

Emergence and function of Deaf Studies in the Netherlands

Lectoraat Dovenstudies / Professorship Deaf Studies

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Very short history of NGT/Deafness awareness in the Netherlands



■ Early 1980's

- *Woord en Gebaar*, national deaf journal is started
- Sign lexicon taught to parents and professionals (van den Bogaerde 1991)
- Start of research on Dutch Sign Language (NGT), initiated by Dutch Deaf Council, NDSDK and University of Amsterdam (KOMVA 1988; overview Crasborn 1999; Nijen Twilhaar 1999)

Short history



■ Mid 1980's

- Awareness in Deaf community about own language and emancipation possibilities (van den Bogaerde & Schermer in press)
- Vi-Taal established in The Hague
- Dutch Deaf Council lobbies for recognition of NGT
- First Interpreter training program (middle level vocational training)

Short history



■ 1990's

- Deaf culture flourishes - Poems (Emmerik 1995) - Theatre (Handtheater)
- Training of native signers to teach NGT by Dutch Sign Center – first CD's on NGT
- Bilingual education programs established in most schools for the deaf - development of materials
- First deaf children receive a cochlear implant
- Commission *Recognition of NGT* is established, report follows in 1997 (*Méér dan een gebaar*)
- Higher educational level training established for teachers and interpreters of NGT in Utrecht 1998

Short history



■ 2000 – present

- Deaf babies receive CI before/around first birthday
- Technical innovations, social changes in education, care and society (Thoutenhooft, this conference)
- 2005 Master Program Deaf Studies
- 2006 Associate Degree Speech-to-text interpreting
- 2007 Professorship Deaf Studies
- Many publications, a/o. on Deaf identity – Blume (2006) Tijsseling (2006) Isarin (2006)

Emergence of Deaf Studies



■ Interpreter training

- Initially: many native signers, who knew Deaf culture and the language
- Later: students needed to learn NGT as a foreign language, needed to learn about Deaf culture

■ Deaf Awareness

- In Deaf community more and more awareness, many activities about empowerment, diversity, Deaf power
- Political necessity: to claim rights as linguistic minority (UNESCO 1994; UN 2006)

Function of Deaf Studies



- Due to emancipation process there is need for information on Deaf culture
 - Is there a Deaf Culture in the Netherlands?
 - If so – what is it? How can we define it?
 - What are priorities in research?
 - How best disseminate results in Deaf community?
 - Lobby for rights of Deaf people (Unesco 1994; UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006)

First activities



Meeting with the Deaf community

- Ontmoetingsdag in June 2008
- Inventory of research topics -> identity
-> participation

Setting up the research group, website (trilingual), networking, fundraising

Collaborative approach with fellow research groups, Deaf community and professionals in the field, and students/teachers of HU

- **Deaf culture**

- Gardy van Gils

- Collaboration between Deaf and hearing people – linguistic and social implications

- Rob de Lange

- Strengthening the position of the Deaf

- **NGT materials**

- Jan Nijen Twilhaar – lexicons on NGT/DC

- Beppie van den Bogaerde – Sign linguistics



- **Wellbeing of hard-of-hearing children in mainstream education**
 - Annemiek Voor in 't Holt

- **SIA RAAK PUBLIC project**
 - On the communication between deaf clients and hearing professionals in (mental) health care
 - Collaboration between de Gelderhorst, de Riethorst, Gelderse Vallei Hospital and LDS
- **Elderly Deaf**
 - Gelderhorst and LDS – day care centers, why?
- **WSW – Equal opportunity in work**
 - Dovenschap and LDS



- **European Common Framework of Reference for Languages**
 - Modern languages taught in Faculty of Education, HU, including NGT
 - Collaboration between professorship, university, HU teachers/students and the field

Deaf Community



Picture © Rob de Lange

References



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