

# HISTORICIZING PRIMARY BILINGUAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

HISTORIZANDO LA ESCUELA PRIMARIA BILINGÜE PARA LOS SORDOS

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## Abstract

This text presents an overview of deafness and education. It aims to present the education for the deaf from historical aspects and legal texts, to the current scenario of bilingual education, anchored in Cultural Studies and Deaf Studies. It is an exploratory and bibliographic study, based on theoretical sources such as books, articles and legal texts that are relevant to the subject matter. The results point to the countless challenges of education in Brazil, such as sparse professional qualification of teachers, low salaries, high rates of grade retention and evasion in schools, among others. The education of the deaf seems to suffer from those same influences, in addition to the constructed beliefs and the social imagery, focusing on the disabilities of deaf people, a fact perceived even through legal texts.

**Keywords:** Education of the deaf; Bilingual education; Bilingual school; Educational and linguistic policies; Social imagery.

## Resumen

El texto teje un panorama sobre la sordera y la educación. El objetivo es presentar la educación para sordos desde aspectos históricos y textos legales, hasta el escenario actual de la educación bilingüe, anclada en los Estudios Culturales y Estudios Sordos. El estudio es de cuño bibliográfico exploratorio, utiliza como fuentes teóricas libros, artículos y textos legales. Los resultados apuntan los innumerables desafíos de la educación en Brasil, como la calificación profesional, bajos salarios, índices elevados de repetición y evasión, entre otros.

**Palabras clave:** Educación de los sordos; Educación bilingüe; Escuela bilingüe; Políticas educativas y lingüísticas; Imaginario social.

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## 1. Introduction

This study presents an overview regarding deafness and the education of deaf people<sup>1</sup> which, through different meanings has been shaping itself through time producing different ways of seeing, perceiving and acting about it. Inserted in the field of Deaf Studies and Cultural Studies, which perceives deafness as a difference, this text aims to understand, based on historical aspects and legal texts, Deaf Education, up to our present day, when bilingual education is advocated. This is an exploratory bibliographical study which uses books, articles and legal texts relevant to the topic as theoretical sources.

We began this study by analyzing historical aspects such as the creation of the school and, subsequently, the history of Deaf Education. We also looked at the legal bases of Bilingual Education, the discourses that create meaning in Deaf Education and shape the way of looking and signifying it. Lastly, we took into account the final considerations in this text, since the reflections on the subject in question are not depleted here and will continue to be problematized.

It is known that the academic institution emerged in the Middle Ages, under the influence of the Church and Christianity, which includes a doctrine, a body of knowledge (Gauthier & Tardif, 2010). In the words of Lopes (2004, p.39) “The school was invented having among its purposes the formation of organized, disciplined, subservient and Christian subjects. It has committed itself up to the present day in forming docile and useful bodies within a pre-established order for relations”. Thus, children go to school to learn discipline. According to Foucault (1997, p.119), “discipline dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase and on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection”.

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<sup>1</sup> Deaf people – we chose this classification because it is a non-sexist way to refer to people who do not use their hearing in a functional way, regardless of hearing loss, understanding them as belonging to a linguistic and cultural minority.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. A bit of a distant but still present story

The ways in which deafness and the education of deaf people have been narrated, organized and structured, demonstrate their construction steaming from the meanings assigned to them at each moment of their history. Thus, during the historical path, discourses on deafness and deaf people “located in the discourses of disabled individuals have been established by different interpretations” (Thoma, 2006, p.10). We range from the extermination of those who did not conform to the standard of normality to the development of a sense of tolerance from Christianity, “since it was believed that people with disabilities needed charity, food and housing” (Müller, Yunes and Lenten da Silva, 2017, p.295).

According to Guarinello (2007, p.20), the “first mention to the possibility of instructing the deaf through sign language and oral language was made by Bartolo della Marca d’Ancona, a writer of the fourteenth century”, with this being an initial perception and one of the earliest to indicate that deaf people were able to make actual decisions. In the sixteenth century, Girolano Cardano, “proposed that the deaf could be taught”, and in 1750, the abbot Charles Michel de L’Épée taught two deaf sisters to write and speak. At the same time, he was concerned with the deaf people living on the streets of Paris, where he learned Sign Language and later created Method Signs (a combination of sign language, French grammar and digital alphabet). In 1760 he founded the first public school for the deaf in Paris, believing that all deaf people were entitled to education, regardless of social status, and was the first to consider deaf people as having a language of communication. Around the same time, Samuel Heinicke founded the first school for the deaf in Germany, based on the oral method, as it would be the ideal way for the deaf to enter the “hearing society”. The differences between L’Épée and Heinicke marked the beginning of the controversies between sign language and the oralist tendency in Deaf Education (Guarinello, 2007).

When revisiting historical aspects of Deaf Education in Brazil, according to Jannuzzi (2006), it can be noted that from the beginning of our colonization there has been an acceptance of individual differences, more evidently, in different places, some more educational than others, for instance hospitals and nursing homes. At the time of the Empire, 1850, two specialized academic institutions were organized. The author asserts that popular education was a responsibility of the provinces, and the Court's government only took on the education of a minority of the blind and deaf, possibly for reasons involving family politics and ties. It is worth

remembering that in the Brazilian Constitution of 1824 there was a proposal of education for all individuals.

The education of deaf people in Brazil began in 1857 when Ernest Huet, a deaf French teacher, at the invitation of Dom Pedro II, began his activities in the first school for the deaf-mute in Rio de Janeiro, the Imperial Institute of the Deaf-Mutes, known today as the National Institute of Education of the Deaf (INES).

During the eighteenth century there was an increase in schools, and sign language was used by deaf teachers. In the nineteenth century, the Congress of Milan established oralism in 1880, and oral language began to be used in the education of deaf people. The goal was to cure deafness; the emphasis was not on the teaching of people but rather on the rehabilitation of deafness. Many deaf people could not speak or spoke only few words and ended up failing in academic and social life, according to Vieira (2017, p.65). "People with disabilities had their own spaces, and not much was expected of them, only the reproduction of a few sentences considered important, [...]" This conception fits into a clinical-therapeutic model of deafness, imposing an insight related to pathology, to biological deficit (Skliar, 1997). In the 1960s, rehabilitation services for people with disabilities aimed at preparing them for their integration into the community.

The hegemonic clinical-therapeutic model reflects "an implicit representation that the hearing society constructed of the deaf, that is, a conception relating to its pathology" (Skliar, 1997, p.113). This conception resulted in innumerable "social, emotional, and psychological deprivations in the lives of deaf people, since it proposed that it was only through speech that deaf children could become citizens in a hearing society." According to Thoma (2013, p. 125), the main goal of deaf education was "the recovery from deafness, aiming at a better social and educational integration of the deaf", who should overcome their condition by learning oral language and disregarding sign language, the greatest expression of the deaf culture.

The oralism dominated the world until the 1960s, when William Stokoe, an American linguist, published an article demonstrating that "the American Sign Language was a language with all the characteristics of oral languages" (Guarinello, 2007, p. 30). From this point forward, experts, anthropologists, linguists and sociologists began observing how deaf people gathered themselves in communities, using sign language, in spite of the repression from the school and society in general. Moreover, they noted that the academic development of deaf children with deaf parents was higher and that they "did not present social and affective problems" as deaf

children with hearing parents. At this time, especially in the United States, ethnic minorities, and then others, such as the deaf who joined the movement, claimed the right to a culture of their own, to be different, and to denounce the discrimination they suffered.

We remember that the subject of education “is the one capable of being guided by its ‘conscience’”. As prisoners of themselves, the deaf reclaim their “freedom” and their “right” to tell themselves as different. “Spaces mark places and indicate models of normality and learning to be followed,” guaranteeing obedience and saving time and work. The disciplinary devices “that make up the school often stress an abnormality in inventing pedagogies and spaces for the rehabilitation of the deaf body” (Lopes, 2004, pp.39-40).

In the 1970s, dissatisfied by the results achieved with oralism and research on deaf parents with deaf children, scholars suggested the inclusion of signs in deaf education. A new philosophy emerged, named Total Communication, which brought out a more flexible proposal, “proposing the use of natural gestures, sign language, digital alphabet, facial expression, speech and sound amplification devices to transmit language, vocabulary, concepts and ideas” (Guarinello, 2007, p.31). However, even when using sign language among other forms of communication, their goal remained the achievement of speech and integration of the deaf in the listening society. And, again, academic results of deaf students were not significant.

In the late 1970s, a new movement emerged to advocate for the language and culture of linguistic minorities. Deaf people called out for the right to use sign language as their first language (L1) and the majority language as their second language (L2). Namely, they proposed a bilingual education, which can be defined “as an opposition to the hegemonic discourses and clinical practices - specifications of the education and schooling of the deaf in the last decades - as a political recognition of deafness as a difference” (Skliar, 1999, p.7). From this perspective, “the deaf form a minority linguistic community, which uses and shares a language of its own signs, values, cultural habits and modes of socialization” (Guarinello, 2007, p. 32), is compatible with an anthropological socio-economic view.

This proposal still faces some challenges due to conceptions shaped throughout time, since it supposes a sense of biculturalism. According to Franco (2014, pp. 71-72), it is “essential, for the emancipation of the Deaf, autonomy in the use of their language, respect for their culture which, unlike the oralism of the Hearing, is visual.” The latter author states that deaf people were considered “incapable, disabled, pitiful, because their language and culture were never valued as legitimate forms of expression of their subjectivities.” Therefore, it is not only their language

that is different, but also their culture, a fact which causes certain unease, undermining coexistence.

A new model of coexistence must be built, one that entails respect for differences. One cannot impose a culture and language as part of establishing a harmonious relationship with the other. Harmony will be achieved when there is the understanding and acceptance that there are other ways of living and communicating, besides one's own. And when there is the recognition of the necessity of overcoming prejudice and arrogance of considering one culture and language with primacy over others. (Franco, 2014, p.73).

### 2.2. Historicizing the legal bases of Bilingual Education

Experiences of bilingual education carried out inside our country and abroad (the United States, Venezuela, Cuba, Uruguay and France, among others) point to the investments required for its implantation. These range from teaching sign language to teachers and families of deaf students, to acquiring a school for the deaf, to guaranteeing their first language as a way of concentrating on “changing the outlook of the deaf and the hearing on the deaf. Perhaps this is a major challenge within the current of bilingualism [...]” because under the lens of clinical and therapeutic knowledge, we were taught to look and narrate deaf people as “lesser, incapable and disabled” (Lopes, 2007, p.65).

According to Lodi (2013, p. 51), the National Education Policy sought to establish “educational systems which consider equality and diversity as inseparable and constitutive values of our society” in the country. Thus, the National Policy on Special Education with an Inclusive Education perspective proposed “the outlining of educational actions that seek to overcome the logic of exclusion in the school environment and society in general.” For this purpose, it advocates for the enrollment of students in the regular education system, regardless of their difference. This meant the insertion of deaf education, which until then had been the responsibility of special education, to the mainstream system. Discussions initiated in the 1990's mention that exceptional education is attributed to the linguistic and sociocultural difference between the deaf and the hearing.

In Brazil, since the 1990s, discussions have been increasing due to research and demonstrations of the deaf communities. Lodi (2013), when providing a historical contextualization of the Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education and Decree 5.626/05, claimed that social movements propelled their writing and approval. The Policy

is “based on the principles of the democratization of education, which guarantees it as a right of all citizens and as a duty of the State”, being influenced by national and international documents. The Decree, in turn, “was motivated by the movements of deaf communities and by researchers in the field of deaf education and was promulgated after the legal recognition of the Brazilian Language of Signs (Libras)”, in 2002.

In 2002, with Law 10.436, the Brazilian Sign Language (BSL, known as Libras) was recognized as one of the official languages of the country. Subsequently, it was regulated, through Decree 5.626 of 2005, determining in Bilingual Schools “... that Libras and the written modality of the Portuguese Language ought to be languages of instruction used in the development of the whole educational process” (Brazil, 2005, Art. 22).

Since the UNESCO conference in 1951, it is axiomatic that, when mentioning the bilingual nature of an educational project, there is the acknowledgment of the right of children who use a language other than the majority language to be educated in their language. Therefore, the materialization of a bilingual education for the deaf is not only a decision of technical nature but must be politically constructed as a linguistically justified associate. (Skliar, 1999, p.10).

Skliar also affirms that the discussion of bilingual education in a “political dimension assumes a double value: the ‘political’ as a historical, cultural and social construction, and the ‘political’ understood as relations of power and knowledge that cross and delimit the proposal and the educational process”. For there are policies that can be translated as “hearing practices.” (Skliar, 1998).

Next, we present three documents that deal with bilingual education for the deaf. The current conceptions regarding educational spaces are rooted on these documents, on which we make some considerations: Decree 5.626, of December 22, 2005, the National Policy on Special Education in perspective of Inclusive Education (2008) and the Linguistic Policy of Bilingual Education: Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language (2014).

Decree 5.626, dated December 22, 2005 - which Regulates Law 10.436, of April 24, 2002, provides for the Brazilian Sign Language - Libras, and art. 18 of Law 10,098 of December 19, 2000. In this document, for the first time, there is the occurrence of “references and guidelines for the training of professionals suited for bilingual education through academic courses of Bilingual Pedagogy and Libras - Licentiate and bachelor’s degree, as well as modalities” on which such education could be offered (Thoma, 2016, p.760).

Chapter VI - For the Guarantee of the Right to Education for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired. Article 22, items I and II, states the following:

Article 22. Federal educational institutions responsible for basic education shall guarantee the inclusion of deaf or hearing-impaired students through the organization of:

I - Bilingual classes and schools, open to deaf and hearing students, with bilingual teachers, in early childhood education and the initial years of elementary education;

II - Bilingual or ordinary schools of the regular educational network, open to deaf and hearing students, for the final years of elementary school, high school or vocational education, with teachers from different areas of knowledge, aware of the linguistic singularity of deaf students, as well as the presence of translators and Libras - Portuguese interpreters;

§ 1. Bilingual education classes or schools are those in which Libras and the written modality of the Portuguese Language are languages of instruction employed in the development of the whole educational process;

§ 2. Students have the right to schooling in a differentiated shift from that of the specialized educational service for the development of curricular complementation, with the usage of equipment and information technologies.

§ 3. The changes resulting from the implementation of clauses I and II imply that parents and students make explicit their preference for education without the use of Libras.

§ 4. The provisions of § 2 of this article must also be guaranteed for students that are not users of Libras (Brazil, 2005).

The National Policy on Special Education in the perspective of Inclusive Education (2008), presents some guidelines on bilingual education, as can be observed.

For the admission of deaf students in ordinary schools, Portuguese/Libras bilingual education develops its academic teaching in Portuguese and sign language, teaching Portuguese as a second language in its written form for the deaf students, translator-interpreter services of Libras and Portuguese Language and the teaching of Libras for the school's other students. The specialized educational service for these students is offered both in oral and written form as well as in sign language. Due to the linguistic difference, it is advised for the deaf student to be with other deaf people in common classes in the regular school. (Brazil, 2008).

This policy proposes the inclusion of deaf students in the common system of education, with the offer, in an opposite shift to the regular classes, of Specialized Educational Assistance (SEA). According to Thoma (2016, p.765), "deafness is seen by the bias of disability," that is to



say, there is no recognition of the deaf, their identity, and the existence of a culture regarding deafness.

In legal documents presented, we can perceive different ways of denoting bilingual education. In Decree 5.626/05, bilingual education for the deaf distances itself from special education and is conceived as a social issue involving the Brazilian Sign Language - Libras, and the Portuguese language, in relation “with the cultural aspects defining and determined by each language”. On the other hand, the National Policy on Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education “advocates for the inclusion of deaf students in the regular education system”, reducing bilingual education to “the presence of two languages within the school, without allowing each one to take their place of relevance within the groups that use them, maintaining the hegemony of Portuguese in educational processes”. This notion minimizes the “proposal for the education of the deaf only to the discursive plane and restricts its inclusion to the school, preventing an extension of this concept to all social spheres, as defended by the Decree.” Moreover, the difference between the meanings of the concepts of bilingual education and inclusion in the aforementioned documents continues to tense and make the dialogue between them unfeasible. (Lodi, 2013, p. 49).

Although the Policy has been woven through a discourse that seeks to approach the principles of bilingual education for the deaf constituents of the Decree (acceptance of Libras in school spaces and the teaching of Portuguese as a second language), the analysis of the statements that support it, when set in a dialogue to defend the proposals, show inconsistencies and a view towards deaf education that does not leave the discursive dimension, and that reproduces, in the proposition of inclusive practices, the past exclusions of deaf people from the educational/social processes. In this sense, the estrangement between this document and the Decree becomes inevitable, thus revealing the reason for the impossibility of dialogue with the demands of the Brazilian deaf communities (Lodi, 2013, p.61).

The Report on Bilingual Education Language Policy: Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language (2014) presents the need for an immediate overhaul of the basic policy of deaf education, since it “reinforces premises that have already supported other forms of schooling that failed”, such as: special dual-grade schools, integration schools with reinforcement classes, and the current inclusive schools with SEA. It should be emphasized that “in none of these models there was a break with the logic that the deaf should be deaf in Portuguese out of

duty and in Libras out of concession," and there is a need to break with this logic. (Brazil, 2014, p.3).

This policy understands bilingual education "as a process that must occur daily, in praxis with the other and in contact with the deaf culture, in bilingual schools where the main language of instruction is sign language and the written form of the Portuguese language is considered as second language for the deaf" (Thoma, 2016, p.765).

When forging considerations, especially relating to the three legal texts above, we are by no means disregarding the other existing legal documents relevant to bilingual education for the deaf. In addition, we do not intend to point out the best policy, but rather to draw a historical path on bilingual education, spaces and discourses constructed throughout history.

Through research conducted in some schools for the deaf qualified as bilinguals, based on the educational principles of bilingualism in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, different scenarios were found. Müller (2016) investigated eight schools, all bilingual in their proposals or political-pedagogical projects, and yet only two (25%) of them used the "bilingual" label in their denomination. "The examined schools, which have High School classes and represent twenty-five percent (25%), highlight this level of teaching in their denomination of institutions". And 50% of schools "are designated as a 'special school', which guarantees them additional resources for their management and maintenance, as well as benefits for the teachers who work in the field of education of people with disabilities (in this case, the deaf are thus represented)". According to Müller and Karnopp (2017), "it is notorious to consider that these school contexts, in which one struggles with deaf cultural difference, are still strongly marked by Special Education policies." And, when they are denominated special schools, they are not considered Specialized Educational Assistance (SEA), a challenging fact for some teachers due to the specificities presented by students.

Stürmer and Thoma (2015) developed a study aiming to "problematize the discourses that produce the bilingual education for the deaf and put it into operation in the Brazilian educational scenario", and, for this purpose, analyzed documents which guide the educational and linguistic policies for deaf people in Brazil, starting with the Special Education Policy in the Perspective of Inclusive Education, 2008 to 2014. The authors verified that "the speeches produced by MEC seek to lend visibility to education in common schools as a fundamental right of all ...", and that the speeches in the documents of the deaf movement "mark the linguistic right as a fundamental human right", while understanding that the common school does not guarantee this right through the Specialized Educational Attendance (SEA).

Ribeiro e Silva (2017, p.8) presented the results of a survey carried out with a group of four deaf people, whose objective was to reflect on their quite distinct schooling processes. The authors concluded that the surveyed subjects grew up without access to a full-fledged language, “did not share the cultural meanings of the deaf community”, and that their academic lives were not easy. The findings “seem to indicate the need of revising the bilingual models (which are diverse even among themselves) that are being implemented from the national inclusive policies.” These authors emphasize that “the deaf student must have access to pedagogical practices based on principles that respect and value their bilingual condition. That's the only way to ensure success in their learning”.

Vieira (2017, p. 199), in concluding her research, asserts that the outcome of bilingual teaching does indeed show: “to society, that the deaf are as capable of learning as listeners; to teachers, that it is possible to work differently by exploring the visual condition conducive to the deaf community; and to the deaf, that the school is, indeed, their place”.

### **2.3. The discourses that produce meanings in deaf education and shape ways of looking at and signifying them**

The words of Souza and Góes (1999) translate, to a certain extent, part of the journey of deaf people and allow us to learn and understand some of the struggle of the deaf community for their language, culture and space.

They were made up as disabled and were constantly reminded of it. They were vilified by the speeches of which they were part, each time their technicians, parents and friends called them hearing impaired. They were made disabled when they were spared from disciplinary content, made simpler by the ignorance of the common or special school, which intended to teach them without a shared language. They were made disabled when they were charitably pushed from one school year to another, as if nothing beyond the point at which they arrived could be expected from them”. They were made disabled when specialists forbade them from sharing the company of other deaf people in their same class, with the hypocritical purpose of avoiding the formation of ghettos and the dissemination of a language that, according to them, was useless for social integration. They were made disabled when they were treated as mentally feeble and surrounded by a whole medical-clinic

apparatus for school monitoring that unfailingly told them, without words, that they were not as capable as their hearing counterparts. They were not made stupid, but unintelligent, by us hearing people.

(Souza & Góes, 1999, p. 163).

Many discourses, at different times and places, as well as various fields of knowledge, were (and still are) created, defined and legitimized, configuring different ways of perceiving and signifying deaf people and deaf education. It must be reminded that the different ways of narrating and signifying people are not outside of knowledge-power relations (Foucault, 1979).

Deaf subjects are still a highly stigmatized group by the majority of people and segments of society. They are viewed, in a prejudiced way, as inferior beings, with a “fault”, and as users of a lower language. In the face of this context, one of the key roles of the bilingual school for the deaf is to deconstruct such representations along with the students and the school community, including, most importantly, the families of deaf students. The assignment of raising awareness about the impropriety of bias related to deaf subjects and Sign Language is fundamental, [...] (Andreis-Witkoski & Douetts, 2014, p.44).

In this assertion, the discussion of bilingual education assumes a dual value in a political dimension: “the ‘political’ as a historical, cultural and social construction, and the ‘political’ understood as relations of power and knowledge that cross and delimit the proposal and the educational process” (Skliar, 1998). In this last sense, the array of Brazilian educational policies for the deaf is still based on dominant representations that seek to standardize the deaf, their identity and their culture, mainly by policies of academic inclusion.” (Müller, Stürmer, Karnopp and Thoma, 2013).

According to Skliar (1999, p. 19), “[...] the subjects of special education were narrated, judged, envisioned and constructed by the professionals who worked with them [...]”. This practice “[...] served the institutional purpose of inclusion/exclusion boundary but, failed in understanding and justifying its own history, knowledge, mediations and power mechanisms”. Considering the subjects’ historicity, we first emphasize the historical aspects so that one can understand the different social and individual constructions, since “many of these elaborations are established as truths in the various contexts in which the subjects receive constitutive and solid marks” (Müller et al., 2017, p.295).

The history of deaf education, together with history of education in general, was regulated by a positivist vision that ignored the subjects' subjectivity. "In this type of schooling, there was no acknowledgement that the imagery built on the subjects and on social groups was directly related to the way in which their treatment and education were conducted". Representations of deafness and deaf people can influence the discourses and ways of looking at differences, nurturing and maintaining prejudices and stereotypes. "The control devices (...), used to legitimize differences, are everywhere, and before we realize it, we are already thinking and acting accordingly" (Thoma, 2013, pp. 121-125).

The human being's process of evolution presupposes implicit representations that determine their forms of "acting and constructing the praxis permeated by the symbolic, by the meanings we assign to different events, as well as by the beliefs and depictions that we construct in the social contexts to which we are inserted" (Müller et al., 2017, p.301). We understand praxis as the "[...] making on which the other or others are targeted as autonomous beings and considered as the essential agent of the development of their own autonomy" (Castoriadis 1982, p. 94).

In analyzing bilingual education in educational and linguistic policies for the deaf, Thoma (2016, p. 768) questions the "discourses and strategies of governance" employed by such policies and presents the results of the research on the subject. According to the author, research shows "how the discourses that constitute certain pedagogical practices are sustained and legitimized to rule over all through bilingual education, [...] which is given meaning in different ways" and is offered in school spaces and times, in both the common and the specific school. The Inclusion Policy (MEC) understands that bilingual education must take place "through SEA and with the presence of an interpreter in the classroom," unlike what happens at the bilingual school for the deaf, where classes are taught in Libras, with specific methodologies".

For Fernandes and Moreira (2014, p. 66), there is a contradiction between the letter of the law - bilingual education - and the daily practice of schools - special education. Since the current configuration of "inclusive education and specialized educational care (SEA), Libras do not assume centrality as the main language in the dialogue involving deaf students in schools." We emphasize the need to reconsider the condition in which the education of deaf people is being addressed, along with their language and culture.

According to Andreis-Witkoski and Douettes (2014, p. 48), a proposal for bilingual teaching takes place through Sign Language as the language of instruction, and it is through this language that "the deaf student's whole formation must be mediated, using strategies unique to

their learning process, contemplating a curriculum which includes them as a subject that produces and appreciates their own culture and history". It is worth remembering the importance of valuing deaf people and their empowerment through Sign Language in interactions in different spaces.

### 3. Final considerations

In this article, we sought to outline a picture of deafness and deaf education that has been shaped and producing different meanings over time. We began with historical aspects, legal background, discourses on deafness and deaf people, who build different ways of being and places to live and learn. And so, we arrive at this present day, in which bilingual education has been established as the best form of teaching the deaf. The world has changed, people have changed, some more than others. However one cannot neglect many beliefs, myths and actions that still remain. Previously, the deaf fought for the right to school, and today the struggle continues for quality education, for learning, for sign language out of school, among others.

According to Andreis-Witkoski and Douettes (2014, p. 41), the deaf community continues to struggle for the maintenance of their rights, and discusses ways to improve education, and for the schools to "become, in fact, institutions characterized by the formation of a bilingual education, as opposed to the paradigm of a disqualified education, historically associated with the origin of the special schools, whose purpose was to correct its pupil".

As we reach the conclusion of this text, but not that of the problematization on the issues involving the education of deaf people and the recognition of the existing differences, we share Lodi's words (2013, p.61) as she states: "Accepting the difference and valuing it as constitutive of the human being determines a new outlook on diversity, for the self (hearing/deaf) and for the other (deaf/hearing), so that, in the return inwards oneself, any troubles may be revealed". This author assures that, although there is no understanding or questioning of the discourses on which we were constituted "the official discourse is placed at service of the maintenance of the status quo, without the possibility of it being resignified". We understand that respect is essential to all relations, however we also understand that the recognition of differences questions beliefs, problematizes instituted knowledge, generates actions, and propels the organization and creation of environments necessary to attend to the specificities of the subjects involved.

We have major challenges in education in Brazil, such as teacher training programs, professional qualification, low salaries, high rates of grade retention and evasion, among others. The education of deaf people also suffers from these same influences, in addition to all the

constructed beliefs and knowledge imposed throughout history, as well as the social imagery focusing on the disabilities and impossibilities of deaf people, perpetuating themselves in the most various contexts and situations in a society that calls itself plural.

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