

TÁMOP 5.4.6/B-13/1-2013-0001

SIGNificant Chance

„The term Deaf refers to people, who – due to the seriousness of their hearing state and mutual relations with similar people – find their primary language and culture in the community consisting of the other Deaf people.” (Iván Vasák,1996)

Present situation

There are no fully reliable data concerning the number of D/deaf people living in Hungary. According to the 2011 census data, there are 8,571 D/deaf and 63,014 hard of hearing persons living in the country. Moderate estimates however figure about 30–60,000 D/deaf people. This population constitutes the third largest linguistic and cultural minority in Hungary.

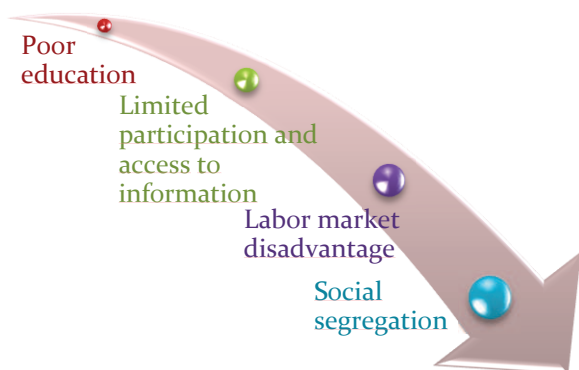


Figure 1. Current situation of the D/deaf in Hungary

There are two ways of educating D/deaf children in Hungary: special schools or mainstream education. Special and mainstream education in Hungary however work on the basis of the same ideology and methodology: the auditive-oral/verbal method is used in the education of the D/deaf, where using Hungarian Sign Language (HSL) as the medium of instruction is not officially promoted or permitted. HSL as a subject

may appear only in special education – at grade 7 and 8, at the age of 15–16.

Analysis of the census data from 2001 and 2011 reveals some sad tendencies concerning the efficiency of the methods used in the education of the D/deaf: drop-out rate among D/deaf pupils is very high in the first few years of schooling, participation in higher education and employment rate of D/deaf people is far beneath the country average.

Sign language act

After decades of preparation, and struggle of stakeholders and professionals the Hungarian Parliament passed the bill on HSL. Act CXXV of 2009 on Hungarian Sign Language and the Use of Hungarian Sign Language recognizes HSL as an independent natural language, recognizes the community of persons using HSL as a linguistic minority, and regulates the use of bilingual methods, as well as the appearance of HSL as a subject in the education of the D/deaf.

The implementation process: goals and barriers

In the last two decades several researches were conducted concerning HSL, its use, and the Hungarian Deaf community, however systematic and representative research within the Deaf and the

hearing community with the collaboration of specialists from different research areas still needs to be done. Only a whole scale, sociolinguistically designed, corpus based empirical linguistic research can serve as a ground for standardization of HSL, which is inevitable before planning and elaborating the methods of the bilingual D/deaf education. This research is unimaginable without the active and constructive contribution of the members of the Deaf community.

TÁMOP project: *SIGNificant Chance*

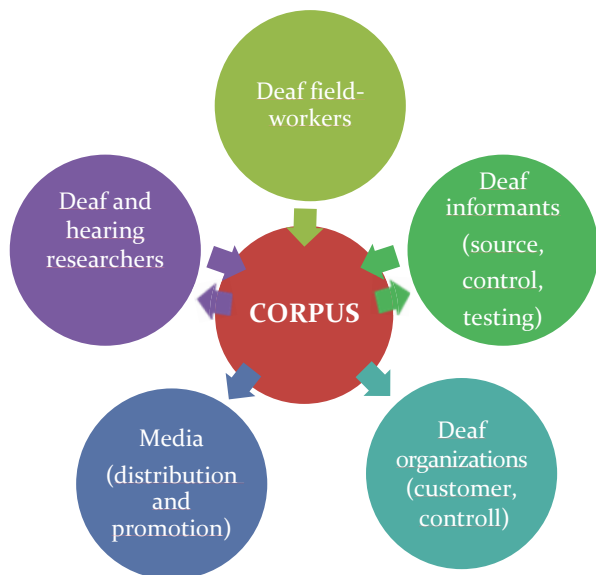


Figure 2. Stakeholders in research

The research needed for the implementation of the Hungarian Sign Language Act has several outcomes: standardization, improving interpretation, developing methods and teaching materials for bilingual Deaf education, trainings in higher education (teachers, interpreters, researchers etc.), promoting availability in the media and public domains, awareness raising.

The main goal of the TÁMOP 5.4.6/B-13/1-2013-0001 *SIGNificant Chance* research project is to conduct the standardization of HSL for educational purposes. The whole research is based on a sociolinguistically designed fieldwork which provides a unique and multifunctional sign language corpus serving as a

database for four sub-projects: 1, sociolinguistic description of the patterns of language use in the Deaf community 2, analysis of variation of HSL and creating a standardized digital vocabulary 3, grammatical description and standardization of HSL 4, measuring competencies of Deaf children in special and in mainstream education. In the long term, research findings will also make the elaboration of methods in bilingual Deaf education possible and scientifically well-grounded.

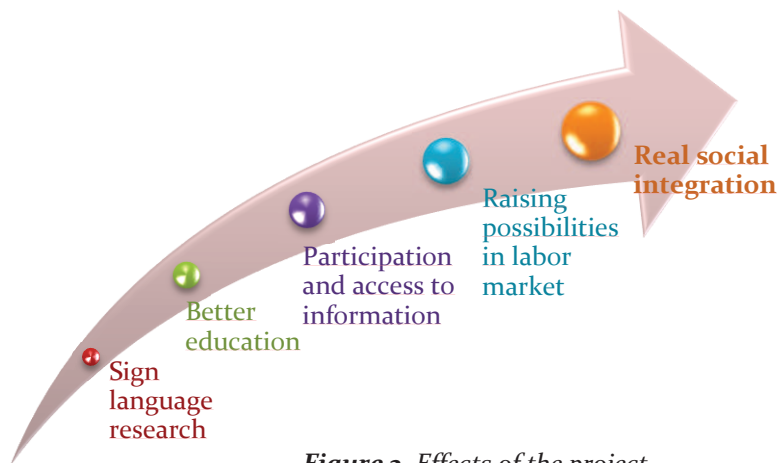


Figure 3. Effects of the project

Some implementers of the project

- Csilla Bartha, project leader, team leader
- Miklós Szabó, project manager
- Ildikó Máté, finance manager
- Péter Zalán Romanek, project supervisor
- Helga Hattyár, deputy project leader, team leader
- Helga Mária Szabó, team leader
- Dániel Gyenes, team leader

- Balázs Surányi, expert on theoretical linguistics
- Noémi Nagy, expert on equal opportunities
- Julianna Bokor, assistant
- Szabolcs Varjasi, assistant
- Erzsébet Csanálosi, assistant
- Diána Pásztor, assistant
- Ferenc Gál, assistant