

## Abstract

### **BRIDGING THE GAP: The European Language Portfolio and L2 Irish Sign Language Learners at A2-B1 level**

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The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a document in which language learners and users – at school or outside school – can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. It has been widely implemented to support the development of learner autonomy in the teaching and learning of spoken languages. Until 1917-18, the ELP had not typically been implemented with learners of sign languages. During this academic year, we developed and piloted a sample ELP for Irish Sign Language (ISL), mapped to the Prosign 1 CEFR for Sign Languages Descriptors (Leeson, van den Bogaerde, Rathmann, & Haug, 2016), published by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML). We introduced the ELP with a cohort of ISL learners in the second year of their 4 years of studies on the Bachelor in Deaf Studies, who perform at A2-B1 proficiency level. We met with participants from the student cohort on four occasions across the academic year to explore how/if use of the ELP in the ISL classroom supports the development of robust self-evaluation skills, and how the ELP enhances student-reported perception of motivation and autonomy. We also documented teacher reflections on the process of implementing the ELP to consider if/how that impacts on practice.

Taking a classic Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) approach to the focus group data set, we suggest that the key concern that students present is figuring out how they can bridge the linguistic gap between where they currently are and where they want to be. The ELP is experienced as a very helpful tool in this regard, offering signposts regarding progression, and offering landmarks that they can review their performance against so that they can reflect accurately on how they have progressed.

### **References**

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1968). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. London,: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Leeson, L., van den Bogaerde, B., Rathmann, C., & Haug, T. (2016). *Sign Languages and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Common Reference Level Descriptors*. Graz: European Centre for Modern Languages.