

## Sign Language Culture as Part of Multiculturalism in Hungary

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of the present study is to investigate sign language culture as part of multiculturalism in Hungary. The study consists of two parts. Referring to the 13 national and linguistic minorities living in the territory of Hungary, the first part gives a short account of the narrower interpretation of multiculturalism according to which it manifests itself within one country. Then the first part introduces the most important provisions of the Sign Language Act, passed in Hungary in November 2009, and as a result, the appearance of the 14th minority group, comprising the community of the Deaf. This part also explains the Hungarian terminology used to denote the deaf and the Deaf, and attempts to formulate the answer to the question whether deafness is a handicap or not. The second part of the study gives a general overview of sign language (SL), concerns briefly the academic research on the properties of SL in Hungary, SL instruction at the University of Miskolc as well as some aspects of intercultural encounters between the hearing and the Deaf. The study comes to the conclusion that hearing people constituting the majority of society have to accept and appreciate sign language culture and find ways of cooperating with the hearing impaired.*

**Keywords:** The deaf and the Deaf, linguistic minority, sign language, sign language culture

### 1. NATIONAL, ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN HUNGARY

A number of national and ethnic minorities have lived in the territory of Hungary for centuries. According to the data of the latest census, minorities constitute 3% of the population of the country. The term and the rights of ethnic and national minorities are set forth in Act No LXXVII, passed in 1993, which stipulates that a minority is any group of people living in the territory of Hungary that constitute a numerical minority within the majority society. Members of a minority are