

Annual report from “The Nordic network on Tactile Language” to the Nordic leadership forum of deafblindness. An overview over the process and work of the network in -2021.

Aim and purpose of the network

The purpose of the network is to find the core points in tactile language, in order to understand how the tactile modality is used when people with congenital deafblindness speak. The network sees a need for being more specific about language in a tactile modality.

More knowledge is needed to develop intervention that supports language development in the tactile modality. The network aims to spread the knowledge into the practitioner field to support language development among people with deafblindness.

Members of the network

Jessica Jägryd / Caroline Lindström (Sweden)

Nedelina Ivanova (Iceland)

Helle Buelund Selling / Susanne Jensen (Denmark)

Marit Irene Vie (Norway)

Sini Peltokorpi (Finland)

Network meetings in 2021:

April 20th : Online meeting

- Evaluation of the first webinars in the beginning of 2021
- Planning for webinars during the autumn/winter 2021

October 8th : Online meeting

- Presentation and joint reflections about Tactile language from a linguistic perspective
- Discussions about future plans holding a course about Tactile language in Denmark 2022

November 19th : Online meeting

- Detailed planning of a course about Tactile language in Denmark 2022
- Planning activities for 2022

Activities 2021

To achieve the purpose and overall aim for the network these tasks have been accomplished during 2021:

Welcoming four new members

- During 2021 we welcomed four new members in our network. Jessica Jägryd from Sweden, Marit Irene Vie from Norway, Susanne Jensen from Denmark and Sini Peltokorpi from Finland. The network has been short on members since 2020 and we are glad to finally be a whole group again
- **Webinar series based on the book “If you can see it, you can support it”**
- Originally our network had planned to organise a physical course about Tactile language in Denmark in 2021. Due to Covid19 that plan was not possible, instead our network planned a webinar series based on the book “If you can see it you can support it”. During 2021 eight different chapters from the book was highlighted and developed through webinars online:
 - January: Chapter 2: Tactile language – a circle model, Bettina Kastrop Pedersen
 - February: Chapter 14: Partners’ contribution to language development in a bodily tactile modality, Caroline Lindström
 - March: Chapter 15: When Trine says GRANDMA ... What is on her mind?, Kari Schjøll Brede
 - April: Chapter 5: Language must be sensorily accessible, Helle Buelund Selling
 - May: Chapter 11: Language development in the tactile modality through outdoor activities, Joe Gibson
 - October: Chapter 12: From bodily experiences to meaning construction, Kirsten Costain,
 - November: Chapter 17: Illustrations of Multi-party communication Sofi Malmgren and Jessica Jägryd
 - December: Chapter 6: We hear with our brains, Rolf Mjønes

The authors of the chapters were invited to speak at a one-hour webinar in English. Each webinar was recorded by The Nordic welfare centre and is accessible afterwards for anyone who is interested through NVC:s You Tube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/nordicwelfare1/videos>

After our evaluation of the webinar series we can conclude that it has been a really good format to spread information through on this topic. The participants liked the mix of video/practice and theory. In each webinar it was approximately between 50-70 participants and aside from the Scandinavian countries they also participated from Italy, England and Brazil.

Working day and collaboration with the network Communicative relations

- Our two networks have been collaborating the recent years since we share the same focus of language development in a bodily tactile modality, yet from slightly different perspectives. The knowledge, developed within Communicative relations, is incorporated and built upon further in Tactile language. Both networks also influence and are influenced by the Nordic master on Atypical communication.
- Our networks arranged an online working day together in September 2021. The theme for the day was “Congenital deafblindness and access to social and cultural contexts”. Anstein

Gregersen was invited this day to give a lecture about the topic and after that we did video analysis together applying the concept to a case in the video.

Attending the Alumni network meeting for the master programme in Groningen. This year the meeting was held online via Zoom.

- For several years it has been important for our network to collaborate and attend the alumni network for the master programme in Groningen. The work within our network has been influenced a lot from the content in the master programme since many members in the network, both former and present, have graduated in Groningen.
- In October 2021 members from our network attended the alumni meeting which contained presentations from Paul Hart, Scotland, and João Canossa Dias, Portugal.

Spreading information and knowledge through the Network's Facebook group "Nordisk Taktil sprogligheds gruppe"

- Our network started a Facebook group in 2011. The group function as a channel to spread information and to reach professionals and families in different countries. It is also a channel where everyone can share with each other on the topic Tactile language.

INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTION AND COLLABORATION

In 2021 our network has started to contribute to and collaborate with other networks and professionals internationally. This new approach to collaboration has been a consequence after the publication of the English version of the book "If you can see it you can support it" in 2019 and the webinar series based on the book which was held in English in 2021. These different tasks in our network has contributed to us reaching out outside of Scandinavia with the topic of Tactile language. The Nordic work and the international work has therefore been parallel processes for our network during 2021.

Request from Dbl:s Latin American network

- In spring 2021 after the first webinars were published online from our webinar series NVC got a request from the Latin American network within Dbl. They were asking if they could translate the whole series to Portuguese to use in their education to families in Brazil. We can therefore gladly report that the work in our network will contribute to families in Brazil.

Collaboration with Texas school for the blind and visually impaired (TSBVI)

- In September 2021 our network was contacted by professionals in Texas, Austin. They had seen our book "If you can see it you can support it" as well as our webinars online and were interested in a collaboration about the topic Tactile language. In Texas they have an online programme called "The Texas deafblind project" in which they intend to spread information about deafblindness in relation to interaction and communication.

The professionals within TSBVI were very keen on developing their work further on the topic of Tactile language and were planning to hold a study group with the book “If you can see it you can support it” as a base.

- Our network met online with Texas in December 2021 where we both talked about our work and about the topic Tactile language. We both agreed on that a collaboration between us could benefit both ways since our network would like other’s input on how the book can be implemented in practice and Texas would like more input in general about the topic. Texas is also working on assessment/evaluation about tactile communication which could be interesting for the future work of our network.

Future plans:

- Arranging one or several workshops in one or more Scandinavian countries about Tactile language. The workshop will be aimed at practitioners and family members combining theory with their daily work/life together with persons with congenital deafblindness.
- Continuing our webinar series about “Tactile language” in 2022. There are still a few chapters left to arrange webinars about.
- Continuing our collaboration with the network Communicative relations.
- Attending and contributing at the Nordic conference in Tampere, Finland 2022
- Continuing our collaboration with Texas
- Reaching out to family members about the topic of Tactile language
- Focus on developing our work on describing Tactile language from a linguistic perspective

Norrköping, April 13th 2022

Caroline Lindström, National Resource Centre of Deafblindness, Sweden.