

## **What happened to standard signs?**

### **The effects of the standardisation of NGT lexicon on the variation of signs used within deaf families and their children.**

In 2002 all schools for the Deaf and the parent guidance programmes in the Netherland started to implement standard signs in their teaching and programmes. All NGT courses offered to parents and teachers contained standard signs. The introduction of standard signs has been controversial amongst the deaf community and researchers. In 2012 it has been ten years since the introduction of standard signs in the Netherland which is a good moment to investigate the effect of the introduction of standard signs on the signing of deaf families who have been affected by the standardisation process.

This paper will present the results of a study we did amongst six deaf families from different regions in the Netherlands with at least one deaf child in the age between 8 and 12 who attended a school for the deaf. In total 16 people took part in this study. Our research question is: what is the effect of the introduction of standard signs on the variation of signs used by members of deaf families with deaf children who have been educated at school by teachers using standard signs.

In the standardisation project for only a few hundred signs out of the 5000 standardised signs, an explicit choice was made between regional variants. The assumption has been that one of the reasons that NGT standard lexicon has been accepted by deaf teachers of NGT that the actual number of signs that has been affected by the standardisation process is quite low. Also the standardisation process has been conducted in such a way that regional variants have been incorporated in the standard signs.

The research was carried out in the following manner:

- All parents were interviewed on video by a deaf NGT researcher about their experiences with regional signs versus standard signs.
- 50 signs with a standard variant and at least two regional variants were elicited from the participants.
- The lexicon of NGT has been expanded over the last 7 years with a great number of new signs that do not have a regional variant. Twenty of these new standard signs were elicited.

In the paper we will present the results of our analysis which is conducted presently. Our preliminary results indicate that the majority of the deaf children in our study use more standard signs at home with their family than their deaf parents. The mothers in our study use more standard signs than the fathers and the hearing children in the family. None of the deaf families encountered problems with the fact that their children were taught standard signs at school.

In our paper we will discuss the results in relation to language planning policies in general and the way in which standardisation of the basis lexicon was carried out.