

A DEAFENING INEQUALITY

PORTUGUESE DEAF EDUCATION AND THE CALL FOR DEBATING AUDISM IN SCHOOLS⁹

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Abstract

The emancipation of the deaf community represents a vivid history in which the right to use sign language and deaf culture had to be defended over and over again, against oralists, scientists, politicians, industries and pedagogues. It is a history of hearing oppression, of different views about what makes one human. In this article, the authors give a historical account from an audist perspective and question if it is not urgent to promote another pedagogical approach in the education of deaf and hearing, which include debating personal and structural audism in schools.

Key words: Audism, Bilingual Education, Deaf Rights, Deaf Culture, Sign Language.

Introduction

The modern state has a rather short history; just a little bit more than 200 years. The former aristocratic regimes with strong links to churches in Europe

⁹ This article is based upon on Swachten (2010) and Tété Gonçalves & Santos (2010). Permission granted by the publisher, Instituto Politécnico do Porto.

collapsed in the aftermath of the process of discovering *terra incognita* outside their borders on other continents; new ideas of superiority and civilising their people emerged in opposition to the discovered primitive other. These ideas grew in importance during the Enlightenment and paved the way for the first civil revolution in mankind. In the dawn of the French revolution, the first school for the deaf¹⁰ was set up; it was a token of civil awareness, which led to an increase of schools for the deaf.

Despite the numerous ways¹¹ the deaf were described in the centuries preceding the French revolution, we could with some imagination interpret these developments towards the establishment of the first school for the deaf in Paris as a first stage in the emancipation of the deaf as citizens. Not only politicians and the elite supported the deaf case, but also lay people partly accepted the deaf (Ladd, 2003a).

This acceptance of the deaf in France and the provided civil rights however, were attacked a century later by scientists and politicians, who considered the oral education method in deaf education a more appropriate way to make the deaf 'human' and to lead them away from becoming a deaf race (Bell, 1883). In the mean time, the institutionalisation of science and the use of knowledge in politics had expanded the domination of the state over the individual (Foucault, 1973). This domination is closely linked to notions of what is considered normal and to be desired. With respect to this we particularly want to point to the phenomenon of audism, a term coined by Humphries (Bauman, 2004). He defines audism as "the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears" (p.240). In addition to this rather personal definition of audism, Lane (1992) adds a structural one when referring to corporate institutions of politics, science and industry that dominate the deaf community; it is "the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community" (p.43)¹². Based on these two

10 It is common practice within Deaf Studies to write deaf with a capital D as Deaf, when deaf people are culturally aware of what makes them different from hearing people (Woodward (1982). However there are nowadays disagreements who can use a capital D and who not. Brenda Jo Brueggemann (2008) deals with this dividing issue. We, however, as hearing outsiders in this ongoing discussion we will make no distinction and will write deaf as "deaf". Only when referred to deaf studies as community of scholars we use "Deaf Studies".

11 Socrates had a rather positive view about the deaf. If we would be deaf, he asked, having neither tongue nor voice, wouldn't we just like the deaf be using our hands and other body parts to transfer the message? Also the Jewish accepted the deaf as a group with a common language. With the rise of Christianity however, the deaf were seen as individuals who were possessed by demons (Ladd, 2003a)

12 Bauman (2004) asserts that man has been working with an incomplete definition of language. He points to the Latin word for language "lingua" that literally means "tongue". This implicates that language equals speech and speech equals language. Brueggemann summarizes this in a syllogism: "language is human; speech is language; therefore deaf people are inhuman and deafness is a problem" (Brueggemann cited in Bauman, 2004, p.242). Bau-

notions of audism we could interpret the history of deaf people as a history of audist practices and a fight for equal human rights.

Taking this into account, three questions related to audist practices are important. Firstly, what were the reasons for the change of climate in which the deaf community encountered more opposition; secondly, how the state domination over individuals affected the case of the deaf since the establishment of the modern state; and thirdly, how the deaf community organised themselves with the help of Deaf Studies to prove that sign language is a natural language and unites the deaf in a deaf culture? After a brief historical overview of deaf emancipation, the oralist attack and the entanglement between science and politics in order to control the deaf, we will turn to the alliance of deaf community and Deaf Studies in their joint effort finding scientific proof for their rights in order to ground further deaf emancipation. As example we will focus on the Portuguese case, the recognition of the Portuguese Sign Language, the law-based support of bilingual education for the deaf, and the establishment of reference schools. In the end we will present a call for debating audism in schools, in order to break down the deafening walls between deaf and hearing.

DEAF EMANCIPATION UNDER ATTACK

When in the 1750s philosophers started to speculate about the nature of man, Leibnitz brought up the idea of an universal language when referring to the deaf and he even spoke about sign language as distinguishing man from animal (Ladd, 2003a). Within this time frame, Pierre Desloges, a deaf French bookbinder published the first text written by a deaf person. Desloges' statement that a particular sign can be made in the twinkle of the eye for explaining what happened, while writing requires several pages for a complete description, attracted the attention of many intellectuals (Bauman, 2008).

Actually, the written history of sign language starts when Abbé de L'Épée began to teach two deaf. In 1755, he founded a school for deaf children born in France and other countries in Europe. For nearly 30 years he organised demonstrations for the public, replying to critics, especially from people within the churches (Stokoe Jr., 2005). His success led to a mushrooming of schools in France and Europe. The growth of deaf schools in the pre-revolutionary years was accompanied soon by public schools, of which the school in Paris was the first. The revolutionary call to educate deaf people as "children of the nation" (Lane, 1984) encountered a warm welcome in the National Assembly held in Paris in 1791.

After the death of Abbé L'Épée in 1789, his successor Abbé Sicard gained credits as well for the education of deaf students. One of his deaf students,

man concludes that this incomplete definition of language represents a third, metaphysical version of audism.

Laurent Clerc, accompanied Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet back to America and he became the first deaf teacher at the first American School for the Deaf at Hartford in 1817. By teaching French Sign Language in Hartford he laid the foundation for American Sign Language. At this school and other schools the natural sign language and methodical sign system developed by L'Épée were used (Stokoe Jr., 2005).

At the end of the 19th century, the proposal of the evolutionist paradigm by Charles Darwin initiated a discussion of its applicability to the human race. It affected the thoughts of Alexander Graham Bell who warned for the development of a deaf race in his "Memoir. Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race" (1883) and urged the use of the oral-education method, i.e. the teaching of speech as the only way to be human. Three years before Bell's warning, hearing educators for the deaf from several countries came together at the 2nd International Congress of Teachers of Deaf-Mutes in Milan, in September 1880. The objective was to promote the oral method and to ban the use of sign language. This proposal was accepted against the will of the American and British representatives¹³.

In retrospect, the Milan congress became the turning point in the development of the deaf community. As oralism became the method of instructing deaf through speech, lip-reading and hearing, deaf teachers employed at residential schools for the deaf had to find other jobs. But this was not enough, the banning of sign language needed to be backed up by disciplinary measures such as physical punishments to keep the students from signing (Baynton 1996; Padden & Humphries, 2006). A lot of schools for the deaf either closed their doors or stayed open, using the oral method as agreed. Nevertheless, some schools in Britain and America went on teaching sign language supported by deaf organisations such as the American National Association for the Deaf, founded shortly after the Milan declarations. In the aftermath of the Milan congress, more deaf national organisations in Europe were founded such as the British Deaf Association (BDA) in 1890 (Ladd, 2003a). We might say, that although oralism became the leading method, it also provoked an unforeseen chain reaction as deaf people started to unite themselves.

Oralism was, according to Lane (1992), the first stage in the assimilation of the deaf. The dismantling of residential schools as a breeding place for a deaf variety of the human race, as Bell argued, was the next step. Day schools for the deaf were founded in order to expose the deaf to a larger oral environment. This was followed by the introduction of supportive methods to teach the dominant oral language through the use of fingerspelling, lip-reading, and speech accompanied by signs. This total-communication method became rather popular in the USA. As fourth stage, Lane points to developments of mainstreaming the

13 See www.milan1880.com for more information about the congress, its objectives and program.

deaf in schools for hearing children, actually dispersing them. Here they found themselves as the only deaf child in the class full of hearing children. In some cases, deaf children could be grouped together in “self-contained” classes, just sharing some art and sports with the other, hearing children. Last but not least, Lane points to the surgery of cochlear implants, the promise of hearing, as the ultimate stage of this assimilation process. As a tool for living, it can be helpful for some; however, the medical and educational presentation of cochlear implants as a cure for everyone clearly demonstrates “the denial of a difference” and not “the solution to a social issue” (Lane, 1992, p.135).

The oralism debate in Portugal took a similar route¹⁴; as a result of the primacy of “oralism” in the education of the deaf instigated at the Congress of Milan (1880), the use of sign languages in Portuguese schools was forbidden. From then on, the oral method had to be used. In 1893, the School for the Deaf-Mute of Porto was established, replacing the sign method by the oralistic. In 1913, the director of Casa Pia, Aurélio da Costa Ferreira, organised a two-year training program for teachers of the deaf, marking the official and institutional recognition of the oral method in Portugal (Pinho e Melo *et al.*, 1984; DGIDC, 2009).

Untill the beginning of the 1970s different methods were developed, which were all based on speech and auditory training with support of technological aids such as SUVAG devices (DGIDC, 2009). The implementation of the maternal-reflexive method in 1974 was another pedagogical renewal, which became very popular in Portugal. The growing research during these years about the school integration of the deaf students, through support rooms, special classes in regular schools and itinerant support led to the creation of the Support Services for Children with Auditory Impairments (NACDA) for the lower school levels and the Support Services for the Auditory Impaired (NADA) for the high school students (Pinho e Melo *et al.*, 1984).

These developments and the just started debate about the value of sign language was a stimulus for some schools to adopt the total communication method. This way of bilingual teaching was applied in A-da-Beja, a small village near Lisbon, in 1981, which can be marked as the beginning of the professional teaching of Portuguese Sign Language (DGIDC, 2009). We will come back on the experiences of bilingual education in Portugal later. First, we have to focus on deafness as a medical deficiency and the role of sciences first.

14 Before the oralist wave reached Portugal several initiatives were undertaken. During the kingdom of D. João VI and Infant D. Isabel Maria, the Swedish professor Per Aron Borg was invited to be director of the first school for the deaf in the Casa Pia of Lisbon, in 1823. At that time, Borg proposed the teaching of writing together with the sign alphabet. This method was used until 1860, when the school was closed. Later, around 1870, schools were founded in Lisbon, Guimarães and Porto, where the method of writing combined with sign language led to exceptional results (Pinho e Melo, Moreno, Amaral, Duarte Silva, & Delgado Martins, 1984; DGIDC, 2009).

DEAFNESS AS “DEFICIENCY”¹⁵ UNDER CONTROL

The image of the deaf on the eve of the establishment of the modern state was a mixed one, as we have seen. The medieval and by Christianity fuelled image of the deaf as possessed by demons, and therefore not human, changed due to the growing interest in the other, the different, and the exotic. Deaf people were regarded as speakers of a very interesting language, as children of the nation, with their rights to an education like every other citizen. This promotion, however, needed to be defended against the church and the first oralists over and over again. The final stroke to the children of the nation was given at the congress in Milan, where the oralist view prevailed. In the pre-Milan period, this view was based upon Christian values like the one held in Middle Ages. With the development of evolutionist paradigm a powerful ally was found. Bell's ideas about the deaf variety of man, that could arise when we would allow the deaf to go to separate schools to learn, live and find their future deaf partner, clearly was a welcome support for the oralists. Actually, this was the first time that a science interfered in the debate about deafness. The general idea was that the deaf were not normal and that through the belief in evolutionist change deviations from this standard can be repaired with appropriate interventions of medical, pathological, psychological and educational professionals. The underlying medical or infirmity model of these interventions marks the beginnings of medicalisation within the modern state with the objective to control deaf people and others as well.

In his books “The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception” (1973) and “Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison” (1977), Foucault explains the foundations of this state intervention in people's daily lives. In modern states, in which the sovereignty of the king or emperor was replaced by the sovereignty of the nation and their people, the idea emerged to separate the weak, sick and criminals in order to control them in institutions like hospitals, mental institutions, and prisons. Even schools are an instrument of control instilling values and norms, necessary for organising the modern-state. The development of the modern sciences in this context is a logical one according to Foucault (1998), because power is not only based on knowledge, it is also a creation of knowledge. This power-knowledge, as Foucault calls it, includes bio-power which embraces “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” (p.140). In the modern state power has to be legitimated as a protection of life and a

15 Usually, deficiency is understood as a shortage of something needed by the human body (insulin deficiency, for instance), while impairment refers to something that is lacking, absent or not functional in terms of body structures or functions (physical impairment). However, taking into account that “deficiency”, especially in the past, was more commonly used to express the existence of a standard human model, we prefer in the context of this article to use this word and to avoid the term “hearing impairment” that, we think, was introduced for reasons of political correctness.

regulation of the body. A brief look at the former residential schools for the deaf in Europe and the USA will give us meaningful insights how to apply Foucault's notions about regulating bodies.

These residential schools with their carefully designated spaces for learning, eating and sleeping and a strict separation of boys and girls located on a land estate, were all in some way similar. Some plans for school buildings were based on architectural plans for prisons. As soon as the deaf students, who came from the surrounding areas of the city, were inside the gates of the schools, "they became 'inmates' and objects of study" (Padden & Humphries, 2006, p. 29) and experiments in the hands of school physicians. Experiments, such as electric shocks or dispensing brew into the ear, endangered the deaf students were not uncommon (Lane, 1992). These practices reflect the imbalance of power between the caretakers and the deaf students, who cannot speak on their behalf; they are silenced bodies (Padden & Humphries, 2006). A silenced body that cannot speak is the objective, i.e. a controllable deaf individual.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that bio-power is related to another of Foucault's concepts: "governmentality". Governmentality is developed through power, which is not only imposed hierarchically, but also through social control in disciplinary institutions (schools, hospitals, psychiatric institutions), and through the production of knowledge. This produced knowledge will be internalised by individuals exposed to it, steering their actions and behaviour. As such, it empowers individuals to govern themselves as the ultimate form of social control (Foucault, 1997). The application of Foucault's governmentality to deaf people or other separated bodies like the "insane" and the "disabled" would, according to Shelley Tremain (2005), be the creation of the *illusion* of a natural deficiency.

It is obvious that the residential schools for the deaf contain a history of a place, where the deaf were brought together in order to be controlled, to be researched and to be labelled, not as unique individuals but as imprisoned bodies. But, residential schools reflect also a history of the right to be different, of finding a family, self-esteem and pride. Padden and Humphries (2006) however remind us that although residential schools for deaf have been a positive marker for deaf personal identities, they also represent feelings of repulsion with painful memories of punishment and abuse. This paradox makes these schools "compelling places" (Padden & Humphries, 2006). In this respect, one could interpret the integration of the deaf in mainstream schools proposed by oralists as a positive development. But this would be a one-sided conclusion when we take into account that the residential schools represent places of a common history and culture, important enough to fight for, as we will see in the next section.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS

The history of the deaf between 1750 till 1970 is also the story about the deaf community; how this community was welcomed like a ship to a safe harbour and given a berth between other boats and ships. However soon thereafter, it was chained to a wharf, declared a wreck. Some said that the ship had to be repaired completely, whereas the captains on the ship disagreed; it needed a lick of paint perhaps, but in its structure it was a rather seaworthy ship like all the others around it. In order to prove their point, they started to paint the ship, to visualise the ship's external and internal features.

This metaphor characterises the political renaissance of the deaf community. It is a history of deaf leaders who organised the deaf in political organisations since oralism became the dominant mode in education and the work of scientific advocates, some deaf, some not, showing and demonstrating in Deaf Studies publications the "seaworthiness" of the community's language and culture. However, the long period in which the deaf were treated as inferior, and their sign languages regarded as outcasts of the human languages (Bauman, 2008), cannot be made undone in a twinkle of an eye; it needs leaders, scientific proof, but foremost political persuasion and persistence. Although some call this political revival a revolution, its results cannot be overlooked in the emancipatory changes that took place in the two decennia after the Second World War. It meant the introduction of the linguistic-cultural model as opposed to the still dominant medical model. Below we will give some highlights in this discourse of the right to sign, but also of the right to be different.

For hearing people it is rather difficult to grasp the idea of a sign language. First of all, a lot of lay people still think that sign language refers to one language. Second, if they got convinced that in every country different sign languages are "spoken", they consider these languages as direct translations of the oral language. Sign languages are no translations of oral languages or manually coded languages. Those who are not able to sign use code languages, which are not structural sign languages. They are invented to facilitate communication between hearing and deaf. A sign language, however, is a visual, tactile and spatial language, a language grown out of shared experiences of deaf over a long period of encounters. It does not mean that no reference is made to the national oral language. If some situations have no visual spatial set of signs, finger spelling is used. However, as finger spelling refers to the national oral language, the deaf rather prefer to combine signs in order to explain the situation.

How to prove that sign language is no outcast within the human languages? Surely, the first text written by a deaf, Desloges, was very helpful, especially his explanation of the visual, tactile and spatial aspects of the gesture-language as it was called in these days. In the time of Desloges, it attracted the attention of philosophers and other elite interested in this highly interesting phenomenon. Nowadays, this is not enough. Due to the development of sciences and thus also

linguistics, the terms, conditions and requirements of what makes a language are set. Stokoe (1960) had the scientific honour in proving that signs can be broken down into parts, i.e. the cheremes, the technical term for the smallest meaningful units of sign language analysis, analogous to phonemes in oral languages¹⁶. His discovery was the turning point in the process of validating sign languages and steered the growth of literature in the right direction (Bauman, 2008).

But despite these scientific efforts of validating sign languages as natural sign language, political recognition was and is another stage towards a full right to sign. At the moment of this writing, some governments have recognised national sign languages as an official language, other governments have declared to give it a protected status for educational purposes and some have just mentioned the importance of the sign language for deaf people¹⁷. According to Ladd *et al* (2003b), there is still a lot of work to do within the deaf community and Deaf Studies: to set up a deaf agenda and to convince the hearing world and politics of the nature of sign language as genuine indigenous and autochthonous languages.

This goes as well for the right to be different. In the aftermath of the Second World War and its continuation in the Cold War, global issues became local, domestic affairs. In this context, the claim of cultural rights for indigenous and autochthonous minorities was not only seeded in the political arena of individual nations, but also in their representative organs, like the European Union. In the USA as well as in Europe, different minorities challenged the majority. Also the deaf community started to polish their cultural legacy. However, to organise their voices as heard while speaking sign language, the leaders had to fight against normalcy policies. It became clear that the deaf community was in need of a body of knowledge in order to have a chance in this unbalanced fight. The help had to come from Deaf Studies “to articulate, explore and promote the phenomenon of Deaf culture, both to the hearing world and to the deaf individuals themselves” (Bauman, 2008, p.3).

Since the 1990s a lot has been published about deaf culture (Ladd, 2003a; Lane, 1992; Padden and Humphries, 2006; and Wrigley, 1996). As in all minority studies, defining culture is a battleground, to be entered with great care. The change of deaf to Deaf was a first step in awareness building and stripping of the “medicalised identity and developing an empowered identity rooted in a community and culture of others who share similar experiences and outlooks on the world” (Bauman, 2008, p.9), the next one.

All literature on deafness as culture tries to discover the essence of what it is, whether labelled deaf nation, deaf culture and identity, ethnicity, deaf subculture, bicultural identity, or the deaf world. These concepts reflect the ongoing discussion within Deaf Studies about the meaning of cultural deafness.

16 “Cheremes” stem from the Greek word for “hand”. They can be categorised into hand configurations, movements and places of articulation.

17 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_recognition_of_sign_languages for an overview.

Compared to the agreements concerning the status of the sign languages, it can become a divide instead of common cause. Identifying the deaf community culturally is a political process, in which deaf opponents encounter difficulties in finding agreements, especially when the essence of being deaf has to be described. The fact that 90% of the deaf children are born in hearing families and are just “one-generation thick” makes this even more difficult (Hoffmeister, 2008). But without doubt, and despite the disputes about the concept of culture, the literature proved in some way deaf culture’s existence. The question is how valuable the concept of deaf culture is for human diversity in order to politically safeguard its future, because that is the ultimate political aim. The concept of culture is politically provocative, especially when a well-defined territory cannot be detected. Culture not only unites or divides people in debates, but it can limit the borders in order to exclude people. Due to globalisation the concept culture has become an even more contested domain. Globalisation provokes discussions about the fluidity of culture, about the process of appropriating, ascribing and owning culture, and what cultural authenticity is. Padden and Humphries’ (2006) had this also in mind when they presented shared stories of a common deaf history as part of what they call the *cultural* as something “...borne through history, made anew by circumstances of the present (...) never universal or without time...” (p. 142-143). In striving to reach recognition as a deaf cultural community, this turmoil of finding agreement can be put to an end, when Padden and Humphries’ (2006) reasoning is followed. Their focus on a common history as a story of shared experiences exchanged in the deaf community, in schools for the deaf, in deaf clubs, in deaf sports, through art, poetry, film and play, might become the backbone of what ties the deaf community together, not only within borders but also as an imagined community across borders (Anderson, 1991).

However, this focus on the cultural will not end the search for authenticity of deaf culture and other cultures; the political stakes are too high. Authenticity as cultural property is an ideal, a marker in the making of culture, to be used in the representation of it; it is also, due to culture’s changeability, a “moving target” (Vannini & Williams, 2009, p.3). Despite this uncertainty, we might discover, as van der Port (2004) describes it, registers of the incontestability of the authentic in the stories of those who share and express the cultural. Below we will turn to the Portuguese deaf community as an example in this search for the unique and the cultural.

THE PORTUGUESE DEAF COMMUNITY

The deaf community in Portugal is very active and is organised in several national associations, like Portuguese Federation of Deaf Associations (FPAS), in which smaller local associations work together. In addition, also parents of deaf children have organised themselves in associations like APECDA (Association of Parents for the Education of Children with Hearing Impairments). Both

organisations are members of the FEPEDA (European Federation of Parents for the Education of the Hearing Impaired), of which the APECDA was a founding member¹⁸.

For those organisations, the concept of culture and belonging to the Portuguese deaf community is closely tied to having a language, meeting spaces and cultural events. With the constitutional recognition of Portuguese Sign Language the research about culture, community and identity increased incredibly. In some writings, the deaf community reacts against the qualification of hearing-impaired, stating that the deaf are “different”, using a different kind of speech, namely sign. They undertake great efforts through seminars, conferences, and publications to protect Portuguese Sign Language and deaf culture as essential elements of their community. In this way, the associations like to show that coming from a situation where the deaf were marginalised, being excluded from the political decision-making process, they are now heading towards the recognition of a juridical status of “being different”. Looking back, one might say that deaf organisations struggled to resist marginalisation of the deaf in favour of a new perspective that seeks to empower the deaf community in their effort to guarantee a place of their own in Portuguese education.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

The study “Towards a grammar of Portuguese Sign Language” of Amaral, Coutinho and Delgado Martins (1994) is regarded as one of the main scientific contributions to the inclusion of Portuguese Sign Language in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic. It marks the beginning of the introduction of the bilingual model and the establishment of units for the support of deaf students as an answer to their social, cultural and linguistic heterogeneity. These units were organised vertically as a place for deaf students from pre-school, primary and middle schools, where the Portuguese Sign Language and the written and, eventually, spoken Portuguese language would be taught. Actually, this was the first time public schools were required to provide equal learning facilities for studying two languages. The concentration of deaf students in some schools was needed to employ deaf teachers of Portuguese Sign Language (PSL), interpreters and speech therapists.

These bilingual principles were reinforced in the Education Act 3/2008 of January 7th, 2008, in which very concrete conditions for implementation were

18 For more information see the following websites: www.fpas.org.pt, www.apecda-lisboa.org, and www.apecda-porto.rcts.pt. In addition, it is worth mentioning that parents of children with cochlear implants founded the Portuguese Association for the Support of Cochlear Implants (APAIC); see www.apaic.pt.

laid down. Moreover, the institutionalisation of so-called Reference Schools¹⁹ was arranged, which renders powerfully the importance of bilingual education through the introduction of Portuguese Sign language as first and the oral as second language. According to this Education Act, education for deaf children has to be provided in bilingual environments with professionals proficient in PSL. The main objective is to give the child the opportunity to immerse in a linguistic environment where the acquisition of sign language as first language and the communication with deaf peers have the highest priority from the time the child enters pre-school.

Pre-school education has to give the deaf child and the hearing child equal opportunities for their personal development. Although they have identical needs, it is extremely important for the deaf child to learn their first language, and in addition the Portuguese written language as a second language. The organisation of bilingual education should strengthen this approach with adequate methodologies stimulating the development of PSL as first language followed by informal reading and writing activities (Sim-Sim, 2009). The bilingual approach for deaf education implies that both languages are used and taught diglossically, which means establishing different goals for the acquisition of each of the two languages or using them differently according to the context of learning. The bilingual approach focuses on the proficiency of two languages, its linguistic structures and, in addition, on cultural knowledge related to both languages. Making sign language available to all the deaf should be the linguistic basis on which any educational project should be built; this availability is an essential right of the deaf. Sign language is not a way of teaching and even less a way of accepting particular non-communicative events (Skliar, 1998; Amaral & Coutinho, 2002; Dorziat, 2004); it is a living language, complete, natural, supported by a community and identified within a culture. It is also an invaluable asset in the lives of deaf children, that cannot be replaced by technology or whatever system of communication (Bouvet, 1982). Moreover, sign language can't be considered solely as a tool to learn other languages, a "consolation prize" for the deaf. As a language it has a status, but it also deserves a privileged place in the construction of identities and the expression of a culture.

Nevertheless, bilingual education for the deaf goes far beyond than just obtaining proficiency in two languages. According to Dubuisson and Daigle (1999), we have to take in mind that the deaf are not a homogeneous group, but individuals with different needs who will fulfil different roles in society and whose cultural background with its specificity, logic and history needs to be addressed as well. This means also that we have to be aware of the "everyday invention of deafness" (Wrigley, 1996, p.28).

Although the bilingual initiative, being more than a new instructional method, is for sure a good access route to education (Perlin, 1998; Skliar, 1998;

19 For more information about reference schools in Portugal, see <http://dgidc.min-edu.pt>.

Góes, 1999), the most significant challenge for the future will be to implement an authentic educational model that probably differs from any bilingual model used so far. Such an authentic educational model has to take into account that deafness is invented over and over again, as Wrigley (1996) reminds us. In the last section, we will take up this challenge and give some ideas for discussion.

CHALLENGING AUDIST PRACTICES: DISCUSSION

The emancipation of the deaf was not a linear process; it was a process with ups and downs in which the deaf community had to defend their rights against oralists, scientists, politicians, pedagogues and industries. Building awareness among the deaf, but also among the hearing, was a political trapeze act in *optima forma*. But this doesn't mean that audist practices are past history; like racist practices they are still very present in our daily life. In this respect we just have to point to the quest of companies and medical scientists to improve cochlear implants. This medical model still represents an immense power. Rabinow and Rose (2006) take in their article "Biopower Today", Foucault's concept applied to the 18th and 19th century into the present time, showing that the bioethical complex, as they call it, is interfering in our daily lives continuously. The research for finding a genetic cure for deafness, often subsidised by states or organisations of states for the sake of the well being of mankind is a well-known example. According to the authors, the role of states in this bioethical complex and especially Foucault's governmentality still need further exploration.

The power of the bioethical complex and governmentality in modern states also affect the lives of hearing people. As such, violation of human rights concerns them as well. Gertz' concept of dysconscious audism (2008) through which she wants to raise the awareness of deaf people should be widened to hearing people. We could also learn from critical multiculturalists, who propose a strategy in which "rather than stressing the importance of diversity and inclusion (...) more emphasis should be placed on the social and political construction of white supremacy and the dispensation of white hegemony"(McLaren, 2007: 268). A focus on the history and construction of the hearing domination makes hearingness as standard visible; otherwise it turns into a privilege, a status, and a property. But how can we use this strategy in education?

Since the first critics on mainstreaming the deaf, bilingual programs were promoted, in which deaf could learn sign language and the written national language. After the first implementations of these programs they also received wide critique, as we have seen in the case of Portugal, from inside and outside the deaf community; the deaf as linguistic and cultural minority were not properly addressed in these programs. Actually this means that the taught sign language was not seen as the first language of the deaf, but more as an instrument to learn the national spoken language. In addition, the cultural (Padden and Humphries, 2006) was not addressed; there were no classes where the deaf could be seated

together learning from each other and communicating in sign language. In some countries, like in Portugal, and in some private schools, the situation is changing however. Schools have bilingual programs where deaf and hearing are mixed but also have separate classes, where sign language is indeed the first language and the written national language the second and where hearing students can learn sign language as well. But is this enough?

In the former section, we concluded that a more authentic model is needed. Addressing audism as personal and structural oppression in schools, where deaf students, but also hearing students are present is one way to discuss the making of deaf and hearing identities. When contextualised within a historical setting including the history of deaf emancipation, the involvement of organisations and professionals representing what Foucault calls governmentality, bilingual education and education can be a driving force behind what we call radical democracy. Discussing the essence of citizenship, whether it is national, European or worldwide, means also understanding oppressive personal and structural practices instilled on deaf and hearing people. We cannot be solely satisfied with the establishment of written human individual and collective rights, as practice shows everyday. A radical democracy means preparing our students to analyse, discuss and to criticise anti-democratic practices. Educating deaf selves and other selves, arming them to negotiate and to define democracy is a rather political and pedagogical act. Teachers need to be trained as well; as creators of adequate learning environments they need to become cultural agents, minimising their roles as cultural gatekeepers.

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