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

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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
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?
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
First research

- **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
First research

- Wellbeing of hard-of-hearing children in mainstream education
  - Annemiek Voor in ’t Holt
Future research

- **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
Future research

- 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

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 06-12-06
- Vi-Taal: [http://vitaal.denhaag.org/](http://vitaal.denhaag.org/)

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