

# SignWriting Workshops in Lisbon, Portugal

Taught by Adam Frost, September 8th-12th, 2009

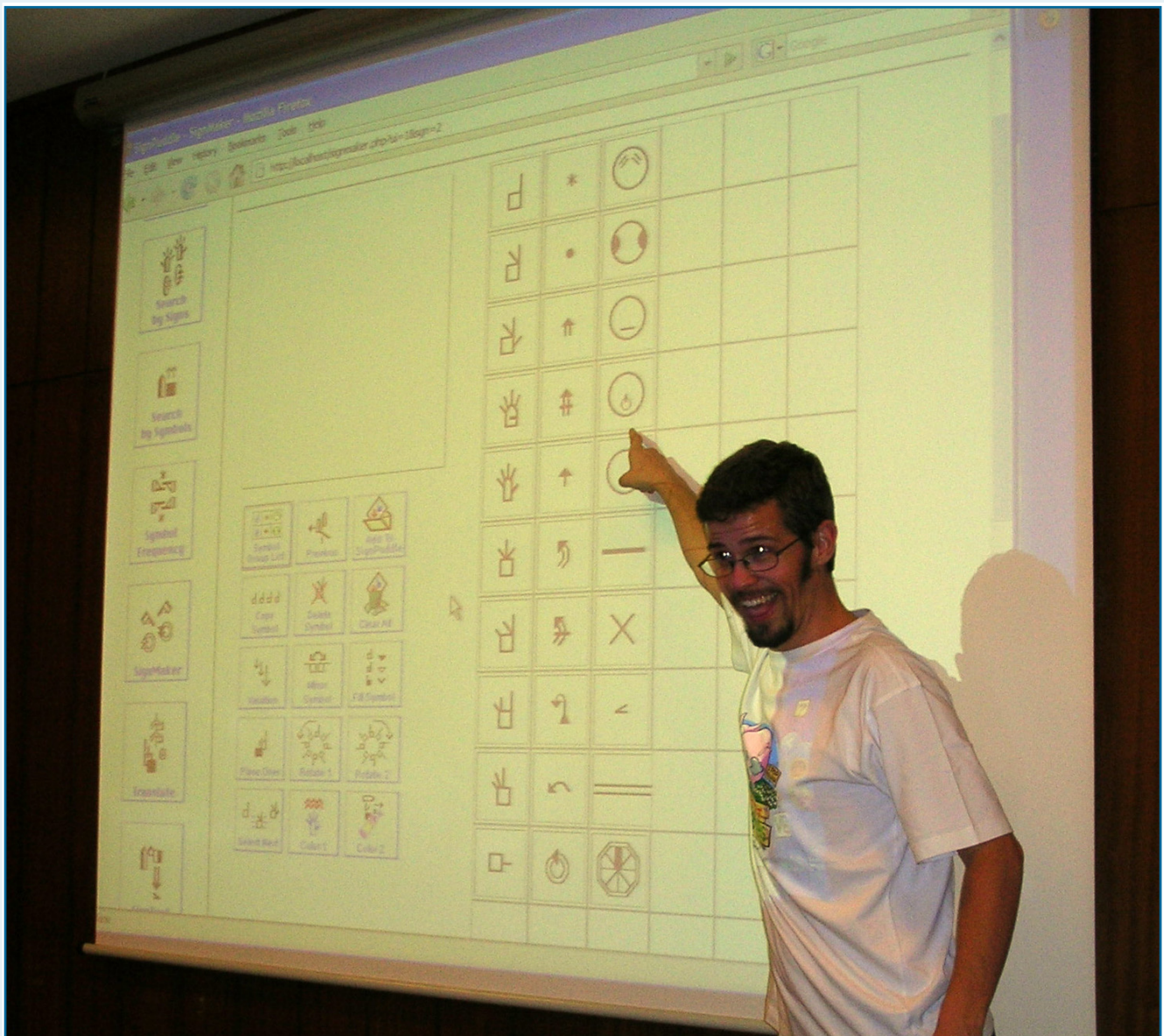


Above, Adam Frost in 2006.  
Below, Adam teaches SignPuddle Software, Lisbon, September, 2009.

## Teacher's Report

by Adam Frost, September 15, 2009

I am excited to tell you about what happened in Portugal last week! I arrived in Lisbon on Sept 7th, and was greeted by friends at the airport. We all had a relaxing time on the beach while we waited for others to arrive for a lunch, which became a dinner. The people at the dinner were the invited presenters of papers at an upcoming conference, which was connected with the workshop that I would teach on Sept 9th and 10th.





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## Teacher's Report continued...

There were people from Brazil, Washington D.C. and Israel. So there were several languages at dinner: English, Portuguese, American Sign Language (ASL), Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS), Língua Gestual Portuguesa (Portuguese Sign Language, LGP), Israeli Sign Language (ISL), and Al-Sayyid Bedouins Sign Language (ABSL), a sign language from a newly found nomad tribe in the Middle East with a high population of deaf people. At dinner, I was the only Deaf person. It was a nice relaxing dinner after a day of traveling to Lisbon.



**Far left:** Dr. Ronice Muller de Quadros, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil, presented a paper on "Letras-LIBRAS, an E-Learning Graduate University Project". **Second left:** Dr. Deborah Chen Pichler, Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., presented a paper "Sign Language as Second Language Acquisition". **Center:** Adam Frost, Deaf Action Committee for SignWriting (DAC), California, presented two SignWriting Workshops. **Right:** Dr. Diane Lillo Martin, University of Connecticut, presented a paper with Ronice on "Constructed Action: Acquisition in ASL and LSB".



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Above: Adam Frost with Professor Ana Mineiro.

## Teacher's Report continued...

The first night, I stayed overnight at Professor Ana Mineiro's beautiful home with her daughter and son. Dr. Mineiro is a researcher at the Instituto de Ciências da Saúde da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, and it is because of Ana and others, that my entire trip to Lisbon was arranged through the University. She and her children are not deaf, but they are learning Língua Gestual Portuguesa (LGP). They tried their best to communicate with me and they did very well!

**Photo Right:** Dr. Wendy Sandler, standing left, from Haifa University in Israel, presented a paper on "The Emergence of Phonology in a New Sign Language: Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language."

**Photo Right:** Dr. Sandra Patrícia de Faria do Nascimento, standing right, from Universidade de Brasília UNB, Brazil, presented a paper entitled: "Lips, Milk, Chocolate, Orange, etc.: A Study of Colors' Names in Brazilian Sign Language."



**Photo Left:** Adam stands with an interpreter, left, and a student, right, from one of his two SignWriting workshops, presented at the Instituto de Ciências da Saúde da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Sept 9 and 10th.



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The next day, Sept 8th, we attended the conference on **Sign Languages Around the World** at the Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, Instituto de Ceincias da Saude. This is the University that paid for my trip to Lisbon to teach SignWriting. All of the presenters I had met the first night, presented at this conference, plus others also gave different presentations related to Sign Language Linguistics. It was nice to see that there was a large group of Deaf people in the audience.



Below: Participants in one of my SignWriting Workshops.





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There are large apartment complexes outside of Lisbon.

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It seems that the academic language in Portugal is English. Interpreters interpreted from English to Portuguese Sign Language (LGP). Then another interpreter, Amilcar, who is Deaf and was sitting next to me, mirrored the LGP to Claudia, also Deaf, who then interpreted LGP into American Sign Language (ASL) for me. Claudia was born in the US and went to a school for the deaf in the US until she was 11, after which her family moved back to Portugal. She mixed ASL, international signs and LGP together. That was the whole day with lunch being provided in a really nice faculty area for those that were presenting/interpreting.



**Above left:** Claudia Dias, Deaf, interpreted from Portuguese Sign Language (Língua Gestual Portuguesa - LGP) to American Sign Language (ASL), during the presentations and workshops. **Right:** Isabel Rodrigues, Deaf, is a teacher at the Jacob Rodrigues Pereira School for the Deaf in Lisbon (Instituto Jacob Rodrigues Pereira, Lisbon).



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I then met with Amilcar and Isabel, his Deaf sister, who I would be staying with the rest of the week. The three of us first went to Ana's home for dinner. There we talked some more and communication between myself and Ana went well since Amilcar and Isabel both know some ASL. Then the three of us went to Isabel's home where I met her husband, Jorge Rodrigues, also Deaf, and their 10 month old son. They gave me their son's future room (when he would be old enough to sleep in a separate room). Jorge joked that I was there just to break in the room for the baby!!



Portuguese doors have many bolts!



While staying with Jorge and Isabel, I really enjoyed sitting with Jorge in his living room, with our computers on, adding LGP signs into SignPuddle Online, in our newly established Portuguese Sign Language Dictionary. It was so great to see his eagerness as well as the light turn on when he understood something. And our LGP dictionary is growing. Visit online: <http://www.signbank.org/signpuddle/index3.html#sgn-PT>.



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On Wednesday I taught my first SignWriting workshop. I was surprised that there was such a big group, most of whom were Deaf. It was an adventure getting the room set up to make it so that everyone could see each other as well as a good placement for the three interpreters. I was also surprised that this was only the first half of two groups. I thought that I would be giving a four part workshop to one group. It turned out that it would be a two day workshop to two different groups, 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the afternoon. The first day I gave a very brief history of SignWriting, and then asked them for signs from their sign language, LGP, that they wish to learn to write. Then I explained the symbols that were used to write each sign they chose. I also was able to learn LGP that way. The two groups were amazed that I could write various signs without even really knowing what they meant. They also asked questions about different symbols here and there, or why something was this way and not that -- the normal questions that people ask when they are learning!





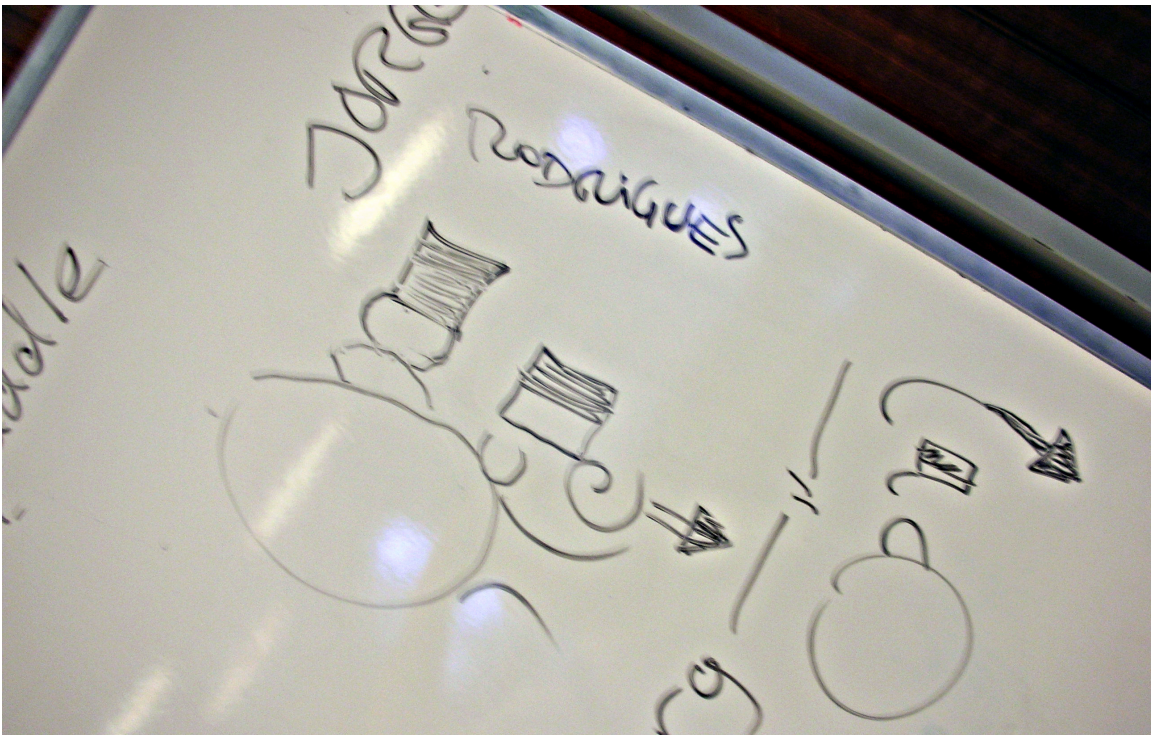
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In the Thursday workshop, I chose signs from SignPuddle Online, from the American Sign Language (ASL) puddle, that I knew were signs that were also used in LGP. I asked them to read them. Many of them tried to tell me the signs from reading the English, but I knew that the signs meant something different in LGP. After they finally understood that I wanted them to read the signs themselves, they realized that the meanings were not the same. This led to interesting comparisons of the two sign languages.

Once they started reading the signs fairly well, I moved on to sentences, which were ASL sentences. That was a little difficult since they didn't have the language knowledge to backup their reading, but they were able to get very close. Then of course they wanted to know the translations. Then I showed them where to go online to use SignPuddle as well as lessons on the SignWriting website and how to join the SignWriting List. I even showed them my blog in SignWriting. They were amazed at all the information online. The last group was a little quiet, so I asked them to come up and write first "D" and then the sign for "Portugal" without my help. They collaborated as a group to get it written correctly. There were several suggestions that were made which helped them realize that they had choices in different ways to write the same sign, which meant the same thing.



Jorge's handwriting of his sign name.



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Then Friday was a "free" day from workshops and presentations, so I went with my new Deaf friends to the school for the deaf, a second opportunity Center for Deaf/Blind/and Deaf-Blind people to find jobs, and then to the Deaf Association where I met several more Deaf people. It was very interesting to see that they were very similar to the Deaf groups that I know here in California. I almost forgot that I was in a different country!

Photo left: The Deaf Association entrance.

Photo below: Isabel and Adam stand in front of the Jacob Rodrigues Pereira School for the Deaf, Lisbon.





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Saturday was a half day with presentations for a different conference, "The Societas Linguistica Europaea 2009 (SLE 2009) Conference", held at the Universidade de Lisboa, in a special workshop called "Listening to Silent Languages". The presentations were mostly the same as the ones that were given on Tuesday with a few new ones. Deb Chan and Diane interpreted for me from ASL to English. During my presentation on SignWriting, participants asked the typical questions: What is SignWriting for? Why use it? How can one learn SignWriting? and I answered them all. So it was a very positive experience.

I traveled home to California on Sunday morning, already missing all the new friends I had made in Portugal! I would love to go back to Lisbon again for a longer time to see everyone again. I would also love to have some time to see the beautiful country of Portugal. I will never forget this wonderful experience...Thank you to everyone, for your kindness and hospitality! Adam Frost, September 15, 2009, frost@signwriting.org

