

Summary of the AT-programme

This project/course must be seen as a pilot project/course, as such a course is not yet existing in Austria! As it turns out with any pilot project, there might be parts in this course programme, which will not function the way, they were supposed to. Practical experience will show, which parts this will be. The testing of the course and the developing of course materials hopefully will be subjects of follow-up projects! The focus in this project was to develop a course programme, which takes into account the particularities of teaching deaf, sign language competent people and not hearing people, who want to learn a sign language from scratch. This makes a difference when developing the course.

1. Thoughts, when developing the programme

When developing the programme, different aspects had to be considered:

- This is a course for deaf, sign language competent learners, who want to learn a foreign sign language BUT they have no or little knowledge of the written/spoken language of the country. When teaching hearing students, the national written/spoken language plays an important role (e.g. teaching and learning materials are in the written national language). The situation is quite different, when teaching a foreign sign language to deaf students. We can assume that most of them have either no or only little knowledge of this written language. So, this fact must be taken into account when preparing the lessons and the teaching/learning materials.
- Although (most) deaf know a sign language – e.g. how space is used, the importance of facial expression etc. - they do not automatically know the grammar of the foreign sign language they want to learn. This is why it is important to have the grammar included from the very beginning. On the other hand, it is not necessary to spend time teaching them how to use their body, facial expression, space for signing, how to form a handshape etc. These are important information when teaching sign language to hearing students (beginners).
- Deaf students know what a handshape is, how it is formed but they do not know the handshapes of the foreign sign language they want to learn. A great amount of different handshapes can be produced, but sign languages all over the world use a restricted number and different handshapes out of this big "handshape-pool". There are few handshapes (the so called unmarked handshapes¹) which can be found in every

¹ These handshapes are acquired at an early stage and are frequently used in a sign language.

known sign language  , but otherwise the handshape inventory differs from sign language to sign language. Therefore, it is important to dedicate one lesson to the most important handshapes of the sign language at the very beginning of the course.

2. Course structure

The course programme for ÖGS (Österreichische Gebärdensprache/Austrian Sign Language) as foreign language is based on the programme proposed by the partner from the UK.

The Austrian course programme was developed in close cooperation between deaf and hearing colleagues.

The course structure of the programmes for A1 and A2 is the same:

- Each level (A1 and A2) is divided in 10 main themes
- Each main theme is divided in four (in one case in five) sub-themes e.g.

Main theme: *Greetings (A1, Theme 1)*

Four sub-themes:

- 1) Greetings
- 2) Important handshapes in ÖGS
- 3) This is Austria
- 4) Repetition, Practise and Stabilization of the course contents

Often, the last lesson of a main theme is dedicated to the stabilization of the course content. The main goal of this lesson is to practise the grammar and vocabulary in open conversations and/or discussions. Usually, questions are asked more easily in a relaxed atmosphere, than in a "typical" classroom situation. This teaching unit should provide such opportunities.

In case, teachers realize that there is a problem with e.g. a specific grammar theme, they also can use this lesson to explain it again.

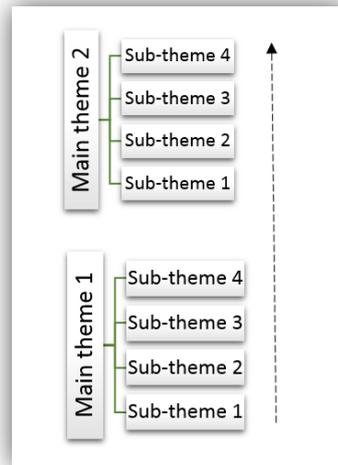
The feedback from the students about the lessons should "close" one main theme.

Duration

The duration of one lesson (sub-theme) is two hours; a break is foreseen after 45 minutes. Not included in this course is the time for an assessment at the beginning of a course, neither for the final assessment.

Increase of difficulty:

According to the CEFR the degree of difficulty in vocabulary, grammar and syntax is increased from lesson to lesson and from main theme to main theme (illustrated in the graphic):



2.1. Lesson templates

2.1.1. Overview of all lessons (A1 and A2)

For A1 and A2 an overview of all lessons is available. Having a look at it, teachers know what the main and the sub-themes are and what kind of information should be given:

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Grammar</i>	<i>Communication aims</i>
<i>The major theme is given here</i>	<i>Here are the subthemes and the lesson content listed</i>	<i>In this column the grammar for the lesson is noted down</i>	<i>Here is defined, what communication goals students should be able to achieve</i>

2.1.2. Lesson structures

The lesson plans are the guideline for teachers to plan their lessons. This way they know: What will be discussed; what grammar has to be prepared; what teaching materials are necessary and so on. A lesson plan includes the following information:

Aim(s): A short description, what the students should be able to achieve at the end of a lesson.

Lesson sequence/ Time	Teacher activities	Students activities	Resources	Assessment
In this column the different themes and activities are noted, as well as the time foreseen for it, e.g. <i>Introduction of the</i>	Here the teachers activities are explained e.g. <i>shows a video</i>	The activities of the students are described here e.g. <i>Participate in the</i>	Resources needed for the lesson are listed here e.g. <i>Video, beamer,</i>	In this column the kind of assessment is proposed e.g. <i>Questions &</i>

<i>theme (15 min.)</i>	<i>and discussion</i>	<i>leads discussion</i>	<i>pictures</i>	<i>Answers</i>
----------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	----------------

Time specification

The time specification in the first column should be a kind of help for the lesson structuring. But of course, how much time for a specific purpose is needed, depends on different facts: number of participants, knowledge of participants, learning pace of the students etc.

Grammar

When developing this lesson plans, we were well aware of the fact that a strict separation between content and grammar is not possible, they always will interact. Already the introduction of the theme should include the grammar components of the lesson. A detailed grammar explanation can be given later in the lesson, when the students are more familiar with the topic.

Vocabulary

The vocabulary given at the end of the lesson is a kind of help for the next step, the development of the materials. It is not the final list for the vocabulary; the most important words, which are connected to a subject, were noted down. A final vocabulary list can only be done, when the teaching/learning materials are developed.

Requirements for teachers

Course instructors should have the following qualifications:

- ✚ Good grammar knowledge of the sign language
- ✚ Prejudice-free: whatever the gender, age, religion, origin, sexual preference and disability, teachers have to treat all students equally!
- ✚ Flexibility: Teachers must adjust their teaching to the class dynamics. This is closely connected to
- ✚ Empathy: To be able to react to the class dynamics teachers must pick up the atmosphere in a class, changes of it and react to them.