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ARTICLE

Analysis of the schooling path of a high ability student in a multilingual family context: a case study

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Gilmar de Carvalho Cruz¹ 

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the schooling path of a highly-skilled/gifted student, son of a deaf mother, inserted in a multilingual family context. This longitudinal ethnographic research started when the subject was five years old and continued until he turned fourteen. Initially, we analyzed the multilingual family context in which the subject is immersed in order to identify his first language (L1). Thereafter, we focused on his school path, aiming at identifying the reasons that led him to present numerous challenges in his schooling. The two research stages reveal, firstly, that Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) and Portuguese are the subject's L1; secondly, that the existence of a multilingual family context generated conflicts in the development of his writing process, given that his high skills and giftedness were not considered in the school intervention, leading the subject to develop total disinterest in his studies.

KEYWORDS

high skills; giftedness; hearing children; deaf parents; inclusion; Brazilian sign language; ethnographic research.

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ANÁLISE DO PERCURSO ESCOLAR DE UM ESTUDANTE COM ALTAS HABILIDADES EM UM CONTEXTO FAMILIAR MULTILÍNGUE: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o percurso escolar de um estudante com altas habilidades/superdotação, filho de mãe surda, em um contexto familiar multilíngue. Trata-se de uma pesquisa etnográfica longitudinal que se estendeu dos 5 aos 14 anos de idade do sujeito pesquisado. Em primeiro lugar, analisou-se o contexto familiar multilinguístico em que o sujeito está inserido, visando identificar a sua língua 1 (L1). Posteriormente, investigou-se seu percurso escolar, objetivando distinguir os motivos que o levaram a apresentar inúmeros desafios em sua escolarização. Por meio dessas etapas de pesquisa, foi possível constatar, a princípio, que a língua de sinais brasileira (Libras) e a língua portuguesa são L1 desse sujeito e, na etapa seguinte, que a existência de um contexto familiar multilíngue gerou conflitos no desenvolvimento do seu processo de escrita e suas altas habilidades não foram consideradas na intervenção escolar, levando-o a desenvolver total desinteresse pelos estudos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

altas habilidades; superdotação; filhos ouvintes; pais surdos; inclusão; língua de sinais brasileira; pesquisa etnográfica.

ANÁLISIS DEL RECORRIDO ESCOLAR DE UN ESTUDIANTE CON ALTAS HABILIDADES EN UN CONTEXTO FAMILIAR MULTILINGÜE: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza el recorrido escolar de un estudiante con altas habilidades/superdotación, hijo de madre sorda, en un contexto familiar multilingüe. Se trata de una investigación etnográfica longitudinal, que se extendió de los 5 a los 14 años de edad del sujeto investigado. Primero, se analizó el contexto familiar multilingüe en el que se inserta el sujeto, con la finalidad de identificar su lengua 1 (L1). En segundo lugar, se investigó su recorrido escolar, buscando identificar los motivos que lo llevaron a presentar innumerables desafíos en su escolarización. Por medio de esta investigación fue posible constatar que la Lengua de Signos Brasileña (Libras) y el portugués son la L1 del sujeto y, en la siguiente etapa, que la existencia de un contexto familiar multilingüe generó conflictos en el desarrollo de su proceso. Las habilidades de escritura y sus altas habilidades no fueron consideradas en la intervención escolar, llevando al sujeto a desarrollar total desinterés por los estudios.

PALABRAS CLAVE

altas capacidades; superdotación; hijos oyentes; padres sordos; inclusión; lengua de signos brasileña; investigación etnográfica.

INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the school trajectory of a gifted student who is the son of a deaf mother and is inserted in a family context with the presence of various languages: Portuguese (PL), Brazilian Sign Language (Libras¹), German (GL), Ukrainian (UL), and English (EL). The singularity of the case, considering the characteristics of this subject (P), is due to his multilingual family context and experience throughout the Brazilian elementary education, segments 1 and 2. This, combined with the longitudinality of the study, allowed gathering data of academic-professional interest ranging from his school difficulties to his award in the Brazilian Mathematics Olympics for Public Schools (*Olimpíada Brasileira de Matemática das Escolas Públicas* — OBMEP).

In terms of academic studies on hearing people who are children of deaf people, twenty studies were found in a literature review carried out between 2007 and 2017 — twelve national and eight international ones. This number reveals the incipience in studies in this field, given that there are 5.7 million deaf people in Brazil (Brasil, 2014). As the deaf have increasingly attained their rights and space in society, many of them have established families, thus increasing the number of hearing people whose parents are deaf. Studies indicate that most deaf people, even when married to another deaf person, have a 90-95% chance to have hearing children (Lane, 1992; Wrigley, 1996, Quadros, 1997).

Studies conducted by Bull (2013), Pereira (2013), Souza (2014), Streichen, Cruz and Krause-Lemke (2015), and Quadros (2017) reveal that hearing children of deaf parents often face serious conflicts of psychosocial nature. These authors highlight that most of the children may have difficulties in learning the oral and written languages, given that they are accustomed to always speaking in Libras with their deaf parents.

Although hearing children of deaf parents are usually immersed in the hearing world and in permanent contact with PL since they are babies (with grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins, neighbors, etc.), the people with whom they interact with most at home are usually their parents. This has a relevant weight considering that the way the deaf communicate, by means of Sign language (SL), differs considerably from the way that hearing people communicate.

Considering the Brazilian scenario, children of deaf people wind up acquiring, naturally and simultaneously, the two linguistic structures (SL+PL), or even other languages, depending on the context of the individuals. At times, depending on the family context the child is exposed to, it is possible that the linguistic culture of SL predominates over that of PL. Then, at school, children

1 Based on Capovilla *et al.* (2017), we decided to use the nomenclature “Língua de Sinais Brasileira” “Brazilian Sign Language” instead of “Língua Brasileira de Sinais” “Brazilian Language of Signs” (Brasil, 2002). Like these researchers, we understand that there is no Brazilian language of signs. In other countries, which have an official Sign language, Sign language is used as a sole linguistic base, as if the three words (*língua de sinais*) formed a single term and the country adjective would be added at the end.

who are more accustomed to SL must only use the rules of PL and “break free” from the structure of SL. In this situation, Pereira (2013, p. 57-58) emphasizes that: “When writing, this student can bring elements from the order of construction of Sign language, leading the teacher, who does not know this language, to believe that the student has difficulties in learning”.

Quadros (2017, p. 221), based on the statements of participants in her studies, and anchored in her own experience, given that she is the daughter of deaf parents, emphasizes that “the school is an event in the life of these individuals that has a significant impact on the relations established by the zones of contact. Initially, the school represents a space of discomfort for most of those interviewed”. According to Streiechen, Cruz and Krause-Lemke (2015, p. 90-91):

A hearing person, whose parents are deaf people, can become a hearing person different from the others, by presenting a “deaf” identity and even be different from deaf people for having auditory experiences. The fact that these individuals have conviviality with two different cultures, the deaf and the hearing, in their daily life, can trigger embarrassing and conflictive situations; most hearing children who have deaf parents become bilingual and inevitably, interpret for their parents; Sign language often becomes the first language (L1) of these people; the fact that they actively participate in their parents’ culture means they wind-up internalizing and thus practicing these cultures naturally in their daily life; some may undergo conflicts of identity for not knowing which community they truly belong to or identify with better, given that they either prefer to be among the deaf or among those with hearing; one of the main challenges faced by them is the curiosity and/or prejudice of society in relation to deaf parents and an excess of responsibilities for younger siblings. The study also reveals that these people may have problems related to emotional, social, school, and other issues.

However, in Brazil, there are no discussions that contemplate the school inclusion of hearing children of deaf parents. Thus, the lack of information among most teachers about the culture and linguistic issues of these students is normally aggravated by labels that can cause deep marks in the schooling and life of these individuals.

In terms of gifted/highly skilled (G/HS) students, Resolution No. 2/2001, Art. 5, characterizes gifted students as those who have “great ease for learning that leads them to quickly dominate concepts, procedures, and attitudes” (Brasil, 2001, p. 2). In turn, Resolution No. 4/2009, Art. 4, which Establishes Operating Guidelines for Specialized Educational Care in Basic Education, Special Education modality, describes G/HS students as being those who “have a high potential and strong involvement with the fields of human knowledge, isolated or combined: intellectual, leadership, psychomotor, arts, and creativity” (Brasil, 2009, p. 1). And according to the National Policy for Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, G/HS students are those who:

Demonstrate high potential in any one of the following areas, isolated or combined: intellectual, academic, leadership, psychomotricity, and arts. They also have a high degree of creativity, strong involvement in learning and realization of tasks in fields of their interest. (Brasil, 2008, p. 15)

Martins, Pedro and Ogeda (2016, p. 562) affirm that the identification of the gifted is extremely “important to the degree that the educational attention given to these students depends, initially, on this process, which should be performed as soon as possible, beginning in early childhood education”, given that these students can face various challenges of a psychosocial order. In turn, in order to deconstruct the myth that these students have better grades in all classes and have good academic performance in all fields, Martins (2006, p. 25) emphasizes that:

Students who present a combination of strong and weak academic points, come to be the rule and not the exception. Thus, they can be gifted in one academic field and show an inability and even learning disability in another in which they are not interested, proving that giftedness on its own does not guarantee educational success.

Based on a survey of dissertations and theses between 2005 and 2014, Martins, Pedro and Ogeda (2016) found 91 studies on gifted students. Upon criticizing the lack of research in this field, and the lack of scientific tools to identify G/HS students, the authors emphasized that: “These gaps leave gifted students invisible within the school context, and their potential is very often unnoticed or not valued” (Martins, Pedro and Ogeda, 2016, p. 565-566).

G/HS students are mentioned in all legislation that supports special and inclusive education, however, these students do not have an apparent disability — as do those with physical or intellectual disabilities, the blind, etc. — thus, identification does not always occur in time to offer the specialized attention that they need. The impact of this is directly related to the criteria, instruments, and strategies used to identify those who should be sent to special programs (Alencar, 2007), and instead of enhancing, may suppress the aptitudes of these students and generate sequelae that are unlikely to be repaired in the future.

Thus, we understand that there is an academic and professional interest to advance in the discussion about G/HS students in order to grant greater consistency in the pedagogical intervention, so that the abilities of these students are not lost in their school trajectory. Therefore, the objectives of this study were:

- to identify the maternal or primary languages (L1) of subject P, who is inserted in a multilingual family context, composed of the five languages involved;
- to analyze P's school path, focused on the implications of the multilingual context and his skills in relation to his schooling process.

THE RESEARCH FIELD AND THE NATURE OF THE DATA

For the development of this study, a qualitative study was conducted with a longitudinal ethnographic approach (Fonseca, 1999) based on a case study. To generate and transcribe the data we used the presumptions of interactional sociolinguistics according to Garcez (2002). It should be noted that the premise of this approach is the “study of social organization of discourse in interaction, emphasizing the dialogical nature of human communication” (Garcez, 2002, p. 8). This method allows giving greater attention to the linguistic phenomenon itself or to the interactional phenomenon. Another very important aspect is the notion of context, considering that the interaction always took place in a situated manner; considering the participants, for example, who speaks to whom; the notion of time — when to speak; space — where the interaction takes place; and reference — what to talk about. The generation of data, therefore, was based on video recordings and their transcription considering these elements.

The total number of data was not quantified, given that there are many records. Thus, those that appear to be more significant for the qualitative and ethnographic analysis were selected for use, based on the case study and which met the objectives outlined for the study, in both the family and school contexts.

The data analysis is based on discursive textual analysis, which is defined as a “process of deconstruction, followed by construction, of a set of linguistic and discursive materials, which are used to produce new understandings about the phenomenon and discourses investigated” (Moraes and Galiuzzi, 2016, p. 134). It is emphasized that the qualitative and longitudinal perspective was crucial for the understanding of the research context, for the generation of data and for the construction of the analytical framework.

The data, generated in audio and video, consisted of family interactions, which were transcribed and organized in different segments, whose purpose was to discuss the following aspects: the intimacy of P with the languages involved in the multilingual context to which he and his brother are exposed; the importance that each language represents for P in the effectuation of communication; the alternance of languages, a phenomenon detected in communicational situations between P, his brother and mother; bimodalism (use of two simultaneous languages) present in some communicational contexts of P with his family members; situations of conversation in Libras between P, his brother, and his mother.

The period studied began in 2008 and continues until 2018, and is divided in different stages, which are described below. The subject in question (P, 14 years of age), is the son of a deaf mother and a hearing father. He lives with his parents and maternal grandparents in the countryside of Paraná State. The first information of the study consists of interviews conducted with P and his mother at age five, in 2009. Given the discovery that P could easily communicate with his deaf mother in Libras, and had a disposition to learn other languages, the study extended from 2012 to 2014 (Streiechen, 2014).

In this phase, the focus was on the languages in P's family context (when he was 8) and aimed to identify what was or were P's maternal languages. The data were collected through interviews and by using a field diary and video recordings, between 2012 and 2013, every two weeks, for about two hours per day, at various times and situations: while P played and interacted with his only brother (who was 3 and 4 years old at the time): in contact with his mother and with other family members or while he tried to do schoolwork at home.

At five years of age, in addition to fluency in SL and PL, P would speak words and sentences in German and understand part of the conversations, in this language, between his maternal grandparents; he was able to read long texts with a certain fluency, presented more elaborate vocabulary in PL and spoke phrases accordingly, establishing gender and number markings; his favorite hobby was to study English and even some of his comic books were written in that language. However, at that age, P still did not attend school, but had already learned to read and write with his mother (who is deaf).

At a certain occasion, at the age of eight, P drew and explained the entire solar system, highlighting the proximities between the planets, as well as the remote possibility that there was life on each one of them. He knew of the existence of new planets and listed each of their names in order and without hesitation. P made a drawing that, according to him, demonstrated how images are transmitted by television, indicating knowledge of physics. He explained the captions of the construction of a school that he had designed, using mathematical knowledge of space and calculations, for example. Despite P's notable ability in acquiring languages, and that he demonstrated interest and learned complex subjects for his age, most of the grades on his school report cards in elementary education (from 1st to 5th grades) were below average (below 7.0²).

During the initial research (Streiechen, 2014), various aspects about P's schooling arose that went beyond the objectives delineated for the study undertaken at that time. After learning about various messages sent from school to his mother with complaints about P's school performance, behavior and low grades, a decision was made to continue the study. A paradox was observed between P's intellectual ability — from five years of age — and the complaints from school found in the messages.

With these considerations, the second phase of the study focused on the analysis of P's school trajectory from the 1st to 9th grades of elementary/middle school years, from six to fourteen years of age. In elementary school, P studied at a municipal school, and in middle school, at a state one. Although he entered school at age five directly into the 1st grade, knowing how to read and write, without having gone to pre-school, he was not motivated to engage in the school activities, mainly in the early years, as reported by the family and the school.

2 Brazil adopts a numerical scoring system, while English-language readers may be familiar with the A-F scoring system only. In the case presented in this article, the student's grade would be a C (between 5.0 and 7.0, in Brazil).

Thus, a study was conducted in two public schools (one municipal and another state) and the participants were, in addition to P, who is the subject of our study, his family, teachers, psychologists, directors, and the pedagogical staff. The data about his school trajectory between the years of 2015 and 2018, were gathered through interviews recorded in audio and/or video³. In 2015, when data collection at school began from the early years (I1⁴), P was already in the 6th grade in another school (I2). Thus, the reports of the teachers from I1 were based on their memories about his schooling, differently than those from I2 which he attended simultaneous to the study. A total of nineteen professionals were interviewed individually, including three directors, two pedagogues, two psychologists, and twelve teachers.

The interviews with teachers and other participants were carried out individually with the purpose of making them more at ease and encouraging them to narrate all the episodes they could remember, about P's schooling process. In the family context, in addition to investigating directly with P, interviews were conducted with his mother and maternal grandmother, the people who spent the most time with him, and whose interviews took place about one or two times a month from 2015–2018. With P, the interviews were nearly always in the form of spontaneous and informal conversations, recorded with a cell phone or camera. These moments configured to generate data, were mostly guided by an incident reported by the mother or grandmother about an episode at school, such as teachers' complaints or concerning homework that P did not want to do.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section presents some data related, first, to the description and functioning of the multilingual context in which P was inserted and then, to the segments selected from interviews conducted with the school staff about the development of the learning process of the researched subject.

In relation to the first step of our study, which involved P's multilingual home context, we highlight the segment in which he expresses his knowledge of three languages — GL, EL, and Libras — during an interview in 2013, when he was eight years old. The purpose of this interview was to verify if P was aware of the linguistic diversity in which he was involved:

Researcher (Res.): Do you know any German?

Subject of the study (P): Heiß.

Res.: Heiß? What does that mean?

3 Video was needed to record the interviews with the mother, considering that the communication with her was in sign language. The first author of this article is a translator and interpreter of sign languages.

4 We use I1 to refer to his school in the early years and, I2 for the school in the later years. Both are public school located in the same city in the interior of Paraná.

- P.: Heiß means hot.*
Res.: Do your grandparents speak in German?
P.: Yes.
Res.: How did you learn English?
P.: On the computer. Did you know that "A" in English is "E"?
Res.: Say something in English for me, please.
P.: Loveu, Loviu lo ['lav].
Res.: Love. What does love mean?
P.: Love means amo.
Res.: What else do you know?
P.: I also know "hello".
Res.: What does Hello mean?
P.: Oi.
Res.: Oi? Hum, what else?
P.: [he looked at the dog, which was in a little house next to him] dog.
Res.: Dog is what?
P.: Dog is cão.
Res.: And in Brazilian Sign Language, how is cão?
P.: [signs dog].
Res.: Hum and what else do you know in libras?
P.: [signs butterfly].
Res.: What is this?
P.: Butterfly [signs "spider" and other animals].

It is pertinent to emphasize that, in front of the camera, P was a bit insecure about speaking the languages. He was not used to this situation and, moreover, was not encouraged to pronounce the words, given that this is not a concern in his surroundings. In the case of the EL, since he learned it on his own, he had no one to share moments of interaction and his study materials were mostly books and magazines. In P's case, the use of languages — especially SL, PL, and GL is linked to communicative purposes, given the multilinguistic constitution of his family surroundings. It thus takes place naturally, without corrections by others. According to Krashen (1981, p. 1) "speakers are not concerned with the form of their sentences, but with the messages that they are expressing and understanding". Although some of P's pronunciations in English are not within the standards for the language, it is pertinent to reiterate his effort to learn on his own, since there is no one at home to give him any feedback.

In the quotation mentioned before, P signs some animals, such as: dog, spider, butterfly. Upon analyzing the videos of P signaling⁵, it was observed that he uses the linguistic parameters of Libras with considerable efficiency,

⁵ Considering compliance with ethical protocol, we do not present images of P signing in Brazilian Sign language.

including: the hand configuration (shape of the hands), location (place of the body where the configured hand is located), and the movements. This is configured as fluency in Libras, given that the signs flow naturally. Moreover, his mother's deafness did not cause any type of harm to P's linguistic development. No type of communicational difficulty was identified between P, as a hearing person, and his deaf mother and vice-versa. There were also no vestiges of delay in language development. On the contrary, it was found that P had a high level of knowledge for his age and moreover, demonstrated great ease in acquiring languages. P did not reject any of the languages present in his context, and there was no superiority or inferiority among the languages involved. All are considered languages with equal value.

Thus, it is observed that P's acquisition of language steered him toward his development as a plurilingual individual, given that he displays competence to manage the use of languages according to different contexts and needs. The research data show that both the PL as well as Libras are constants in nearly all the communicative situations between P and his mother, and therefore, he acquired the languages simultaneously and naturally. Therefore, it can be stated that both languages, Libras and PL, are P's maternal languages. P's presence in this multilingual context becomes extremely important for his brother's language development, given that Libras is used by them all of the time, facilitating even more the process of language acquisition by his younger brother, which supports the findings of studies by Moraes (2001), that affirm the importance of child-child interaction in this process.

It was also possible to verify that the frontiers between Sign and oral languages present in multilingual contexts cause the interlocutors to seek strategies that facilitate or effectuate communication. The following strategies stand out: the alternance of languages, a phenomenon that is quite frequent and common in the dialogs of bilingual people; bimodalism; gestures that are important strategic resources and that even have semantic meanings within different interactional frameworks.

Regarding the second stage of our study, which concerned P's school development, among the data produced, some statements of the teachers were emphasized, revealing the implications of linguistic diversity and of giftedness in P's writing and orality acquiring process. With a focus on the discursive textual analysis (Moraes and Galiuzzi, 2016), the elements found in the statements in two groupings can be synthesized into those which may have triggered the setbacks in P's education and learning, one of them being the interference of the languages present in the family environment, and the other his giftedness.

The fact that P lives and communicates through both SL and PL has had consequences in his writing process — the main complaint of the teachers. These languages have different syntactic structures and P, who acquired them concomitantly, was not always able to separate them at the time of writing, thus generating a certain confusion between the two. According to Pereira (2013, p. 57-58):

In the school environment we cannot forget that hearing students who are children of deaf parents use sign language in their home with their parents and that the language has a different structure and order of use from Portuguese. Upon writing, these students may bring elements from the order of construction of Sign language, leading teachers, who do not know this language, to believe that the students are having learning difficulties.

Although P is immersed in the hearing world and in permanent contact with Portuguese (through his father, grandparents, uncles, cousins, etc.), the person with whom he most interacted with at home is his mother. Thus, it is important to note that P was literate by his mother. This has an important weight provided that the way that the deaf communicate, with SL, is considerably different than the way hearing people communicate, in PL (or other languages) and it is probable that the mother, being deaf, used Libras criteria, *i.e.*, structures of her primary language, to teach her son to read and write. By learning how to write with his mother, P internalized the rules of SL much more — an absence of conjunctions and prepositions, the syntactic structure, verbs (in the infinitive) as reported by his science teacher from I2: “I was almost not able to understand what he wrote. He did not use ‘e’ [and] and ‘mas’ [but] very much”. Thus, upon entering school, P had to “break free” from everything he had learned at home to be replaced by the rules of PL, given that his way of writing was considered to be incorrect at school, since:

School is the space that emphasizes the Portuguese language in its spoken and written modalities and does not customarily consider other languages in its curriculum [...] Since the spoken language is used to mediate relations at school, the institution is not able to attribute meaning in relations based on Sign language. Thus, school may not make sense for some children of deaf people or may incite alienation (anger, denial). (Quadros, 2017, p. 221)

Upon considering the differences implicit in the two languages, SL and PL, it can be inferred that these differences cause conflicts in P's process of learning how to write. Thus, he used an escape strategy, that is, he avoided writing, as reported by teachers: “*He didn't like to write, he didn't like to put things on paper and when he did, it was only the main idea. At times, he treated us poorly, because he said that he hated to write, so he hated the teacher and everything*” (4th grade teacher, I1, 2016); “*he simply did not like to write. And his greatest difficulty was also in Portuguese, language norms, paragraphs, accents, switching letters, text production*” (5th grade teacher, I2, 2016); “*he had his difficulties in writing [...]. Until the Libras interpreter entered, because of another deaf student, and she began to help P correct this part of the spelling, his writing*” (Pedagogue from I2, 2017); “*he never complained about the subject, but I noticed he preferred the moments when I was explaining the contents to the moments that he had to produce manually*” (History teacher, I2, 2018).

Virgolim (2014, p. 586) explains that a gifted child “can read precociously or show a deep interest in a particular subject and not demonstrate the same interest or abilities at later moments”. Based on this explanation, it is possible to affirm that for P, reading could be the route for the acquisition of knowledge, while writing is a field that does not bring him pleasure. P’s lack of interest in writing may be the fruit of his multilingual family context as well as his giftedness.

Among the statements of the teachers, there is a complaint about the incomprehensible handwriting that made it difficult to evaluate P’s writing. Some researchers (Martins, 2006; Alencar, 2007, and others) postulate that G/HS students may have various school problems, including difficulty with handwriting:

Academically gifted students are, at times, unequal in their scholastic profiles, they may have learning disturbances in some domain, such as dyslexia and a difficulty to learn how to read, problems with mathematics, perceptual-motor problems, *difficulty in handwriting* or even an inability to focus and pay attention. (Martins, 2006, p. 25, emphasis ours)

Upon comparing these “domains” to which Martins (2006) refers, with our data about P’s schooling process, it is possible to affirm that this student did not have problems related to most of the fields described in this citation. In the item “difficulty of learning how to read”, the data demonstrate that P has been reading since he was five years old; in the field of mathematics, P is capable of mentally solving mathematical expressions and calculations; in fact, in the 6th and 9th grade, he was a medalist in the OBMEP, and earned a grant. In other fields (geography, history, and sciences), despite the low grades in his report cards at I1, P has always been an outstanding student at I2, showing exceptional interest and high grades.

In terms of the perceptual-motor commands, difficulty with handwriting or even inability to focus and pay attention — domains also highlighted by Martins (2006), in the excerpt above —, our data demonstrate that P’s greatest difficulties reside there and that the teachers indicated this as a problem: “*I could hardly understand his writing, what he wrote in the tests*” (science teacher, 2018); “*his spelling [...] he didn’t like it, wouldn’t do it, he would become revolted, he didn’t like to write. And, maybe, that’s why his grades were not very good*” (4th grade teacher, 2018); “*this difficulty that he had in writing, when it was time to register something in his notebook, he refused*” (5th grade teacher, 2018).

In one of the notes from the 4th grade teacher, the teacher expressed her concern with P’s handwriting, when she recommended, to the mother, to buy P a calligraphy notebook. Based on these findings, we can conclude that it was not only the multilingual environment in which P was immersed that was the source of the obstacles in his writing process, and consequently in his school trajectory as a whole, but the junction of this context with his giftedness.

Nevertheless, P's giftedness was only detected in 2015, when he was in 6th grade (at age 11). Despite the evidence that P is a G/HS student, most of the teachers did not mention them in the interviews. The records from the school councils we reviewed also did not reveal anything in this sense. However, there are various reports on the participants, from both institutions, that prove that some school challenges faced by P were directly related to his giftedness, without the professionals realizing this. We believe that P's giftedness was not identified, given that the idea still predominates that a student can only be considered gifted if they "present command in various fields, 'a genius'; someone who is "a 10 in everything" (Martins, 2006, p. 14).

Although it is highlighted in one of the psychological reports, issued in 2010, when P was in the 1st grade, that he is a student with above average performance, the focus and the complaints of the teachers always relayed on the difficulties and not on the potentials of this student. Let us see the part of the psychologist's report with such information:

The student has a great intellectual capacity, at 6 years of age, in the 1st grade he knows how to read and write many words. P has great intellectual potential and ability to express himself at a higher level than children of his age. The student was submitted to a non-verbal intelligence test for children and at the time he was evaluated, he had a performance MUCH ABOVE the average expected for children his age, considering that his scores were in the best level of performance for 9-year-old children. (Psychologist, 2010, emphasis by the psychologist⁶)

In short, the main justifications of the participants regarding the difficulties in working with P were because: "He did not take advantage of all his potential. [...] The teacher is not prepared to work with this student, because students with superior intelligence go to special schools" (1st grade teacher, 2018); "It was difficult to read him [...]. I was not prepared at that time" (2nd grade teacher, 2018); "He wouldn't adapt to the level of the school [...]. He didn't want to follow the class. He didn't have complete assistance, support, there was no internet in the school, there were much fewer resources" (4th grade teacher, 2018); "I didn't have time for him [...]. I couldn't go only to the area he was interested in" (5th grade teacher, 2018).

Upon identifying the limited information and distorted ideas found among the teachers about recognizing and working with G/HS students, Martins and Alencar (2011) emphasize the urgent need for public educational policies that propose the formation of educators who can act in this field. These authors affirm that "there are great challenges to be overcome so that the special attention to gifted students takes place in a significant manner in the country, beginning with teacher education, the foundation of the entire process" (Martins and Alencar, 2011, p. 43). Studies by Fleith (2007, p. 55) highlight the importance of mothers in the education of gifted children. The author revealed that:

6 In the interviews, the teachers mentioned that P was sent to the psychologist, but none of them knew what was in the psychologist's reports.

It is the family, particularly *the mother*, who is breaking barriers of greater isolation that society tries to impose on these children and adolescents. It is *the mother* who is interested in the development of her sons and daughters, who receives the diagnosis. When the evaluation and guidance are well done, the routines with psychologists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists begin to develop basic human skills such as expressing feelings and self-knowledge, speech and the use of the body in an adequate manner. (Fleith, 2007, p. 55, emphasis ours)

In P's case, the specificity of his mother, that is, the fact that she is deaf, somehow, increases the degree of difficulty even more for some of the procedures (with psychologists, speech therapists, etc.). And this is not based on deafness, but on the communicative barriers imposed by society. Thus, P's mother, unlike hearing mothers — who can claim and demand more from the school, since they speak the same language — was left with fragmented information that did not allow her to have a broader view of the school problems faced by P. According to Fleith (2007, p. 55) “because of the historic culture of exclusion, the school is transformed into the main barrier the family confronts to the development of the gifts of their children”. If families consisted entirely by hearing people face barriers to discuss the direction and procedures for G/HS children, imagine a family with a deaf mother, who often faces much greater barriers because of the linguistic differences and the lack of professionals to mediate her communication with the school.

In this sense, these challenges found by teachers and researchers, in relation to students who have peculiar learning conditions, should serve to propose didactics, strategies and policies, in order to offer them a quality education, which is their right.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we sought to present some data from a longitudinal study that investigated the learning path of P, considering his multilingual family surroundings and his high abilities. The results indicate that P lived in a family culture different from that of children whose parents could hear and because he communicated with two languages — PL and Libras — which makes him bilingual. However, living between the two cultures — the deaf and the hearing — can generate psychosocial difficulties, including in a school environment, given that some schools are not aware of the implications that SL can have on the scholastic development of these students.

We can affirm that both PL and Libras are P's maternal languages and also that:

- P's learning difficulties, in his early years, were not related to being gifted, because the teachers did not identify this;
- his peculiar form of writing was not associated to his multilingual context and or to being gifted, but was considered to be incorrect,

given that the teachers were not familiar with the languages that P used;

- the teachers tended to give more emphasis to the student's difficulties rather than to his abilities. This accentuated the difficulties, leading P to repudiate the school and have a total lack of interest in his studies.

Concerning the problems faced by P, in his writing acquisition process, our data indicated two issues. The first is related to the fact that P is bilingual, that is, he used both SL and PL to communicate. Thus, he naturally and simultaneously internalized the two linguistic structures (SL+PL) and, therefore, his writing showed the conflict with both linguistic standards. The phonological, morphological and structural elements of the two languages created some challenges to the development of P's writing. It should be emphasized that GL and UL, which were present in P's family context, also influenced his pronunciation of some phonemes, like /R/, for example. For this reason, he used an escape strategy, that is, he avoided writing. The second issue is related to P's being gifted, which as we saw, can generate difficulty in the perceptomotor development, in handwriting, and consequently in the writing process.

In this context, the school must be attentive to indications of any type of intolerance toward certain activities, or low school performance, on the part of hearing students who are children of deaf people, so that they can take coherent initiatives according to each case, in order to offer equal opportunities and possibilities for all, as determined by Brazilian educational laws and guidelines regarding inclusion.

The study presented here indicates the need to incorporate to the new pedagogical proposals in teacher education, as determined by Resolution CNE no. 02/2015 (Brasil, 2015), classes aimed at special and inclusive education, and to discuss more deeply with future teachers procedures to identify, propose, and develop strategies that stimulate the abilities of students, so that they do not repudiate school, by needing to hide their potential and face challenges, as occurred in P's school trajectory.

Given these results, we want to emphasize the importance and urgency of considering public education policies that reconsider school inclusion of hearing students of deaf parents. For more than a century, reports of trauma and suffering caused to the deaf have been constantly heard with indignation, because of efforts to employ an oralist methodology that sought to have the deaf learn how to speak, not recognizing that education and learning among deaf students can only occur with their own language, SL. There is currently a risk of repeating this mistake, now related to the education of the children of the deaf. In this sense, it is necessary to pay attention to the linguistic and cultural singularities of these children, who must be considered in the school environment so that their psychosocial development is not impaired.

Thus, it is essential that the schooling of hearing students with deaf parents be discussed in courses on SL, which are part of the teacher's education curriculum, so that when working with these students, future teachers can artic-

ulate theories and practices concerning the literacy of these individuals. Schools must also develop means for deaf parents to express their opinions, discuss, and actively participate in the schooling of their children, so that parents with special conditions have complete access to the school. It is essential to address these issues to minimize the barriers between the school community and deaf parents. By approximating the parties, conditions can be offered to teachers to recognize the linguistic and cultural singularities that permeate the life of their students, whether they can hear or not. And, as a complement, also offer the opportunity for parents to recognize the challenges faced by both teachers and their children so that these parents can contribute more directly and effectively in the education of their children.

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