

Serbian Sign Language: the state of affairs

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ABSTRACT

In this presentation we will give an overview of the current situation in deaf education in Serbia from the point of view of the Serbian Deaf Community. In giving this account we rely on Serbian Deaf people's experiences and testimonies regarding Serbian Sign Language use in classroom. For this purpose we interviewed 28 adult deaf signers at the deaf club in Belgrade and 25 deaf children in one of the schools in Belgrade. The testimonies reveal that there is frustration among the users because of the lack of access to information in Serbian Sign Language and a pronounced need for the introduction of Serbian Sign Language as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, we examine the history of sign language courses and materials in Serbia only to reveal that the efforts in this respect have been highly sporadic and unsystematic. The reasons for this should be sought in the medical model of deafness and language ideologies of special educationalists and policy makers which have promoted the attitude of paternalism toward deaf people. Finally, in the light of the Law on Sign Language that was passed in 2015 we examine what the future holds for Serbian Sign Language and its users.

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