

Teaching Italian Sign Language in Higher Education

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Abstract : Since its formal recognition in 2021, Italian Sign Language (LIS) and interpreters' education has become a topic for higher education in Italian universities. In April 2022, Italian universities have been invited to present their proposals to create sign language courses for interpreters' training for both LIS and tactile LIS. As a result, a few universities have presented a three-year course leading candidate students from the introductory level to interpreters. In such a context, there is an open debate not only on the fact that three years may not be enough to prepare skillful interpreters but also on the need to refer to international standards in the definition of the training path to follow. Among these, are the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages and Dublin's descriptors. This contribution will discuss the potentials and the challenges given by LIS training in academic settings, by comparing traditional studies to the requests coming from universities. Particular attention will be given to the use of CEFR as a reference document for the Italian Sign Language Curriculum. Its use has given me the chance to reflect on how LIS can be taught in higher education, and the adaptations that need to be addressed to respect the visual-gestural nature of sign language and the formal requirements of academic settings.

Keywords : Italian sign language, higher education, sign language curriculum, interpreters education, CEFR

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