



# WASLI Newsletter

WASLI is committed to the advancement of sign language interpreting world wide

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### INTRODUCTION

I was invited by MyASLI to be part of their interpreter programme with my colleague Caron Hawkings on a 2-day workshop that looked at mentoring, community and ethics. I was also invited, as WASLI Secretary, to officiate at the launch of MyASLI, which on 13 February 2007 became the latest national interpreter association.

This is a report on the launch.

**Zane Hema (Editor)**

### WASLI AT MALAYSIA ASSOCIATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and is made up of 2 geographical regions: (1) Peninsula Malaysia (or West Malaysia) and (2) Malaysia Borneo (or East Malaysia)

The Malaysian Federation of the Deaf (MFD) is the national organisation that represents the Deaf citizens of Malaysia and its national committee is comprised of representatives from the various states.

MyASLI works closely with the MFD and it was the MFD who were successful in securing funding that to train 100 interpreters over the next 5 years. The first group of students are coming to the end of their first year.



The launch took place at the Pearl International Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. There were about 200 people who attended amongst them invited dignitaries, international guests, Deaf representatives from a number Malaysian states, members of the Deaf community and members of the interpreting community, pupils from the Deaf school and other guests.

The President of the MFD is Mr Mohamad Sazali Shaari. He gave a speech that provided the detail and background to the MFD securing Government funding. He also emphasised the importance of the interpreting association working closely with the Deaf Federation and indicated his pleasure and pride at being able to see MyASLI officially being launched.

The first President of MyASLI is Wan Zuraidah Abu.

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In my speech, I was able to sign greetings in BIM (Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia) and in spoken Malaysian "Salam Sejahtera", and to also read a letter of greetings from the WASLI President.

I also spoke of the WASLI aims and objectives with the first objective being 'to encourage the establishment of interpreting associations in countries that do not have them'. Malaysia has become the fourth known country in the WASLI Asia Region to have an interpreter association (behind Japan, the Philippines and South Korea). I added how crucial it was that the interpreter association work alongside the Federation of the Deaf and how challenging it will be as they face the task of training 100 interpreters over the coming 5 years.

Finally I stated that WASLI is committed to support MyASLI in its work to develop the profession of sign language interpreting in Malaysia. Following my speech I was invited to officially launch MyASLI.

This was done, not by cutting a ribbon, but by pressing a key on a laptop that was connected to a big screen. The screen came alive with graphics of fireworks that announced MyASLI and then a series of images that profiled the work of the MFD with interpreters.

After the computer graphics presentation, a series of gifts were exchanged and it was a pleasure to be presented with a gift to WASLI. This was a plaque made of pewter showing the Kuala Lumpur skyline featuring the Petronas Towers. MyASLI also presented their official membership application to join WASLI as a National Member.

It was equally my pleasure to present the President of MFD and the First President of MyASLI with gifts including copies of the WASLI 2005 Conference Proceedings.



I would like to thank Mohamad Sazali Shaari and Wan Zuraidah Abu for their kind hospitality; for the time and energy into the preparation of the event; and for their work and commitment to seeing the profession of sign language interpreting develop in Malaysia.

I also need to mention Adrienne Goh for all her support and for making sure I was where I was supposed to be at the right time.

For information on Malaysia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysia>

## WASLI NEWS A REPORT ON POLAND



Population: 38,128,000 (2006)  
 Deaf People: 100,000  
 Deaf Sign Language Users: 40-50,000

### SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

The number of Polish Sign Language interpreters quoted by Maya de Wit in her recent report as declared by the Polish Association of the Deaf (PZG) amounts to 200. It might be assumed that the number indicates only the interpreters that are officially registered at the Association. The number of interpreters working as freelancers not connected with the Association remains unknown. As for full-time and part-time interpreters, even within the Association the distinction appears problematic, though. Presumably the majority of interpreters employed there are at the same time social workers, the Association administrative staff, or otherwise have another source of income apart from interpreting.

ing. Interpreters not registered at the Association are mainly part-time interpreters combining their full-time employment as teachers, clerks, etc. with working for the Deaf community.

### INTERPRETER ASSOCIATION

There is no professional organisation for sign language interpreters in Poland. For many years, the Polish Association of the Deaf has provided the main pool of interpreters. At the same time, there have always been many interpreters not involved in the Association (usually CODAs) working as freelancers. The Association is the only nationally authorised body providing interpreting programmes and certification. The problem is, however, that the communication method propagated and accepted by the Association is manually coded Polish, the so-called sign-language system. Many of the freelance interpreters are not certified (even CODAs) because they disagree with the Association's language policy.

Recently a small organisation called Institute of Polish Sign Language has been established in Warsaw. The organisation includes teachers, interpreters and researchers. One of its objectives for the nearest future is to develop a interpreting programme and establish an association of sign language interpreters.

### INTERPRETER TRAINING

As mentioned before, to date the only organisation offering officially recognised interpreting programmes is the Polish Association of the Deaf (Polski Związek Gluchych - PZG) established in 1946. It has its headquarters in Warsaw and local branches and units in all voivodships. The unit of the Association responsible for the interpreting training is Educational Sign Language Centre situated in Warsaw.

The focus of the two-stage interpreter training (T1 and T2) provided by the Centre is on the acquisition of signs of the manually coded Polish (sign-language system). The programme seems to ignore the basics of interpreting: interpreting process, techniques, ethics, etc.

What can be considered the most important event for sign language interpreters in the last two years is the introduction of The Act on the Profession of a Sworn Translator and Interpreter on 25 November 2004. The Act recognises sign language interpreting as a profession, referring to sign language interpreters as "expert witnesses", though.

(Thank you to Alex Kalata from Poland, for this report)

### NEXT EDITION

In the next edition there will be a report from the WASLI visit to Singapore and in later editions will be reports from a survey on the sign language interpreter situation in the Asia region; plus interviews from 2 sign language interpreters whom have the honour of living the furthest north and the furthest south.

### The WASLI Executive Board

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### WASLI BOARD

Officers: Liz Scott Gibson (President); Philemon Akach (Vice President); Zane Hema (Secretary)

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