

Flemish Sign Language Lexicography: Past, Present and Future

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ABSTRACT

In this paper lexicographic projects related to Flemish Sign Language will be discussed. Flemish Sign Language consists of five regional varieties and there was a time when this lexical variation was considered a disadvantage in deaf education and L2 teaching. That is why in the 1980s and early 1990s the very first lexicographical project related to Flemish signs concentrated on lexical unification in Signed Dutch. However, when the Flemish Deaf community officially rejected the use of Signed Dutch and started promoting VGT, this also led to a change in focus on lexicography. In 2004 the first electronic bilingual Flemish Sign Language/Dutch dictionary was published online. Since by then the Flemish Deaf community had decided not to opt for standardisation from above, it was decided to also include regional variation in the dictionary and to label the regional variants as such. By looking at past and current projects and initiatives planned for the near future, it has become clear that both societal and technological developments have been and are shaping lexicographical work related to Flemish Sign Language. Finally, future developments will be discussed that will pave the way for exciting possibilities with respect to sign language lexicography.