

Presentation

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Deaf bilingual education has been building its history on a process of international dialogue about experiences from different countries and their unique trajectories of recognising the linguistic rights of deaf communities. This process began with the political mobilisation of deaf movements in defence of their civil rights, and was legitimised in the scientific field by academic research that subverted the dominant theoretical and conceptual models that only considered spoken languages.

From the beginning of the 1990s, and on the basis of the 1980's Swedish model in deaf education (KYLE, 1987; see also SVARTHOLM, 2014), deaf education shifted from a total communication model of education to a bilingual and bimodal one, with many attempts in developing programs utilising sign languages as L1 languages to deaf children (BOUVET, 1990; MARSCHARK; TANG; KNOORS, 2014; MARSCHARK; LAMPROPOULOU; SKORDILIS, 2016; KURZ; GOLOS; KUNTZE et al., 2021; SNODDON; WEBER, 2021).

This shift was based on Cummins' theory of linguistic interdependence, especially the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) according to which, crossing the threshold in development of a first language, aids in the acquisition of a second (CUMMINS, 2021). Thus, developing a threshold in one language — in the case of the deaf child, in a signed language — can aid the attainment of proficiency in another language — in this case, in a spoken language (and later, even in more). Thus, from the 1990s onwards, there is a large number of research (mainly coming from the USA in relation to the American Sign Language - ASL) demonstrating a correlation between deaf children's fluency in a signed language (in ASL) and higher assessment tests for reading (the SAT - Scholastic Assessment Test used in school reading assessment; for a review see HUMPHRIES, 2014).

Linguistic research has been absorbed by educational systems since the early 1990s (GARCIA; BAKER, 1995; BAKER, 2001), and by different forms of bilingual programmes employed in different linguistic communities and socio-cultural educational contexts, in which different linguistic power relations and amounts of language teaching and learning are involved, requiring a pedagogy of language teaching, and a bilingual pedagogy emphasising the role of signed languages in teaching and learning.

To this day (2023), sign languages as academic languages are seen only as languages of instruction that can deliver the national curriculum at all educational levels (pre-school, primary and secondary education). Furthermore, very few countries have official sign language curricula to teach sign language as a subject of study, as an L1 and L2, for deaf and hearing students. Due to these non-linear developments and, of course, the fact that there is little research on how bilingual education for the deaf takes place in schools, this volume entitled "**Bilingual education for the deaf**", set out to compile studies that could contribute to deepening these aspects, based on research that problematises the challenges and contradictions of bilingual education on the international and Brazilian stage.

Whether countries have implemented official or unofficial bilingual policies and/or programmes, there is still the need to inform the field and school practice of how sign languages are treated as first (L1) and/or second languages (L2). In the member countries of the European Union (EU), the USA and Australia (as a few examples to mention), there is a current discussion about the implementation of multilingualism and multiculturalism. In Brazil, bilingual education for the deaf is a consensus in the "letter of the law" of the texts that underpin national policy. Recently, with the approval of the Federal Law 14.191/2021, the modality of bilingual education for the deaf was created, signalling the need for structural changes in education systems, ensuring that access to the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), and Portuguese as an L2 for deaf children, is guaranteed from early childhood education onwards. However, the continental dimension of the country and the profound regional socio-economic differences reflect a discontinuous and multifaceted reality in terms of guaranteeing deaf people's linguistic rights.

In this context, this volume has sought to bring together works that address the teaching and learning of sign languages in various educational systems, both nationally and internationally, with an emphasis on the early years, when deaf children enter mainstream and/or bilingual schools for the deaf. The challenges and problems that deaf people, their families, and educators encounter during the process of implementing bilingual education, and how these issues have been faced and/or overcome, are some of the themes that this issue aims to address, based on the contribution of current research and practices in the field.

Many countries, within the frameworks of special education and inclusion, have established policies that explicitly state that a sign language is the first language in school, and an oral language the second language, mainly in its written form.

However, even with this official recognition, sign language is still offered as an option for hearing parents to choose (or not) for the education of their deaf children. In reality, based on our research experience with school practice and anecdotal conversations with teachers in schools, this option, in most cases, comes second or last and never first. And here comes the paradox, as Plaza-Pust (2016) noted (see also Mertzani in this volume). For example, within the special education and inclusion model, official policies establish sign language interpreting services in ordinary classes with deaf children, with the main argument being that the child will have the necessary access to the language.

For example, if the official language policy line is that a sign language is used only as an instructional language (as mentioned earlier) that serves the learning of a spoken language, sign language appears only as a language of communication and interaction in the classroom and not as a curricular subject of study for the deaf child who grew up in a native deaf environment. The bilingual programme is called *transitional* because the child's native and/or natural language — a spoken and/or sign language other than that of the official curriculum — is used with the aim of developing the child's proficiency in the official national language only.

The focus is on bimodal bilingual education, since it involves two (or three) language modalities¹: signed, spoken (vocal articulation) and written (representing many forms of written codes). This focus was also motivated by the fact that official policies still do not recognise sign languages in deaf education. This phenomenon evokes the school experiences of other linguistic communities, where languages (minority or majority) that are not the official languages of a country do not enter into children's education (especially in language teaching) (see, for example, the interview with Heather Gibson by Mertzani, De Monte and Fernandes in this volume). For example,

¹If we chose to distinguish languages as verbal and written, then we do refer to two modalities only; that is, the verbal, materialised manually by signing or through voice articulation. As there is academic discussion on writing systems that can represent non-written languages (e.g., signed languages, indigenous languages), the written form corresponds to both signed and spoken languages.

Spanish-speaking pupils and/or indigenous-speaking pupils in the USA and Canada, who do not speak English but are taught English in schools.

In bilingual *development programs*, the objective is to maintain the students' native/natural language. Thus, the native/natural language is the basis for learning the majority language in the early years of schooling (e.g., in the kindergarten and the first year of primary education) and the program focuses on the development of both languages, teaching them as curricular components. As the child progresses in school grades, the teaching hours of L1 are reduced, whereas those for L2 are increased (e.g. 30% for L1 - 70% for L2). In *two-way/dual* bilingual programs, both languages are again involved (thus, both languages appear in the national curriculum) but the difference is in the 50:50 teaching model at the early school years. The *immersion* programs have been applied widely in Canada (see Mertzani, De Monte and Fernandes in this volume) for the learning of a L2 (e.g., French), where the target L2 is used in the language classroom (for more detailed discussion see: GARCÍA; LIN; MAY, 2017). Which type(s) of bilingual program(s) are used in the schools (e.g., in bilingual schools of the deaf; in bilingual classes; in the inclusive classes in the mainstream school; in the regular classes)?

There are three contributions from international researchers on experiences that seek to answer these questions.

With the aim of broadening the discussion around inclusive education and how to achieve barrier-free social interactions in an ideal learning environment for hearing-impaired children, Ellen Ormel, Annemarie Kerckhoff, Michelle Baker and Belinda van der Aa bring us their contribution to deaf education on the Dutch scene. In the Netherlands, the majority of deaf and hard of hearing children currently attend mainstream schools with access to Dutch sign language through classroom interpreters, a model that has been criticised by families for partial access to information and unsatisfactory academic results. The article "**Introducing inclusive bimodal bilingual mainstream education in the Netherlands using best practices from Australia**" discusses the experiences of some countries that have developed inclusive, bimodal and bilingual (BiBi) primary education programmes to facilitate equal access to information in spoken and sign language. In particular, the researchers describe the history and best practices of Toowong State School in Brisbane, Australia, which serves as one of the models for the first Dutch BiBi programme. The sensitisation and training of teaching teams, the definition of roles for teaching assistants and sign language interpreters, and the circulation of sign language in the school for deaf and hearing students were some of the challenges pointed out for the implementation of the model.

Maria Tagarelli De Monte, author of the article "**The role of Italian Sign Language (LIS) in the Italian educational system**", discusses the state of the art of general education for the deaf in Italy, from a detailed history of the changes that have taken place in the country's policies, to the recent recognition of the Italian Sign Language (LIS), in 2021, as the natural language of the Italian deaf community. In the article, she examines publications that have discussed the process of recognising LIS, with special attention to its role in the education of bimodal bilingual deaf children. Families of Italian deaf children can choose between special or mainstream schools, where classes are taught in Italian and there is professional support (support teachers, communication assistants and/or deaf educator, speech therapist), with hours defined by the individual educational plan (in Italian, Piano Educativo Personalizzato - PEI). The author discusses the challenges of a bilingual education in Italy, given the challenges concerning the linguistic policy of deaf education, since the teaching of SL has never been considered a priority in teacher training and there is an increasing number of deaf children who receive a cochlear implant at an early age, leading to the adoption of an oral method rather than a bimodal bilingual method by families.

"Greek language policy, curriculum, and sign language skills" is the theme of Maria Mertzani's work, which presents a study to fill the gap in the discussion of a categorisation of bilingual programmes (strong and weak), which are generally not discussed in relation to the teaching and learning of sign languages. The paper followed a historical-structural analysis of government policy texts in post-dictatorial Greece (from 1980 to the present). By discussing formal language learning programmes in Greece, with a strong relation to the Greek Sign Language (GSL) Curriculum, published in 2004, for the bilingual education of deaf children in the kindergarten and the first two years of literacy in primary school, the paper examines basic fundamental and comprehension skills of GSL, along with the language objectives of the national curriculum for Greek (as L1 and L2) and the other spoken languages (majority and minority), considering the contemporary deaf student population in Greece. As language policies are imposed from the top down following EU directives and global economic changes, the study calls for careful language planning and policy-making for GSL as a minority language L1 and L2, addressing the need to build bilingual deaf students in a multilingual curriculum and through dual language programmes.

On the Brazilian scene, there are two papers in this issue that set out to analyse the foundations of the political-legal context of deaf education, considering the right to bilingual education in Brazil. The first, **"Legal and political milestones in deaf education in Brazil,"** by Julianne D. C. Pietzak and Rogério Sousa Pires, aimed to analyse official documents and academic literature relating to the education of deaf children in the early years of primary school, in bilingual school and school inclusion contexts in two periods; the first, from the Imperial Period (1855) to the period of the Military Dictatorship (1964-1982). The second part covers the late 1980s, with an emphasis on the 1988 Federal Constitution as the basic text of subsequent policies in relation to guaranteeing justice and equity in education, right up to the present day. To this end, the paper analysed the concepts of the deaf subject underlying the legislation, from the understanding of deafness as a disability, a dominant discourse in special education mobilised by the medical model, to the problematisation brought about by the field of Cultural Studies, which prioritises socio-cultural aspects of deafness and the recognition of the deaf as a linguistic minority. The authors' long and detailed presentation seeks to show that the principle of education as a right for all must prioritise attention to the linguistic and cultural particularities of deaf students in order to guarantee equality and equity in the educational process.

In a more contemporary approach, the second article, by José Raimundo Rodrigues, Kátiuscia Barbosa Olmo and Lucylene Matos da Costa Vieira-Machado, deals with a debate in national legislation, contextualised in the transition of political forces in the Brazilian federal government involving the administrations of the Workers' Party (PT), between 2003-2016, and the Liberal Party, from 2016 onwards. The transition period marks a change in the legislation that determines the guidelines for inclusive special education in Brazil, surrounded by controversy and contradictions over its legitimacy. The ideological context of this proposal is the subject of debate in the article **"The Decree 10.502/2020 beyond opposition and uncritical acceptance: an invitation to look in the mirror?"**. Through bibliographical and documentary research, the authors invite us to reflect on the fact that "even policies of inclusion can generate exclusions". Even in the midst of the fragilities of a process that has been under construction for the last two decades, the "new" Decree could result in possible setbacks in the achievements already secured, due to the segregating nature of several of the document's guidelines. They problematise the neoliberal perspective, in line with international bodies that further weaken public schools, the challenges of funding and the contradictions that led to the suspension of the Decree by the Supreme Court and its subsequent revocation by President Lula at the start of his third term, in 2023. On the other hand, the article

proposes a reflection on the contradictions that emerge from this document, given that the deaf community felt represented in the proposed bilingual education policy, which would respond to the demands of their historical struggle. The invitation to problematise the concepts underlying the fields of special education and bilingual education, as well as the position on evaluations between achievements and setbacks generated by the Decree 10.502/2020, is the mirror that the authors invite us to look into; "is to look to the future, is a restlessness from the present."

Two papers deal with bilingual education practices for deaf children in the context of public, so-called inclusive early childhood education institutions. The first article is based on ethnographic research at a Municipal Early Childhood Education Centre (CMEI) in Curitiba-PR. Carolina Carvalho Palomo Fernandes, Sueli Fernandes and Angela Scalabrin Coutinho discuss the practices of hearing-ization with young deaf children in the article "**Young deaf children in Early Childhood Education: discussion over hearing-ization processes and practices in an inclusive context**", which aims to understand the processes of constitution of the hearing norm in the experiences of inclusion of young deaf children in early childhood education. The new analytical conceptual category proposed by the authors — *hearing-ization* — refers to the naturalisation of social processes and strategies that privilege the hearing person and their oral-auditory culture as the norm, based on dialogue with concepts from the Sociology of Childhood and Deaf Studies in Education. The authors point out the evident hearing privilege in practices that reiterate the place of prominence and positivity of listening and speaking references, the overvaluation and naturalisation of symbols, materials and experiences that give centrality to oral-hearing culture in educational-pedagogical experiences, making deaf children and their visual communication experiences invisible, with a focus on Libras.

From the same perspective of analysis, the second article, "**Effects of the Brazilian inclusion policy on the linguistic education of a deaf child in preschool**", by Kátia Regina Borges, Keila Cardoso Teixeira and Pedro Henrique Witches, discusses the possible effects of the Brazilian inclusion policy on the linguistic education of a deaf child. Based on a case study that involved observations of the interactions of a deaf child in a public nursery school in the southeast of Brazil, the authors highlighted the lack of defining the roles of Libras and Portuguese, and the restriction of access to both languages as the main elements that challenge the implementation of bilingual education at this early stage of basic education. With theoretical contributions from authors in the field of Deaf Studies and Language Policies, they point to the linguistic-pedagogical training of human resources and family members to promote an effective linguistic environment and the integral development of deaf children in early childhood education.

Another section of this volume focuses on the analysis of bilingual education policies and practices in the diversity of Brazilian municipalities, based on specific themes involving the organisation of the education system, teaching methodologies, professional performance and training.

With deaf literature as a theme, Lidiane Rodrigues Brito and Maria Clara Maciel de Araújo Ribeiro present "**Storytelling in Libras from the teachers' perspective: reflections on its frequency and purpose**", analysing literature in educational practices. The authors take an approach to storytelling that goes beyond its function of satisfying the need for fantasy, advocating its character of social and humanising formation which, by providing a greater understanding of reality, offers the opportunity to reflect on fiction versus reality, reaffirming its educational contribution. Based on a study of teachers' representations of *Tale Time* in Libras, they sought to identify to what extent and for what purpose teachers of the deaf use storytelling and what images they construct of this practice. From the study results, they emphasise that although they consider storytelling to be a positive influence, a significant number of teachers do not use it as part of their routine. Despite the

fact that various studies and productions deal with different types of deaf literature, the authors address the lack of genuinely deaf literature in storytelling practices as an enhancer of students' cultural-identity development. We recommend reflecting on the detailed findings of the study, which provide important reflections on the creation of bilingual and bicultural literacy contexts that effectively promote bilingual education for the deaf.

Finally, closing the block of articles that deal with effective experiences of deaf education in Brazilian municipalities, Samantha Camargo Daroque and Cristina Broglia Feitosa de Lacerda present the manuscript **"The regular school as a training space for the Libras teacher and educational interpreter duo"** dealing with the importance of creating a shared training space between the teacher and the educational interpreter (EI) of Libras in the regular school. The lack of work guidance involving these two professionals has been pointed out as one of the obstacles to strengthening and qualifying everyday actions and relationships when working together with deaf students. The authors report on an experience of two professionals who worked in the 8th grade class with 30 hearing students and 4 deaf students, in a public school in the municipal education system. It became possible to work in partnership, in which the teacher and EI decided together on actions for the instruction and development of deaf students and on interpretative processes for the content taught and mediated in the classroom, through experiences, planning, construction of materials and assessments and reorganisations that were managed collectively.

As reflections, they point to the importance of creating training spaces that promote sharing between professionals, and provide a differentiated and careful look between and with professionals, which results in changes in their educational practices involving deaf students, in inclusive classes, through the theoretical bias of the cultural historical approach proposed by Vygotsky (2021), in dialogue with national reference researchers in deaf education. The results reveal productive meetings that helped professionals to rethink their representations, experiences and practices, individually and collectively, in order to transform the teaching of deaf students into more effective actions.

Closing this volume's contributions, Fátima L. Silva Gomes, Geisymeire Pereira do Nascimento and Iveuta de Abreu Lopes study the linguistic and contextual regularities that lead to the acceptability and creation of compound signs in LIBRAS by deaf people, in the manuscript **"Creation and use of compound signs by deaf people: a study with students on the Letras-Libras course at UFPI"**. Based on qualitative research using morphological aspects of Libras and Portuguese, the authors identify linguistic and contextual regularities underlying deaf students' perception of the acceptance and creation of 55 compound signs in Libras, related to the following factors: linguistic economy, cultural factors, visual perceptions, conceptual and contextual perceptions and understandings of the world and language learning.

We close the volume with an interview with Heather Gibson, a deaf leader in Deaf Education in Ontario, Canada, and coordinator of the American Sign Language (ASL) Curriculum for the teaching and learning of ASL. The interview makes it clear that the curriculum of sign languages is a profound prerequisite for the establishment of BiBi education, its programmes, and the progress evaluations of deaf children and young people. Clear sign language objectives need to be established alongside those of the official curriculum to avoid linguistic deprivation of deaf children and to support the positive role of sign languages in their BiBi education and school performance.

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