

Christian Rathmann: *German Sign Language Corpus Project: The Corpus Design*

Christian Rathmann is Professor of Sign Languages and Sign Interpreting and Head of Institute for German Sign Language and Communication of the Deaf at the University of Hamburg.

He was born in Germany and after his initial studies in Hamburg, he earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin in 2005.

Since 2009 he is the project leader of the DGS-Corpus project which is a long-term project of the Academy of Sciences in Hamburg for the documentation of and research on German Sign Language (DGS). He is a member of the executive team and acts in management.

Since 2012 he is part of the project team of PRO-Signs which aims to establish European standards for signed language proficiency for professional purposes focusing specifically on sign language teaching in Deaf Studies and Sign Language Interpreting programs.

He is also the very first deaf professor in Germany.

Research interests: Agreement, Aspect, Corpus Sign Linguistics, Deaf Studies, Language Acquisition and Learning (L1 and L2), Linguistics of Sign Languages, Sign Interpreting, Text Structure

Abstract

First, after providing a brief introduction on two technical terms ("corpus" and "corpus design") and a short overview on current national sign language corpus projects, I will illustrate two main goals of our ongoing German Sign Language (DGS) Corpus Project: (a) DGS-Corpus and (b) Corpus-based DGS-German Electronic Dictionary.

Second, I am going to cover four areas which are pertaining to the sign language corpus design issues (with emphasis on our DGS Corpus project):

(1) Data collection procedure

- Data elicitation
- Selection of informants based on sociolinguistic criteria
- Informant's consent: Ethical issues
- Film studio setting

(2) Annotation

- iLex as an annotation tool
- Type-token matching
- Basic versus detailed transcription
- Feedback procedure
- Translational issues

(3) First corpus-based lexicographic
analyses - Color signs

(4) Ways of collaborating with Deaf communities

- Involvement of members of Deaf communities in our project at various stages
- Awareness of our project within Deaf communities