died.

Despite the difficulties of IS to take off, its appreciation between deaf people started later thanks to its simplicity in communication: the main aim of International Sign is to understand each other beyond boundaries. These characteristics of being very visual and simple, and taking into consideration the current developments in globalization and the growth of Internet technologies, allowed the spread of International Sign and the foundation of a consortium of International Sign Interpreters (both Hearing and Deaf).

Glossaries

As oral languages, also Sign Languages are living languages that change during time. The desire to stop time and archive the results reached is part of the human research. Vocal languages can "save" words and rules in written dictionaries, whereas Sign Languages find this action harder to make. Thanks to the development of technologies, videos allow to make this will come true also in Sign Languages and to create websites or apps in which signs can be fixed.

Sectorial vocabularies are more and more needed in Deaf communities since Sign Languages are living a new born thanks to their recognition all over the world.

These are the online glossaries founded on the net till May 2021:

1	https://rv-sonastik.ead.ee/en	(International Sign, Estonian Sign Language)
2	https://www.spreadthesign.com/isl.intl/search/	(Sign Languages all over the world, International Sign)
3	http://www.signmediasmart.com/	(British, Italian, Swedish, French and German Sign Language)
4	https://www.handspeak.com/	(American Sign Language)
5	https://jelnyelvi-szotar.jelnyelv.hu/	(Hungarian Sign Language)
6	https://www.hallatlan.hu/c/jelek/	(Hungarian Sign Language and American Sign Language)
7	https://www.signbsl.com/	(British Sign Language)
8	https://dico.elix-lsf.fr/	(French Sign Language)
9	https://dansktegnsprog.dk/	(Danish Sign Language)
10	http://www.sematos.eu/index.html	(Catalan, Spanish, French, German Sign Language and Internation Sign)
11	https://finsl.signwiki.org/	(Finnish Sign Language)
12	https://suvi.vittomat.net	(Finnish Sign Language)
13	https://woordenboek.vlaamsegebarentaal.be/search	(Belgian Flemish Sign Language)
14	https://www.auslan.org.au/about/dictionary/	(Australian Sign Language)
15	https://www.nzsl.nz/	(New Zealand Sign Language)

16	https://www.talkinghands.co.in/	(Indian Sign Language)
17	http://www.wikisigns.org/	(9 countries Sign Language)
18	https://www.dictio.info/?lang=en	(Czech, Slovak, Austrian Sign Language, American Sign Language and International Sign)
19	https://www.gjshk.org/	(Kosovo Sign Language)
20	https://www.aisrael.org/?CategoryID=3456&ArticleID=62070	(Israel Sign Language)
21	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCScR0I-J7gGR2jRCjcrt9Og	(Israel Sign Language)
22	http://www.dizlis.it/	(Italian Sign Language)
23	https://teckenspraklexikon.su.se/	(Swedish Sign Language)
24	www.sign2mint.de	(German Sign Language)

From this research we can state that only four of these glossaries include International Sign. This means that IS still need a great work on the translation and archiving of specific terms: the reason is that International Sign is still under “construction”, some terms are missing, in particular they miss in sectorial subjects like digital ones.

In the majority of cases, these glossaries are a way to archive National Sign Languages and widespread them. For example, the most famous is “Spread the Sign”, which aims in the dissemination of the vocabulary of National Sign Language and lately in International Sign, too.

The “contradiction” of International Sign in Deaf community is that it’s a really appreciated communication that has the respect of Deaf and hearing people, but, at the same time, it’s “criticized” because it’s not a recognized language. Enhance and promote IS is the aim of this Erasmus plus project in which each partner can contribute significantly.

References

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