



<https://www.uni-siegen.de/zew/insign/>

Newsletter

July 2021



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News

The InSign project, “InSign Advancing inclusive education through International Sign”, is an ERASMUS+ funded project that started on 1st of September 2019 under the coordination of the University of Siegen (DE) and the partnership of 5 organizations, namely, Instituto Politecnico Do Porto in Portugal, European Association of Career Guidance in Cyprus, the Hellenic Mediterranean University in Greece and the Univerza v Mariboru in Slovenia.



InSign Project partners gathered at the Kick-off-Meeting in Siegen

Learn International Sign(IS)



In recent years more and more deaf people travel abroad, take part in international events, which increased the voices supporting the need for a lingua franca, named International Sign (IS), to facilitate the communication and interaction among deaf and non-deaf.

Why should deaf learn International Sign?

- to be able to communicate with deaf people from other nationalities
- to promote the effective emergence of a lingua franca in the sign languages domain
- to open the doors of internationalization and globalization to deaf people in education and better job opportunities
- to better access foreign media, arts, and culture

Why should non-deaf learn International Sign?

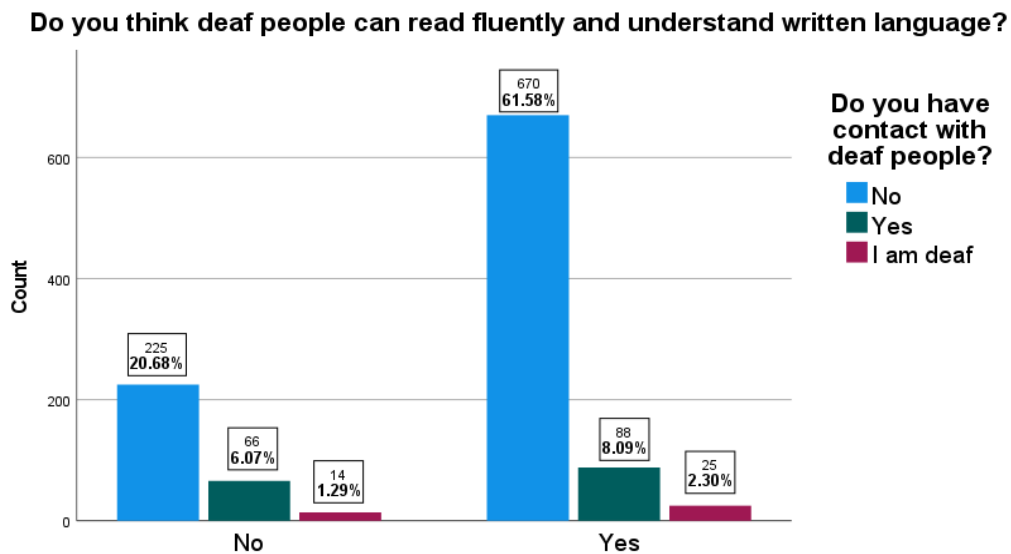
- to gain a first insight into the sign languages world
- to be able to communicate with deaf and non-deaf people in noisy environments where voice/audio is not effective
- to anticipate age-related hearing loss
- to better access the deaf cultures
- to close the gap between deaf and hearing communities
- to provide help for deaf people especially in emergency situations

InSign Survey

In the context of the InSign project the partners conducted an online survey and guided interviews addressed to deaf and non-deaf students, teachers in HE, interpreters, associations of deaf and hearing impaired, special needs schools, etc. The aim of the survey was to get in-depth insights into the common difficulties faced by deaf people in everyday life and the need for a common Lingua franca (IS) to facilitate the access of deaf students to education and promote their inclusion in the globalized society. The survey was performed in the partners' national languages, and a report with the consolidated findings was made in six languages.

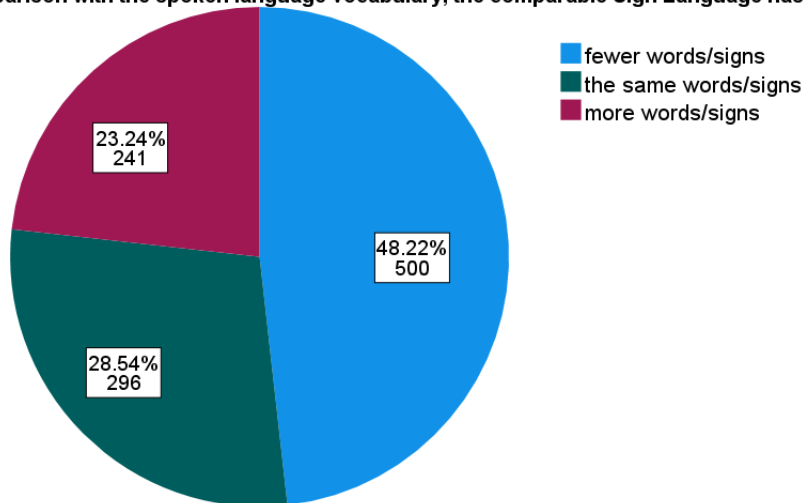
Findings of the survey:

The survey included 1107 participants. Results show that almost three quarters (72%) of the participants believe deaf people can read fluently and understand written language. However, when these results are grouped by whether or not the participants have contact with the deaf community, there are noticeable differences between groups (see figure below). Those that do not have contact are much more likely to think deaf people can read and write. They represent close to three-quarters of all participants with no contact with deaf people, while those that do have contact are much more evenly split. This shows that there is some misconception in the general public as the deaf often struggle with learning the written language.



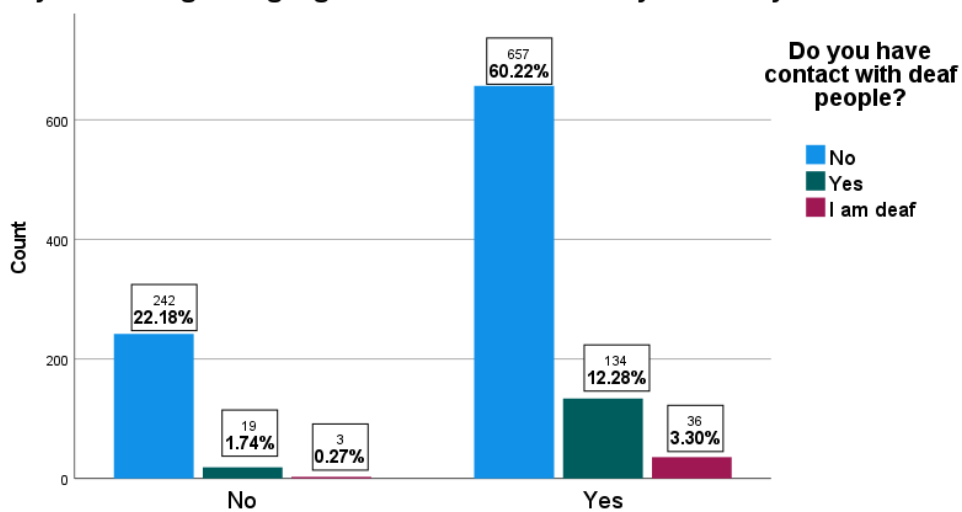
The comparison between the spoken language and sign language (see figure below) shows that participants in decreasing order believe the sign language has fewer, about the same, or more signs/words than a spoken language. The interesting information here is that more than half of participants believe that sign languages have the same or larger number of signs than spoken languages have words, which of course, is not true. In spite of that, the expressiveness of sign languages is not so limited because signs are not the only element of sign languages (e.g. body movement and face expressions).

In comparison with the spoken language vocabulary, the comparable Sign Language has:



One of the most interesting questions was whether the participants think sign language is different from country to country. Almost one quarter (24.1%) believe sign language is the same everywhere. However, when grouped by contact with deaf people (see figure below), it becomes more obvious that those who do not have contact with deaf people are the most likely to believe there are no differences between sign languages used in different countries.

Do you think Sign Language is different from country to country?



We have also asked the participants how interested they were to learn their national sign language and/or the IS. Interestingly 80,6% of them were interested in learning sign language, and 80,3% were interested in learning the IS, even though only 17,8% of participants have previously been aware of the IS. As expected, deaf people, followed by those that have contact with the deaf community, are much more likely to have heard about IS before. Given the option to take a sign language course in their studies, 73,4% of participants answered they would be interested in doing so.

Interestingly, results from across Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Portugal, and Slovenia where the survey was performed did not show any wide differences, possibly indicating that there is no significant cultural difference (at least among these countries) in how deaf people or rather their communicational capabilities are perceived.

Presentation of InSign in Conferences

In 2021 the project was presented at the following conferences:

- ITS2021, International Conference on Intelligent Tutoring Systems, 7-11 June 2021, by Dr Kostantino Karampidis, Hellenic Mediterranean University

Difficulties and disparities to distance learning during Covid-19 period for deaf students –A proposed method to eradicate inequalities

Advancing inclusive education through International Sign - InSign



Hercules is also used to the EU funded program “InSign - Advancing inclusive education through International Sign”, where one of the outcomes will be an automatic bi-directional translator from International Sign Language to the aforementioned spoken languages [4]. InSign aims to promote the access of deaf students to education, international mobility, and global citizenship by raising International Sign as a lingua franca among deaf and non-deaf in international



- ERACON 2020, ERASMUS Congress and Exhibition 5 – 9 July 2021, by Prof. Nuno Escudeiro, Polytechnic Porto



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