



Educação & Realidade

ISSN: 0100-3143

educreal@ufrgs.br

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do  
Sul  
Brasil

da Silva Thoma, Adriana  
Educação Bilíngue nas Políticas Educacionais e Linguísticas para Surdos: discursos e  
estratégias de governo  
Educação & Realidade, vol. 41, núm. 3, julio-septiembre, 2016, pp. 755-775  
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul  
Porto Alegre, Brasil

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=317246239008>

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## **Bilingual Education in Educational and Linguistic Policies for the Deaf: government discourses and strategies**

Adriana da Silva Thoma<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre/RS – Brazil

**ABSTRACT – Bilingual Education in Educational and Linguistic Policies for the Deaf: government discourses and strategies.** In this article, I present some problematizations about the government discourses and strategies used by current educational and linguistic policies for the deaf. I claim that both the bilingual education provided by regular schools and the bilingual education in schools for the deaf are strategies to govern deaf identities and difference. I analyze texts of the policies, reports, and documents produced by deaf leaders or experts about bilingual education to demonstrate how the deaf school population has been subjected, normalized, and conducted to an active and productive participation in the contemporary world. I highlight the existence of different discourses on such education, some investments made by the Brazilian government, and proposals of organization and distribution of deaf subjects in school periods and spaces at the present time.

**Keywords: Bilingual Education. Deaf People. Discourses. Government. Biopolitics.**

**RESUMO – Educação Bilíngue nas Políticas Educacionais e Linguísticas para Surdos: discursos e estratégias de governo.** Neste artigo, apresento algumas problematizações sobre os discursos e as estratégias de governo utilizados pelas atuais políticas educacionais e linguísticas para surdos. Argumento que tanto a educação bilíngue oferecida na escola comum quanto a educação bilíngue que acontece nas escolas de surdos são estratégias para que as identidades e a diferença surda sejam governadas. São analisados textos das políticas, relatórios e documentos produzidos por especialistas ou líderes surdos sobre a educação bilíngue, a fim de demonstrar como a população escolar surda vem sendo subjetivada, normalizada e conduzida para uma participação ativa e produtiva no mundo contemporâneo. Destaco a existência de distintos discursos sobre essa educação, alguns investimentos realizados por parte do governo federal e propostas de organização e distribuição dos sujeitos surdos em tempos e espaços escolares na atualidade.

**Palavras-chave: Educação Bilíngue. Surdos. Discursos. Governo. Biopolítica.**

## Introduction

In this article, I present some problematizations about the government discourses<sup>1</sup> and strategies<sup>2</sup> used by current educational and linguistic policies for the deaf, using the notions of government and discourse developed by Michel Foucault as theoretical-methodological tools. I analyzed texts of policies, reports, and documents produced by deaf leaders or experts on bilingual education, in order to demonstrate how the deaf school population has been subjected, normalized, and conducted to an active and productive participation in the contemporary world through the imperative of sign language, deaf culture, and bilingual education, which aims at including deaf subjects in school, the labor market, the economy, and consumption.

The theme of educational and linguistic policies for the deaf has been of interest to the research that I have been developing and advising in recent years, and the problematizations that I present in this article are the result of analyses carried out in these studies. More specifically, I bring here some government discourses and strategies put into work by the texts that guide the policies analyzed, as well as the forms of resistance of the deaf rights movement, which proposes actions different from those taken by the Brazilian Government through the Ministry of Education. In the research titled *Políticas educacionais e linguísticas como estratégias de governo dos sujeitos no campo da educação de surdos* [Educational and linguistic policies as strategies of subject government in the field of education of the deaf] and its developments, the research group that I coordinate<sup>3</sup> works with issues related to the education of deaf students from the field of Deaf Studies, in conjunction with Cultural and Foucauldian Studies.

Our research is based on the understanding of deafness as an identity trait of a group of subjects who have sign language as their primary linguistic and cultural mark. In this sense, we dialogue with authors from the field of Cultural Studies in Education and in a post-structuralist perspective, having Michel Foucault as one of the main interlocutors for our problematizations of the subject constitution, subjectification processes<sup>4</sup>, and strategies of regulation and control of the deaf difference. From the concepts of discourse (Foucault, 2012; 2013) and government (Foucault, 2008a; 2008b) developed by him, we analyze how the deaf school population and their teachers have been subjected and constituted as subjects who must assume certain conducts of care of the self and for each other, which are aimed at collaborating in the management of the risk of exclusion and producing forms of enhancing an active and productive participation of deaf people in society.

For Michel Foucault, the discourses are related to processes of meaning production in a historical dimension. In each historical period, the discourses in circulation constitute our modes of being and acting, and the subject is discursively produced in history and culture,

in knowledge-power-truth relations. In the formation processes and in our teaching practices, we are constantly questioned by discourses that say how we should be and act toward the inclusion of differences in school education. However, educational policies, aiming at conducting the conduct of teachers, deaf students and interpreters, need alliances with families, the media, and other sectors such as health care and social services. When in circulation, the discourses of such policies gain truth status, start to dispute and negotiate with other discourses, and those of more power in the order of discourse prevail.

Government strategies are part of what Foucault called arts of governing and occur through processes of *normalization*<sup>5</sup>. In contemporary times, we have witnessed the celebration of difference and identity, at the height of a society called *society of normalization, of control, or of security*. In this society, the *disciplinary standard*, which used to be defined *a priori* so that the normal and the abnormal would be to derive from it, weakens, and the normal becomes defined within each group or community. In the *security society*, the *standard* derives from the normal; in this sense, policies can be seen as strategies of *normation* of deaf people in such a way that they are “linguistic normal” (Thoma; Kuchenbecker, 2011; Kuchenbecker, 2011), assuring all deaf people that they have access to a language. However, they can also be seen as strategies of risk *normalization* for the deaf population (Kraemer, 2011; Kraemer; Thoma, 2012). In both, the *normalization* is recurrent, but its procedures change, and disciplinary and biopolitical strategies are added to govern the subjects.

It is important to highlight that the problematizations of government strategies involve analyses of the construction of the subjects more than the analyses of exercise of power. To analyze and problematize the ways of government of the subjects by the policies in question requires also understanding the subjectification and normalization processes triggered by the school, a space from which knowledge is articulated and mobilized to make government strategies work. When seeking ways of participation in school, the policies seek to control, regulate actions, and govern all subjects. Policies are used to establish an art of conducting the conducts that takes place through established codes both for the students and the teachers – in case of inclusion in educational spaces, also for sign language interpreters.

As government strategies, such policies aim at the construction of a system open to diversity and to the *participation of all*, thus creating a set of laws and proposals of changes in the educational codes and symbols (curriculum, evaluation, methodologies etc.) that are beyond purely organizational matters. The discourses on diversity and respect to the differences that underpin policies constitute a government logic based on an economic logic, which Foucault calls a way of *governing more with less government* (Foucault, 2008a; 2008b). This economic logic aims at the government of the forms of life of the population, consti-

tuted by a multitude of subjects that must be controlled and regulated, in order to avoid death and guarantee and enhance life, which may be called the biopolitical economy of existence. In this scenario, the school is responsible for producing desirable conducts, normalizing and erasing differences. Hence the need, in Modernity, for mass schooling, a condition for governing individuals, for controlling multiplicity and heterogeneity, for homogenizing and normalizing differences.

The relation between biopolitics and education has been widely explored in our present context, in investigations inspired by Michel Foucault's thought. They follow the trail left by him in his analysis of "[...] social medicine [...], the police, social security, and biological racism of the State, among others – as one of the privileged strategic mechanisms to exert biopowers and biopolitics in modern Western societies" (Gadelha, 2009, p. 15).

In the contemporary scenario, government strategies that seek to regulate the life of the population through regulation and normalization processes aim to enhance and maximize life in such a way that all may live longer and with more quality, using disciplinary power – which focuses on the individual body of each individual – linked with biopower – which acts on the population as a whole – in order to promote the participation of all. Through biopolitical strategies<sup>6</sup>, the performance of the power does not occur only in the body of each individual, but through actions aimed at subjectification and at the belief that we are all responsible for ourselves and for others.

In the present analysis, such concepts developed by Foucault help us understand that both the bilingual education provided by regular schools and the bilingual education in schools for the deaf work as strategies to normalize and govern deaf identities and difference. Both the Ministry of Education school inclusion policy and the bilingual education proposed by the Deaf Rights Movement, although understanding in different forms what is *bilingual education*, tend to produce serial subjects. That happens because education and pedagogy are always thought for categories of diversity subjects, even if in their texts are filled with expressions such as *respect for difference*, *appreciation for singularities*, etc. In this sense, I seek to give visibility to the ways in which the construction of deaf subjects has been operating through the processes of subjectification and normalization that occur in school, a place where knowledge is articulated and mobilized to constitute subjects of certain types.

Dealing with subjectification, normalization, and the constitution of a deaf *ethos* in a previous text (Lopes; Thoma, 2013, p. 105), we discussed contemporary paradoxes present in public policies geared toward the deaf, for "[...] people with deafness can be seen both as *hearing impaired* and as *deaf*, or as members of a specific visual and linguistic community". We perceive in policies an ambiguity that is part of the

experience of subjects living in a country that recognizes them both as hearing impaired people and as members of a linguistic and cultural community. This ambiguity promotes endless forms of subjectification in the *body with deafness*, thus named to refer to a specific body/surface, and not to a subject, for there are many and complex experiences of those sometimes called *people with hearing impairment*, sometimes *deaf*, as well as there are many and complex forms of subjectification that make them see and identify themselves by one term or the other.

The bilingual education that has been proposed by the current policies in Brazil is also constituted of ambiguities. On the one hand, it is the result of the fight for the right of deaf people to an education in sign language and in Portuguese; on the other hand, it can be understood as a biopolitical practice of government acting on the deaf school population by their inclusion in school and in the labor market, subjecting, normalizing, and conducting *people with deafness* to be economically productive and potential consumers.

We observe that bilingual education, according to the binary logic of the inclusion policy, sees regular school as the most suitable space for its accomplishment. According to the deaf movement, deaf people should be in bilingual schools, because they provide a linguistic and cultural community with which deaf children and young people can identify themselves and construct their political and cultural difference.

In the following sections, I present results from studies on some discourses and strategic ways of organizing and promoting bilingual education from the relationship between biopolitics and education, starting with discourses on bilingual education, on to some investments that have been made by the Brazilian government to promote bilingual education for the deaf population, and ending with the presentation of the proposed organization and distribution of the deaf in school periods and spaces.

## **Discourses on Bilingual Education**

Several discursive fields have been describing and narrating deafness, deaf people, and their education. Among these fields, we may mention Medicine, Linguistics, Anthropology, and Human Rights as the ones that most connect with the field of education and justify the policies proposed and put into work for the education of deaf students. We see an emphasis sometimes on clinical discourses, sometimes on human discourses, and other times on linguistic discourses, but they are all disseminated in culture and society, coexisting and producing different practices.

In Stürmer (2014) and Stürmer & Thoma (2015)<sup>7</sup>, we analyze the discourses on bilingual education for the deaf and how they constitute

specific ways to think about the education of these students and to govern the deaf difference in the Brazilian scenario of recent years in documents produced by the Ministry of Education (MEC) and by the *Federação Nacional de Educação e Integração dos Surdos* [National Federation of Education and Integration of the Deaf] (FENEIS). The analyses show that bilingual education in bilingual schools becomes the greatest demand of the deaf movement after the *Política de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva* [Special Education Policy from the Perspective of Inclusive Education] (2008), in which there is a brief guidance on such education:

For the inclusion of deaf students in regular schools, the bilingual education – Portuguese/LIBRAS [Brazilian Sign Language] develops school education in the Portuguese language and in sign language, the teaching of Portuguese as a second language in the writing modality for deaf students, the services of Libras and Portuguese translators/interpreters and the teaching of Libras for the other students at school. Specialized educational service is provided both in oral and written modalities, and in sign language. Because of the linguistic difference, as far as possible, the deaf student must be with other deaf students in regular classes, in regular school (Brasil, 2008, p. 17).

But it is in *Decree 5626* (Brasil, 2005) that references and guidelines for the training of professionals for bilingual education appear for the first time, through programs of Bilingual Pedagogy and Libras – Teaching Degree and Bachelor's Degree, as well as the modalities in which such education can be provided. In Art. 22, items I and II, we read that:

Art. 22. The federal teaching institutions responsible for K-12 education should ensure the inclusion of students who are deaf or with hearing impairment, through the organization of:

I – bilingual education schools and classes, open to deaf and hearing students, with bilingual teachers, in pre-school and in the early childhood education;

II – bilingual schools or regular schools of the regular teaching network, open to deaf and hearing students, for the final years of elementary school, high school or vocational education, with teachers of different areas of knowledge, aware of the linguistic uniqueness of deaf students, as well as with the presence of Libras-Portuguese translators and interpreters (Brasil, 2005, p. 8).

From the data produced, we seek to show how relations of knowledge and power that produce truths about this education are constituted. By the recurrences observed, Stürmer (2014) constructed two thematic units. In the first one, the author verified the use of national and international documents, in addition to academic and statistical



research, to produce effects of truth in the discourses. In this sense, there are recurrences and silencing in the production of these truths, for it comes to discourses deriving from *different political and ideological principles* (Lodi, 2013). In the second unit, the author noted a polarization regarding the education of the deaf, for different meanings assigned to bilingual education are produced. The discourses circulating in MEC understand deafness as an impairment and point to inclusive education as an inalienable right. In this case, the deaf should be included in regular school through *Atendimento Educacional Especializado* [Specialized Educational Service] (AEE) in after-school activities, having the presence of a sign language interpreter in the classroom. Sign language is understood as an accessibility resource, since, in the logic of school inclusion, deafness is a sensory impairment and the deaf do not produce a culture. The discourses circulating in documents produced by FENEIS, on the other hand, understand deafness as a linguistic and cultural difference and address the need to create linguistic environments suitable for the deaf to acquire sign language and develop themselves through it with deaf peers, which, in this perspective, is not feasible in regular schools, where deaf students almost always interact only with hearing teachers and classmates and where the Portuguese language prevails.

With the officialization of Libras in Brazil by *Act 10436/2002* (Brasil, 2002) and its regulation by *Decree 5626/2005* (Brasil, 2005), the deaf are recognized as members of a linguistic community, with the right to access and use sign language and to education in this language. This legislation also expands the possibility of deaf children to identify themselves with other deaf people in bilingual schools or classes, where there should be the presence of deaf teachers and the communication competence in signs of hearing teachers. In these spaces, the deaf can develop and maintain their language and culture (Müller et al., 2013). However, these linguistic and cultural issues “are silenced or even denied in many MEC documents and the deaf movement states that this silence or denial constitutes a serious problem in the field of human rights” (Stürmer; Thoma, 2015, p. 10). For the deaf movement, there is a “limited and one-sided vision of the *Convention*”<sup>8</sup> (FENEIS, 2011a, p. 25), since this document provides that “every person lives up to all rights and freedoms” and affirms “the need to ensure that all people with disabilities fully exercise them without discrimination” (Brasil, 2007, p. 14). The objective of the *Convention* is “to promote, to protect, and to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity” (Brasil, 2007, p. 16). Such rights are not ensured when MEC disregards the need for bilingual schools and classes as spaces for gathering the deaf community, spaces that allow the construction of deaf identities and political difference by using and sharing ideas and visions of the world through sign language, visual culture and



pedagogy. In this sense, for the deaf movement, the linguistic rights already conquered are threatened because “a man without language or to whom the right to speak his language has been denied is a man whose dignity is not ensured, neither equality nor freedom of thought, expression, and communication” (FENEIS, 2011a, p. 5).

This context requires a broadening of the debate between MEC and the deaf movement regarding the implementation of the bilingual proposal, in order to achieve a greater articulation between the positions of each one and a displacement of binary discourses that polarize the deaf – sometimes as subjects with disability, sometimes as belonging to a linguistic minority – to discourses on the deaf difference that look at deaf people in a plural way, with identities that cannot be reduced to disability or cultural difference, which escapes and cannot be captured by the dominant discourses (Stürmer; Thoma, 2015).

### Biopolitical Investments in the Deaf Population

In recent years, the Brazilian government has made investments in the deaf population aiming at promoting conditions of biopolitical normalization. They result from discourses of the human rights that are used sometimes to argue in favor of the use and dissemination of sign language, sometimes to argue in favor of the use of correction technologies – such as hearing aids, among which cochlear implants are emphasized – aiming at erasing the deaf difference.

In this sense, Kraemer (2011) analyzed strategies of government of the deaf in and for their school inclusion, considering as an analytical corpus a document produced by the deaf community<sup>9</sup> and legal documents of the Ministry of Education (MEC) that deal with the education of the deaf and the inclusive education, produced from 1999 to 2009. Understanding the school inclusion of the deaf as a way of governing that contributes to the functioning of an economic and neoliberal rationality that summons everybody to participate in the market, the author believes that “[...] in this game, everyone is their own entrepreneur and plays as their cards allows them to” (Kraemer, 2011, p. 12). For her, the proposed school inclusion of the deaf, as well as the conditions of access and participation, is given by the legal guarantee of professional teachers and translators/interpreters proficient in sign language, but each deaf person should manage ways for their participation in education spaces and in the labor market. Among the government strategies in education, the author points to *accessibility*, which aims to enable the participation and movement of the deaf, and the *certification and dissemination of the use of Libras* through the mandatory teaching of this language in all teaching degree and speech therapy programs – and in other undergraduate programs as an optional subject.

Another development of the theme was made by Cardoso (2013) in her master’s thesis, which analyzed the discourses about the invest-

ments made in the education of teachers for Specialized Educational Service (AEE) to participate in school inclusion practices. In this research, aiming to identify and analyze the discourses about deafness, deaf people, and their education as well as to understand how these discourses lead the conduct of teachers and constitute practices to normalize deaf students, the author, from the understanding of discourse, government, and normalization developed by Michel Foucault, discusses school inclusion as a biopolitical apparatus and the education of teachers as one of the strategies to make school inclusion work.

Cardoso identified the recurrence of discourses from three fields of knowledge: *law discourses*, dealing with the need for changes in regular school for participation and learning of all students, considering the valuation and recognition of differences; *educational discourses*, which establish government practices based on disciplinary techniques, distributing the deaf students in the periods and spaces of the regular classroom and of AEE and requiring the watchful eye of the teacher of this service; and the *linguistic discourses*, which conduct the conducts of AEE teachers for a bilingual education that considers Brazilian Sign Language a accessibility resource for understanding school contents and for using the written Portuguese language as a second language, the latter being considered the one which will enable these students to become subjects/citizens. The faculty government for the normalization of deaf students occurs by risk management, whose practices intend to produce autonomous, participatory, and competent subjects in both languages – sign language and Portuguese language – both at school and outside of it.

Investment in correction technologies (hearing aids) was the theme of the investigation of Pontin (2013, p. 25) in a research that analyzed the discourses about deafness, deaf, and the cochlear implant in a manual delivered to families of deaf children candidates for the implant. According to her, “[...] before surgery, medical advice is offered to the parents, as well as materials for reading, so that they have knowledge about the implant, which can assist them in the decision making about whether or not to undergo surgery”. The author, using Michel Foucault’s concepts of discourse and normalization and the concept of identity of Stuart Hall (2011, p. 5), discussed how the discourses of this manual seek to inform, advise, and convince the families about the cochlear implant. From recurrences of statements identified, she shows how the circulation of the material has its pedagogical character of production of subjectivities and problematizes how the discourses about the child that has been implanted enter in regular school and start to circulate as truths “[...] are new subjects, that is, implanted subjects, that are neither deaf nor hearers, living in a border situation”. This is also an analysis that shows us how much the ambiguity in the categorization of deaf people in binary positions does not define the many positions that these subjects can occupy and that

[...] it blends the categorizations previously created, forcing the multiplication of identities, of ways of living the deafness, clinical diagnostics about hearing and language, of forwarding of the deaf subjects to school, of the interaction with other subjects etc. (Lopes; Thoma, 2013, p. 105).

Continuing this theme, in a previous research, Pontin (2014) analyzed the discourses present on current government policies and the normalization processes of the deaf subject that are produced from such policies. Using of the Foucauldian concepts of *discourse* and *normalization*, the author selected excerpts by discursive recurrences and formed thematic groupings, which were presented as questions: 1) *Performing legally?* 2) *Freedom of choice?* and, 3) *Possibilities of success, for whom?* With these groupings, she deepens the analysis on the constitution of implanted subjects living in a hybrid situation, of border, with identities which escape the usual binary poles of classification from which we were accustomed to think of the education of the deaf to the present. The analyzed discourses conduct the conducts and act on disciplinary and biopolitical normalization of the deaf, being the school the place where policies are effected the most.

Through these analyses we can perceive that, while the deaf struggles turn to education in signs and to visual culture in schools, other practices of correction and normalization of the deaf and of erasing of the deaf difference are increasing. However, this scenario “[...] of struggles of the deaf for education in signs and visual culture in schools is also a scenario in which other correction and normalization practices and those of erasing the difference arise and reproduce at every moment” (Thoma, 2012, p. 214). To create the conditions for a school inclusion policy for deaf people, there are investments in the teaching of sign language “[...] for all future teachers, mostly hearers, whereas deaf children, many of them, are undergoing surgery of cochlear implants” (Thoma, 2012, p. 214). Disciplinary normalization and biopolitical normalization have, therefore, in the industry of implants and other technologies, important allies.

### **Organization of School Spaces and Distribution of School Periods to Promote Bilingual Education for the Deaf**

How are school periods and spaces arranged to promote bilingual education for the deaf in the context of school inclusion? And what is the proposal presented by the Working Group (WG) designated by *Ordinances no. 1060/2013* and *no. 91/2013* for *Política Linguística de Educação Bilíngue – Língua Brasileira de Sinais e Língua Portuguesa* [Linguistic Policy of Bilingual Education – Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language] (Brasil, 2014b)?

Analyzing the documents of the *Política de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva* (Brasil, 2008), the *Educação Especial*

*na Perspectiva da Inclusão Escolar – Abordagem Bilíngue na Escolarização de Pessoas com Surdez* [Special Education from the Perspective of School Inclusion – Bilingual Approach in the Education of People with Deafness] (Brasil, 2010), and the *Relatório sobre a Política Linguística de Educação Bilíngue – Língua Brasileira de Sinais e Língua Portuguesa* [Report on the Linguistic Policy of Bilingual Education – Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language] (Brasil, 2014a), we see that the school inclusion policy proposes that the education of the deaf should occur primarily through their inclusion in the regular system of education, providing AEE in a period out of the regular class period and occurring in three specific moments: a) Teaching of Libras; b) Teaching in Libras; and c) Teaching of written Portuguese language. In this policy, deafness is seen by the bias of disabilities; the deaf student is not recognized as a subject with a specific identity, although plural and mobile (Hall, 2011), and the existence of deaf culture is disregarded.

In the subsidies prepared by the Working Group assigned to develop the *Linguistic Policy of Bilingual Education – Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language*, presented in the Report on the Linguistic Policy of Bilingual Education – Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language (2014), bilingual education is understood as a process that must occur daily, in praxis with the other and in contact with the deaf culture in bilingual schools where the language of instruction is sign language and the written Portuguese language is considered a second language for the deaf. The deaf movement, which had five representatives in the Working Group, with the support of the majority of the researchers of the field who were also part of the WG, understands deafness as a difference, recognizing and valuing linguistic and cultural specificities of the deaf according to their rights as people, seeking to promote the linguistic identity and social development of these students by sign language and visual culture.

In the logic of school inclusion, all are invited to effectively and permanently participate in the process, which is provided for by the right of admission, permanence, and learning at school. However, the structuring of an educational system geared to deaf difference needs to be widely problematized, for, as I mentioned previously, we see the existence of dichotomous processes between what the deaf movement demands for schooling of children, young people, and adults who are deaf and what the inclusion provides at regular schools. Whereas the inclusion policy divides the student's time between the regular classroom space and AEE in the other period, bilingual schools resemble the space and time of the regular schools, where the students interact with their deaf peers and teachers fluent in sign language, in terms of a more effective educational bilingualism.

Kuchenbecker (2011) and Marins (2015) believe that school for the deaf can also be considered an inclusive school, since there are students

with different disabilities associated with deafness. Kuchenbecker, in her master's thesis, performed an analysis of the discourse of school documents and discussed the strategies of normalization of deaf subjects with Down syndrome (*Down deaf*), considered inclusion students, in a private school for the deaf in Porto Alegre (RS). Professionals from different areas produced the documents analyzed, including assessment reports and clinical opinions. In addition to analyzing these documents, the author conducted interviews with teachers who work with these students. In her analysis, she shows a discursive regularity between the different fields of knowledge – medical, social, psychological, and pedagogical – that depict the Down deaf as *docile subjects*, but also with *limitations* and *difficulty in comprehensive and expressive language* of sign language. As a result, the author has constructed three units of analysis: 1) *Clinical opinions: examination and classification of the subjects*: this unit shows discourses of the different fields of healthcare knowledge, which are vested with powers and produce truths about Down deaf and their families when those seek admission to the school; 2) *Curriculum adaptation as normalization strategy*: unit in which there are analyses of adapted objectives, comments on the development of students in the assessment reports, and their relationship with the discourses that produce pedagogical practices with Down deaf students included in deaf classes; and, 3) *Linguistic normalization: risk management of non-learning*: in this unit, the author discusses the investments that the school makes in the sign language teaching (L1) and in Portuguese language teaching (L2), which is always a concern constant in the daily practice of teachers in the classroom with all students – deaf people with disabilities and deaf people without associated disabilities –, thus occurring comparability and ranking of the subjects according to their language skills. Finally, the author shows that in order to manage the risk of non-learning, teaching strategies are created to bring the Down deaf people and the deaf fluent in sign language together, to finally invest in the Portuguese language learning and make them bilingual subjects.

In more recent research, Marins (2015) investigated how the processes of construction and development of curricula for deaf people with disabilities in other bilingual school for the deaf in the same municipality have been occurring, this time a public school. The research, from Cultural Studies and Deaf Studies, discusses possibilities of a pedagogy of the difference thought from the sign language, deaf identity and culture. Marins seeks to understand the curriculum configuration and relationships of knowledge-power present there by observations in classrooms and records of meetings of teacher education and educational meetings. As a result, she constructed the following thematic units: 1) *The everyday life in an inclusive classroom in a bilingual school: new experiences of curricula*: in this unit, the author presents data on the work in the classroom with deaf students with disabilities and discusses

the need for education of bilingual teachers on the different areas of disabilities, in which they can discuss situations with which they live and create strategies to meet the singularities; 2) *Curricula for singularities: the development of visual language for deaf people with disabilities*: here, Marins shows how bilingual teachers seek to experience and learn from the challenge of planning and developing differentiated lessons for each of the deaf students with disabilities, through individualized plans; and 3) *Meetings of teachers: challenging the new*: lastly, the author problematizes the teachers' look regarding deaf students with disabilities. According to her, there must be *a new look*, for working with inclusion of deaf students with associated disabilities is a challenge also for those teachers who work with deaf students without disabilities, for which they were not prepared in their specific education in the field of deafness.

The discourses about Mathematical Education and how they constitute the practices developed with deaf students are analyzed by Alberton (2014). As empirical material, the researcher analyzes the National Curriculum Parameters (NCP) in the area of Mathematics for Elementary School and the Political-pedagogical Projects (PPPs) of three schools for the deaf which work with bilingual education and that provide services for deaf students with different identity traits and learning profiles. The analyses were carried out based on Ethnomathematics (D'Ambrosio, 2013; Knijnik, 2002) and on the Foucauldian concept of discourse. The author dialogues with other surveys that deal with mathematical education, particularly with Viana and Barreto (2014) and Borges and Nogueira (2013), as well as with Hall (2000), Strobel (2008), Thoma and Klein (2010), and Thoma (2012), to discuss about identities, deaf difference, curriculum, culture, and power. The documents of the schools state that these schools use methodologies focused on sign language, and from that language, all contents are approached using visual practices. As a result of the analyses, by discursive recurrences, the author has constructed three thematic groupings: a) *Mathematics for Citizenship*: in this unit, she shows that affirmations that the school works knowledge socially produced and recognized as necessary for the exercise of citizenship are recurrent; b) *Curricular Content in the area of Mathematics*: in this unit, the excerpts show that the contents approached are linked to the social and cultural contexts in such a way that students can develop their mathematical skills, how to count, calculate, and interpret in social issues; and c) *Methodologies, Resources, and Evaluation Processes*: in this third unit, the excerpts show that methodologies, resources, and evaluation processes are linked to cultural issues, focusing on Brazilian Language of Signs and on cultural issues in such a way that students can develop mathematical skills and use their knowledge of this area.

The first unit, *Mathematics for Citizenship*, was later deepened in an article published by Alberton and Thoma (2015), in which the ques-



tion of the government of the conduct of deaf subjects acquires centrality, being the learning of mathematical knowledge more than a right at school, seen as fundamental for deaf people to be active and productive citizens.

## Final Remarks

In the documents of the policies analyzed and in the surveys brought throughout this article, I presented some problematizations about the discourses and government strategies used by current educational and linguistic policies for the deaf. More specifically, I presented results from a research on the topic and developments produced by members of the research group SINAIS on their research in the Graduate Program in Education of UFRGS. These studies show how the discourses that constitute certain pedagogical practices are sustained and legitimized to govern all through bilingual education, education which is significant in different ways and that is being provided in school spaces and periods, either in the regular school or in an specific school.

The different discourses on bilingual education cause disputes and clashes. On the one hand, the school inclusion policy conducted by MEC considers that bilingual education must be feasible through AEE and with the presence of interpreters in the classroom, which is totally different from what occurs in bilingual schools for the deaf, where lessons are given directly in Libras, with specific methodologies. While the enrollment of these students has increased in regular schools, as a result of investments in hearing aids, the education of teachers for AEE, and the use and dissemination of Libras by the teaching of this language in universities, the deaf movement in favor of deaf Education and Culture is contrary to the closing of specific schools for the deaf, which has been occurring since 2004.

In 2011, the movement filed a letter of complaint in Federal Public Prosecutor Offices of all Brazilian states, denouncing the situation of the education of the deaf in the country (FENEIS, 2011b). The movement claims that the MEC inclusion policy, which has prioritized the closure of schools for the deaf, choosing to enroll all students in regular schools, does not respect the linguistic and cultural uniqueness and specificity of these students. In regular schools, the deaf children are educated with children who hear and speak Portuguese, without having accessed neither sign language (therefore, the presence of an interpreter is not required) nor oral language. Generally, the deaf students come to schools without an effective linguistic development and, in school inclusion, they tend to continue without developing any language enough, since the teaching of sign language is restricted to one or two hours per week. At the same time, the interaction of deaf students with the other members of the school (hearer teachers and classmates) is impaired, since almost always these are unaware of the language and culture of the deaf.



Documents produced by FENEIS present data of the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research “Anísio Teixeira” (INEP) that indicate that, between 2005 and 2008, there was a decrease of 15,216 enrollments of deaf students in K-12 education. During this period, there is an emphasis on the inclusion model of MEC; thus, data can show that truancy is being caused because students cannot follow the class.

The deaf movement, based on statistical data of INEP and on research data, defends the bilingual schools for believing that there the discourses about deaf people and deafness as a linguistic and cultural difference produce teaching-learning practices carried out by sign language, with the written Portuguese being considered as a second language. It is justified, yet, that the deaf naturally acquire and express themselves in the language through the sense of sight. With the natural acquisition that occurs between pairs who are users of the same language, research in the field shows that deaf people can develop their linguistic skills, communication, and understanding of the world in a similar way of hearer children.

Despite these differences, based on the analyses here presented, I sought to demonstrate that both the bilingual education provided at regular schools and the bilingual education that occurs in specific schools for the deaf are strategies for identities and the deaf difference to be governed. The deaf school population has been subjected, normalized, and conducted to be participative and productive from the imperative of sign language, deaf culture, and the bilingual education, in such a way that the deaf subjects can enroll and remain in school and in the labor market, being able to produce and consume, becoming independent of the State.

With the issues analyzed, we can also see that the processes of subjectification, normalization, and establishment of the *deaf ethos* in contemporary times occur from State investments and are contemporary paradoxes in the deaf population government (Lopes & Thoma, 2013). The ambiguous and paradoxical character of the policies, which, at the same time, celebrate the deaf difference and invest in the correction/normalization of individuals with deafness, is present in all deaf subjects. Thus, we can proceed by asking in a Foucauldian way: *what are we helping be made of ourselves? What kind of bilingual education and deaf subjects do we want to help produce, after all?*

Received on December 22, 2015

Approved on March 18, 2016

Translation from Portuguese: Tikinet Edições Ltda.

Translation Proofreader: Ananyr Porto Fajardo

## Notes

- 1 From Michel Foucault (2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2010; 2012; 2013), the discourses are understood as constituted and constituters of practices.
- 2 According to Veiga-Neto (2005), *government* would be the most appropriate word to refer to all actions used by a Government over those it wishes to govern. The author proposes the word *government* (with a lowercase g) to differentiate *Government* (with a capital G – the one that govern) from *government* (actions of conducting the conducts of a population) when discussing the terms and their meanings in the Portuguese language.
- 3 The research group SINAIS: *Sujeitos, Inclusão, Narrativas, Alteridade, Identidades e Subjetividades* [Subjects, Inclusion, Narratives, Otherness, Identities, and Subjectivities] (<http://dgp.cnpq.br/dgp/espelhogrupo/3079025401567038>), linked to the Graduate Program in Education (PPGEDU) of UFRGS), develops studies and research in the field of Cultural Studies in Education, Foucauldian Studies, and Deaf Studies, on the following themes: school inclusion, identity and difference production, educational policies, teaching experiences and teacher education, government discourses and strategies in the field of education. PhD, master's, and undergraduate students participate in the project.
- 4 For Gadelha (2009, p. 173), "[...] at the end of his life, Foucault made it clear that the problematization of the subject has always been the central theme of his research, while modern educational practice and theorization took the subject as their reason for being, that is, as their greatest object and purpose [...]. In this sense, when it comes to education, we could speak of the modes through which it is involved with the issue or the problem of 'subjectivity'. In the first case, it is involved with policies, processes, devices, and mechanisms of subjectification – i.e., the constitution of identities, personalities, forms of sensibility, of normalized, subjected, regulated, controlled ways of acting, feeling, and thinking. In a second case, in which resistance to power becomes the focus through an ethical-aesthetic way, we can think how education is involved in the creation of singular manners of relationship with the self and with otherness".
- 5 Foucault discusses the normalization processes from two axes: *disciplinary normalization* and *biopolitical normalization*. In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), the author says that the main target of the *disciplinary power* is the body, as an object that must be analyzed, manipulated, subjected to rules, transformed, and perfected to make the subject useful, docile, and productive. *Biopower* comes from a development of the disciplinary power in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to act on the population as a whole. *Biopower* is a power mechanism that aims to preservation the life of the population, and acts not on the man-as-body, but on the man-as-species. By *biopolitics*, the life of the population becomes regulated by birth, mortality, fertility rates and other statistics, with a double objective: to control the populations and to predict their risks.
- 6 According to Castro (2009, p. 60): "[...] 'biopolitics' must be understood as the manner in which, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there has been an effort to rationalize the problems posed to the government practice by the phenomena characteristic of a set of human beings as a population: health, hygiene, birth rate, longevity, race. [...] This new form of power will, then, be responsible for: 1) The proportion of births, deaths, rates of reproduction, and fecundity of the population. In a word, demography. 2) Endemic diseases: nature, extent, dura-

tion, and intensity of diseases in the population; public hygiene. 3) Old age, the diseases that drive the individual away from the labor market. Thus, also for individual and collective insurances as well as retirement. 4) Relations with the geographical environment, climate, urbanism, and ecology”.

- 7 The documents analyzed in the master's thesis of Stürmer (2014) and in the article by Stürmer & Thoma (2015) constitute a set of ten documents prepared by the deaf movement, represented by the National Federation of Education and Integration of the Deaf (FENEIS) or by the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC). They are the following: Alves; Ferreira; Damázio (2010); Brasil (2008; 2011; 2012; 2014a; 2014b); Campello et al. (2012); FENEIS (2011a; 2011b; 2012).
- 8 The *Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) is a document based on the *Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), which was built on behalf of the rights of persons with disabilities. It was signed in New York on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007 and promulgated with Constitutional Amendment status in our country by Decree 6949/2009a (based on the Legislative Decree no. 186, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008, and according to the paragraph 3 of Article 5 of the Brazilian Constitution). Since then, it subsidizes the investments in inclusion and accessibility made by the country through educational policies and programs.
- 9 *A educação que nós surdos queremos* [The education we, the deaf, want] (FENEIS, 1999).

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**Adriana da Silva Thoma** is graduated in Special Education by Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (1994), holding MSc (1997) and Phd degrees in Education (2002) by Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Presently, she is an Adjunct IV teacher at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, also working in the Education Post-graduation Program (PPGEDU). She is the coordinator of *SINAIS: Sujeitos, Inclusão, Narrativas, Identidades e Subjetividades* Research Group. She is a member of the *Núcleo de Estudos sobre Currículo, Cultura e Sociedade* (NECCSO/UFRGS) and the *Grupo Interinstitucional de Pesquisa em Educação de Surdos* (GIPES).

E-mail: [asthoma@terra.com.br](mailto:asthoma@terra.com.br)