

Languages in the communication of deaf people: Czech Sign Language and Czech

Macurová, A.; Zbořilová, R. a kol. *Jazyky v komunikaci neslyšících: český znakový jazyk a čeština*.

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The research on Czech Sign Language started in the Czech Republic at the beginning of the 20th century, which was more than 30 years later in comparison to the USA, where the first fundamental research of W. Stokoe was published, and other countries, where the research on national sign languages was initiated shortly afterwards. According to the author, Czech Sign Language started to be the point of interest of Czech linguistics thanks to the initiative of the Institute for deaf people in Beroun and Parents and friends of the hard-of-hearing which attempted to view the hearing impairment from a different angle contrary to the view common back then.

Even though a lot of years have passed since the beginning of the research, it still can be said that some of its issues have not been fully explored yet, as it is mentioned several times in the publication. The characteristics of Czech Sign Language have been the focus of very few publications. They were mostly articles in professional magazines, the theses of Charles University students of Czech language in communication of deaf people, and the publications of the Czech Chamber of Sign Language Interpreters.

The monograph called *Languages in the communication of deaf people: Czech Sign Language and Czech* by Alena Macurová, Radka Zbořilová et al. was published in 2018 by Karolinum Press.

The monograph provides a partial look into languages which are used in communication of Czech people with hearing impairment, namely Czech Sign Language and written Czech. It was based on former publications, which had been adapted and updated to serve its purpose in the monograph.

The publication includes 316 pages and it is divided into two sections. The first section is focused on Czech Sign Language and it comprises 12 chapters. The reader acquires basic insight into the specifics of Czech Sign Language, such as its simultaneity and the presence of manual and non-manual units of meaning. There are also

examples of non-manual expressions of quality, degree of intensity, and information about communicative value of an utterance. Each expression is supplemented with an example in Czech Sign Language (CD annexed) and Czech translation. Simultaneous existence of the components of manual characteristics of the sign and simultaneous articulation of two one-handed signs is described there as well. Besides, the reader is informed about several types of so-called negative signs and that the negation in Czech Sign Language has not been explored in detail in comparison to Czech language. Another specific feature of Czech Sign Language is the expression of plurality, which is significantly different compared to Czech, since additional information about place, location, and organisation is included.

The book further supplies the reader with an insight into adjectives in Czech Sign Language. According to the publication, there are two types of means that express the qualities of substances, i.e. adjectives (without more detailed specifications regarding shape and size) and specifiers of shape and size. Then, the book defines so-called specific signs which are typical for the community of deaf people and their sign languages. The origin and classification of name signs is included as well. We are informed that no comprehensive research on this area has been conducted in the Czech Republic yet, therefore, all relevant data about its characteristics are mainly found in foreign sources.

Next, there is information about specific features of language adoption of a deaf child. There are differences in communicative strategies adopted by deaf mothers in comparison to mothers with no hearing-impairment. Then, the reader learns that influences in spoken languages permeate the system of sign languages as well, namely dactylogy, initialized signs, calques, and speech components which are described in more detail. The first remarks about the cognitive linguistics of Czech Sign Language, which has started to be analysed only recently, can be found there too.

The book deals with the way of approaching the concept of colours in Czech Sign Language and it compares it with the concepts of other sign languages. Another interesting phenomenon is metaphors in sign languages, which has been studied by students of Czech in communication of deaf people at Charles University in Prague only. At the end of the first part of the monograph, one could find the ways of recording Czech Sign Language. There are various notation systems as well as the research on the notation of Czech Sign Language conducted in 2006–2012 mentioned.

The second part is devoted to the issue of written Czech of Czech deaf people and it is divided into six chapters. This part deals with the literacy of Czech deaf people and it refers to the fact that, in the Czech Republic, there has only been one area research on testing the literacy of Czech deaf pupils in elementary schools conducted, namely it was the research done by the Czech school inspectorate in 1997. The diploma thesis of Poláková from 2000 focused on the level of functional literacy of Czech deaf people, in which a different type of testing contrary to the Czech school

inspectorate's one was chosen. The results of Poláková's work are presented in the book. In connection to the topic of literacy, the book approaches the communication in letters of Czech deaf people as well. The reader may get a clearer idea about this phenomenon thanks to the examples included. The publication further develops the topic of prepositions in written language of Czech deaf people and spatial relationships in a text. The diploma thesis of Makovská from 2013 and her analysis of textbooks for students with hearing impairment including their comparison to the textbooks for students without hearing impairment are part of these chapters too.

There are numerous demonstrative examples in Czech Sign Language (the videos can be found in the CD annexed), which are supplemented with Czech translations.

The monograph is aimed at a wide variety of readers, including students, teachers, professionals in centres of special education and associations for early intervention, parents and families of children with hearing impairment, and other professionals who encounter the issue of communication of deaf people. Finally, the book is aimed at the general public and the community of Czech deaf people.

The monograph is truly beneficial due to a limited number of Czech publications dealing with this topic. As it is mentioned several times in the book, some areas of Czech Sign Language are still awaiting its exploration, therefore, one may expect similar publications coming soon. The monograph also significantly contributes to support the identity of deaf people and their pride of their language.

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