

# The TUB Sign Language Corpus Collection

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## Abstract

We present a collection of parallel corpora of 12 sign languages in video format, together with subtitles in the dominant spoken languages of the corresponding countries. The entire collection includes more than 1,300 hours in 4,381 video files, accompanied by 1.3 M subtitles containing 14 M tokens. Most notably, it includes the first consistent parallel corpora for 8 Latin American sign languages, whereas the size of the German Sign Language corpora is ten times the size of the previously available corpora. The collection was created by collecting and processing videos of multiple sign languages from various online sources, mainly broadcast material of news shows, governmental bodies and educational channels. The preparation involved several stages, including data collection, informing the content creators and seeking usage approvals, scraping, and cropping. The paper provides statistics on the collection and an overview of the methods used to collect the data.

## CCS Concepts

• **Computing methodologies** → **Machine translation**; **Natural language processing**; **Computer vision tasks**; **Language resources**; • **Applied computing** → *Language translation*; • **Human-centered computing** → **Accessibility systems and tools**.

## Keywords

sign language, parallel corpora, German Sign Language, Peruvian Sign Language, Costa Rican Sign Language, Colombian Sign Language, Chilean Sign Language, Argentinian Sign Language, Mexican Sign Language

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## 1 Introduction

Language technology has made enormous progress over the last decade, resulting in several popular and helpful products and services. However, it should be noted that while this progress has been observed for spoken languages, progress with regard to technology for sign languages has been limited. As sign languages are the primary means of communication for deaf and many hard-of-hearing individuals, this lack of progress means that approximately half a billion people worldwide have fewer opportunities to experience the benefits of language technology, and therefore are disadvantaged with regard to communication and access to information and knowledge. It should also be noted that for most sign language users, written language is a second language. This can lead to difficulties accessing most online content, which is predominantly textual, and limits benefits from text-based technologies. We therefore believe that it is the responsibility of the language technology research community to encourage and empower research into relevant developments for sign languages, with the aim of increasing accessibility and lowering communication barriers around the world.

A crucial element in the progress of language technology for spoken languages has been the focus on collecting and curating language corpora. This has facilitated research in fields such as *computational linguistics* and *natural language processing*. More recently, the conception and use of data-intensive empirical methods and machine learning has unlocked great potential in terms of functionality and applications, but this has depended on the availability of large amounts of corpora. These corpora are predominantly textual and usually originate from publicly available web data that have been pre-processed and curated for specific tasks. A relevant subcategory of these corpora are the so-called *parallel corpora*, i.e. collections of content expressed in two or more languages in a way that can be aligned, allowing training of machine learning models for multilingual tasks, such as machine translation, multilingual summarization etc..

Unlike spoken languages, almost all sign languages suffer from a lack of corpora. We believe this is one of the reasons why the research and development of sign language technologies has been limited. Although significant efforts have been made in recent years, with several datasets being released, these still only cover a few sign languages and are nowhere near what is required to train large-scale models similar to those available for spoken languages.

In an effort to improve this situation, we present the TUB sign language corpus collection: a set of parallel corpora sourced from the web containing videos of various sign languages alongside textual transcriptions of the dominant spoken languages of the countries where the respective SLs are used. The important contributions of this collection are the following:

- the entire collection comprises 1,391 hours of continuous sign language videos, totalling 440 GB across 4,381 files,
- the videos are accompanied by 1,335,320 timed closed captions (subtitles) in the respective spoken language (manually or automatically generated), in overall including 14 M tokens,
- the corpora are manually collected from internet sources by 8 native speakers of the respective spoken languages,

- the licences of the content have been verified, the content creators have been informed, and additional permissions have been sought and obtained by the majority of them,
- the vast majority of the content consists of the interpretation of spoken televised or streamed content,
- the content mostly falls in the domains of news reporting, government announcements and educational material
- it includes the first parallel corpora of continuous sign language for 8 sign languages of Latin America.

The collection is available open source in form of a catalogue, which is licensed under the MIT licence<sup>1</sup>.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: In Section 2 we provide an overview of the state-of-the-art sign language corpora and outline how our work compares to them. The construction of the collection is detailed in Section 3. The content of the collection is described in Section 4 whereas our view on the limitations is given in Section 5 and a conclusion is provided in Section 6.

## 2 Related Work

In this section we provide an overview of the state-of-the-art corpora for the sign languages included in our collection. An overview is given in Table 1.

YouTube-SL-25 [24] is the biggest and most multilingual parallel corpus between sign language videos with spoken language text. It contains solid representation of 25 languages and amounts to 3,207 hours of content. Our effort is similar to this corpus in that it contains content from multiple sign languages from around the world, as well as a large number of videos sourced from YouTube. One major difference is that, whereas the YouTube-SL-25 videos were selected using an automatic classifier, our videos were manually handpicked. In addition to what is provided by YouTube-SL-25, our collection includes extensive metadata containing licence information and domain labels. We have also communicated with the content creators to inform them about the data collection and obtain additional permissions. Finally, we can confirm that the YouTube videos referred to by our collection do not overlap with those included in YouTube-SL-25.

One of the most used sign languages, **American Sign Language (ASL)**, has the largest amount of available continuous sign language corpora. The largest such corpus is YouTube-ASL [24], providing 1,000 hours of signed content, sourced from YouTube, as a predecessor of YouTube-SL-25. The next largest dataset of considerable size is How2Sign [8], comprising a vocabulary of 16k tokens and 79 hours of video. It features 11 signers and provides loosely aligned sentence-level transcriptions, gloss-level transcriptions, OpenPose keypoints, depth camera images, and speech tracks from the video sources. The FLEURS-ASL [23] corpus comprises approximately 15 hours of sign language video data and is primarily intended for benchmarking MT models that translate ASL to text of the spoken languages included in FLEURS [6] and FLORES [11].

**German Sign Language (DGS)** has the following available continuous sign language corpora. The DGS-Corpus[13] consists of 50 hours of original content expressed in DGS. The corpus has been collected by 330 participants across Germany and is intended for linguistic usage. RWTH-PHOENIX-Weather [10] has been used as a

<sup>1</sup><https://github.com/DFKI-SignLanguage/TUB-Sign-Language-Corpus-Collection>

Corpus Name	Sign Language	Spoken Language	Duration (hrs)	Annotation Granularity
Youtube-SL-25	Various (25)	Various	3,207	Sentences
Youtube-ASL	ASL	English	1,000	Sentences
How2Sign	ASL	English	80	Sentences, glosses
FLEURS-ASL	ASL	English	15	Sentences
DGS Corpus	DGS	German	50	Sentences, glosses
RWTH-PHOENIX	DGS	German	13	Sentences, glosses
DGS-Fabeln1	DGS	German	3	Sentences
Matignon-LSF	LSF	French	39	Sentences
MEDIAPI-SKEL	LSF	French	27	Sentences
Dicta-Sign-LSF-v2	LSF	French	11	Sentences, glosses
Rosetta-LSF	LSF	French	2	Sentences, glosses
CORLSE	LSE	Spanish	380	Sentences
KSL dataset	KSL	Korean	20	Sentences, glosses

Table 1: An overview of sign language datasets, sorted by language.

benchmark for machine translation from sign to text, despite having received criticism for its quality [7]. The videos were derived from the weather forecast of the German public TV broadcasting service PHOENIX and have a resolution of 210x260 pixels, accumulating to 3.25 hours of content. DGS-Fabeln-1 [19] is a parallel corpus of German text and videos containing German fairy tales interpreted into DGS by a native DGS signer. The corpus is filmed from 7 angles and contains 573 segments of videos with a total duration of 1 hour and 32 minutes, corresponding to 1,428 written sentences. The size of the DGS parallel corpora that are included in our collection is ten times the size of the DGS corpora available so far.

For **French Sign Language** (LSF), Matignon-LSF [12] is a 39-hour corpus of interpreted government speeches, featuring aligned LSF videos with French audio/subtitles. Dicta-Sign-LSF-v2 [1] contains 11-hour travel-themed dialogues with 18 signers with annotation on both lexical and non-lexical signs. MEDIAPI-SKEL [4] contains 27 hours of video of body, face and hand keypoints of originally-signed sign language, aligned to subtitles. Rosetta-LSF [2] focuses on text-to-sign translation through virtual signers and aligns French news headlines with LSF videos and AZee formal representations. For **Spanish Sign Language** (LSE), the corpus that stands out is CORLSE [22] with over 380 hours of continuous LSE video recordings, featuring naturalistic and semi-structured discourse from more than 200 deaf signers from diverse regions across Spain. The KSL dataset [14] is the biggest representant of **Korean Sign Language** and contains 90 hours of 3-camera recordings of discussions, stories, and lexical elicitation.

For **Latin American sign languages** included in our collection, to the best of our knowledge, there is no consistent parallel corpus of continuous sign language. Small corpora for isolated signs or focused linguistic studies are available for the sign languages of Argentina [15, 21], Chile [16], Colombia [9], Costa Rica [18] and Mexico [25]. To the best of our knowledge, no resources exist for the sign languages of Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru.

### 3 Construction of the Corpus Collection

The construction of the corpus collection consisted of the manual search for the sources, the collection of the licensing information and the processing of the content.

#### 3.1 Manual Search of Sign Language Sources

The sign language content used for this corpus was manually collected by eight hearing individuals, all native speakers of the languages they were responsible for. This group included native speakers of French, German, Korean and Spanish from Latin America. Having speakers of the spoken language conduct the search process was crucial, as they could more easily allocate and identify signed content relating to politics, academia or the news, or specific types of videos, using keywords (e.g. 'Cadena' for Spanish, meaning 'National Transmission'). Their familiarity with linguistic and cultural context allowed for more targeted and effective search queries.

It is important to note that, although some countries share the same spoken language, such as the United States of America and United Kingdom with English, for example, the SLs used in each country differ. For instance, ASL is used in the United States of America, while BSL (British Sign Language) is used in the United Kingdom. The same applies to Spanish-speaking countries such as Spain and Latin America. Each country in Latin America has its own official sign language: For example, LSM is used in Mexico, LSA in Argentina and LSCh in Chile. The same pattern applies to the SLs of Arabic- and Portuguese-speaking countries.

A significant portion of the search was conducted on the media platform YouTube, which has an interface that allows users to search for videos by topic or channel and apply filters such as the presence of subtitles or closed captions, and whether they are licensed under Creative Commons. This was helpful for clarifying licence requirements, which will be explained later. Nowadays, it is common for news and government channels to include a sign language interpreter, so these were also searched for. These videos either show the interpreter in one of the lower corners of the screen or alongside the person speaking. However, not all videos from

Name	Unit/format
ID	-
Channel ID	-
Video name	-
Release date	YYYY-MM-DD
Website URL	-
Video URL	-
Resolution	pixels x pixels
Video length	HH:MM:SS
Frequency	FPS
Date of acquisition	YYYY-MM-DD
File size	MegaBytes
Subtitles	-
Sentences	-
Tokens	-
Characters	-

Table 2: Metadata table

news or government channels include a sign language interpreter, so an extensive search was necessary. In some cases, we created custom YouTube playlists to isolate sign language videos from channels with a wider range of content.

### 3.2 Collecting Licensing Information

The vision behind creating this collection was to make the corpora as freely and publicly available as possible. Therefore, as previously mentioned, the initial search focused on online sources that publish content under permissive licences. Secondly, we verified the licences of the videos as they were collected individually. Finally, we communicated with the content creators, providing them with a detailed description of our project and its purposes. This enabled us to obtain informed consent for the data collection and additionally resulted in positive permissions being granted, which were not initially available.

The collected corpora are covered by the licences of *public domain*, *creative commons*, *YouTube standard license*, *permission for research usage*, and *permission for research usage after keypoint extraction*.

### 3.3 Processing of content

Subtitles had to be extracted from videos in order to calculate spoken language statistics and include them in the metadata. In some cases, optical character recognition (OCR) was used to extract subtitles that were part of the video. A sentence and word tokeniser was used to tokenise the subtitle text.

Videos were often cropped to isolate the interpreter when they were blended into part of the screen during spoken shows. Cropping the interpreter enables the resolution of the signed content to be calculated, which is a useful technical quality indicator.

## 4 Description of the Corpora

Here we will provide details about the metadata catalogue, statistics on the data and content characteristics of the videos.

### 4.1 Catalogue of Metadata

Following previous work, and due to redistribution restrictions on a substantial portion of the collection, we provide the URL addresses together with extensive metadata. The catalogue of the metadata is provided in two levels:

*Channel list.* The first metadata CSV table lists the *channels* (i.e. content sources), with one row per channel. Aggregated metadata are provided for each channel, including information on the sign language covered, the licence, the total length and size of videos, the number of subtitles, and the number of sentences, tokens and characters they contain. The time period during which the original material was released is also provided.

*Video list.* The videos are listed in a CSV table for each collection. There is one row for each file, which is identified by an incremental ID and accompanied by the relevant video file metadata (Table 2). The first part of the metadata provides a description of the video’s basic characteristics, including the video name, website and video URLs, and the release date. This is followed by technical details such as resolution, video length, frequency in frames per second (FPS), date of acquisition, and file size. The final section refers to the associated content in the relevant spoken language (if available), as well as the number of subtitles, sentences, tokens and characters.

### 4.2 Data overview

An overview of the size of the corpora for every language is provided in Table 3. The corpus collection consists of 4,381 videos in 12 sign languages. The most represented spoken-sign language pairs in terms of video duration are those from Germany, Peru, Costa Rica and Colombia.

The second overview in Table 4 provides details on the content sources that have been included in the corpus for each language. It is also possible to view additional details here, such as the domain to which each content source belongs.

### 4.3 Content types

The content sources are predominantly labelled with one of four content types:

*Political Content.* In terms of video length, political content such as press conferences, parliamentary sessions and official government communications constitutes the largest category in the corpus. Videos from the German parliament (Bundestag) fall under this category, containing the majority of content in DGS. There are 388 videos in this category, with a combined length of 525 hours and half a million transcribed sentences. This category also includes presidential speeches and government content from several Latin American countries and South Korea.

*News Broadcasts.* The news category originates from television broadcasts and includes, among others, the German news bulletin ‘Heute Journal’ (with an average length of 20 minutes), the Chilean news outlet ‘Timeline Antofagasta’, and the Ecuadorian Executive Branch Official Channel ‘Tele Ciudadana’.

*Educational Content.* This category comprises various sources related to educational contexts. These include educational institutions, such as universities, or organisations and channels that

Spoken Language/Dialect	Sign Language	Video Length	File Size (GB)	Videos	Subtitles	Tokens	Characters
Argentinian	LSA	78:54:31	26	306	80,480	456,910	2,555,712
Chilean	LSCh	94:48:59	41	379	71,047	411,961	2,316,400
Colombian	LSC	118:15:47	51	827	143,973	834,068	4,768,925
Costa Rican	LESCO	196:57:24	56	508	19,626	120,151	680,377
Ecuadorian	LSEC	27:43:56	5	41	32,612	193,187	1,118,958
French	LSF	06:50:20	4	73	8,621	58,640	298,368
German	DGS	529:14:52	149	578	541,948	9,669,699	59,706,371
Korean	KSL	04:28:57	3	44	6,322	27,052	96,818
Mexican	LSM	50:13:52	17	247	55,801	281,021	1,524,000
Nicaraguan	ISN	05:01:25	3	30	4,442	15,021	82,576
Peruvian	LSP	270:27:43	81	1,215	362,766	2,195,060	12,502,837
Spanish (*Castilian)	LSE	08:17:15	5	133	7,682	42,867	235,177
<b>Sum</b>		1,391:25:01	440	4,381	1,335,320	14,305,637	85,886,519

Table 3: Corpora statistics aggregated by language pair

promote sign language learning. Unlike the majority of videos in the corpus, which show interpreted content, this category also contains material that is originally produced in a sign language.

*Social Content.* This content refers to videos derived from social organizations, such as unions of the deaf and NGOs.

#### 4.4 Subtitles

One of the core criteria for selecting videos is the availability of subtitles. Subtitles are attached to videos linked by our metadata lists. They are typically provided in VTT, SRT and XML formats (the latter of which allows for word-level segmentation of broader subtitle units).

There are two types of subtitles: those that have been manually created by transcribers and provided by the content providers, and those that have been auto-generated by the video platform. Manually created subtitles are undoubtedly of a higher quality than automatically generated subtitles, which are created using automatic speech recognition and may contain errors. Nevertheless, we believe that auto-generated subtitles are better than no subtitles, and therefore we include them in the collection. However, their usability for relevant tasks must be assessed. Information on whether the subtitles are manually or automatically generated is provided in the metadata of every channel. For auto-generated subtitles, the number of sentences is not reported due to a lack of punctuation.

#### 5 Limitations and Further Work

Although we performed careful manual selection and metadata annotation of the sign language videos, the vast majority of the process has been done by hearing persons, native speakers of the spoken languages on the textual side of the parallel corpora. Despite our efforts, we could only include one signer of DGS but no signers of the other languages in the project. This may entail issues for the identification of the sign languages, the quality of the closed captions, but also requires future circumspection about the compliance with FAIR and CARE principles [5, 26] with regard to the local signing communities. Efforts should be made in further work, and as we did not have access to local communities during

the development of the collection, we kindly invite them to engage with the open source content towards its improvement.

As in most interpreted content, the subtitles provided are a transcription of the spoken content and not the sign language. As the subtitles and the sign language interpretation have been produced most probably independent of each other, based on the spoken content, there may be considerable deviations between the two. An isolated portion of the screen which contains the signing person is not provided in the current version due to licence limitations. We aim to provide co-ordinates and scripts in future updates.

An additional challenge is the timely alignment of the subtitles with the signed content, due to the inevitable variable delay introduced during interpretation. This issue may need to be addressed with further technical means such as segmentation [17, 20] or automatic shifting of the subtitles to match the signed content [3]. We intend to address this limitation in further versions of our corpus.

#### 6 Conclusion

The TUB Sign Language Corpus Collection represents a significant step toward the development of multilingual sign language resources by assembling a large-scale, diverse, and richly annotated dataset of signed videos and corresponding spoken language subtitles. With over 1,300 hours of video across 12 sign languages and extensive metadata, the collection aims to provide a valuable foundation for further research on sign language technology. Future work will focus on increasing the data and their availability, improving temporal alignment, and enhancing community engagement, to better serve both scientific and signing communities.

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SL	Spoken L	Name	Content	Licence	Videos	Length	(GB)	Subtitles	Tokens	Characters	From	To
LSA	Argentinian	Aprender entre rios	Edu	CC	121	05:55:53	3	6,316	36,398	201,226	2015-07-31	2022-10-05
LSA	Argentinian	Universidad Nacional de Entre Rios - Canal 20	Edu	CC	69	05:34:02	4				2014-01-10	2022-10-05
LSA	Argentinian	Casa Rosada - República Argentina	Gov	Public	116	67:24:36	19	74,164	420,512	2,354,486	2010-12-20	2023-12-01
LSCh	Chilean	SaludResponde	Health	YT	17	00:12:45		256	1,503	8,469	2020-04-08	2022-07-20
LSCh	Chilean	Lense Biobio Chile	Edu	YT	36	14:19:59	4	13,262	66,151	344,427	2020-03-26	2022-08-08
LSCh	Chilean	BCNChile	Gov	CC	20	00:27:04		523	2,872	17,520	2021-03-19	2022-04-04
LSCh	Chilean	BCNChile	Gov	CC	203	34:27:45	17				2013-05-09	2022-10-13
LSCh	Chilean	Prensa Presidencia	Gov	CC	7	00:48:05		1,218	7,139	42,676	2015-12-31	2017-12-31
LSCh	Chilean	Cauquenesnet La Web de Cauquenes	News	CC	12	01:26:27	1	1,623	9,003	47,814	2014-01-12	2023-08-01
LSCh	Chilean	Timeline Antofagasta	News	CC	20	11:05:29	7	13,547	79,802	454,352	2021-04-25	2022-12-10
LSCh	Chilean	Terrenos de Chile	Gov	CC	64	32:01:25	11	40,618	245,491	1,401,142	2019-09-27	2021-12-19
LSC	Colombian	Fundesor	Social	YT	13	00:22:58					2015-07-23	2016-09-27
LSC	Colombian	FENASCOL	Social	CC	617	87:51:25	33	105,280	610,678	3,472,239	2011-05-08	2023-05-01
LSC	Colombian	Ayudas Para Todos	Edu	YT	12	00:52:55		865	4,363	23,569	2013-07-16	2020-09-23
LSC	Colombian	Ministerio TIC Colombia	Gov	CC	50	04:47:24	3	5,951	34,627	198,409	2013-05-11	2021-08-24
LSC	Colombian	Presidencia de la República - Colombia	Gov	YT	135	24:21:05	15	31,877	184,400	1,074,708	2013-02-10	2022-12-23
LESCO	Costa rican	Presidencia de la República	Gov	YT	440	182:45:58	53				2018-05-23	2022-12-31
LESCO	Costa rican	OndaUNED	News	CC	27	12:07:10	2	17,038	104,322	592,683	2014-09-25	2022-05-15
LESCO	Costa rican	La Reaccion	News	YT	41	02:04:16	1	2,588	15,829	87,694	2021-01-11	2022-11-08
LSEC	Ecuadorian	TELE CIUDADANA	News	CC	41	27:43:56	5	32,612	193,187	1,118,958	2015-05-19	2016-10-02
LSF	French	Littlebunbao	Edu	YT	73	06:50:20	4	8,621	58,640	298,368	2018-01-16	2022-08-21
KSL	Korean	말해주세요 #새정부에 바란다	News	Public	25	02:17:49	1	3,249	12,747	47,052		
KSL	Korean	뉴텔러 - 키워드로 새롭게 보는 정책	Gov	Public	19	02:11:08	1	3,073	14,305	49,766		
DGS	German	Bundestag	Gov	3Keypoints	388	525:00:43	132	454,700	9,065,020	55,548,592		
DGS	German	Heute Journal	News	Research	190	04:29:04	18	87,248	604,679	4,157,779		
LSM	Mexican	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	Gov	YT	154	31:47:31	7	34,876	165,170	916,187	2020-07-28	2023-06-01
LSM	Mexican	LSM IAPPPS	Edu	YT	33	04:28:13	3	5,656	33,984	189,680	2020-01-04	2022-10-31
LSM	Mexican	LSM Enseñando	Edu	YT	41	09:04:25	3	9,599	44,873	233,340	2020-01-07	2022-10-31
LSM	Mexican	CuriosaMente	Edu	YT	1	00:08:38					2021-02-05	2021-02-05
LSM	Mexican	Brenda Mtz A	Vlog	YT	18	04:45:05	3	5,670	36,994	184,793	2021-12-14	2022-11-02
ISN	Nicaraguan	VOS TV	Edu	CC	30	05:01:25	3	4,442	15,021	82,576	2020-01-10	2021-12-01
LSP	Peruvian	Defensoria del Pueblo Perú	Gov	YT	1,215	270:27:43	81	362,766	2,195,060	12,502,837	2011-01-04	2023-06-01
LSE	Spanish*	CÓRDOBA HOY	News	YT	34	04:04:45	3	4,987	28,675	160,174	2021-10-10	2022-12-06
LSE	Spanish*	MariaOrtiz-LSEnfermeria	Edu	YT	52	00:56:24		727	1,948	12,170		
LSE	Spanish*	Aprender Gratis	Edu	YT	25	01:14:47	1	216	1,237	6,153	2020-09-17	2022-12-26
LSE	Spanish*	otanana	Edu	CC	22	02:01:19	1	1,752	11,007	56,680	2013-07-26	2022-12-18

**Table 4: Details for the content sources (channels) included in the collection. YT: YouTube Standard License**

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