



## Uganda and Ugandan Sign Language

Lars Wallin is coming from Sweden and he was here to give us a lecture about Uganda and Ugandan Sign Language, *USL*. He took PhD in sign language (Swedish sign language) classes, specific in classifiers field, back in 1994. He and 3 other people made a dictionary for USL through 5 years, since 2001 until November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006. They got 2299 signs in the book, but it will be more than 2299 as if they get more time for the project. The project was held at Kyambogo University, Kampala. The main goal of this project is for parents who have deaf children and teachers. The bonus for the book itself can be use in politic general. Moreover, Lars said that not only the four were working on the book; they got a lot of help from around 40 another deaf people in Uganda!

The USL has borrowed many signs from American Sign Language, British Sign Language, and Kenyan Sign Language. But still a lot of USL are coming from Uganda itself. Many church-signs are coming from ASL, for example Father. However, when they are talking about a father and a son, they will be using USL. When they are in church and they will use father in ASL-sign. Many finger spelling from BSL became into USL. For example, boy/girl, they use B/G finger spell from BSL. Many Ugandans took education in Kenya, that's why many signs are coming from KSL in USL.

Uganda has 5 different languages, but the most common written language is British's English. In according of English written language influence on USL itself. So, therefore USL practices a lot with ASL and BSL.

The dictionary book comes with phonology and morphology. Sometimes the signs have to be showed in grammar in the book. It depends on sign, itself. Also, it shows which sign is coming from, because Uganda has several of regional-signs. They did film a lot, both a narrator and two persons in a dialog, because of sign is different between one-way and two-ways communication. There are several of challenges during the working; for instance, some signs aren't able to explain into words. They will have to use several of samples to look right.



Some signs need to use a picture to show the meaning of sign, but some other signs require several pictures. So, it means more than 2000 signs will probably have need almost 6000 pictures in the sign dictionary.

In the 2 first years, Lars spent time to learnt USL. He met deaf people in different regional and taught the rules of sign language in general to 3 other colleagues. In the 3 last years, he filmed the signs, made pictures from the film, analysed the signs; translated from sign into word. In final, he got confirmation from Uganda deaf people that they approved the USL as their sign language prior printing the first USL Dictionary book.

In the general dictionaries have a system and USL dictionary has their own system, too.

The system has the alphabetic order with 5 different places on the body.

1. Location – where on the body, or nearby the body. For instance, variety of signs will be found in head, stomach, or arm part.
2. Hand or 2 hands.
  - 1 hand - Handshape – for example, 1 or 5 handshape and which finger is primary working.
  - 2 hands – Same handshape – both are active, a hand active and another hand is passive or two different handshapes.
3. Contact – Does the sign have a contact on the body or not?
4. Direction – Which does the sign toward in direction?
5. Movement – Does the sign move at all?

Some signs are completed in number 3, but some other signs are finished in number 5. So, it comes with varieties.

We, Frontrunners 2, want to congratulate you for your success with the USL-dictionary book. 😊