Sign language dictionary as a digital tool in L2 teaching
Sentence scoring on CEFR levels A1–B2

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Method

Based on CEFR level and the language ladder, various grammatical properties (e.g. non-manual negation), word classes (e.g. verbs), clause types (e.g declarative), and number of signs were included in each example sentence.

Each grammatical property has been assigned a score. By tallying the total score of a sentence, it is possible to assign it to a specific CEFR level based on a pre-established scoring range per level.

We have tentatively defined the levels A1-B2 as follows:
A1 = 1 -4 points; A2 = 5-15 points; B1 = 16 + points; B2 = ?

BA program in sign language and interpreting

• The first 3-year BA program (180 ECTS) was started in the fall of 2013

• The program consists of theoretical and practical courses in and about Swedish Sign Language, but also courses on interpreting between Swedish and Swedish Sign Language

• The main aim is for students to develop their practical skills in Swedish Sign Language as an L2 during two years

CEFR for sign languages

• Practical teaching is adapted to CEFR definition of L2 skills in terms of production, comprehension, and conversation
(CEFR=Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

• The scale has three levels, each with two sublevels:
A1–A2 = basic user
B1–B2 = independent user
C1–C2 = proficient user

• PRO-Sign has developed CEFR as applied to sign languages
(https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2012-2015/ProSign/PRO-Signreferencelevels/tabid/1844/Default.aspx)

Language ladder

Level 6 Text and discourse level (fluency, tempo, metaphors)

Level 5 Text level (e.g. viewpoints)

Level 4 Phrase/clause level (e.g. buoys, token, clause types)

Level 3 Modification in signing space, morphological processes, …

Level 2 Signs based on the knowledge of the four parameters, both fixed and depicting, and phonological awareness, …

Level 1 Modality (e.g. eye and body contact, gestural and bodily awareness, simultaneity, signing space)

Swedish Sign Language Dictionary

• Publicly available for free online December 18th, 2008

• Updated online in September 2014

• 18,633 signs (22,000 signs collected)

• 4,561 example sentences

• Continuously updated with new functionality

• Several search functions available
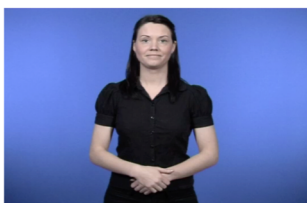
| BA program in sign language and interpreting | CEFR for sign languages | Language ladder | Swedish Sign Language Dictionary |

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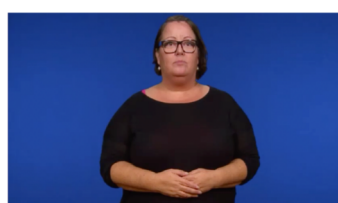
Example sentence at the A1 level

Metafor	Nej	0
Normal tempo	Ja	0
Perspektiv	Nej	0
Emotiv markör	Nej	0
Initialpaus	Nej	0
Initialstopp	Nej	0
Böj	Nej	0
Teckenrummet	Nej	0
Teckenspråklig munrörelse	Ingen	0
Genuint tecken	Nej	0
Negation	Nej	0
Hjälpverb	Nej	0
Avbildande verb	Nej	0
Pekning	Nej	0
Siffertecken	Nej	0
Bokstavering	Nej	0
Satstyp	Enkla påstående satser	1

Summa: 1 A1

Example sentence at the A2 level

Metafor	Nej	0
Normal tempo	Ja	0
Perspektiv	Nej	0
Emotiv markör	Nej	0
Initialpaus	Nej	0
Initialstopp	Nej	0
Böj	Nej	0
Teckenrummet	Lokalisation	1
Teckenspråklig munrörelse	Ingen	0
Genuint tecken	Nej	0
Negation	Nej	0
Hjälpverb	Nej	0
Avbildande verb	Nej	0
Pekning	Indirekt pekning	1
Siffertecken	Nej	0
Bokstavering	Nej	0
Satstyp	Topikaliserad sats	4

Summa: 7 A2

Example sentence at the B1 level

Metafor	Nej	0
Normal tempo	Ja	0
Perspektiv	Nej	0
Emotiv markör	Ja	2
Initialpaus	Nej	0
Initialstopp	Nej	0
Böj	Nej	0
Teckenrummet	Token	2
Teckenspråklig munrörelse	E-typ	2
Genuint tecken	Avancerad	4
Negation	Nej	0
Hjälpverb	Hjälpverb	2
Avbildande verb	Nej	0
Pekning	Nej	0
Siffertecken	Nej	0
Bokstavering	Nej	0
Satstyp	Komplexa påstående satser	6

Summa: 18 B1

• This development work is highly important – not only for hearing L2 learners in the BA program, but also for similar sign language courses.
• Through the dictionary, it is possible to retrieve sentences according to the level of interest (targeting one's progress and level of skill).
• The scoring for sentences at the A1, A2, and B1 levels are considered relevant. The next step is to develop and adjust the scoring model.