FROM UTTERANCE TO EXAMPLE SENTENCE
Excerpting and adapting corpus sentences for use in the Danish Sign Language Dictionary

Consultants

The source for the context sentences is a raw corpus that contains 148 monologues and 75 hours of discussions from sessions with a consultants group.

The consultants group consists of 25 persons, corresponding to 0.6% of the deaf population of Denmark. The consultants are in the age of 20–60 years, and are recruited from sign language centres across Denmark, typically cities that have hosted deaf schools for many years.

The consultants met 4–6 times a year. One task for the consultants was to discuss the use of signs presented by us. Another task was to tell a story from the consultants’ everyday life. All discussions were videotaped. No hearing people were in the room during the recordings.

An example

How a sentence can be moderated according to the guidelines

The original utterance from our consultant:

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PRON PLACE PF NAME ART/T USE-TO NAME NEW ART SQUEEZE~1/SQUEEZE~2/SQUEEZE~3/ WHAT 1.p WHAT/SOME THINK CAUSE PRON LOTS-OF ART ALSO FLOCK-TO/PRON gesture SEE /LAND [SCAPE]/ BEAUTY LANDSCAPE/ ENLIGHTENMENT/ART/ (and) that place is called art... use to be called the artist squeeze... squeeze ... squeeze, why I don't know, some people think the reason is that also a lot of artists go to this place... erm... to see land... to get inspired by the beautiful landscape, they go there.
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The utterance was turned into a context free sentence with no hesitations from the speaker. This is how it ended up in the dictionary:

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PRON PLACE LOTS-OF ART FLOCK-TO/ BEAUTY LANDSCAPE/ ENLIGHTENMENT/ART/ lots of artists go to that place to get inspired by the beautiful landscape.
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From excerpt to dictionary

The sentence editing process consists of 11 stages:

- Draft, first excerpt
- Adjusted according to guidelines
- OK according to guidelines
- Assigned to a meaning in an entry
- Checked for grammaticality
- Sentence video taped
- Video clip checked
- Transcription into DTS glosses
- Transcription checked
- Translation into Danish made
- Translation checked

Guidelines for example sentences

Apart from being grammatical, the sentences should adhere to the following guidelines:

- The good context sentence
  - reveals something new
  - is including a common use of the lexeme
  - is understandable out of a larger context
  - has a high truth value
  - keeps focus on the sign
  - must not be offending in any way
  - do not reveal who is the source of the sentence
  - should contribute to the balance in topics
  - should not be a definition of the sign

Sentences from the corpus can be moderated according to the guidelines by a member of the lexicographic staff who is a native signer.

Sources

55% of the sentences were excerpted by hand from a raw corpus of dialogues and monologues – given to us by our group of consultants. Most of the remaining sentences were coined by the lexicographers that are native signers.

Sentences in the entry

The project

The Danish Sign Language Dictionary was made at Centre for Sign Language and Sign supported Communication – KC in collaboration with the Danish Deaf Association.

The dictionary is being maintained and developed further at Centre for Sign Language, now a department of University College Capital in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Dictionary is freely accessible on the internet at www.tegnsprog.dk

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