



# TLEF Project – Final Report

Report Completion Date: (2019/08/29)

## 1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 1.1. General Information

<b>Project Title:</b>	Integrating Sign Languages into the Linguistics Curriculum		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Kathleen Currie Hall		
<b>Report Submitted By:</b>	Kathleen Currie Hall		
<b>Project Initiation Date:</b>	1 May 2018	<b>Project Completion Date:</b>	31 July 2019
<b>Project Type:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Large Transformation <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Small Innovation</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Other: [please specify]		

### 1.2. Project Focus Areas – Please select all the areas that describe your project.

- Resource development (e.g. learning materials, media)**
- Infrastructure development (e.g. management tools, repositories, learning spaces)**
- Pedagogies for student learning and/or engagement (e.g. active learning)
- Innovative assessments (e.g. two-stage exams, student peer-assessment)
- Teaching roles and training (e.g. teaching practice development, TA roles)
- Curriculum (e.g. program development/implementation, learning communities)**
- Student experience outside the classroom (e.g. wellbeing, social inclusion)
- Experiential and work-integrated learning (e.g. co-op, community service learning)
- Indigenous-focused curricula and ways of knowing
- Diversity and inclusion in teaching and learning contexts**
- Open educational resources
- Other: [please specify]



### 1.3. Project Summary

The goal of this project was to begin to integrate sign languages into the core UBC Linguistics curriculum, diversifying the languages students are exposed to and helping promote intercultural understanding and inclusion. We envision UBC as having a fully functional sign language component of our general curriculum within a few years, and this project represents an early step toward that goal.

This TLEF had three primary objectives:

1. the development of general resources about sign languages and Deaf culture to educate students about relevant social issues;
2. the continued development of software tools to facilitate the transcription, collection, and linguistic analysis of sign languages, which will themselves directly enhance student learning and research and also allow for #3:
3. the development of hands-on activities to be incorporated into the general flexible learning structure of our program to help students fully understand the differences and similarities between signed and spoken languages.

All three of these goals have been met (though #1 is somewhat preliminary).

### 1.4. Team Members – Please fill in the following table and include students, undergraduate and/or graduate, who participated in your project.

Name	Title/Affiliation	Responsibilities/Roles
Kathleen Currie Hall	Associate Professor, Linguistics	PI
Oksana Tkachman	PhD Student, Linguistics	sign language consultant
Roger Lo	PhD Student, Linguistics	lead programmer
Yurika Aonuki	Undergrad Student, Linguistics	lead RA / manager of other RAs
Li Ze Choo	Undergrad Student, Computer Science	RA
Terrance Gatchalian	Undergrad Student, Linguistics	RA
Cristina Lee	Undergrad Student, Linguistics	RA
Liz Tiamzon	Undergrad Student, Linguistics	RA
Mai Tran	Undergrad Student, Linguistics	RA

### 1.5. Courses Reached – Please fill in the following table with past, current, and future courses and sections (e.g. HIST 101, 002, 2017/2018, Sep) that have been/will be reached by your project, including courses not included in your original proposal (you may adapt this section to the context of your project as necessary).



Course	Section	Academic Year	Term (Summer/Fall/Winter)
Ling 101	004	2018/2019	Winter
Ling 101	006	2018/2019	Winter
Ling 100	002	2019/2020	Summer
Ling 200	921	2019/2020	Summer
Ling 200	001	2019/2020	Fall
Ling 311	001	2019/2020	Fall
Ling 447Q	001	2018/2019	Fall

Note that the materials used for Ling 200 and Ling 311 will continue to be used in future semesters as well; likely materials for Ling 100 / 101, though that's less clear at the moment.



**2. OUTPUTS AND/OR PRODUCTS**

**2.1.** Please *list* project outputs and/or products (e.g. resources, infrastructure, new courses/programs). Indicate the current location of such products and provide a URL if applicable.

Product(s)/Achievement(s):	Location:
General database of sign language resources	<a href="https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BL4_e4rysiWuFsznNXORoB3mf8mXtcEN_OftPH9LHIs/edit#gid=0">https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BL4_e4rysiWuFsznNXORoB3mf8mXtcEN_OftPH9LHIs/edit#gid=0</a>
SLP-Annotator / Analyzer Software	<a href="https://github.com/PhonologicalCorpusTools/SLP-Annotator">https://github.com/PhonologicalCorpusTools/SLP-Annotator</a>
Course Materials for Ling 100, 200, 311	Currently on the TLEF Canvas Project Site ( <a href="https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/10777">https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/10777</a> ); will get moved to a general Linguistics Teaching Canvas Repository ( <a href="https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/27526">https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/27526</a> )
ASL-Lex Database, coded in SLPA	Currently on the TLEF Canvas Project Site ( <a href="https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/10777">https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/10777</a> ); will likely get moved to the GitHub site for the software ( <a href="https://github.com/PhonologicalCorpusTools/SLP-Annotator">https://github.com/PhonologicalCorpusTools/SLP-Annotator</a> )

Note: we presented an overview of the project at the TLEF showcase, available online under 2019 / Faculty of Arts: <https://tlef.ubc.ca/events/>

I am also attaching three example exercises that were developed (one for Ling 200 and two for Ling 311), along with some example presentation slides for use in Ling 200; these slides include original drawings made by one of the project RAs to illustrate articulatory properties of sign languages..

**2.2. Item(s) Not Met** – Please list intended project outputs and/or products that were not attained and the reason(s) for this.

Item(s) Not Met:	Reason:
Although we have the start of a database of introductory materials, it is neither as complete or as immediately classroom-ready as we had intended.	Training the RAs in the SLP-A coding system took longer than expected, and we simply ran out of time.

**3. PROJECT IMPACT**

**3.1. Project Impact Areas** – Please select all the areas where your project made an impact.

- Student learning and knowledge
- Student engagement and attitudes
- Instructional team teaching practice and satisfaction



- Student wellbeing, social inclusion
- Awareness and capacity around strategic areas (indigenous, equity and diversity)
- Unit operations and processes
- Other: [please specify]

**3.2. What were you hoping to change or where were you hoping to see an impact with this project?** – *Please describe the intended benefits of the project for students, TAs, instructors and/or community members.*

- **Students:** We wanted to expose students to signed languages in a regular and rigorous way. Even in introductory courses where sign languages are currently mentioned, any explanation of how sign languages fit into the discipline is frequently limited to overt statements that sign languages are linguistically “the same” as spoken languages, with very little concrete illustration of how this is so (or where they differ). This treatment leaves students unequipped to work with sign languages or interact successfully with those who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing. By exposing students to sign languages as a recurring, regular part of their linguistics curriculum, we hope to change their view and understanding of sign languages and what it means to be d/Deaf.
- **Instructors:** Instructors, too, often have been indoctrinated that sign languages are “similar” to spoken languages, but are not always equipped to concretely illustrate that similarity in their courses. There *are* differences because of the difference in modalities, and many instructors feel unequipped to properly integrate sign languages into their courses. We wanted to make this a smoother, easier, and less intimidating task by creating some datasets that fit into pre-existing curricula and thus enhance their lesson plans without too much effort on their part.
- **Community members:** While community members are not directly affected by this project, there are indirect benefits. In particular, many of our students choose a career path of audiology or speech language pathology, where they will run into users of sign languages relatively often. It is thus imperative that they have a realistic and sympathetic understanding of signed languages and d/Deafness in a way that is relatively comparable to their understanding of spoken languages. We hope that this program will result in better-qualified practitioners in the community.

**3.3. Were these changes/impacts achieved? How do you know they occurred?** – *What evaluation strategies were used? How was data collected and analyzed? You are encouraged to include copies of data collection tools (e.g. surveys and interview protocols) as well as graphical representations of data and/or scenarios or quotes to represent and illustrate key themes.*

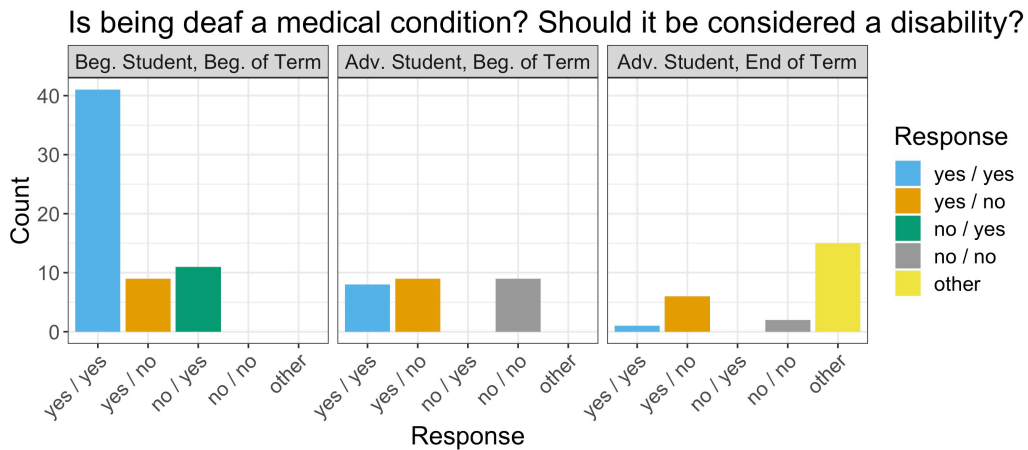
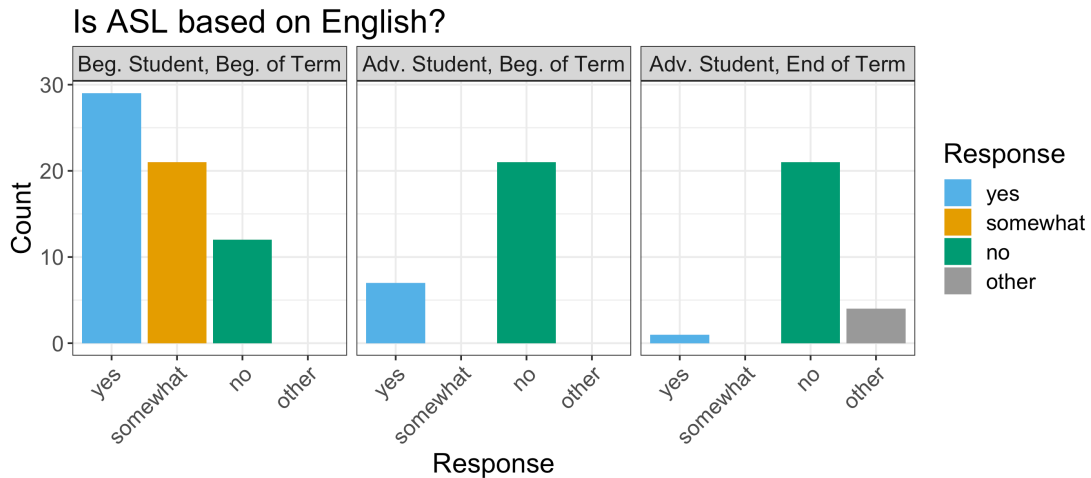
- We created a beginning-of-term / end-of-term survey for students to probe their knowledge of / understanding of signed languages, but we don’t have all of the data for



all of the courses. Below are two examples, however. (One example of the survey, designed for higher-level students, is here:

[https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bPChUV1LAV20DvT](https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bPChUV1LAV20DvT)).

- In each case, the data from the first graph is from students in Ling 100 without any prior training in linguistics; the data in the second graph is from advanced students in Ling 447 who have had linguistics courses but not specifically training in sign language linguistics; and the data in the third graph is from those same students at the end of the term, once they have been exposed to sign languages in a more systematic way.
- The first set of graphs shows responses to the linguistic question “Is American Sign Language based on English?” Here, we can see that the majority of beginning students in Ling 100 thought that yes, ASL is based on English (at least somewhat), which is incorrect. Advanced students at the beginning of a term were much more likely to correctly say “no,” but even then, a handful thought yes. By the end of the term, only one maintained this misconception, and several of the others actually had an even more nuanced view (indicated by the handful of “other” responses).
- The second set of graphs shows responses to the cultural questions “Is being deaf a medical condition, and should it be considered a disability?” Almost everyone in Ling 100 thought the answers to both questions were “yes.” The students in Ling 447 started out with an interesting dichotomy: the majority thought that it is definitely a medical condition, but were split on whether it’s a disability. Meanwhile, a sizeable minority thought it was definitely NEITHER a medical condition NOR a disability. By the end of the term, almost all the students had a much more nuanced view of the situation, with most of them choosing “other” (because the question especially of disability is largely a cultural and personal decision by people who are d/Deaf).
- Although it would be ideal to have graphs from before and after in a single introductory course, these data do at least indicate that our students come into the program with large misconceptions about d/Deafness and signed languages, and that even our advanced students (coming through the program with no explicit instruction in signed languages) have a lot to learn. They also demonstrate that concerted efforts to include information about signed languages in the curriculum can change student understanding.



**3.4. Dissemination** – Please provide a list of **past** and **upcoming** scholarly activities (e.g. publications, presentations, invited talks, etc.) in which you or anyone from your team have shared information regarding this project.

- We presented at the 2019 TLEF showcase:  
[https://www.dropbox.com/s/bkej3r1abd3ls3c/2019\\_Hall\\_TLEF\\_Showcase\\_Poster.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/bkej3r1abd3ls3c/2019_Hall_TLEF_Showcase_Poster.pdf?dl=0)
- We plan to present information about the project to the Linguistics Department at a Teaching Discussion Group meeting in the 2019-2020 school year.
- We will be mentioning aspects of this project as part of a larger research presentation at the conference on Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR: <https://www.idgs.uni-hamburg.de/en/tislr2019.html>) in September 2019.

**4. TEACHING PRACTICES** – Please indicate if **your** teaching practices or those of **others** have changed as a result of your project. If so, in what ways? Do you see these changes as sustainable over time? Why or why not?



- I have long been interested in including sign languages as part of the curriculum in my courses. A few years ago, I tried to do so in Ling 200 by having a day at the end of the semester about sign languages, and while the students were interested, it was not sustainable in other terms and also not satisfactory to me. It was not sustainable because I often didn't have an "extra" day in the syllabus, and the topic wasn't "required" for future courses, so it was easily cut. It also wasn't satisfactory, because it promoted the idea that sign languages are "other" or different from spoken language, rather than really emphasizing that they have analogous structure to all other known human languages. Through the implementation of the TLEF project, I had a set of resources that allowed me to incorporate signed languages relatively seamlessly from the first day of class in Ling 200 this past summer term. It didn't feel like it took any "extra" time to include them in the class, and by referencing them at multiple points during the term, I think the students had a better understanding of the real similarities across signed vs. spoken modalities. I am sure this was more effective, and it is also much more sustainable.
- We have had less of an immediate impact on others so far, but we have sent the materials to other instructors, who are interested at least in principle in incorporating them, and I think that by targetting our initial efforts on Ling 200, our students themselves will help push the initiative forward into higher-level courses.

**5. PROJECT SUSTAINMENT** – *Please describe the sustainment strategy for the project components. How will this be sustained and potentially expanded (e.g. over the next five years). What challenges do you foresee for achieving the expected long-term impacts listed above?*

- The current course materials will need to be somewhat massaged to make them more uniform and accessible to instructors (they vary in terms of how much contextualization and support are included). They also need to be transferred to a more central repository and explicitly shared with other instructors.
- The ASL-Lex database is coded, but the coding was done in separate chunks, and those chunks need to be merged before the corpus can be made publicly available.
- Both of these tasks require sustained investment, either of time or money to hire another RA to finish them, and it would have been nice to have a bit more of a small "follow-up" funding source for them.
- Now that we have a model for the materials, though, along with a database of ASL transcriptions and software for analyzing them, it will be easier for me and other instructors to create similar exercises and add them to the repository.
- The biggest challenge will be actually getting these materials into the classrooms of other instructors, as people are often quite set in their ways and course plans, and it can seem daunting for them to find the time to learn about the materials and to incorporate them. There is talk in our department of having a regular "Teaching Discussion Group," which would facilitate a platform for sharing the materials and my experiences in how best to incorporate them.