



Access to the Written Text of the Deaf Signer Students: the Role of Metalinguistic Activity

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Abstract

The Bilingual Education Model, consisting in the use of sign language and spoken language as a vehicle for communication and access to the school curriculum, was implemented in Catalonia (Spanish state) in 1996. In 2010, a bilingual Catalan-deaf language project started in order to develop a sign language curriculum which shall include the teaching objectives, teaching content and teaching methods in the area of Catalan Sign Language (LSC). This goal is crucial for the normalization of sign language in society and in education in particular. To optimally implement a curriculum in this area, we need to further investigate the implications of deafness and the use of sign language as the vehicle of instruction.

The hypothesis of the actual PhD project is that metalinguistic awareness and metalinguistic activities play a decisive role in the process of language acquisition, in particular with regard to reading and writing. The empirical research will be conducted in a Catalan Sign Bilingual School, a mainstream center with 6 to 12 year old hearing and deaf students where the main languages of instruction are LSC and spoken/written languages (Catalan and Spanish), and where the figure of the LSC interpreter is of great importance. The collection of data shall be conducted during one school year. It will consist in a quasi-experimental design that will include researcher observations interviews with the teachers, surveys to the parents, and a set of tests to students.

It is expected that the results are of significance for the bilingual teaching community and researchers in order to increase the knowledge on the literacy learning process of signing deaf students, and to implement it in the classrooms. Several authors have pointed out the need for research on metalinguistic approaches for the teaching of reading and writing, and also to investigate concrete methodologies in bilingual programming.