

VIDUSIGN – USING CREATIVE VIDEO FOR EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG DEAF

Bernd Holzgethan equalizent Ltd., Vienna, Austria

ABSTRACT

Vidusign is a crosseuropean project with the goal of empowering young deaf people in the labour market through a creative and visual approach.

Videos are a powerful tool for self-expression according to the needs and strengths of deaf people. Videos have already been used in the past, but mostly in a static and not in a creative way.

Vidusign explores how videos can be used by young deaf people as empowerment tool in order to facilitate their access to the labour market.

Teachers for young deaf people are a target group as well as the young deaf people themselves. They gain knowledge about video production and explore the potential of using videos for better chances in the labour market.

In workshops trainers and young deaf people gain knowledge about video production and how videos can be used in creative ways. They develop pilot videos as best practice examples. Additionally Vidusign is building up a repertoire of literature and best practice videos. All these experiences are then used to produce pedagogical materials (printed/online materials, video tutorials) for teacher, training institutes and associations. A package-tool contains best practice examples, literature, pilot videos and an online tutorial in visual language. This pedagogic material can be used by teachers or young deaf people in the future.

Video

Nowadays young people grow up using a lot of different media. Videos are a medium that provide infinite creative possibilities. They are a tool to help discover their own hidden thoughts, wishes and skills. Videos require knowledge about the technology but also ideas and creativity. That's why Vidusign helps young deaf people to use videos not only in a static, but also in a creative way. Videos are a suitable tool for deaf people in general, as their approach to language is visual. Vidusign works with these visual skills and tries to develop them even further. The project considers these specific potentials of deaf people and offers them a tool for improve them. So working with videos gives the young people the chance to empower themselves and recognise their competences.

Vidusign - What is it about?

In the beginning young deaf people get in touch with the new media in general. The first workshop is meant to awaken their interest. On the one hand they learn techniques such as editing software, photographic techniques and usage of other new media. They improve their practical knowledge through experimenting with different video techniques (for example Stop Motion). This practical approach is very important as brain research proved that it is impossible to improve one's skills without actively working within a topic and getting to know things by learning by doing.

Additionally to the technical training the teenagers and young adults are encouraged to develop their creativity. They work on tasks like “What is fun for you?”, “What are your hobbies?”, “10 seconds for my sign: What I always wanted to tell everybody”, “Who am I?” and “What are my goals?”. The goal is for the participants to figure out what they want to express and what they don't and therefor figure out what is the best way/technique to implement this decision. For this process everything is allowed, which demands the ability of self-perception.

In a world dominated by spoken language it is of special importance that the deaf young people are encouraged to create videos using sign language as this is the language they feel most comfortable with, as it is highly and emotionally connected with their identity. The production of these videos is a creative and artistic act: the deaf teenagers use sign language poetry to express their thoughts and feelings. This gives them the opportunity to express themselves in their own language and through poetry in a very artistic way as well.

The goal of the technical training, creative work and awareness of their own wishes and strengths finally are used to create a videotaped CV in sign language. With this video CV young deaf people have the chance to apply and introduce themselves and their personality in their own language. The young adults are also supported through job application and video production training: in an ongoing process of self-reflection the participants have to figure out their strengths and weaknesses, they have to decide what and in which way they want to present themselves. The goal is meant to be a conscious decision in which they find their own balance between the requirements of the labour market and respecting their own way of being. It is an empowering process that raises self-confidence as the teenagers themselves make the decisions.

These videos are included in group dynamics and have a huge effect on the deaf young people as they deal with their peer group as well as the world of hearing people. The goal is to work together in teams of hearing and deaf people. The teenagers learn to overcome the anxiety in front of the camera. They handle their fears and insecurities and finally they learn to value and proudly present who they are, what they want to express and to appreciate their way of doing it. Working in a team teaches them to value themselves as well as respecting the others.

Results

Vidusign and the videotaped CVs is a possibility to show the skills of deaf young people to the hearing world. The CVs indicate that the applicant not only has knowledge in video technology, but also that he/she is a creative person. Applicants do not hide their deafness anymore; instead they show it with self-esteem and self-confidence. Companies receiving these applications are initially made aware of deafness.

These young people have learned techniques that can be useful in future jobs. As a result they learn to believe in themselves and gain confidence in their knowledge. The videos were posted on the Vidusign's website and on Facebook where thousands of people have seen them.

In the end everything is collected and turned into pedagogic material such as a booklet, video-tutorials etc. The material helps trainers of young deaf people to use it in class and to enable others to experience a similar enriching and awareness building process.