

# PHILEMON ABIUD OMONDI AKACH

Special Needs Education,  
Maseno University, Kisumu-Busia Road  
P.O. Box 333-40105,  
Maseno, Kenya

Phone: +254 721 439058

Email: [okinyi.akach@maseno.ac.ke](mailto:okinyi.akach@maseno.ac.ke)  
[Okinyi.akach@gmail.com](mailto:Okinyi.akach@gmail.com)

## EDUCATION:

- 1968 Regea Primary School (Kenya) C. P. E
- 1969 City High School (Kenya) Left, lack of funds
- 1969-70 Chadwick Teachers Training College P3 Teachers' (Kenya) Certificate
- 1973 Correspondence Education P2 Teacher's (Kenya) Certificate
- 1975 Correspondence Education P1 Teacher's (Kenya) Certificate
- 1977-79 Kamwenja Teachers Training S1 Special College (Kenya) Education (Deaf)
- 1984-85 University of Jyvaskyllä (Finland) Advanced Diploma Special Education (Deaf)
- 1986-88 University of Jyvaskyllä (Finland) B.A. Special Education (Deaf). Dissertation, *Communication of the Deaf in Kenya*
- 1989-91 University of Nairobi M.A. in Linguistics (Kenya) Dissertation, *Sentence Types in Kenya Sign Language*
- 2010 PhD in Linguistics-University of Free State-2010
2016. B.A. Honours in Theology-University of Free State

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

AKACH, P.A.O. in collaboration with AARONS, D. University of Sydney Australia.

2003-2007: The use of South African Sign Language as a medium of instruction Implementation in a School for the Deaf.

This research project used a school for the Deaf in Thaba’Nchu, Free State. The project was based on the Bilingual-Bicultural Approach to Deaf education. In the approach, learners are taught through the medium of South African Sign Language (SASL) their hearing teachers were paired with native signers (Deaf) assistants. Both the teachers and the assistants were trained by the project leader in using SASL as the language of teaching and learning. They were also trained in to work together to ensure that the

learners understand the material and the classroom interaction. Written English was introduced through the medium of SASL, when the learners have grasped the concepts being taught.

The project was designed to last for three years, and to cover the initial three years of primary school. There was an action research component, to document, monitor and assess the implementation of this Bilingual-Bicultural approach in South Africa. Additionally, learners were tested at the beginning and end of each teaching year to assess their cognitive development. These test results were used to assess learners' progress as well as to compare them to other learners in the UK, where this test was specifically developed to assess deaf learners without taxing their skill in spoken language. The learners in the project were also assessed relative to learners in other schools for the Deaf in Free State. At the end of the project, the comprehension and written English of the learners were also assessed and compare to learners who were not taught through the medium of SASL.

One of the main aims of the pilot project was to demonstrate that the implementation of a bilingual-bicultural programme in schools for the Deaf was feasible, as well as that implementing the approach leading to higher standard of cognitive ability and level of literacy in Deaf school goers. The hope was that the success of the project would provide a model for implementation in other schools for the Deaf in South Africa.

University of Free State and University of Durham (UK) Using their Assessment Tool in the NRF funded research Project at the school for the Deaf in Thaba’Nchu.

3. University of Free State, University of Ghent and University of Brussels-Partners in Joint Research Programme (Flanders-Belgium/South Africa) titled: “Cross-Linguistic Research of South African Sign Language and Flemish Sign Language”. Funded by NRF and Flemish Government.

4. UFS and PanSALB: The Development and Publication of SASL teaching materials development project.

Number 3 above lead to the development of South African Sign Language (SASL) Teaching Materials in the form of a Student Manual, Workbook and Videotext to be used by teachers and instructors to teach SASL to teachers of the Deaf, Parents of the Deaf, Students of SASL and the general public at any level learning institutions including tertiary institutions in South Africa.

ALL the above were published with funds from PanSALB. Now the significant number of South Africans who would like to learn SASL, to benefit the Deaf people with whom they work, interpret for, interact with and so on can now benefit from the project. The publication also provides the much needed job creation for Deaf teachers of SASL. These are listed as follows:

P. Akach & D. Aarons. 2003. South African Sign Language. Functional Notional Approach, Sign Naturally. Student Manual and Workbook (184 pages) Level (Pilot Version)

P. Akach & D. Aarons. 2003. South African Sign Language. Functional Notional Approach, Sign Naturally. Student Manual and Workbook (168 pages) Level II (Pilot Version)

P. Akach & D. Aarons. 2003. South African Sign Language. Functional Notional Approach, Sign Naturally. Student Video, text (120 Minutes) Level I (Pilot Version)

P. Akach & D. Aarons. 2003. South African Sign Language. Functional Notional Approach, Signing Naturally. Student Videotext (120 Minutes) Level II (pilot Version)

P. Akach & D. Aarons. 2003. South African Sign Language. Functional Notional Approach, Sign Naturally. Teacher's Curriculum Guide (308 pages) Level II (Pilot version)

P. Akach & D. Aarons. 2003. South African Sign Language. Functional Notional Approach, Sign Naturally. Teacher's Curriculum Guide (208 pages) Level II (Pilot Version)

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE:**

- 1971            Garissa Primary School, Kenya Teacher
- 1972            Bura Primary School, Garissa, Kenya Teacher
- 1973            St. Kizito Primary School, Isiolo, Kenya Teacher
- 1979            Lisa/Hola School for the Deaf, Kenya Teacher
- 1983            Mumias School for the Deaf Teacher
- 1986            Machakos School for the Deaf Teacher
- 1987            Educational Advisor: Ear Nose and Throat Clinic at Kenyatta Referral Hospital
- 1993            University of Nairobi  
Department of African Languages and Linguistics Lecturer
- Kenya National Association  
                  Of the Deaf (KNAD) and  
                  University of Nairobi  
                  Principal Researcher
- 1996            The Deaf Federation of South Africa  
Director, Interpreting & Development
- 1999            University of Free State Unit for Language Facilitation SASL Interpreter and Empowerment. Senior Lecturer
- University of Free State  
                  Department of Afro-asiatic Studies  
                  Sign Language and Language Practice  
                  Senior Lecturer  
                  South African Sign Language and Interpreters Trainer
- 2008            Department of Afro-asiatic Studies Sign Language and Language Practice  
Departmental Chair

2010 Department of South African Sign Language (SASL) Senior Lecturer and  
Departmental Chair

### **OTHER TEACHING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCES:**

- 1987-1994 Gave a series of training workshops to Kenyan Sign Language/spoken language Interpreters in Kenya
- 1987-1994 Gave a series of training workshops to teachers of the Deaf in Kenya on the use of Kenyan Sign Language as a medium of instruction
- 1996-1999 Gave a series of training workshops to teachers of the Deaf in Ghana in use of Sign Language as medium of instruction and as a school subject in Deaf Education
- 1996-1999 Gave a series of training workshops to Interpreters in Ghana on techniques of interpreting and to distinguish a contrived system of signing as opposed to the naturally occurring signed language
- 1996-1999- Gave a series of training workshops to Deaf Sign Language Instructors in Ghana
- 1997-1998- Gave a series of training workshops to Deaf Sign Language Instructors in Mozambique
- 1996-2000 Gave a series of training workshops to Deaf Sign Language Instructors from all the provinces in South Africa
- 1996-1999 Gave a series of training workshops to all schools of the Deaf in SA in the use of SASL as medium of Instruction and as a school subject
- 1997-1998 Gave two training workshops to South African Sign Language Interpreters from all over SA at the University of Free State.
- 9-11/6/2005 Assess learners and Workshop the teachers on Aims of Bilingual-Bicultural SASL and English Approach Research Project at Thiboloha School for the Deaf QwaQwa SA
- 18-21/5/ 2006 Assessment of Deaf Learners Performance in classroom and workshop on SASL as a language of learning QwaQwa SA
- 23-26/7/ 2006 Assessment of Deaf Learners and workshop for the teachers on SASL as a language of learning Thiboloha School for the Deaf – QwaQwa
- 25/8-5/9/ 2009 Training Workshop: Sign Language Interpreters from West Africa University of Ghana and Ghanaian Association of the Deaf Accra Ghana
- 28-30/4/2008 Workshop for Teachers of the Deaf on SASL as a School subject in Ficksburg SA

- 7-14/4/2010 Gave a workshop to teachers of the Deaf from Umthata - Efata/Birin Schools for the Deaf (Eastern Cape) on SASL Teaching Port Elizabeth SA
- 12-18/7/2010 University of Nairobi Kenyan Sign Language data online workshop East Africa
- 15/9/ 2010 Workshop for Malawian Sign Language Teachers at the Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD) Blantyre Malawi
- 20-29/04/2011 Gave a workshop for Spanish Sign Language/Spanish interpreters in Cordoba-Spain
- 30/10- 6/11/ 2010 Gave a workshop for Ghanaian Sign Language/spoken language interpreters Accra Ghana
- 13-21/11/2010 Gave a workshop at the Cycle Workshops of Spanish Sign Language/Spanish Interpreters "III WORKSHOP" University of Cordoba Spain
- 7-13/10/2011 Gave a workshop for Spanish Sign language/Spanish interpreters in Cordoba-Spain
- 06/2010-06/2011 Gave a one year SAQA accredited short SASL training to Department of Arts, Culture and Sports Language Practitioners in Limpopo
- 07/2011-07/2012 Gave a one year SAQA accredited short SASL training to selected teachers from schools for the Deaf in Western Cape at De La Bat School for the Deaf in Worcester
- 2012 Gave a one 2-day workshop on using SASL as a language of learning and teaching as well as evaluating the teachers signing skills
- 6-13/11/2012 Gave a workshop for Spanish Sign Language/Spanish interpreters in Cordoba-Spain

### **HONOURS AND AWARDS:**

- NRF Grant Holder 2002 to 2007.
- NRF International Scientific Bilateral Research Project Belgium and South Africa Joint Grant Holder 2005-2007.
- Golden Key Honorary Member, Awarded by Golden Key International Honour Society: University of Free State Chapter 2006.

### **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP:**

- 1986-88 Panel member of Sign Language Development, Kenya Institute of Education
- 1989-91 Chairman Nairobi University Linguistics Students Association

Full CV Format

- 1991 Vice-chairman, Kenya Sign Language Committee (Kenya National Association of the Deaf)
- 1991 Member, International Sign Linguistics Association
- 1992 Elected Associate Partner of Initiatives for Deaf Education in the Third World
- 1992-98 World Federation of the Deaf Expert on Sign Language and Interpretation in the Third World
- 1993 Elected Executive Board Member of the International Sign Linguistics Association.
- 2000-to date Member South African Translators' Institute (SATI)
- 2001 Member Adhoc Committee for Pan South African Language Board (P ANSALB) Nominations Committee, Appointed by the Minister for Arts Culture and Technology.
- 2002 Member of the South African Sign Language (SASL) Standards Generating Body (SGB) within the National Qualification Authority
- 2003-2005 Member of the Working Group to Establish World Association of Sign Language Interpreters WASLI.
- 2005-8 World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) Vice President.
- 2003-to date Member of Panel on Deaf Culture online Development Convened by University of Durham, UK
- 2011-2013 Member of Ministerial Team on South African Sign Language Curriculum Management Team.

**SKILLS AND TRAINING:**

Attended Language Courses:

Afrikaans-6 weeks in 1999

Basic Sesotho Course whole of 2005

Attended Courses Concerning:

Thesis Writing

Module development

Study Guide development

Computer Literacy; excel

Research Proposal writing  
Learners Assessment  
1-3/9/ 2008 Assessor RPL Workshop  
RPL Coaching Clinic Quest Conference Estate  
Vanderbijlpark

## **CONSULTANCY MISSIONS**

1994 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Saudi Arabia on Sign Language of the Deaf*. UNESCO, Paris

1996 Akach, P. & Trier M. Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Ghana on Education of the Deaf; Sign Language: Dictionary Development; and Sign Language in Deaf Education. UNESCO, Paris.

1996 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Ghana on Education of the Deaf Sign Language: Dictionary Development; and Sign Language in Deaf Education*. UNESCO, Paris.

1997 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Namibia on Sign Language and Deaf Education*. UNESCO Paris.

1999 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission (fact finding) to Uganda/Kenya on Information for parents and educators*

1999 Akach, P. Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Ghana on Sign Language training for Instructors and Interpreters

1999 Akach, P. Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Uganda on Video Assignment for parents; educators

1999 Akach, P. The Structure of Sign Language and Teaching for Teachers of the Deaf and Workshop for Adult Deaf Persons on Sign Language Documentation and Development. In *Inclusive Schools And Community Support Programmes, Deaf Education Project, Ghana-UNESCO Final Report* November

2001 Akach, P. *Manual UNESCO Deaf Video Information Project for Parents, Teachers and Community Workers*. February

2003 Akach, P. Report: Mid-Term SL work as per FAD-ASUMO Dictionary Project, in Mozambique November/December 2003. Finish Association of the Deaf FAD-Helsinki Finland

2009 Akach, P., International Sign Interpreting consultant Olympics of the Deaf (Deaflympics) Taiwan-Taipei

## **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE:**

2008 Department of Afro-asiatic Studies Sign Language and Language Practice

Departmental Chair

2010 Department of South African Sign Language (SASL) Senior Lecturer and Departmental Chair

**CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS:**

- 1981 Symposium on Sign Language Interpretation. Bristol, UK.
- 1987 World Federation of the Deaf, Espoo, Finland. (Interpreter)
- 1988 East African Sign Language Seminar, Arusha, Tanzania (Interpreter and presenter)
- 1989 Swedish Association of the Deaf Congress (presenter)
- 1990 United Nations Meeting of Experts on Ways and Means of Ending the Decade of the Disabled, Jarvenpaa, Finland. Interpreter)
- 1990 East, Central and Southern Africa Seminar of the Deaf. Thika, Kenya. (Presenter and International Interpreter)
- 1991 East Africa Sign Language Seminar, Debre Zeit, Ethiopia. (Interpreter and presenter)
- Initiatives on Education of the Deaf, Rabat, Malta. (Interpreter and presenter)
- 1991 World Federation of the Deaf Congress, Tokyo, Japan. (International Interpreter for the Deaf from Third World countries)
- 1991 Visit to “Chama cha Viziwi” Tanzania, giving talks at different institutions for the Deaf.
- 1991 Study tour to UK, giving lectures on work in sign language in Africa.
- 1991 22nd Annual Conference on African Linguistics, Nairobi, Kenya. (Presenter)
- 1992 East Africa Sign Language Seminar, Nairobi, Kenya. (Presenter and interpreter)
- 1992 Central Africa Sign Language Seminar, Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. (International Interpreter)
- 1993 International Conference on Bilingualism in Deaf Education, Stockholm, Sweden. (Interpreter)
- 1994 Eastern Africa Sign Language Seminar, Kampala, Uganda. (Presenter)
- 1994 Workshop on Education of Girl children with Disabilities, Nairobi, Kenya. (Co-presented with Okoth Okombo)



- 1994 World Federation for the Deaf Congress, Vienna, Austria. (International Interpreter)
- 1994 Issues in Interpreting Conference, Durham, England. Keynote presenter)
- 1994 DEAFSA Biennial Conference, Johannesburg. (Interpreter)
- 1996 Weekend Workshop on Sign Language Structure, arranged by the Deaf Community of Cape Town, The Bastion, Cape Town. (Workshop co-ordinator with D. Aarons)
- 1996 Two-day Symposium on the Use of Sign Language as a Medium of Instruction in Schools for the Deaf. Institute for The Deaf, Worcester. (Symposium Co-ordinator with D. Aarons)
- 1997 Language Facilitation and Development in Southern Africa -Forum for Language Workers. South Africa Translators' Institute and Federation Internationale de Traducteurs, Pretoria, South Africa. (Co-presented with D. Aarons and R. Morgan)
- 1997 South African Translators Institute Symposium. Bellville, South Africa. (Presenter).
- 1998 Building Bridges Conference for Teachers and Parents of Deaf Children. Johannesburg, South Africa. (Co-presenter with D. Aarons and R. Morgan)
- UNESCO Week Workshop (Training) for Ghanaian Sign Language Instructors, Somaiya Ghana. (Facilitated the entire workshop/training)
- A One UNESCO Week Workshop (Training) for Ghanaian Sign Language Interpreters, Somaiya, Ghana.
- Linguistic Society of South African conference-UNISA-Pretoria.
- 1999 World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Congress, Brisbane-Australia. (International Signs Interpreter)
- 2000 In Proceedings of the *Symposium on Current Trends in Vocational Education and Rehabilitation of the Hearing Impaired*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- 2001 The 5th. Language International South Africa. University of Free State. South Africa.
- 2001 Eastern and Southern Africa Sign Language Seminar Dar es Salaam Tanzania.
- 2005 The Linguistics Society of Southern Africa Conference at Dikhololo Pretoria SA
- 2005 Conference Proceedings of World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) in Worcester-South Africa
- 2005 Seminar for Teachers of the Deaf in KwaZulu Natal.
- 2006 Conference of Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC).

Toronto Canada.

- 2006 ASLI Conference, Durham University, UK. (Keynote Speaker)
- 2006 Cross Linguistics Research University of Nijmegen The Netherlands January.
- 2006 University of Lille France June 2006.
- 2006 Language in Education Conference, University of Oslo, Norway.
- 2006 Colloque International Syntaxe, Interpretation, Lexique Des Langues Signees. University of Brussels Belgium
- 2006 SATI International Symposium University of Johannesburg
- 2007 World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) Conference Segovia – Spain
- 2008 4<sup>th</sup> FILSE: International Conference “Future Cooperation” Cordoba-Spain
- 2008 Sign linguistics and number and mathematical project; Deaf young children learning and understanding number and mathematical reasoning using sign language. University of Durham England UK
- 2008 Signed language Interpreting project; Lisbon Portugal
- 2008 Seminar: Intensive deliberations regarding sign linguistics and number and mathematical Project University of Durham UK
- 2009 Sign Language: A Modern Foreign Language? Research Panel. University of Durham- Jan 2009
- 2009 Research Panel Meeting (chairing the June and September meetings) 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> June 2009.
- 2009 5<sup>th</sup>. FILSE international conference “future co-operation” Cordoba-Spain 3-10 April.
- 2009 Ghanaian National Association of the Deaf Workshop “Training Trainers (Instructors) of SL Accra-Ghana 15-21 February.
- 2009 Ghanaian National Association of the Deaf Workshop “Training Trainers (Instructors) of SL Accra-Ghana 25-30 April.
- University of Ghana: Establishment of SL as a University Course. April 25-26.
- 2009 WOCAL 6-World Congress on African Linguistics. Cologne-Germany August 17-21
- 2009 Seminar: Panel discussion Quality, Embedding of the a Discipline University of Durham UK

- 2010 Conference Deaf Education and Empowerment: University of Ghana- Accra Ghana
- 20-25/9/2010 Deaf Culture Online Panel Meeting at University of Durham UK
- 2011 3<sup>rd</sup>. African Workshop of the African Contact Group for mental health and Deafness- Mbabane Swaziland
- 2011 42<sup>nd</sup>. Conference on African Linguistics University of Maryland College Park USA
- 16-25/6/2011 Deaf Culture Data Collection Technique Workshop for East Africa for signed language online International Panel-Nairobi Kenya
- 20-26/3/2011 Kenyan Sign Language Data Online Panel Workshop University of Durham UK
- 2011 World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) Conference 14-16 July. Durban South Africa
- 2011 The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Congress 18-24 July. Durban South Africa
- 2011 Deaf Culture Online Panel Meeting 6-10 September University of Durham UK
- 2012 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference on African Linguistics at University of Tulane, New Orleans
- 2012 Project meeting for Specifying Sign Language Proficiency in Deaf Studies and signed language teaching programs between the Durham University, Swaziland National Association of the Deaf and African Languages department of the University of Swaziland (UNISWA) Durham UK

## **PUBLICATIONS:**

### **BOOKS and CHAPTERS IN BOOKS/DVDs.**

- 1991 Akach, P. (Editor and Coordinator). *The Kenya Sign Language Dictionary*. Kenya National Association of the Deaf. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1992 Akach, P. *Kenya Sign Language Syllabus for Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced Stages*. Kenya National Association of the Deaf. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1999 Akach, P. and Morgan, R. Sign Language Interpreting in South Africa. In Erasmus, M. et al (Ed) *Liaison Interpreting in the Community*. Van Schaik SA.
- 2002 Aarons, D. And Akach, P. South African Sign Language - one language or many? In Mesthrie, R. (Ed.) *Language and Social History*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, Great Britain.
- 2007 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane  
Signing Naturally. SASL. Student's manual & workbook Level 1. ISBN 978-0-86886-775-5.
- 2007 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane

Signing Naturally. SASL. Teacher's Curriculum Guide Level 1. ISBN 978-0-86886-776-2.

2007 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane

Signing Naturally. SASL Students Videotext. Level 1. ISBN 978-0-86886-782-3.

2008 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane

Signing Naturally. SASL. Student's manual & workbook Level 2. ISBN 978-0-86886-777-9.

2008 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane Signing Naturally. SASL. Teacher's Curriculum Guide  
ISBN 1978-0-86886-778-6.

2008 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane Signing Naturally. SASL. Students Videotext. Level 2.  
ISBN 978-0-86886-783-0

2008 Akach, P., D. Aarons & E. Matabane Signing Naturally. SASL. Student manual & workbook Level  
1. ISBN 978-0-86886-775-5.

2011 Akach, PAO. Topical Issues in Deaf Education: In Africa. VDM, Verlag Dr. Muller.

### **ACCREDITED PUBLICATIONS:**

1997 Akach, P. And O. Okombo. *Language Convergence and Wave Phenomena in the growth of a National Sign Language in Kenya*. International Journal of the Sociology Language

2002 Aarons, D & Akach, P. South African Sign Language: one language or many. In R Mesthrie (Ed). *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2003 Akach, P. and Lubbe, H.L. Naming in Spoken Languages and Sign Language-a comparison. In Erasmus (Eds) *Acta Academica Supplement 2*,

2002 Aarons, D. and Akach, P. Inclusive Education and the Deaf Child in South Africa. In Kathleen Heugh (Eds) *Perspective in Education Journal*

2008 Akach, P. And Naudé, J.A. Empowering Marginalised Culture: Institution of south African Sign Language at the University of Free State. In Central University of Technology: Journal for New Generation Sciences (ISSN 1684-4998)

2009 Akach, P., E. Damey, E. Matabane, M. Van Herreweghe and M. Vermeerbergen. What is South African Sign Language? What is the South African Deaf Community? In B.B. Utne and I. Skattum (Eds) *Languages and Education in Africa; A Comparative and Tran disciplinary Analysis*.

2013 Akach, PAO. Teachers Attitude Towards Sign Language Medium of Instruction: An Empirical Study (a case study of two schools) Multilingualism and Education: African Practices and Challenges Nairobi, Kenya. (In press)

## NON ACCREDITED PUBLICATIONS

- 1988 Aarons, D. And Akach, P. South African Sign Language  
Akach, P. *Communication of the Deaf in Kenya*. (ms.) University Jyvaskyllä, Finland.
- 1988 Akach, P. The Present Stage of Sign Language in Kenya. In Joutselainen, M. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the East African Language Seminar*. Arusha, Tanzania.
- 1990 Akach, P. The Development of the Kenyan Sign Language Dictionary. In Gachuhi, S. (Ed.) *Final Report of East, Central and Southern Africa Seminar of the Deaf* Thika, Kenya.
- 1990 Akach, P. The Use of Sign Language in Schools in Kenya. In *Proceedings of the East African Language Seminar*. Debre Zeit, Ethiopia.
- 1991 Akach, P. *Sentence Types in Kenya Sign Language*. Unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1991 Akach, P. Interpretation for Understanding. In *Initiatives of Education of the Deaf in the Third World*
- 1992 Akach, P. Sentence Types in Kenyan Sign Language. In *Proceedings of the East African Sign Language Seminar*.
- 1992 Akach, P. Barriers. In *Signpost*. The International Sign Linguistics Association. Durham, Great Britain. Spring
- 1994 Akach, P. Ignorance. In *Signpost*. The International Sign Linguistics Association. Durham, Great Britain. Summer
- 1994 Akach, P. Interpretation as a Profession. In *Proceedings of the East African Sign Language Seminar*. Kampala. Uganda.
- 1994 Akach, P. Some Policy Issues in the Education of Deaf Girls. In *Report on the workshop of the education of girl children with disabilities*. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1994 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Saudi Arabia on Sign Language of the Deaf* UNESCO, Paris.
- 1995 Akach, P. Experiences in Interpreting. In Brennan, M. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the Issues in Interpreting Conference*. Durham, Great Britain. 1995.
- 1996 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Ghana on Education of the Deaf; Sign Language: Dictionary Development; and Sign Language in Deaf Education*. UNESCO, Paris.
- 1997 Akach, P. *Report of the UNESCO consultancy mission to Namibia on Sign Language and Deaf Education*. UNESCO, Paris.
- 1997 Aarons, n, Akach, P., and Morgan, R. Sign Language Interpreting -- Linguistic Issues. In Kruger,

- A. (Ed.) *Proceedings of Language Facilitation and Development in Southern Africa-- Forum for Language Workers*. South African Translators' Institute and Federation Internationale des Traducteurs, Pretoria. June
- 1999 Akach, P. (to appear). From Policies, Principles and Laws to Implementation; what went wrong? In Eastern and Southern Africa Sign Language Seminar Proceedings.
- 2000 Akach, P. Communication gaps that hinder the successful rehabilitation of the hearing Impaired; a case of Kenyan, Ugandan and Ghanaian Situation. In Proceedings of the *Symposium on Current Trends in Vocational Education and Rehabilitation of the Hearing Impaired* Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- 2001 Akach, P. *Manual UNESCO Deaf Video Information Project for Parents, Teachers and Community Workers*. February.
- 2001 Akach, P. *The Criteria of Selection of South African Sign Language Trainees, Who Decides?* Proceedings of the 5th. Language International South Africa.
- 2003 Akach, P. Report: Mid-Term SL work as per FAD-ASUMO Dictionary Project, in Mozambique. November/December 2003. Finish Association of the Deaf FAD-Helsinki-Finland
- 2004 Akach, P. Development of Sign Language Interpreting in Africa. In WFD News, Magazine of the World Federation of the Deaf; Vol. 17 No. 1 (ISSN 0787-8680) July
- 2004 Akach, P. Training of Sign Language Interpreters in Africa. In WFD News, Magazine of the World Federation of the Deaf; Vol. 17 No. 1 (ISSN 0787-8680) July
- 2005 Akach, P. Colonization of African Sign Languages and its Impact on the Signed Language Interpreter. In the Conference Proceedings of World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) in Worcester-South Africa
- 2006 Akach, P. Sign Language Interpreting: where to from here? The African Perspective, Keynote address; In NEWSLI, Magazine for the Association of Sign Language Interpreters-The Conference Issue; Issue 57 (ISSN 1747-9762) July

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:**

- 1988 Akach, P. The Present Stage of Sign Language in Kenya. In Joutselainen, M. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the East African Language Seminar Arusha, Tanzania*.
- 1990 Akach, P. The Development of the Kenyan Sign Language Dictionary. In Gachuhi, S. (Ed.) *Final Report of East, Central and Southern Africa Seminar of the Deaf*. Thika, Kenya.
- 1990 Akach, P. The Use of Sign Language in Schools in Kenya. In *Proceedings of the East African Language Seminar* Debre Zeit, Ethiopia.
- 1992 Akach, P. Interpretation for Understanding. In *Initiatives of Education of the Deaf in the Third World*. 1991.

- Akach, P. Sentence Types in Kenyan Sign Language. In *Proceedings of the East African Sign Language Seminar*.
- 1994 Akach, P. Interpretation as a Profession. In *Proceedings of the East African Sign Language Seminar*. Kampala, Uganda.
- 1994 Akach, P. Some Policy Issues in the Education of Deaf Girls. In *Report on the workshop of the education of girl children with disabilities*. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1995 Akach, P. Experiences in Interpreting. In Brennan, M. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the Issues in Interpreting Conference*. Durham, Great Britain.
- 1997 Aarons, D., Akach, P., and Morgan, R. Sign Language Interpreting -- Linguistic Issues. In Kruger, (Ed.) *Proceedings of Language Facilitation and Development in Southern Africa--Forum for Language Workers*. South African Translators' Institute and Federation Internationale des Traducteurs, Pretoria June
- 1988 Akach, P. From Policies, Principles and Laws to Implementation; what went wrong? In Eastern and Southern Africa Sign Language Seminar Proceedings
- 1988 Akach, P. The Present Stage of Sign Language in Kenya. In Joutsalainen, M. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the East African Language Seminar Arusha*, Tanzania.
- 1990 Akach, P. The Development of the Kenyan Sign Language Dictionary. In Gachuhi, S. (Ed.) *Final Report of East, Central and Southern Africa Seminar of the Deaf*. Thika, Kenya.
- 1990 Akach, P. The Use of Sign Language in Schools in Kenya. In *Proceedings of the East African Language Seminar Debre Zeit*, Ethiopia.
- 1991 Akach, P. Interpretation for Understanding. In the proceedings of *Initiatives of Education of the Deaf in the Third World*.
- 1992 Akach, P. Sentence Types in Kenyan Sign Language. In *Proceedings of the East African Sign Language Seminar*.
- 1994 Akach, P. Interpretation as a Profession. In *Proceedings of the East African Sign Language Seminar*. Kampala, Uganda.
- 1994 Akach, P. Some Policy Issues in the Education of Deaf Girls. In *Report on the workshop of the education of girl children with disabilities*. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1995 Akach, P. Experiences in Interpreting. In Brennan, M. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the Issues in Interpreting Conference*. Durham, Great Britain.
- 1997 Aarons, D., Akach, P., and Morgan, R. Sign Language Interpreting -- Linguistic Issues. In Kruger, (Ed.) *Proceedings of Language Facilitation and Development in Southern Africa--Forum for Language Workers*. South African Translators' Institute and Federation Internationale des Traducteurs, Pretoria June

- 1999 Aarons, D. And Akach, P. South African Sign Language Structure *In Proceedings of the South African Linguistic Society conference July*
- 2000 Akach, P. Communication gaps that hinder the successful rehabilitation of the hearing Impaired; a case of Kenyan, Ugandan and Ghanaian Situation. In Proceedings of the *Symposium on Current Trends in Vocational Education and Rehabilitation of the Hearing Impaired*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- 2000 Akach, P. Communication gaps that hinder the successful rehabilitation of the hearing Impaired; a case of Kenyan, Ugandan and Ghanaian Situation. In Proceedings of the *Symposium on Current Trends in Vocational Education and Rehabilitation of the Hearing Impaired*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- 2001 Akach, P. *The Criteria of Selection of South African Sign Language Trainees, Who Decides?* Proceedings of the 5th. Language International South Africa.
- 2001 Akach, P. *The Criteria of Selection of South African Sign Language Trainees, Who Decides?* Proceedings of the 5th. Language International South Africa.
- 2001 Akach, P. From Policies, Principles and Laws to Implementation; what went wrong? In Eastern and Southern Africa Sign Language Seminar Proceedings.
- 2005 Akach, P. Colonization of African Sign Languages and its Impact on the Signed Language Interpreter. In the Conference Proceedings of World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) in Worcester-South Africa.
- 2005 Akach, P.A.O. Standardization of South African Sign Language (SASL) Presented at a Seminar for Teachers of the Deaf in KwaZulu Natal.
- 2006 Akach, P. Colonization of African Sign Languages and its Impact on the Signed Language Interpreter. Presented at the Conference of AVLIC Toronto Canada.
- 2006 Akach, P. Sign Language Interpreting: where to from here? The African Perspective. Keynote address at ASLI Conference, Durham University, UK. In the Proceedings of the conference-April
- 2006 Akach, P., Herreweghe, M., Matabane, M.E., and Vermeerbergen, M. Cross-linguistic research of South African Sign Language (SASL) and Flemish Sign Language (VGT) Presented Cross Linguistics Research University of Nijmegen The Netherlands January
- 2006 Akach, P., Herreweghe, and Vermeerbergen. Word Order Issues in South African Sign Language (SASL) and Flemish Sign Language (VGT) Presented at the University of Lille France June
- 2006 Akach, P., Herreweghe, M., Matabane, M.E., and Vermeerbergen What is South African Sign Language? What is the South African Deaf community? Language in Education, University of Oslo, Norway.



- 2006 Akach, P., Implementation of South African Sign Language (SASL) and English Bilingualism in Education of the Deaf. MIDP conference at the UFS
- 2007 Akach, P., Deaf learner assessment in classroom situation; SASL/English Bilingual implementation. Education Management Unit-University of Durham
- 2008 Akach, P., SASL in Interpreters Training at the University of Free State and its influence in the Region. Lisbon Portugal
- 2009 Akach, P., Multi-media SASL grammar teaching books and DVDs. 5<sup>th</sup>. FILSE international conference “future co-operation” Cordoba Spain 3-10 April.
- 2010 Akach, P., The Role of the University Past, Present and Future presented at Conference on Deaf Education and Deaf Empowerment at the University of Ghana-Accra Ghana
- 2011 Akach, p., Colonization of African Sign Languages-presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup>. African Workshop of the African Contact Group for mental health and deafness-Mbabane Swaziland
- 2011 Akach, P., Signed Languages and Education of the Deaf presented at the 42<sup>nd</sup>. Conference on African Linguistics University of Maryland College Park USA
- 2012 Akach, P., From policies and laws to the implementation of signed language in Deaf education: What went wrong? Presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference on African Linguistics at University of Tulane, New Orleans.
- 2020 Key note speaker at the Witswaterstrand seminar series on Deaf Education, Johannesburg from 24th to 27th February 2020. Topic; Sign language application in Education of the Deaf in Africa.

## **MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

This essay will attempt to articulate my approach to teaching South African Sign Language (SASL). Also, to situate this within both my teacher training and my life experience which, to my mind, has been highly influential in clarifying my approach to teaching as much as my understanding of what I teach and what I intend to accomplish. In a roundabout way my teaching philosophy is therefore an instinctual, lived, embodied experience in much the same way as teaching my subject matter cannot be done without involving the body and the self. In formulating my teaching philosophy, I would argue that there is always a sense of the aspirational embedded in my approach. I remind myself always of the words of William Arthur Ward: “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

At the outset, I would like to suggest that teachers impart more by way of example than precept. In turn, students are very perceptive in recognizing artifice. Values and principles therefore have to be believed

in order to be imparted successfully and bringing it home to one's own lived experience is most helpful in this. There are several values from my own experience that I try to use in teaching students. This, of course, does not in any way negate the importance of rigorous teacher's training, but rather enhance and enrich the experience. I have had the privilege of a number of teacher training programmes in several countries and subject to a variety of teaching approaches. In 1977-1979, when I trained to become a teacher of the Deaf, one of my lecturers made an indelible impression by cautioning not ever to teach the same thing the same way (method) for ten years. This caution stands out in my memory till the present and I use my language acquisition tutors to remind me to constantly evolve. My senior students, mostly third years and postgraduates, act as tutors (in a mentoring programme) to the first and the second year SASL undergraduates. They have to audit first and second year acquisition classes to inform their tutoring. These senior students therefore keep me honest. They would often raise a difficult part of the work in a discussion class by referring to language acquisition classes and observing in an almost accusatory note, "You didn't teach us that way. Seeing it explained differently made it more interesting" or "clearer" or "made me aware of something I didn't notice before."

Growing up in mid-twentieth century Kenya, a country of many languages as is common in the continent of Africa, children were subjected to two distinct pathways to adulthood. The first was of growing up in a deep rural setting where the language of the area was spoken in the home (mother tongue or first language), in the playground, tending cattle, in church, and so on. The second was of growing up in an urban environment, usually because one's father had a job that took him to the town or city. City dwelling dictated an entirely different approach to language where linguistic expression dictated social setting and even standing. Most of my generation experienced the former because the socio-economic realities of the time dictated for most men to leave their wives or partners behind in the countryside to work in the cities, with visits exchanged at opportune times. I experienced both. I spent my early years in a rural area of Kenya and later my family moved to town. In the countryside, mother tongue was existential and common in schools. In fact, mother tongue was the language of tuition and learning up to grade 3. It was only in grade 4, that English and Kiswahili (the lingua franca of East and Central Africa) were introduced, English awarded 60% more time than Kiswahili in the curriculum. In the urban setting, mother tongue retreated to the home; Kiswahili was the language of playground and also language of tuition up to grade 3. Then, again, English and Kiswahili would be introduced interchangeably. This demarcated linguistic differentiation, retrospectively, informed my lifelong involvement in language teaching.

My English and Kiswahili teachers stand out in my memory for their common attributes: they presented the two languages in a way that caught my interest, clarified difficult grammatical constructs, and made knowledge of language relevant to me. These early role models influenced my approach to language teaching: I view myself primarily as a facilitator of learning, rather than as an expert who simply delivers information to a learner as encapsulated in the following description of *the teacher as facilitator* by Vito Brondolo: “I tend to consider the role of the language teacher as facilitator, rather than instructor. A facilitator is someone who is knowledgeable about the subject being taught and has experienced the same kind of learning process that her/his learners are experiencing now. She/he knows where the difficulties are and can best advise the learners. She/he acknowledges the different learning styles and provides the learners with the best opportunities for making progress and achieves success. She/he shows enthusiasm for learning and fosters a positive and inquiring attitude to language learning.”

I’ll return to a selection of teaching methodologies shortly, but I want to point out that key to this and irrespective of method of instruction, was the fact that these two teachers used the target language to teach the target language. We listened to the target language throughout the thematic lesson and grew familiar and accustomed and comfortable within the thematic or situational setting, guided by the comforting presence of the teacher. Retrospectively, I can deduce that they must have used communicative language teaching (CLT), a method that focuses on enabling the learner to communicate effectively and appropriately in various situations she would be likely to find herself in. The content of CLT courses are governed by the situational, functions such as inviting, suggesting, complaining or notions such as the expression of time, quantity, location (cf. Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

My teachers made learning a language fun; they made us play with language; they encouraged us to learn the language by speaking it. “Learn to speak by making mistakes,” they encouraged us but cautioned that, once corrected, not to make the same mistake again. They demanded practice of the language in pairs and groups. We were made to laugh with each other and not at each other when one of us made a mistake. In hindsight, I recall the teachers subjecting themselves to the same demands. They would make mistake, deliberate or not I would not know, but the stringent differentiation between teacher and learner meant that we couldn’t laugh. But our silence and a giggle would give us away. At that point we would be asked: “Was that sentence, statement, utterance correct?” I remember the responsibility and importance I would feel when politely, very politely, venturing to point out the mistake or offer suggestions as alternative to expressing the same thought. Being allowed to do this was, in retrospect, my first experience of being allowed to flex my critical and analytical “muscles”.

Besides making learning interesting, these primary teachers used voice and gesture: they were calm and used natural voices. They never shouted, as was a common trend among primary school teachers of the time. A difference we were well aware of as the tops of the walls sub-dividing the classrooms were open. In the chaos of intermingling noise, teachers tried to shout each other as they taught different subjects. My own teachers' teaching approach was therefore a rare and valuable gift, as Albert Einstein's words depict: "Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as valuable gift and not as a hard duty."

The experience of my childhood influenced my teaching so much that when I did my final pre-teacher practice in 1969, the external examiner mentioned in his report a young man who has a natural voice pleasant to listen to, and reassuring, especially to the third grade pupils he was teaching. It is telling that I chose to train to teach the same level and age where my own formative experience of teaching was solidified.

Now, to contextualize, allow me a brief moment to discuss the various teaching methodologies available to the teaching of language, of which CLT is one. Richards and Rodgers's 1986 *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* explication will suffice for the purpose of this essay:

- **Direct Method**

The teaching is done entirely in the target language. The student is not allowed to use her mother tongue. Grammar rules are avoided and emphasis is placed on exact pronunciation.

- **Grammar-Translation**

Learning is largely encouraged by translation to and from the target language. Grammar rules are to be memorized and long lists of vocabulary learned by heart. There is little to no emphasis on the development of oral fluency.

- **Audio-Lingual**

This method is based on the theoretical presupposition that learning a language means acquiring habits. There is much practice of dialogues of every situation imaginable. New language is first heard and extensively drilled before a student is exposed to the same in written form.

- **Structural Approach**

This method considers language to be a complex of grammatical rules which are to be learned one at a time in a set order. So, for example, the verb “to be” would be introduced and practised before the present continuous tense is introduced which uses “to be” as an auxiliary.

- **Suggestopedia**

The method presupposes that a language can be acquired only when the student is receptive and has no “mental blocks”. By various methods it is suggested to the student that the language is “easy” - and in this way the mental blocks to learning are removed.

- **Total Physical Response (TPR)**

TPR works by encouraging the student to respond to simple commands such as “stand up”; “close your book”; “go to the window and open it”, etc. The method stresses the importance of aural comprehension.

- **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

The method earlier mentioned in my essay, it emphasizes enabling the student to communicate effectively and appropriately in the various situations she would be likely to find herself in. The content of CLT courses foreground functions such as inviting, suggesting, complaining or notions such as the expression of time, quantity and location.

- **Silent Way**

The name describes the method. It is so called because the aim of the teacher is to say as little as possible in order that the student may be in control of the communicative situation. Mother tongue is not used.

- **Community Language Learning**

This approach relies on the building of strong personal links between the teacher and student to preclude possible obstacles to learning. There is much talk in the mother tongue which is translated by the teacher for repetition by the student.

- **Immersion**

This approach to a great extent mirrors the situation we had at school: ESL students are immersed in the English language for the entire school day and expected to learn math, science, geography, etc., through

the medium of the target language, English. Today, immigrant students all over the world, often find themselves in such educational circumstances. Good examples are first generation children from Turkey or Bosnia attending German schools, or Puerto Rican children in American schools.

- **Task-Based Language Learning**

The focus of the teaching situation is the completion of a task which in itself is interesting to the student. Students use the language ability already at their disposal, no matter how limited, to complete the task and there is little correction of errors. The tasks include reading, searching the internet, listening to taped material, selecting important vocabulary to teach other students, etc.

- **Natural Approach**

This approach, propounded by Krashen, stresses the similarities between learning the first and second languages. Again, there is no correction of mistakes. Learning takes place by exposing the students to language that is comprehensible or to language made comprehensible to them.

- **Lexical Syllabus**

This approach is based on a computer analysis of language which identifies the most common, and hence most useful, words in the language and their various uses. The syllabus teaches these words in broadly the order of their frequency. Great emphasis is placed on the use of authentic materials.

Moving back to my life story: in my teaching career, I have taught mainly languages, except when I had non-rotating classes in lower primary (foundation phase) where as the only teacher you are expected to teach all material. In upper primary I would rarely teach anything but language and if it was expected of me because of circumstances, my preference was usually for the humanities: religious studies, history, or geography. While still teaching in a regular (hearing or sound reliant) school, from 1971 to 1977, I taught Kiswahili and English. After graduating as a teacher of the Deaf in 1979, I started teaching in schools for the Deaf. In my 1977-1979 teacher training programme I trained to teach the Deaf through the method of so-called “oralism”. This entailed speaking to the deaf learners. They are expected to “listen” by reading the teacher’s lips in order to understand what is taught. As an enthusiastic and ambitious teacher seeking results, this method had evident and obvious drawbacks. Highly frustrated, I decided on the alternative: to acquire my students’ Sign Language (SL) by immersion. This implied a reversal of roles - the teacher became the student. Most schools for the Deaf are residential schools and, with the principal’s permission, I started sleeping in the dormitory as “house father”. I woke with my

students, dressed, ate breakfast with my students, etc. In other words, I did everything they did and this is how I learned signed language.

For long periods of time I would spend most of the teaching day away from the classroom; visiting students and initiating discussions in SL. I can only imagine how much the learners laughed at me as I made mistakes and they corrected. The drive or inspiration behind this was to be able to unpack the curriculum in the language the deaf learner understood best, SL. In fact, save for a few with a lesser degree of hearing loss, this is their *only* language. My students/teachers became my guiding lights. At this point I need to emphasize that this entire process contradicted standard policy in Kenya. The policy in Kenya was that the deaf learner had to speak a spoken language, not specifying which language, but English as an official language was assumed. It was therefore almost inevitable that, as I started using sign language more and more in my teaching, I lost my job at the school in 1983. I have never looked back.

From my own experience, therefore, a blend of three of the teaching methodologies listed before, stand out as they formed the basis of my own acquisition of SL. Immersion, followed by a liberal interpretation of the Community Language Learning method without the translation component. The Natural Approach, also, played a role especially with regard to the exposition to language comprehensible or made comprehensible, although I don't ascribe to the absence of any form of correction. Predominantly, I apply in CLT in my current SASL teaching. This is embedded in the multimedia teaching materials I developed as teaching aids.

In 1994, I came to South Africa because of a very special reason: the 1994 constitution acknowledged SASL. Perhaps not as an official language, but at the very least as a language to be developed with the prospective use of the language in the broader communicative domain. After 15 years of working in environments with such negative biases towards signed language, I relished the thought of greater openness towards the possibilities this language offered. Alas, smooth sailing it was not. In 1996, when I was appointed to work at DeafSA, we started to demand official status for SASL. It is now almost twenty years later and that demand is yet to be honoured. The South African Schools Act of 1996 did, however, give us a reprieve as it declared SASL an official language for educational purposes. For a career educator such as myself, this was an important victory. But yet again, in retrospect, very little has changed: teachers who cannot sign are still employed in South African schools for the Deaf. We did however make small strides. In 1997, I lead a team that developed curriculum for SASL as a school subject, as a so-called second language. We developed our curriculum with adaptation possible in order

to allow the teaching of SASL at university level. This was important because if we wanted teachers who could sign in schools for the Deaf, we needed to provide higher education training grounds to prepare these teachers. Unfortunately, this curriculum was never implemented.

Then came 1999, when the University of the Free State (UFS) took the bold step to introduce SASL as an academic discipline. The university employed me to adapt my own curriculum to suit the language curriculum of the UFS. I now had a curriculum but no teaching materials! In short, I was the textbook and the SASL dictionary all in one! Yet, finally with the opportunity to prove that a signed language could be taught as an academic subject at a higher education facility, I started developing teaching materials from scratch and I needed a philosophy as base for my teaching material.

Before designing the curriculum, I immersed myself in the various approaches to second-language teaching. I needed an approach that emphasized interpersonal communication and that helped students achieve communicative competence. I selected the communicative approach, which focuses on the “functions” or “communicative purposes” of people’s everyday interaction. For example, do they want to introduce themselves? Do they want to invite someone to their home? Do they want to direct someone to do something? Do they want to talk about a movie, book or event? Do they want to tell a story? I emphasize functions that help students establish and maintain social relationships. We introduce a polite, informal register of SASL in the first level. I begin with personal information and move to the impersonal. I move from naming things that are present to talking about things not present. I begin by talking about concrete things and progress to talking about abstract ideas. And so forth. Grammatical structures introduced are determined by the function in the unit. That is, students learn grammar in the context of communicative activities. These activities are varied to allow students to use different learning strategies to practice what they have learned. Role-play which predict everyday deaf-hearing encounters are used to contextualize and give meaning to the function. The indirect benefit of these situations for students is the development of cultural awareness and cross-cultural adjustment skills.

I designed the teaching units with the following principles in mind:

1. Students learn language best when lessons are presented in context.
2. Students retain language best when activities are meaningful and experiential
3. Students develop comprehension skills more quickly than expressive skills.



Therefore, all lessons are designed to be presented in SASL, avoiding the use of voice, written and spoken language or glosses, and teachers are encouraged to always sign slightly beyond the students' expressive ability. This is all based on the CLT approach. A Deaf member of staff contributes to the authenticity of the teaching experience. Also, embedded in our teaching is the involvement of native signers from the Deaf community in and around Bloemfontein. The students are therefore exposed to the community whose language and culture they are learning. They learn to adapt to individual quirks – an excellent means to test their signing skills.

The SASL students at the UFS do not come with a disciplinary background acquired in high school, as would be the case for many other languages taught at university level. We therefore start at a level of 0. SASL may be offered as a major, a minor (elective), or for occasional study and at post graduate level. Our students' reasons for taking SASL vary widely. Some would want to purely communicate; others want to offer community services such as prospective social workers, psychologists, etc. There are those who want to teach SASL or work as interpreters. To be able to address such diverse requirements and this with a newly acquired language first encounter at university is not easy. Bearing in mind also that the optimal language acquisition age diminishes by the time students reach university age. We guide our students through dedication by using CLT. By the end of the first semester, when the students find that they can hold a basic conversation with a deaf person, they find themselves hooked. After the third year of SASL, students are well able to communicate complex issues. They are also ready to teach SASL as a school subject, use it as a teaching and learning language, enroll for post graduate in Language Practice (interpreting) and any other venture that require SASL competence. When I observe my students and former students at this level interacting in SASL, I am reminded of Maria Montessori's words: "The greatest sign of success....is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist'."

Colleen Wilcox says, "teaching is the greatest optimism" and I am optimistic that now that the Department of Education is rolling out the SASL as a school subject curriculum in 2014, nearly 16 years since I first suggested it, the deaf learner will benefit from teaching in a language they can call their own.

As for me, I am thankful for the entrenchment of SASL as discipline at the UFS. Encountering my former students in all walks of life, using SASL proficiently to the benefit of a new generation Deaf children, have become my greatest reward.

**Select Bibliography:**

Richards, J. and Rodgers, T *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (1986) CUP Cambridge.