

## **Sign Language planning and policies: the role of a national sign language database in the Netherlands.**

Abstract for ICML 11

Sign Languages are highly variable linguistic systems since they have been excluded from the educational settings for a very long time and are learned in informal situations. Bilingual educational models for the Deaf make it necessary to provide models and norms for sign-language teaching (including sign-language dictionaries) which may lead to increasing linguistic uniformity.

In this paper we will discuss the purpose and set-up of a unique tool we have developed in order to be able to provide sign language users (such as teachers) with information about SLN but also gain information from sign language users about the lexicon of SLN: a national web-based bilingual spoken/sign language database which is used to produce DVD-ROM's according to specific customers demands. The database is also linked to the website of the Dutch Sign Language Centre ([www.gebarencentrum.nl](http://www.gebarencentrum.nl) or [www.woordenboekgebaren.nl](http://www.woordenboekgebaren.nl)) and provides its users with an on-line dictionary which currently contains more than 5000 sign movies.

The database stores information on the lexical and grammatical level, contains definition movies of concepts as well as explanation movies and stories. In addition, drawings, picto's and photographs can be stored.

Furthermore the way in which this database is used in relation to sign language planning and policies in the Netherlands will be discussed, especially the way in which the basic lexicon of SLN was standardised to comply with the Dutch Government's demand in order to recognise SLN as an official language in the Netherlands.

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