

ISSUE

#1

MARCH

2017

SIGN-HUB

Newsletter

this issue

SIGN-HUB project **2-3**

First results **4**

Upcoming events **5**

Contact information **6**

WHAT IS SIGN-HUB?

The SIGN-HUB project originates from the expertise of a group of researchers from seven countries.

Central aim of the project is the development, preservation and dissemination of the linguistic, cultural and historical heritage of European Deaf signing communities through digital resources.

It is a four-year project (2016-2020) funded by the European Commission within Horizon 2020 Reflective Society 2015, Research and Innovation actions.



Welcome to the SIGN-HUB project!

This is the first newsletter of the research project *SIGN-HUB: preserving, researching and fostering the linguistic, historical and cultural heritage of European Deaf signing communities with an integral resource*. The first newsletter of the project celebrates the completion of its first year.

The yearly newsletter we will disseminate aims at spreading our research work among Deaf communities, policy makers,

clinicians, educators and anyone interested in sign languages and in the culture of Deaf communities.

The newsletter also aims at promoting the project's preliminary results and involving the reader in our forthcoming events.



The Newsletter in International Sign (IS)

Scan or click on the QR codes you will find next to the articles to view the video clip in International Sign.



European Commission

Horizon 2020
European Union funding
for Research & Innovation



The SIGN-HUB objectives

Our research project aims at:

1. The creation of on-line grammars of 6 sign languages: Catalan Sign Language (LSC), Spanish Sign Language (LSE), German Sign Language (DGS), Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT), Italian Sign Language (LIS), and Turkish Sign Language (TİD).
2. The construction of an interactive online ATLAS of sign languages providing grammatical information of European and non-European sign languages.
3. The development of tools for sign language assessment to detect language disorders and assess the linguistic competence of signers.
4. The creation of a digital archive of elderly signers' linguistic and cultural heritage collected through interviews centered on different topics.
5. The creation of an open digital platform hosting the content of the project.



Project partners

Researchers from 7 countries are working on the project:

- ✿ Spain: Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) – project coordinator Josep Quer.
- ✿ France: Université Paris Diderot 7, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.
- ✿ Germany: Georg-August-Universität Göttingen.

- ✿ The Netherlands: Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- ✿ Italy: Università Milano-Bicocca, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.
- ✿ Turkey: Bogaziçi Üniversitesi.
- ✿ Israel: Tel Aviv University.



Our contribution to Deaf communities

In most countries, Deaf communities are marginalized within hearing societies. Their language and culture is largely unknown and subject to false preconceptions and prejudices, potentially threatening their survival. In some countries, the national sign language is still lacking official recognition as a minority language. As a consequence, these Deaf communities still do not benefit from the rights accorded to linguistic minorities.

SIGN-HUB aims at preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of sign languages

Through the creation of sign language grammars, the Atlas of sign languages, the tools for sign language assessment, and the archive of elderly signers' interviews, our research project aims at promoting the

recognition of sign languages and contributing to a better understanding of their linguistic properties. Since sign languages lack a written form, they are exposed to the risk of disappearance. The digital resources employed in the project have a double goal: to make the content of our research available to the Deaf and scientific community and to preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of sign languages. By making sign languages and Deaf communities more visible, the project contributes to reducing the distance between Deaf and hearing communities. Research into the linguistic features of sign languages will also help improve educational programs for the Deaf.



Our contribution to the scientific community

The research on sign languages carried out in the last 50 years has demonstrated that they are full-fledged natural languages displaying the same complexity at all levels of grammatical description as spoken languages.

A fine-grained investigation of the grammatical and socio-linguistic features of languages in a different modality through the creation of the on-line grammars and the atlas of sign languages will improve our understanding of the language faculty.

Research into the properties displayed by sign languages will also enrich typological and comparative studies, thus enabling us to test the validity of the hypotheses shaped on spoken languages, to identify linguistic universals that are

modality-independent and to detect modality-driven linguistic features feeding our knowledge of parametric variation.

SIGN-HUB will contribute on the understanding of the language faculty

Research on the tools for language assessment in sign languages will be crucial to deepen our understanding of language impairments by comparing linguistic disabilities in a different modality.



FIRST RESULTS

Grammar

A first step toward the writing of the grammars of 6 sign languages is the examination of existing linguistics literature to identify the grammatical topics that have already been described as well as those that require new research. Researchers have then started to write chapters and sections of the grammars, following the guidelines in the book *SignGram Blueprint: A Guide to Sign Language Grammar Writing*. The SignGram Blueprint was developed during the SignGram project, which was funded by the European Commission and ended in May 2015 (COST Action IS 1006 <http://parles.upf.edu/llocs/cost-signgram/>). The grammars will be freely available when completed.



Past events

The SIGN-HUB kick-off meeting was held in Barcelona on April 4-5, 2016. A second meeting was held in Venice, on September 3-4, 2016 to discuss the implementation of the project. The fifth FEAST, the official SIGN-HUB conference, was held in Venice on September, 1-2, 2016.



Interviews

Researchers have started collecting interviews on life stories from elderly Deaf signers in the late Fall of 2016. In all countries, the spirit is alike: gathering experiences concerning education, family, social and political issues based on a questionnaire. Yet, it soon turned out that the exact approach may be slightly different in individual countries. In Turkey and Italy, for instance, a small group of Deaf and hearing research assistants

travelled to diverse locations to interview Deaf people, while in the Netherlands, a Deaf research assistant is interviewing residents in an apartment complex for elderly Deaf people who come from all regions of the country. From a linguistic perspective, it is particularly interesting to see how different the signing of elderly Deaf people within a country can be, depending on the type of education and/or whether the individual has Deaf family members. This already suggests that the subsequent step, the translation and annotation of the interviews, will likely be challenging at times.



JOIN US!

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEAST Conference

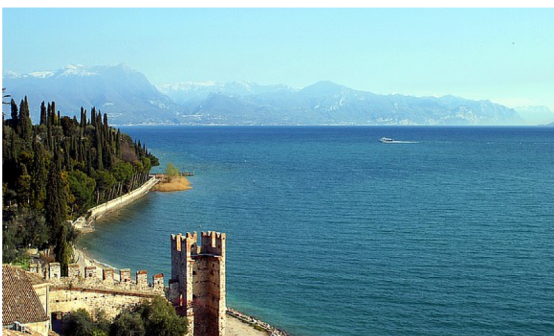
The sixth meeting of the conference in 'Formal and Experimental Advances in Sign language Theory' (FEAST) connected to the SIGN-HUB project will take place at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, on June 21-22, 2017.

Invited speakers are Dr. Joanna Atkinson (University College London) and Dr. Chiara Branchini (University Ca' Foscari Venice).



Check the conference website

For more information on the FEAST conference, visit the conference website: https://sites.google.com/site/feastconference/home/conferences/feast_reykjavik_2017.



Check the Summer School website

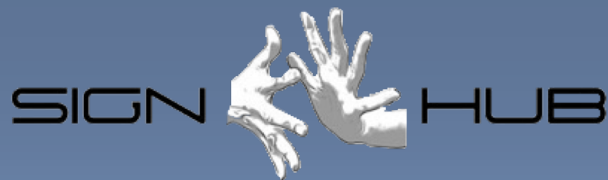
For more information on the Summer School, visit the website: <https://sites.google.com/site/feastconference/home/summer-school/summer-school-2017>.

SIGN-HUB Summer School

The SIGN-HUB Summer School will be organized on May 8-12, 2017 in Gargnano sul Garda, Italy. It is open to Master students, graduate students and junior researchers and will address theoretical and experimental issues in sign language linguistics.

The Summer School is funded by the Labex EFL Empirical Foundations of Linguistics, a network of Linguistic labs based in the Paris area, and is hosted in the Gargnano facilities of the University of Milan (Department of Philosophy). A number of bursaries have been offered to students to attend the summer school.





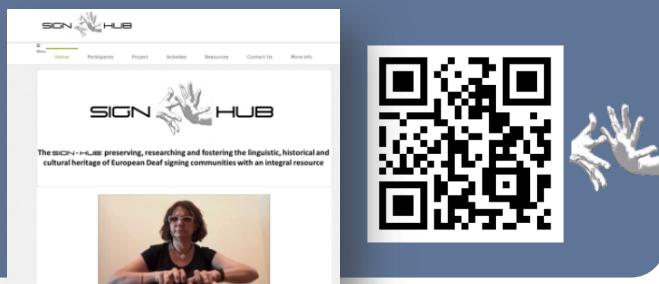
SIGN-HUB: preserving, researching and fostering the linguistic, historical and cultural heritage of European Deaf signing communities with an integral resource

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US

The SIGN-HUB website

To get more information on the project, to keep updated on our dissemination activities and preliminary results, and to contact us, visit the project general website

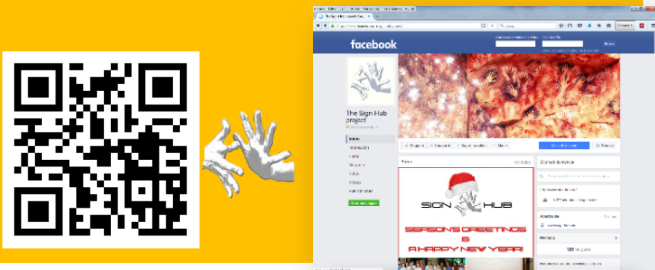
www.sign-hub.eu



Our Facebook page

To keep updated with our activities, to share your comments and experience with the scientific and Deaf communities visit our Facebook page

www.facebook.com/sign.hub.project



Subscribe online to receive the SIGN-HUB Newsletter by writing to sign-hub@upf.edu

National websites

Visit the project national website of your country:

- **Spain:**
<https://signhub-upf.joomla.com/cat/>
- **France:**
<https://sites.google.com/site/signhubfrance/>
- **Germany:**
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/546745.html>
- **The Netherlands:**
<http://aclc.uva.nl/research/groups/groups/content/folder/sign-language-grammar-and-typology/sign-hub/sign-hub.html>
- **Italy:**
<http://www.sign-hub.it/>
- **Turkey:**
<https://signhub.boun.edu.tr/en>
- **Israel:**
<http://www.tau.ac.il/~naamafr/sign-hub/index.html>



European
Commission

Horizon 2020
European Union funding
for Research & Innovation

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693349.