

## **To be Deaf and to learn foreign languages in a (m)OOC featuring two sign languages and two written languages.**

We would like to seize the occasion of the EuroCALL conference to present a report on our first (Massive) Open Online Course experimentation.

The E-SCALE project (deaf E-space for Signed Collaboration Abroad on Language E-learning) proposes an online learning environment aimed at Deaf learners who wish to improve their written English and ASL (American Sign Language) or their written French and LSF (French Sign Language). The (m)OOC lasts 8 weeks and will be scheduled twice, from April to June 2014 and again in 2015.

We hope to get interesting insights from a non-conventional CALL context with original exolingualistic situations (copresence of writing and signing, of vehicular and vernacular languages). E-SCALE proposes to broaden the usual investigation field to a population dealing with minority language issues and also, to a lesser extent, with disability – which induces different motivational, intercultural and pedagogical aspects (Ochse 2001, Plue 2003).

Teaching through a sign language and teaching sign language as a subject is already a challenge, because of the visual-gestural nature, the non-linearity and the absence of a functional writing system. But this challenge is even increased in case of a foreign language (Fusellier-Souza 2003): if we don't want to teach Deaf people French as if it were a dead language, by training only writing and reading skills, we have to ask ourselves what form of "oral" (and not necessarily "vocal") communication we want to offer, possibly by having recourse to another sign language. It's this latter choice we made in our project.

The setting developed for E-SCALE is based on multimodal interactions between participants in four languages, through synchronous and asynchronous activities. The pedagogical design is based on various tasks that have to be performed mainly by binational groups of four learners ("quadrems"), supervised by a tutor. The work is organized in three steps: preparation and first staggered interactions, followed by a simultaneous session, and then a synthetic work made asynchronously. The (m)OOC platform offers educational resources and brings in videochats, textchats, collaborative editing tools, etc. as well as tools that have been specifically created for sign languages.

We want to investigate which strategies are pursued by our learners (Pockock 1992), which modalities are favored and most effective (Millet & Esteve 2009), and if the introduction of an additional foreign sign language makes the overall learning process easier or more complicated (Plaza-Pust & Morales-Lopez 2008). This project should give some new insights about the order and the moment when to introduce signing and writing in a foreign language, which proportions both modalities shall occupy, which tools and alternatives to writing can be used; it will also offer valuable clues to the changes a visual-gestural language induces into language learning interactions in general.

From our research outcomes we will deduce which global architecture, which kind of pedagogical interventions and interactions are most efficient to allow Deaf sign language users to acquire foreign languages. In August 2014, the analyze of the first (m)OOC session and of the collected data will be the occasion to draw intermediate conclusions.

*Keywords : MOOC, Deaf education, sign languages, multimodality*