Summary of the guide for teachers

In the first part of this guide, a short overview of the situation "Sign language courses as foreign language" (for sign language competent (deaf) people) in Austria is given. This is followed by a description of the target group and how or why the course content has been selected.

The second part deals with the course programme; the structure of the programme (this part can be found in the *Summary of the AT programme*). During the development of the course programme two rather interesting points emerged:

1. Role of the national written/spoken language in class

The importance of the national written/spoken language will be different in a sign language course for hearing (non-signing people) compared to deaf foreign signers:

Hearing students

In all partner's countries there are numerous sign language courses for hearing people. In Austria those courses are only held by deaf people. In these courses it is assumed that the students are either native speakers of German or have a very good language competence. The following illustration reflects this assumption:
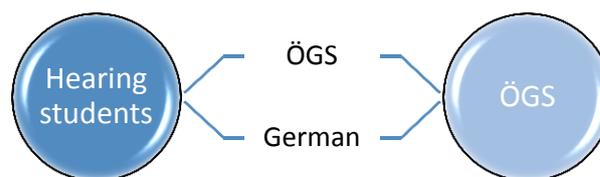

Figure 1: Importance of German for hearing students

ÖGS and German have, especially at the level A1, the same significance. This is because the ÖGS-grammar, the signs etc. are explained with support of the written language. As there is no universal notation for sign language, most of the learning materials (e.g. Grammar, instructions for exercises, vocabulary) are in written German too.

Ideally, the use of the written language should decrease with the increase of sign language knowledge of the hearing students (figure XX):

Figure 2: Increase of ÖGS; decrease of German

Deaf students

For foreign deaf, sign language competent students having no or very little knowledge of German, the use of it is quite different:

Figure 3: Importance of German for deaf students

The national written language is only important, when it is necessary for the semantic distinction of homonym signs, e.g. SCHWESTER # BRUDER or FREITAG # GASTHAUS # BLEISTIFT).

This fact has to been taken into account when developing course materials!

2. Modality specific information

In this section, one can find a description of the information deaf students do not need to learn and what information they should learn, although they are sign language competent (cf. *Summary of the AT-programme*). For example, they do not need to learn how to use space when signing, but should learn the grammar of the sign language.

3. Course materials

The aim of this project was to develop a course programme. Teaching and learning materials will (hopefully) be done in a follow-up project. When developing them, some peculiarity have to be taken into consideration:

- The target group does not know German; written explanations, grammar, written instructions are not useful at all.

- Many deaf do have very little knowledge of the grammar of their sign language as well of the national written language. Therefore, grammar will have an important role in the course.

4. Course structure

You can find the summary of the course structure is in *Summary of AT-programme*.

5. Best practice when teaching

To design an interesting lesson, the teaching method should vary:

- Teacher-center teaching; this should be used for explanations (should not be used too extensively)
- Questions and answers
- Discussions
- Brainstorming
- Use for sign language videos, new media, pictures etc.
- Games
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Grammar teaching might be difficult, as it is often a subject deaf feel overchallenged. Therefore, it is important:

- To explain, what it the grammar theme about and why it is import;
- Check previous knowledge of the students;
- Students should have the possibility to "discover" rules on their own. This can be done by showing a sign language video, stories told by the students …
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6. Type of exercises

Alternating exercises help to get students actively involved and catch there interest:

- Role play
- Team work
- Partner work
- Discussion
- Give a speech

7. Teacher requirements

The teacher requirements are also mentioned in the *Summary of the AT-programme*.