Jette H. Kristoffersen and Thomas Troelsgård  
Centre for Sign Language  
University College Capital, Copenhagen, Denmark

General information

The Danish Sign Language Dictionary was launched in May 2008. The dictionary is freely accessible on the internet at www.tegnsprog.dk.

The dictionary describes the basic vocabulary of Danish Sign Language (DTS).

The dictionary was developed and edited at the Centre for Sign Language and Sign Supported Communication – KC, in close cooperation with the Danish Deaf Association (DDL). Centre for Sign Language is now a department at University College Capital.

Some key figures

- 2,000 sign entries.  
  These include special entries for the following common "building blocks" of DTS:  
  - Polymorphemic stems (49 entries)  
  - The manual alphabet (29 entries)  
  - The Mouth-Hand System (14 entries)  
  - Affixes (6 entries)

- 500 variants.
- 75 entry-level cross-references.
- 3,000 meanings (sign senses).
- 6,000 Danish equivalents.
- 150 prose descriptions of special use or function.
- 2,500 meaning-level cross-references.
- 3,500 usage examples, containing about:  
  - 3,400 glosses (27,500 running glosses)  
  - 7,000 words in the translations (44,500 running words)
A. Entry header
B. Video window
C. Meanings window
D. Additional information
1. Sign photo
   A photo of the sign in its basic form.

2. Sign location
   A drawing of the location of the sign, i.e. the
   place on or in front of the body where the sign
   is articulated.

3. Handshape of the sign
   A drawing of the sign's handshape.

4. Printable sign overview

5. Show all example sentences
   containing the sign
   Opens a window with an overview of all
   examples with the sign (shown as a
   concordance).

6. Sign gloss
   A gloss, i.e. a unique, fixed name for the sign,
   used as textual representation of the sign
   throughout the dictionary.

7. Video window
   All video clips are played in this window:

8. Show basic form
   Shows the sign. If the sign has variants, these
   are shown by clicking the additional play
   buttons in the middle above the video player
   (9).

9. Show variant

10. Video controls
    The current video can be controlled using the
    buttons below the video. The options are
    normal speed, slow motion, full-screen view.

11. Description of current video
    For usage examples, the transcription and
    translation of the sentence is shown.

12. Other signs with a similar manual
    expression
    Homonyms, i.e. signs with similar handshape,
    location and movement as the sign, but with a
    different meaning.

13. Frequent co-occurrences including
    the sign
    The co-occurrences are supplied with a
    Danish equivalent, and in some cases
    accompanied by the symbol ←, which
    denotes, that the mouthing of the equivalent
    can be used with the sign.
    Compounds shown in this section has a
    meaning, that can be described as the "sum"
    of the meanings of the individual signs.
    Semantically opaque compounds are shown
    below the sign meanings, see 22.

14. Common frozen forms of the sign
    This type of information applies only to the
    special entries for polymorphic stems
    (which glosses start with "PF-" (proform)).
    Under the caption Almindelige
    proformafledninger: is given a list of
    common frozen forms of the stem in question.

15. Meaning of the sign
    A sign can have several meanings or senses.
    For each meaning, various information is
    given, see below (16-21).

16. Translation of the sign into Danish
    A sign meaning can have one or more Danish
    equivalents. Some equivalents are
    accompanied by the symbol ←, which
    denotes, that the mouthing of the equivalent
    can be used with the sign in this particular
    meaning.
    Some Danish equivalents are ambiguous
    (polysemous), and are therefore provided with
    a parenthesis containing a short specification
    of the exact meaning.

17. Explanation of the use of the sign
    Some signs have uses, that cannot be
    sufficiently described through a Danish
    equivalent. In these cases an explanation of
    the use, e.g. a grammatical function is given,
    indicated by the function symbol: ☰.

18. Mouth-gestures
    In Danish Sign language some signs can (in
    certain meanings) be accompanied by
    particular mouth-gestures. In the dictionary
    the most commonly appearing mouth-
    gestures are provided after a special mouth
    symbol: ☰.

19. Cross-references
    = Synonym
    ! NB. Refers to a sign, that could be
    translated into the same Danish
    (polysemous) word as the current
    sign, but in a different sense.
    – Short form.
    — Long form.
    123 Number incorporated signs.

20. Usage restrictions
    Some sign meanings are restricted in use,
    they could be rarely used, or be particular to
    the language of young people. Information on
    usage restriction is indicated by R.

21. Example sentence with Danish
    translation
    One or more sentences showing the sign
    used in the current meaning. To the left of
    every sentence is a play button ▶, that
    activates playback of a video recording of the
    sentence (in the video window, no. 7).
    The sentences are transcribed sign by sign,
    as they are signed in the video, and a
    translation into Danish is provided.

22. Compound with Danish equivalent
    Only semantically opaque compounds are
    shown here (see also 13).
Looking up signs

The signs can be looked up through:

- Handshape (with a possibility of specifying particular handshapes for the active and the passive hand)
- Location
- Text, including phrase search ("...") and wildcard search (* and ?).
- Topic
- Combinations of the above.

Handshapes to be used in the search criteria are selected in groups of related handshapes. However, selected handshapes can be deselected individually, which gives the user the opportunity to select single handshapes or custom groups of handshapes, independently of the default handshape grouping.

The search result is by default ordered by relevance: Handshape and location matches are ordered according to their appearance in the sign. Text search matches are weighted in the following order: glosses, equivalents, glosses in usage examples, words in translations of usage examples. Matches with equal relevance are ordered first by location, then by handshape. Furthermore, the user can choose to sort the entire search result either by location or handshape.

Overall layout

The search facilities are located in separate windows to the left of the dictionary entry window:

A. Selection of search criteria / selected search criteria
B. Search result list
C. Entry window

In this way, the latest search is always visible, and the user can easily browse the result list (and open other sign entries) or adjust and repeat the search.