

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL OF SIGN LANGUAGES

MEDZINÁRODNÁ LETNÁ ŠKOLA POSUNKOVÝCH JAZYKOV

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Between the 25th and 29th August 2014, the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague held the so called **International Summer School 2014: Current Issues in Sign Language Linguistics**. Within the same time period, the **Institute of Deaf Studies of the Charles University in Prague** organised a thematic week dedicated to current issues in the linguistics of sign languages. Through a series of specialized presentations and workshops, the Summer School supported young experts and helped them carry out their own research projects and provided an overview of modern linguistics across different sign languages in the world. The Sign Language Summer School attended by ninety-nine participants from twenty-two states and four continents. This linguistic event was systematically divided in two parts. The first three days represented the so called **Summer School Lecture** attended by fifty delegates from various parts of the world as well as renowned experts in the field of sign language (cognitive) linguistics from the USA, Australia and Europe, such as **Tom Humphries, Trevor Johnston, Carol Padden, Christian Rathmann, Adam Schembri, Ulrike Zeshan, Klára Richterová** and **Irena Vaňková**. On the fourth and fifth day, the so called **Summer School Open** followed and was visited by the general public and all interested in sign language. In their presentations, experts and students who participated in the first part of the event presented the results of their research as well

as the latest findings in the linguistics of sign languages around the world.

The week of sign language cognitive linguistics was opened by a student of Czech language in Communication of the Deaf and the main organiser – **Bc. Lucie Břínková**, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague – **doc. Mirjam Friedová, Ph.D.**, the Director of the Institute of Deaf Studies – **Mgr. Andrea Hudáková, Ph.D.** and the “founding mother” of the study programme Czech Language in Communication of the Deaf – **prof. PhDr. Alena Macurová, CSc.** Key topics were cognitive linguistics, sign language corpora, affinity of sign languages and the culture of the Deaf. The conference languages were English, Czech, Czech sign language and the international signing system.

In our work, we decided to describe the atmosphere of this inspiring event and point out the motivating force, modernity and liveliness of all given presentations.

Summer School Lecture

On Monday the 25th August 2014 the issue of cognitive linguistics was introduced in explicit connection with sign languages. The first presenter was **Irena Vaňková** with her *Stereotype as a Key to the Worldview of the Czech Deaf*, in which the author pointed to the linguistic visionimage of the world, social stereotypes and stereotypes in the Czech sign language. After a lunch break, presentations

continued with the works of **Lucie Břínková**, focusing on the interesting issue of *National Stereotypes in Sign Languages*, **Marie Basovníková** and her *Stereotype of a Hearing Person in Sign Languages* and **Radka Zbořilová** with her *Conceptualization of Colours in Sign Languages*. The afternoon brought three simultaneous cognitive linguistics workshops that built on the three presentations mentioned above. In *National Stereotypes in Sign Languages*, its author offered the audience a detailed look at various Deaf nations and their cultures. The *Stereotype of a Hearing Person in Sign Languages* presented a humorous but realistic attitude of the Deaf towards the hearing community (and vice versa). The third workshop – *Conceptualization of Colours in Sign Languages* – opened a discussion in which ten nationalities analysed and compared different colours and their motivation. The excitement about cognitive linguistics did not fade out after the end of the opening day as we all enjoyed a beautiful evening experience during the Tour of Prague.

The following day was held in the context of Sign Language Corpora. The first presenter was **Christian Rathmann** with his *German Sign Language Corpus Project: The Corpus Design*, in which he shared with us the results of his long-term systematic work of obtaining the corpora. **Trevor Johnston** pointed to the *Adding Value to and Extracting Value from a Signed Language Corpus through Strategic Annotations*. In the afternoon, **Adam Schembri** looked into the *Quantitative Approaches to Analysing Sign Language Corpus Data* and introduced the statistic tool Rbrul. The final word on Corpus linguistics was that of **Trevor Johnston** who presented his *Building on Basic Annotations for Conducting Research: Exploring Examples and Solutions with Participants Using a Small Czech Sign Language Sample*, and described the differences between notation, transcription, annotation and tagging. The series of presentations was followed by an evening program accompanied by the so called Exhibition opening during which various notable non-hearing personalities from the Czech Republic and other countries were presented.

The topic of the 27th August was Deaf Culture and Current Research in SLL. **Ulrike Zeshan** presented *Many Languages at Hand – The Study of Sign Multilingualism*, where she compared cross-signing and sign-switching. **Carol Padden** emphasized the relation between the gesture and the sign in her work *From Gesture to Sign Language*. Later she explained to the audience the relations between gesticulation, pantomime, emblems and sign language. **Klára Richterová** spoke about *Kinship Terminology in Signed Languages – Czech Sign Language*. The last lecturer was **Tom Humphries** with his challenging *Meaning Making in Culture: 'deaf', 'HEARING' and Other Models*. After a panel discussion, all linguists arrived at the Rector's Residence (Karolinum), where the Rector's speech was followed by a historical presentation and a tour of this exceptional building.

Summer School Open

The Summer School was opened for the public on Thursday the 28th August. The first to present was **Tom Humphries** with his *Meaning Making, Worlds, Dictionary Definitions, and Context is Everything*. **Radka Nováková** presented her work called *Indirect Naming Units in Czech Sign Language* in which she pointed to the semantic triangle and the relation between the form and the content. Many were excited by **Petr Vysuček** and his *Deaf Signs in Czech Sign Language*. The lecturer commented on specific signs that form part of the sign language grammar. **Trevor Johnston** presented the findings of the research carried out in *Australian sign language under the title Corpus-based SL Research: The Case of Mouth Actions in Auslan (Australian Sign Language)*. **Adam Schembri** spoke about *Lexical Variation and Change in British Sign Language*. **Aurore Paligot** in her *A Corpus Study of Weak Hand Lowering across French Belgian Sign Language Registers* introduced francophone Belgium. **Paweł Rutkowski** presented a recent Polish sign language research project in his *Corpus Data in Linguistic Research: The Case of Polish Sign Language (PJM)*. In the afternoon, two hours were dedicated to poster presentations during which we could stop for a while and share our

ideas about the given issue. The last lecture of the day was that of **Carol Padden** and her *Studies of Sign Language Lexicon* dedicated to iconicity, and **Ulrike Zeshan** and her *Sign Language Endangerment* in which she pointed to the endangered sign languages around the world and the ways of their conservation. The last presenter was **Josefina Safar** with her work *Village Sign Language as Endangered Languages – An Analysis of Discourse about Chican Sign Language (Mexico)*. The evening programme ended in Michnův Palace and was accompanied by a musical concert with a simultaneous and artistic interpretation into Czech sign language.

On Friday 29th August, several motivating lectures were held. **Josef Fulka** in his presentation titled *Construction of Sign Language as a Historical Object: Some Questions and Fallacies* explained the importance of objective history which depends on interpretation. Later we were captured by **Karel Redlich's** *Plains Indian Sign Language*. **Josefina Kalousová** introduced her *Handshapes in Handling Classifier Constructions in Czech Sign Language*. **Keiko Sagara** presented the findings of her research studies into numerals in *Historical Relationship between the Numeral Signs of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea Sign Language*. **Hyunhwa Lee** presented her research into Korean sign language in a presentation titled *A Study on Code Switching in Korean Sign Language*. **Yaqing Chen** gave an interesting account of the extremely signed Chinese language and signed Chinese in her lecture called *Cross-modal Bilingualism: Language Contact Phenomena in Chinese*. **Juhana Salonen** dealt with the perfective aspect in a work called *Perfective Aspect in Finnish Sign Language*. **Silvia Gabarro-Lopez** introduced and interpreted an

almost unknown concept of buoys in her *Buoys in the „LSFB SEA“? Their Coordinates and Their Neighbours*. **Christian Rathmann** used applied linguistics to explain his theoretical studies and research in a lecture called *Performance of German Deaf Children, Adults and L2-Learners in German Sign Language Sentence Reproduction Test*. The week dedicated to linguistics in sign languages was closed by **Anna Moudrá** and her cognitive views in *PATH – Image Schema in Czech Sign Language*.

At the end of this inspiring scientific and social event, the time came for its organisers to say goodbye to its participants by thanking them and concluding that the Summer School met all expectations. All participants showed great enthusiasm and the overall satisfaction of the audience was the biggest reward for the organisational team, as well as the fact that all participants expressed hope to take part in similar event next year. Therefore, we appreciate the work of the organisational team who prepared a high quality event with an exceptional social value. The team was incredibly flexible and successfully met the requirements of all attending lecturers giving them an excellent opportunity to present themselves.

We are quite confident to say that the International Summer School 2014 was an event which finally brought together sign language experts enthusiastic about language and science. All presentations were the result of many years of professional determination of their authors. Their lectures provided plenty of functional and challenging facts that are concisely summarised in this paper. The Summer School 2014 proved that (cognitive) linguistics in sign language offers space for science.