

Sign Language as a Second Language: Exploring the Linguistic Behavior of Deaf Students in Inclusive Learning Environments

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Abstract: Students with hearing problems are a special group that usually has Modern Greek as their first language. During their schooling, they happen to learn Sign Language as a second language. As a result they become confused in the definition and decision of their identity, which is why their language behavior can vary within the school and their socialization. The ongoing research study looks for the sign language behavior of its hearing impaired students in the social grid of inclusive educational environments

Key words: second language, sign language, deaf students, hearing impaired students, linguistic behavior, inclusive learning environment

1. Introduction

Second language defines the language that is chronologically following the first. It concerns the language that conquers a person through his contact with natural speakers in a natural environment, since his first language has already begun or completed. This language needs the person in order to communicate with the environment. Learning the second language is done through systemic learning, without always being directly and continuously contacting parent speakers of this language and learning motives have the most often abstract character (Skourtou, 1997).

The Greek Sign Language based on law 4488/2017 (Article 65, paragraph 2) was recognized as equivalent to the Greek language (Symvasi OHE, Greek Law, Part D). It is a natural and complete language in which most users are deaf or hard of hearing (students with hearing problems) although the fact of the sensory specificity of the users is linguistically coincidental. Its nature is visual- motor and it is a language integrated with a complex structure, rich vocabulary, verbal and grammatical meanings, syntactic rules. Its components are the meanings which correspond to words of oral speech. In Sign Language the phonemes of words are pronounced simultaneously, due to multiple active modules, in contrast to spoken languages which are governed by linearity. The grammar and syntax of the Greek Sign Language differs from that of the Modern Greek language, which is why space and movement play a key role in terms of grammar and syntactic structure. The system of the times of Sign Language is very different from that of spoken Modern Greek, while at the level of semantics there are many

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common elements due to a common cultural background, but also great differences between Sign Language and Modern Greek, due to the different modality (visual-kinetic/acoustic) and the different worldview between the two (Lambropoulou, 1997; Papaspyrou, 1998, 1994).

People with deafness can pick up certain sounds but are unable to use their remaining auditory ability to understand the content of speech (Stasinos, 2020). Deaf are the people in whom the sense of hearing does not work. They were born with a complete absence of auditory sense or with minimal hearing or lost it in infancy. Some children with congenital hearing impairment are characterized as congenitally deaf. Others are people with acquired deafness. These are children who were born with normal hearing, reached an age at which they had learned to speak and understand the speech of others but a little later lost their hearing due to accident or illness (Stasinos, 2020). Hearing aids or people with hearing loss are people with poor acoustic acuity. Many times they are congenitally deaf with their sensory dysfunction usually reduced with the help of an acoustic or cochlear implant. The extent of hearing impairment or dysfunction is usually determined with the audiometer (Stasinos, 2020).

2. The Language Behavior of Students With Hearing Problems in the Effort to Socialize

Linguistic behavior concerns the internalized knowledge of language. According to Hymes (1972), language and therefore language acquisition consists in the acquisition of communicative ability, which includes not only knowledge of the language, but also the ability to use it in order to convey the appropriate messages in specific communicative and social environments. When deaf children are raised in a family environment where sign language is used, they acquire it as a mother in the exact same way that hearing children acquire the speech of the Greek language (Lambropoulou, 1999). However, when there are deaf and hard of hearing (hearing impaired) children who are brought up in a family environment with listeners, they either do not develop it or develop it with delay as a second language (Kourbetis, Hatzopoulou, 2010; Kourbetis et al., 2007). Sign Language is considered an autonomous language and is not identical with the Modern Greek Language. The context of bilingualism appears in this box as it is a contact of two separate languages.

Socialization can be defined as the type of social learning that is created when one person interacts with other people. While some believe that this process is limited to childhood, others argue that socialization is a continuous process that extends throughout a person's life and certainly can not take place overnight nor is it complete (Xochellis, 2007; Katie, 2000). Many students with hearing problems come into contact with Sign Language at an older age and are taught it as a second language, as the first (if they fully master it) means the Modern Greek language, although the learning of Greek has not been done with the established acquisition criteria first language. The usual course of learning Greek from deaf and hard of hearing in the first years of life includes technical and structured procedures such as audiometry and application of hearing aids, speech therapy, lip reading, predictable communication at the level of voices, words and simple sentences, while at school their exhibition in Greek language at best consists of fragmentary information in the classroom necessarily sitting at the first desk.

The school is the fundamental natural space that must meet the needs of students and their families. In addition to initial support, schools that receive new students need to develop interventions to address their concerns and thoughts arising from new social and learning requirements. Among the most obvious is dealing with problems arising from limited or deficient language, students' experiences and cultural differences, as avoiding them can create prejudices and discrimination-related attitudes and staff (Bauminger Shulman, & Agam,

2003). For bilinguals, their dual or multiple and modern identities can be strongly influenced by social expectations and the family, educational, cultural context (Maxwell-McCaw et al., 2000). An individual's identity can be greatly influenced by the reactions of others and shaped by past and ongoing experiences, a process that continues throughout life (Grotevant, 1992). Students with hearing problems have to cross two cultural worlds and often experience conflicting expectations in their daily lives (Drakos, 2003). Communicative language dysfunction also has an emotional impact inside and outside the classroom with the appearance of internalized disorders such as anxiety, decreased self-esteem, withdrawal (Kakouros et al., 2005; Norbury et al., 2013). Externalized behavioral problems can also occur, such as aggression, irritability, reactive behavior, delinquency (Botting, Conti-Ramsden, 2003).

The educational guideline of our ongoing research is based on the above. The final findings will be posted in the future.

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