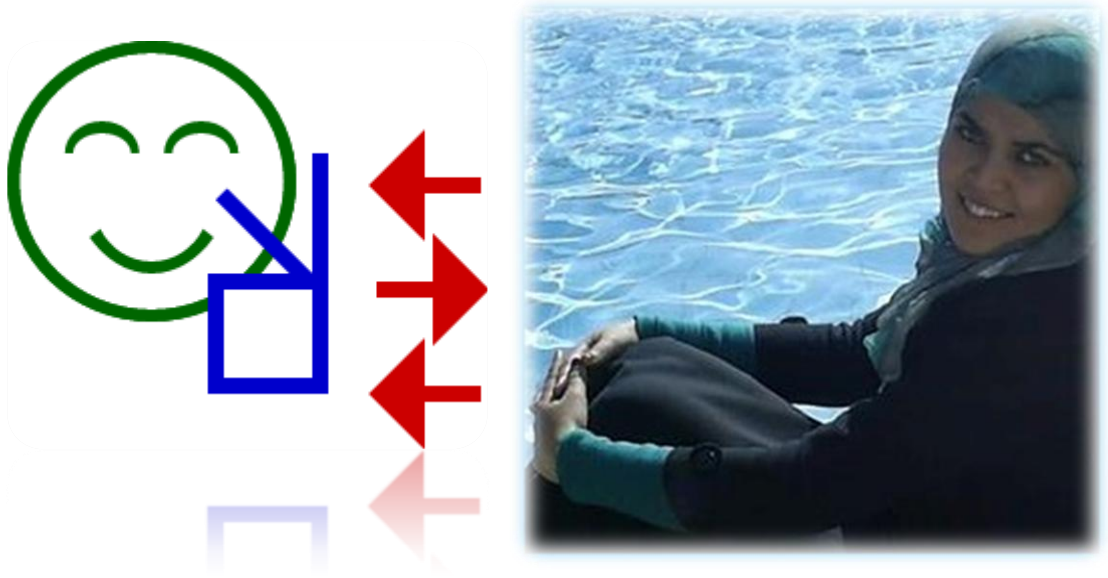


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Wafa Laajili



Wafa did not know much about deaf culture until she started learning Tunisian, French and Arabic Sign Languages. When she was learning Signwriting at her university, she found it boring though she had remarkable marks in the exams.

When preparing for her graduation thesis, she chose, by chance, to write about “The importance of Signwriting in Deaf Children Education”. She had no idea about what was laying ahead.

She contacted a Tunisian Deaf Association, and she explained her project to them. The woman in charge in that association answered her saying: “What is this crazy method? Do you think that using these squares, rectangles and triangles (she meant Signwriting hand shapes) , you can help deaf children learn to speak?”.

That was the biggest shock Wafa had ever had. That made her upset, but she did not give up though she could make her graduation thesis on another topic, and she contacted a Tunisian school “Ecole 17 Rue de la Russie”, and they accepted her project.

Though Wafa was not really convinced of the usefulness of Signwriting per se, she thought that this ought to be tried out.

Wafa was worried about the way to explain Signwriting for 7 and 11 year old children, as she thought that teaching Signwriting would take long time. She was surprised that deaf children could understand and READ Signwriting sentences and texts without any one's help. That was Wafa's first surprise. The second one was when she made different exams written in Arabic and French relating to mathematics, French and Children Science, but the deaf children could not understand them and were angry with her, especially when Wafa did not want to help them, and that was on purpose. These same exams were written in Signwriting, and that was Wafa's second surprise; Children were delightful, they asked Wafa not to help them answer the questions, because they could do it by themselves.

Wafa had never imagined such results, and this experience made her love Signwriting and she is now defending the right of deaf children to use their own language and Signwriting in their studies.

This wonderful experience has remarked Wafa strongly, and her goal now is "Finding ways to make Signwriting spread in all over Tunisia"...

She will never forget her pupil's smile saying to her: "Teacher! I am very happy because I can read on my own without asking for translation! Thank you for teaching me Signwriting!"

Main Works:

- Graduation Thesis "The importance of Signwriting in Deaf Education in Tunisia".
- A 23 minutes video recording deaf children signing using Signwriting.
- A Children story written in Signwriting.