

Bi/Multilingualism in Education: A Linguistic Human Right

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ICED Conference

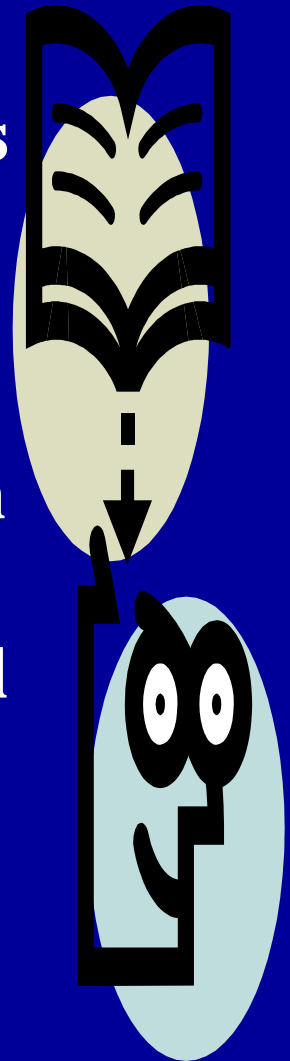
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WFD Panel: Overview and Principles

- **The Deaf Child's Identity and Human Rights**
- **WFD Statement of Rights and Recommendations**
- **Fundamental Changes: Bi/Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Society & Education**
- **Access to and Quality of Environment/ Education System and High Outcomes for all**
- **Action Plan for Success: Collaborations among Families, Deaf Adults, Qualified Professionals, and Communities**



The Human Rights of a Deaf Child

are inalienable and recognized by the United Nations and WFD

- **To be one's self as a person**
- **Identity as a visual being**
- **Bi/multilingualism and multiculturalism**
- **Community and diversity**

**These rights are born with
and belong to each child.**

Meaning & Importance of Identity

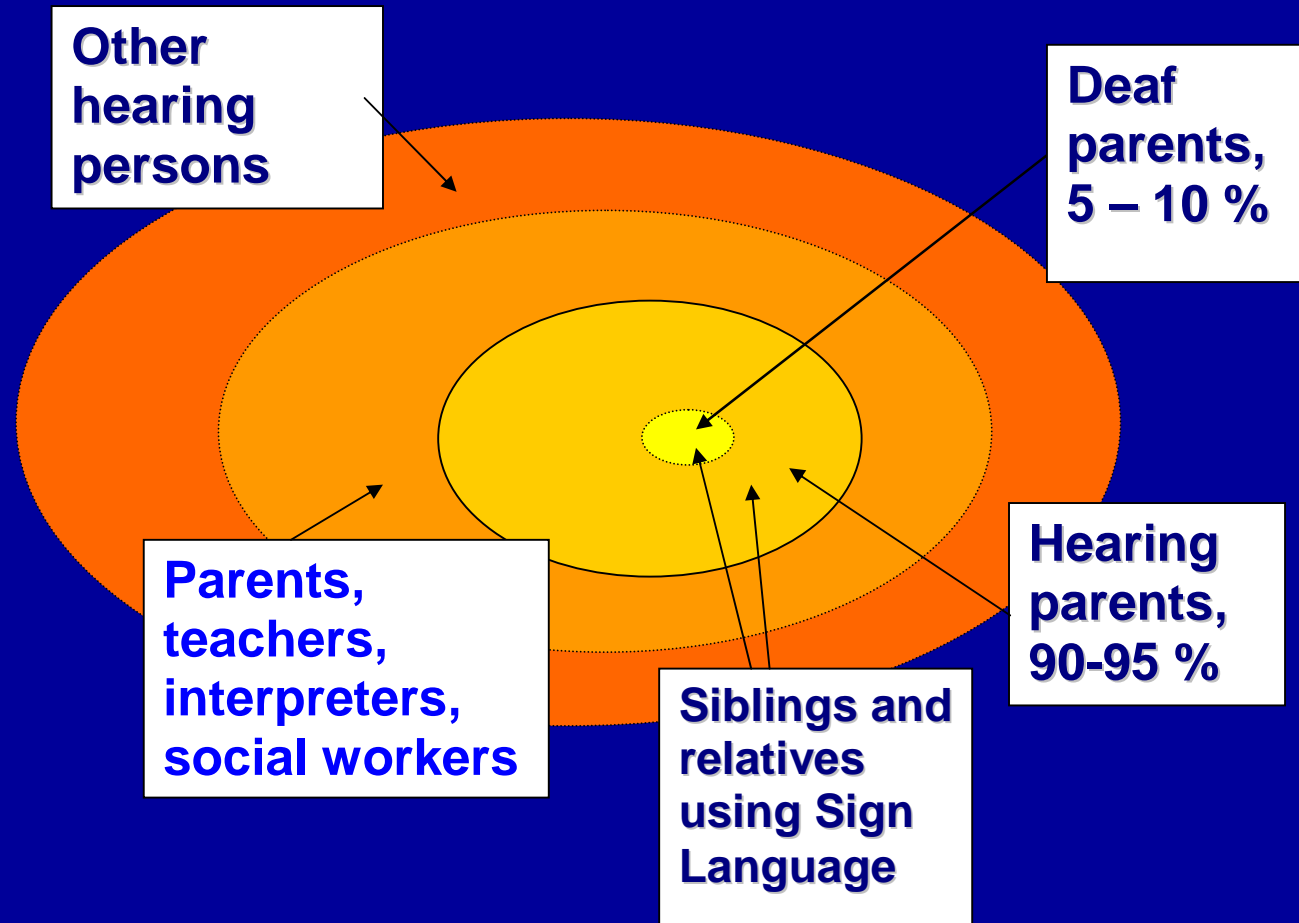
- **Identity of individual:**
 - Social + personal identity (parallel processes)
- **Personal identity:**
 - Feeling same with others (sameness) + knowing oneself (person's own experience on her/himself and on her/his life)
- **Social identity**
 - classifying oneself, choosing identity
- **Language carries identity of its user within; it continually creates and shapes identity**
- **Minority language in a pressure of majority languages**
 - Inner feeling of belonging to the group + pressure from outside strengthens the group
 - Minority languages are protected by the United Nations.

Intense discussions on Deaf identity today, again...

- Seeing people; Visual people
- Sign Language user/native signer
 - Teckenspråkig
 - Viittomakielinen
 - Gebärdenssprachig
- Deafness (pathological) 
Deafhood (humanistic)

“Deafhood: epistemic process of knowing and explaining one-self to that self and to others.”
(Ladd, 2003)

Deaf Community



Community of Sign Language Users

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graph TD; A([Community of Sign Language Users]) --> B[Mother tongue]; A --> C[First language]; A --> D[Second language]; A --> E[Foreign language]; B --- F; C --- F; F --- G[Sign Language Persons, Native Signers];
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**Mother
tongue**

**First
language**

**Second
language**

**Foreign
language**

**Sign Language Persons,
Native Signers**

Expanding from Deaf Community to Sign Language Users Community

Vague social identity →

Emerging social identity (concrete, based on physical locations) →

Linguistic, cultural (ethnic), minority identity (more abstract & symbolised identity) →

Global collective identity (less based on Deaf experience per se ?)

From deafheid to Deafhood and full embodiment

MAJORITY CULTURE







Modifying Individual versus Modifying Environment

- There is a strong tendency to modify a disabled individual to accommodate him/her to the environment
- **But** the **UN Standard Rules** emphasize a developmental process for society and various environmental systems (i.e. services, activities, information, access, documentation) to be available for all people, including people who are disabled.

CONTINUUM of INDIVIDUAL vs ENVIRONMENT Orientations

■ Individual oriented:

- MEDICINE
- GENETIC MANIPULATION TECHNOLOGY
- PSYCHO TECHNIQUES
- SPECIAL EDUCATION

■ Environment oriented:

- MODIFYING ENVIRONMENT BY TECHNOLOGY ~ DESIGN FOR ALL PRINCIPLE
- BARRIER-FREE COMMUNICATION
- MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

WFD on Sign Language as a Birthright:

Recognition of Linguistic Human Rights of Deaf Children

Deaf children have the right to acquire full mastery of their sign language as their 'mother tongue', as well as to learn the language(s) used by their family and community. Mastery of language(s) enables a child to express her/his needs and desires, and gives him/her the tool to protect and to assert him/herself as a human being.

Recognition of Right to Sign Language in Education

“The distinct national sign languages of indigenous deaf populations should be officially recognized as their natural language of right for direct communication...Teachers of the deaf are expected to learn and use the accepted indigenous sign language as the primary language of instruction” **1987 Resolution World Federation of the Deaf**



UN and WFD on Education Linguistic Human Rights

- **Sign language should be considered in the education of Deaf children, families and communities. (UN Standard Rules – 1993)**
- **Sign language is important in a deaf child's education. (UNESCO Salamanca --1994)**
- **Deaf children must have the same quality access to education as non-Deaf children. Furthermore, sign language (bilingualism) is their birthright. (WFD – 2001)**

Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights



Barcelona, 1996



- **Article 3: The right as a member of a language community to use own language and to be taught in that language.**
- **Article 5: The rights of all language communities are equal and independent, both legally and politically.**
- **Article 26: The right to be educated in and about own language and other languages**

The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities (or Cultural Minorities)

- 1. The right to one's own identity and language in the education process**
- 11. Early school years are important and should be in the child's language**
- 12. Research shows curriculum should be in minority language and the language should be taught by fluent bilingual teachers**
- 20. Minority representatives should participate in curriculum and education process.**

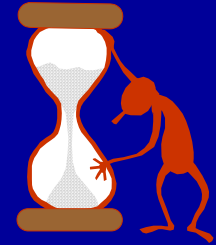


“Nothing about us without us.”



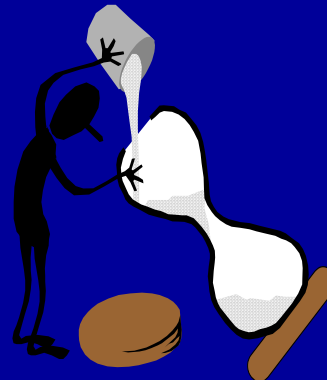


Issues:



- Evolution of views on language
- Importance of Communication, Cognitive Development, Competencies and Community
- Need for efficient delivery of services
- Accountability
- Limited time!

J. Inness, 1996

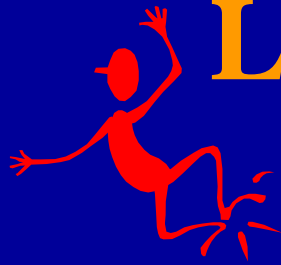


The Brain and Language

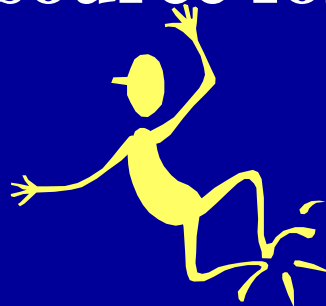
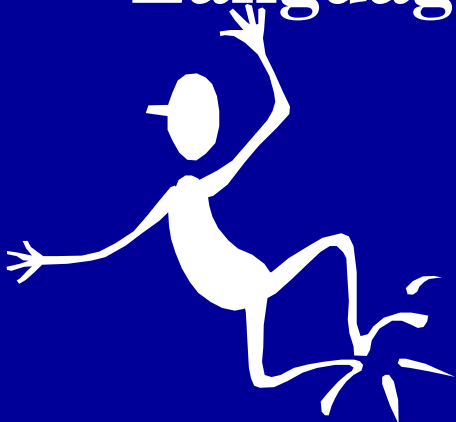


- **Proper stimulation can increase a child's IQ score by 30 points. Conversely, denied proper stimulation, the brain atrophies.**
- **The brain depends on environmental feedback to survive and thrive.**
- **Without early family and community access, Deaf children are needlessly stalled in language acquisition until they commence formal schooling.**
- **Early identification, quality intervention programs and family education with Deaf adults are essential.**
- **Deaf children of Deaf adults generally have a head start in language acquisition, communication development and educational/social prowess.**
- **Literacy and language do not equal speech and communication. Early speech development alone does not guarantee language and literacy skills.**

Evolution of Views on Language



- **Language as a Problem**
- **Language as a Right**
- **Language as a Resource for ALL**



Ruiz and Nover

Extra Challenges for Deaf Children Compared to Other Children of Linguistic Minorities

Families of Deaf infants need to learn sign language as soon as possible.

Sign languages need to be accepted as full fledged languages and mother tongues of Deaf children

Deaf children should not be seen exclusively as disabled children.

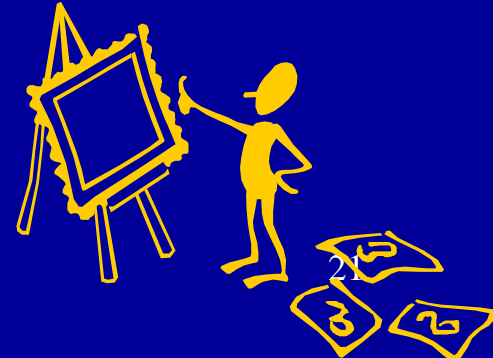
The use of other terms for “Deaf” such as “Sign Language Users” may help.

The education of communities and policy makers regarding linguistic human rights and bi/multilingual benefits is important.

Need for Deaf-Friendly Intervention

- **Child-centered focus & valuing deafness as part of diversity**
- **Positive professional advice on timely acquisition of natural language and multiple-literacies**
- **Early identification and educational intervention for whole families**
- **Teams of families and Deaf and hearing professionals**
- **Ongoing assessments and high expectations**
- **Advocating best practices and outcomes**

- Mashsie 1997, Carver 2000, Yoshinaga-Itano, 2000



Bi/Multilingual Theories

- 1. Bi/multilingualism has positive consequences**
- 2. Languages reinforce each other, not compete for space**
- 3. Knowledge and skills transfer across languages**
- 4. Social expectations and environment influence bi/multilingual development**

Multilingualism Research (Wurm, 2001)

Advantages for Bi/Multilingualism over Monolingualism

- **More flexible, alert minds, greater and quicker thinking capacity, greater volume of memory due to mastering two (or more) different language systems with different vocabularies, grammar, sound structures and idiomatic expressions.**
- **Greater volume of information and knowledge, larger stock of general and linguistic knowledge, different semantic associations, due to skills in switching languages and thought patterns.**
- **Less rigid attitudes, more tolerant of the unknown (i.e. less hostile and suspicious), can regard manifestations of different cultures as acceptable and respectable.**
- **More balanced thought patterns and world-views due to familiarity with different, possibly contradictory concepts. Greater ability to learn new concepts, ideas and things, to fit into novel situations without trauma, and to understand different facets of a problem.**

Multilingualism Research (by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas)

- **High-level multilinguals do better than monolinguals on tests measuring several aspects of intelligence, creativity, divergent thinking, cognitive flexibility, etc.**
- **Additive teaching leads to high-level multilingualism.**
- **Sign language users can become high level multilinguals through organized bilingual education, if they receive most of their education through Sign languages, with skilled teaching of additional languages by teachers proficient in Sign languages.**
- **If the languages that people acquire differ from each other maximally, this develops metalinguistic awareness further.**

Multilingualism Research (cont'd)

- **Enhanced metalinguistic awareness is one of the main benefits of functional multilingualism. Creativity is another benefit.**
- **Sign language differs maximally from any spoken/written languages, therefore SL can enhance significant metalinguistic awareness.**
- **Therefore we can expect high level multilingual Sign language users as a group to be more creative than corresponding monolinguals or even people who are high level multilinguals in several spoken/written languages.**



- “Since they do not share this mother tongue (Sign Language) with their parents, (Deaf children) are completely dependent on formal education to really develop it to the highest possible level.”
 - Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003

Without a strong educational and language base, it is difficult to succeed in today’s communities and marketplaces, and in the world of technology and information.

Full access to language and acquisition of language leads to independence and economic power.

Multiculturalism Benefits

- Education in multilingual world
- Globalisation
- Immigrants, refugees, diversity
- Respecting linguistic and cultural diversity
- Mounting evidence for multilingualism: creative arguments
- Principles of multicultural education

Multicultural perspectives should be present in the curriculum.

Deaf people must be involved in developing the curriculum. (Hague Recommendation)

Achieving Quality Education

➤ Prepares students to gain:

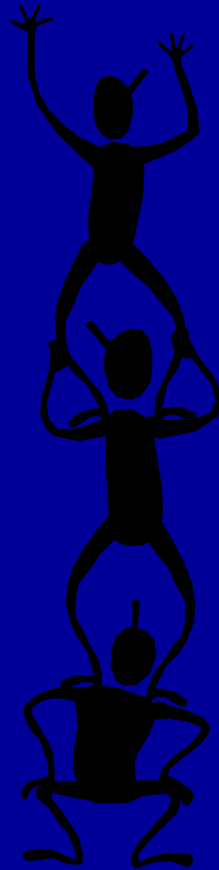
- Independence and quality of life
- Self-empowerment, citizenship and consumer rights
- Appropriate employment
- Economic power

➤ Education is a process for life;

Education is not a goal unto itself.

Quality education cannot happen without appropriate policies, qualified personnel and a supportive system.

➤ **Systems MUST BE CHILD-CENTERED.**



WFD Principles for Quality Education

- Full language and communication access as a birthright
- Use of high-quality bi/multilingual pedagogies
- Critical mass of age and level appropriate peers
- Environment geared to learning style
- Access to all academic, extracurricular programs
- Direct instruction and direct interaction
- Bi/multilingual competencies of personnel
- Certificated and qualified personnel, both Deaf and hearing
- Deaf-friendly homes, schools, and communities
- Ongoing family education and professional development

“To deny Deaf children access to a quality education and their human rights is tantamount to child abuse.”

Inclusion Principles: Schools for All

- **Full inclusion for a Deaf learner means a totally visual, supportive, signing and student-centred environment.**
- **Should there be inclusive schools, i.e. no more separate special education studies? What about inclusive Sign language users schools for both Deaf and hearing students? (PS 47 Model in NYC)**
- **Today's global society requires team work skills and multicultural perspectives for everyone.**
- **Studies of school subjects should be based on public school curricula for all, guided by professionals skilled in Sign languages.**
- **Teacher's role as social change agent, guide, counsellor.**
- **Iceland model?**
- **Make the total SYSTEM and ENVIRONMENT – homes, schools, & communities – barrier-free.**

- **Communication Identity, Multilingual, Multicultural, and Global Network**
- **PLUS** Early and Quality Education



Can Lead to **FEWER** Differences between

Deaf and Hearing Persons →

The Final Inclusion?





WFD Statement of Educational Rights and Recommendations

- **All Deaf people, including Deaf children, have the right to full access to quality education through visual modes, including indigenous sign languages. This position is supported by several international conventions of the UN.**
- **Early identification of Deaf infants and youth, and sign language environments and educational intervention strategies and programmes, in partnerships among families, Deaf adults and professionals.**
- **Curricula should enable students to learn in and study both their local/national sign language and the local (written) language as academic subjects.**
- **Governments should ensure equal and full access to and educational success for Deaf learners based on regular education goals, standards and curricula.**



WFD Statement of Government/Society's Responsibilities

- **Implement policies or guidelines regarding early identification of and intervention for Deaf children using their visual capabilities and sign language.**
- **Legalise sign language and quality education for Deaf people of all ages.**
- **Provide resources necessary to develop/implement effective programs for teaching sign language and Deaf Studies (history, culture, etc.) to involved people, such as:**
 - **Families**
 - **Teachers, administrators and other professionals**
 - **Professionals, including doctors and therapists, for preschool Deaf children**
 - **Interested parties such as but not limited to community service providers, interpreters, and other students**

- **Support professional development programs for Deaf people to receive training and become employed as teachers, educational professionals and members of educational teams.**
- **Establish high standards for quality education programs and outcomes, from early childhood to professional education, for all Deaf people equal to that for all people; implement assessment and monitoring programs to ensure positive outcomes.**
- **Ensure that Deaf learners in mainstream educational settings have access to educated, trained and qualified sign language users and interpreters & other needed support services, Deaf peers and role models, and full participation in both the educative and co-curricular processes.**
- **Support further research on:**
 - **Strategies and valid instruments for teaching and assessing features in indigenous sign languages and fluency development.**
 - **Benefits of acquiring an education using direct communication pedagogies, versus indirectly through a third-party interpreter.**

Conclusion

SYSTEM and COLLABORATIONS

- The system includes partnerships among schools, skilled professionals, Deaf people, communicating families and community/government networks.
- Professionals must be qualified in bi/multilingual and multicultural education.
- The bi/multilingual human right belongs to the child.



**THEN STUDENTS WILL
SUCCEED.**

**Students do not fail, we fail them!
It's in your hands.**

References and Resources

- <http://www.m-w.com>
- <http://www.linguistic-declaration.org>
- <http://www.terralingua.org>
- <http://www.unesco.org>
- <http://www.wfdeaf.org>



Check www.wfdeaf.org

for WFD position papers and to download the WFD membership form

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