THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRODUCTION OF A DEAF STUDENT - A CASE STUDY

Priscilla Hasstenteufel [1]

ABSTRACT: This article describes the research that sought to understand if the teaching materials, electronic or not, are in accordance to the necessities of the deaf student. This question became the main goal of my investigation and its enlightenment is divided in specific goals: identifying kinds of teaching activities/linguistic aspects that present difficulty to the deaf student; and identifying kinds of teaching activities/linguistic aspects that do not present difficulty to the deaf student. The applied methodology is qualitative descriptive, oriented to the case study. This research has its explanation in the necessity of deepening the knowledge in this lacking area that demands more studies, that is the work with students with special needs, or in this specific context, the deaf student. The acquisition of a second language was my theoretical support in the research as well as in this article. According to the studied authors, the second language acquisition spans both external and internal factors of the student's life and is influenced by the theory of education that the teacher adopts in his/her pedagogical practice.

KEYWORDS: Second language acquisition. Deafness. Electronic and printed.

RESUMO: O presente artigo descreve a pesquisa que buscou entender se os materiais de ensino, eletrônicos ou não, estão de acordo com as necessidades do aluno surdo. Esta pergunta tornou-se o objetivo geral da minha investigação e seu esclarecimento divide-se nos seguintes objetivos específicos: identificar tipos de atividades de ensino/aspectos lingüísticos que apresentam dificuldades para o aluno surdo; e identificar tipos de atividades de ensino/aspectos lingüísticos que não apresentam dificuldades para o aluno surdo. A metodologia aplicada é a qualitativa descrita, direcionada para o estudo de caso. Esta pesquisa tem sua justificativa direcionada à necessidade de se aprofundar os conhecimentos nesta área tão carente de estudos, que é o trabalho com alunos portadores de necessidades especiais, ou neste contexto específico, o aluno surdo. A aquisição de uma segunda língua foi minha base teórica na pesquisa, assim como neste artigo. Segundo os autores estudados, a aquisição de uma segunda língua perpassa por fatores externo e internos do contexto de vida do aluno e é influenciado pela teoria de educação que o professor adota em suas práticas pedagógicas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Aquisição de uma segunda língua. Surdez. Meios eletrônicos e impressos.

---

1 English teacher graduated in Languages Major in 2006 at CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO UNIVATES.

1 INTRODUCTION

I believe that the teacher, besides the responsibility of seeking for the best way of teaching the knowledge to his/her audience (kids, teenagers, or adults), he/she needs to know the laws that rule the teacher's professional practice. He/she also needs to be integrated to the reality of the social context of the student, the school, and the society. The Brazilian law called Guidelines and Basics of Education (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação – LDB) brings the norms that involve teachers' professional practice.

The LDB (1996) has articles that deal with the inclusion of people with special needs in the school and makes demands on teachers. It requires that the professionals of education must be able to handle these requirements; that is, teachers need to be facilitators in the process of social inclusion of those students declared "normal" and those that in some way, genetic or not, have special needs. "Art. 58. Special education is understood by, […], the kind of school education, offered preferably in the regular teaching system, to students with special needs." (See the original text at the footnote)[2] (BRASIL, 1996)

Parallel to this necessity there are the growing tools that enable more knowledge acquisition. Thereby, along with books, nowadays we have the internet as an important tool of publicizing knowledge that enables people to seek for and learn about a variety of themes that are interesting to the culture of a person.

Considering the described context, I decided to answer the question: Are the teaching materials – electronic or not – in accordance to the necessities of the deaf student? This question, which is the theme of my research, arose due to the work I carried out with a deaf student. In association with this problem and having the desire to facilitate my search for answers, I thought it was important to understand the difficulties faced by the student, as well as his strengths in contact with the teaching means proposed, having these as my specific goals in the research.

The second language acquisition was my theoretical support in this investigation. Ellis (1997) considers the second language acquisition a recent study that refers to the learning of a language that is not the mother language, inside or outside the classroom. He also says that there are external and internal factors that influence the acquisition of a second language.

Lightbown & Spada (2004) relate many theories of second language acquisition that were elaborated in the attempt of explaining the learning mechanism that a person uses when learning a second language. Among the related theories are: behaviorism, innatism, Krashen's 'monitor model', information processing, connectionism, and the interactionist position.

The methodology that I used to reach my answer was divided in three moments. The first moment was the preparation of classes based on electronic or printed means. The second moment was teaching and observing my student in

---

2 Art. 58. Entende-se por educação especial, [...], a modalidade de educação escolar, oferecida preferencialmente na rede regular de ensino, para educandos portadores de necessidades especiais.

class. After the class, he answered a questionnaire to say if the activities were easy or difficult and why. The final moment was the analysis of the questionnaires.

In short, this article is organized in the following topics: a bibliographic review of what is said about second language acquisition, followed by the student's life story, the research I developed, and my conclusions.

2 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second language acquisition is a fairly recent study, from the second half of the twentieth century, as ELLIS (1997) points out. Its approach nowadays seems to be no accident. We have been living the "global village" and the "World Wide Web" time.

In the citation below, L2 and Second Language Acquisition are defined:

> 'L2 acquisition' […] can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom, and 'Second Language Acquisition' (SLA) as the study of this (ELLIS, 1997, p. 3).

Ellis (1997) also makes clear that the 'explanation' (identification of external and internal factors that account for the way learners acquire the second language) and the 'description' of the L2 acquisition are the goals of SLA study.

2.1 Theories

Lightbown & Spada (2004) have claimed that researches proposed different theories to explain and clarify the learning mechanisms that are used by all second language learners.

In this paper, just a brief view of some of them are going to be presented.

2.1.1 Behaviorism

Lightbown & Spada (2004) have drawn attention to the fact that the behaviorists say that learning occurs through "imitation, practice, reinforcement (or feedback on success), and habit formation."

> Learners receive linguistic input from speakers in their environment and they form 'association' between words and objects or events. These associations become stronger as experiences are repeated. Learners receive encouragement for their correct imitations, and corrective feedback on their errors (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 35)..

As language development is considered as the formation of habits, the authors, Lightbow e Spada (2004), point out that behaviorists say that the learner of a second language "starts off with the habits formed in the first language"(p. 35). These habits have their interference in the second language.

However

> […] the influence of the learner's first language may not simply be a matter of the transfer of habits, but a more subtle and complex process of identifying points of similarity, weighing the evidence in support of some particular feature, and even reflecting (though not necessarily consciously) about whether a certain feature seems to 'belong' in the structure of the target language (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, P. 35).

Nevertheless, Lightbown & Spada (2004) correctly argue that behaviorism is an incomplete theory in explaining language learning.

2.1.2 Innatism

Chomsky bases his theory on the principles of the Universal Grammar (UG) that "permits all children to acquire the language of their environment, during a critical period in development" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 36).

Lightbown & Spada (2004) observe that even if Chomsky does not refer to second language acquisition, some linguists say that this theory of Universal Grammar offers the best conception to understand second language acquisition. Others say that Universal Grammar is not available to guide second language learners who have passed the period defined as critical.

2.1.3 Krashen's 'monitor model'

Stephen Krashen proposed five 'hypotheses' for his innatist theory of second language acquisition, as Lightbown & Spada (2004) have indicated.

Among them I am going to elucidate 'the affective filter hypothesis', according to Krashen (apud LIGHTBOWN & SPADA, 2004). It is said that the second language acquisition takes place depending on the learner's state of mind or disposition (attitudes, emotional states, needs, and motives). If the student is tense, angry, etc, the 'affective filter' limits what is acquired.

We cannot "be sure that affective factors *cause* the differences in language acquisition" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 40). However, this theory has immediate implications in the classroom.

> Krashen's writing has been very influential in supporting communicative language teaching (CLT), particularly in North America. On the other hand, the theory has also been seriously criticized for failing to propose hypotheses which can be tested by empirical research. Most teachers and researchers see much which is intuitively appealing in his view. There is little doubt that communicative language teaching, with its primary focus on using language for meaningful interaction and for accomplishing tasks, rather than on learning rules, has won support from many teachers and learners (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 40).

2.1.4 Recent psychological theories

2.1.4.1 Information processing

The cognitive psychologists who work with information processing "tend to see second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge systems that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 41).

Lightbown & Spada (2004) observe that Richard Schmidt, a theorist, emphasized that 'noticing' consciously is very important in second language acquisition; people only come to know something if they first notice it consciously.

2.1.4.2 Connectionism

It is the view of Lightbown & Spada (2004) that connectionism highlights the importance of environment and argues that "what is innate is simply the ability to learn, not any specifically linguistic structure" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 42).

> Connectionists argue that learners gradually build up their knowledge of language through exposure to thousands of instances of the linguistic features they eventually learn. Thus, while innatist see the language input in the environment mainly as a 'trigger' to activate knowledge, connectionists see the input as the principal source of linguistic knowledge. After hearing language features in specific situational or linguistic contexts over and over again, learners develop stronger and stronger mental or neurological 'connection' between these elements (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 42).

2.1.4.3 The Interactionist position

The interactionists say that "second language acquisition takes place through conversational interaction" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 43).

Lightbown & Spada (2004) understood that Michael Long, an interactionist, believes that comprehensible input is needed to acquire a second language, as Krashen believes as well. However, Long "is more concerned with the question of *how* input is made comprehensible" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 43).

Long, as Lightbown & Spada (2004) perceptively state, believes that learners need opportunities to interact with other people who will adapt what they say until the learner shows that he/she understands. In short, the interaction modifications, which always happen when a native speaker talks with a non-native speaker, makes input comprehensible, which in its turn promotes acquisition. And the referred modifications are not necessarily simplifications. They can include contextual cues, gestures, slower speech rate, elaboration, etc (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 43).

Lightbown & Spada (2004) also note that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mental processing is in the role of interaction.

> Vygotsky's theory assumes that all cognitive development, including language development, arises as a result of social interactions between individuals. Extending Vygotskyan theory to second language acquisition, Jim Lantolf and others claim that second language learners advance to higher levels of linguistic knowledge when they collaborate and interact with speakers of the second language who are more knowledgeable than they are, for example, a teacher or a more advanced learner (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 44).

In the view of Lightbown & Spada (2004), the difference between Vygostky and other interactionists is the belief that language acquisition happens in the interaction of learners and interlocutors.

2.2 Individual differences

It is said that normal children, in normal contexts, have success when learning their first language, as Lightbown & Spada (2004) observe. But it is different than second language acquisition.

Ellis (1997) says that besides external factors that influence learners, like social conditions – i.e. if the learner feels positive attitudes from the native speakers of the target language towards him/her - and the input learners receive – i.e. if the language samples that the learner is exposed facilitate learning-, there are some internal and individual differences in L2 acquisition.

Lightbown & Spada (2004) have indicated that these differences, like intelligence, aptitude, motivation, and attitudes are difficult to measure, but even so they are taken into consideration because they are relevant to language learning.

2.2.1 Intelligence

"The term 'intelligence' has traditionally been used to refer to performance on certain kinds of tests" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 52).

According to Lightbown & Spada (2004), researchers have found that the kind of IQ intelligence is "more strongly related to certain kinds of second language abilities than to others" (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 52). For example, someone with a high IQ can be better at language analysis and rule learning than at communication and interaction.

It is important to emphasize that intelligence is a very complex factor, because nowadays we know that there are different kinds of intelligence and individuals have different abilities and strengths. Howard Gardner, for example, proposed a theory called "multiple intelligences", because a person who is good at mathematics is not necessarily good at languages or in music, for example.

2.2.2 Language aptitude

The internal factor called 'language aptitude' can explain why learners vary in the rate they learn a second language and why some are successful and others not so much.

It has been suggested that people differ in the extent to which they possess a natural ability for learning an L2. This ability, known as **language aptitude**, is believed to be in part related to general intelligence but also to be in part distinct. (ELLIS, 1997, p.730).

It is said that aptitude is composed of different types of abilities:

> (1) the ability to identify and memorize new sounds; (2) the ability to understand the function of particular words in sentences; (3) the ability to figure out grammatical rules from language samples; and (4) memory for new words." (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p.53).

Ellis (1997) has indicated that researches found that learners with high scores in language aptitude tests attain higher levels of proficiency than learners with low scores. So, there is evidence that language aptitude is closely related to success in the process of a second language acquisition.Most of the research on the relationship between language aptitude and L2 proficiency took place in the 1950s and 1960s and, therefore, predates the birth of SLA (1997, p. 74).

Even those researches are not up-to-date,

> […] teachers may find that knowing the aptitude profile of their students will help them in selecting appropriate classroom activities for particular groups of students. Or, if they do not have such information, they may wish to ensure that their teaching activities are sufficient varied to accommodate learners with different aptitude profiles (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2004, p. 54).

2.2.3 Motivation

Besides language aptitude, the motivation of the learner has central importance.

Ellis (1997, p. 75) says that

> Whereas language aptitude concerns the cognitive abilities that underlie successful L2 acquisition, **motivation** involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2. Various kinds of motivation have been identified; **instrumental**, **integrative**, **resultative**, and **intrinsic**..

2.2.3.1 Instrumental motivation

It is called instrumental motivation that which is for functional reasons. As Ellis (1997, p. 79) says:

> Learners may make efforts to learn an L2 for some functional reason – to pass an examination, to get a better job, or to get a place at university. In some learning contexts, an instrumental motivation seems to be the major force determining success in L2 learning.

2.2.3.2 Integrative motivation

This kind of motivation is related to those learners who want to feel integrated in the target-language group, as Ellis (1997, p. 75) observes:

> Some learners may choose to learn a particular L2 because they are interested in the people and culture represented by the target-language group. For example, it is this integrative orientation that underlies the motivation that many English speaking Canadians have for learning French.

2.2.3.3 Resultative motivation

According to Ellis (1997), as well, the resultative motivation is seen as the motivation that results from learning. A successful learner may become more motivated, or in some contexts, less motivated to learn.

> […] In a context like Canada, success in learning French may intensify English-speaking learners' liking for French culture. However, in California success in learning English may bring Mexican women into situations where they experience discrimination and thus reduce their appreciation of American culture (ELLIS, 1997, p. 75-76).

2.2.3.4 Intrinsic motivation

The intrinsic motivation is maintained by the curiosity and can be maintained because of the learner's particular interests that keep them personally involved in learning (ELLIS, 1997).

> In some learning situations, it may not be learners' general reasons for learning an L2 that are crucial in determining their motivation. Indeed, it is possible that many learners do not hold distinct attitudes, positive or negative, towards the target-language group. Such is probably the case with many *foreign* language learners. It does not follow, however, that such learners are unmotivated. They may find the kinds of learning tasks they are asked to do intrinsically motivating (ELLIS, 1997, p. 76).

Ellis (1997) still says that motivation can vary depending on the learning context; it is not something stable.

2.2.4 Learning strategies

When learning a language, learners have to create strategies to learn new words, grammatical patterns, etc. Ellis (1997, p. 76-77) explains these learning strategies as

> […] particular approaches or techniques that learners employ to try to learn an L2. They can be behavioral (for example, repeating new words aloud to help you remember them) or they can be mental (for example, using the linguistic or situational context to infer the meaning of a new word). They are typically problem-oriented. That is, learners employ learning strategies when they are faced with some problem, such as how to remember a new word. Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and, when asked, can explain what they did to try to learn something.

Studies found out that language learners who are successful pay attention to form and meaning. Ellis (1997, p. 77) still adds that

> Good language learners are also very active (i.e. they use strategies for taking charge of their own learning), show awareness of the learning process and their own personal learning styles and, above all, are flexible and appropriate in their use of learning strategies.

Teachers should be aware of the learning strategies and make use of them to facilitate students learning.

3 THE STUDENT'S STORY

The student was born in 1979 in Lajeado/RS. By six years of age, he had learned to talk perfectly. When he was six years old, he became ill – he had a case of meningitis.

According to the information of the Meningitis Research Foundation (2009), meningitis is the inflammation of the lining around the brain and spinal cord. No other disease can kill faster - it can kill in hours. People who recover from meningitis may be left with a range of after effects that dramatically alter their lives.

This Foundation found that:

> Every day nine people become ill with the diseases [meningitis and septicaemia]. With one in ten people dying, this means a death will occur almost every day. A further two people will be left with life-altering after effects as severe as brain damage, deafness and multiple amputations (MENINGITIS Research Foundation, 2009).

The student, after recovering from meningitis, was left with deafness as an effect that dramatically altered his life.

As it was said before, in that period, he was able to speak his mother language perfectly – Portuguese - but was not able to write yet, in other words, he was not literate.

During his literacy process, he was literate using images and having the support of his family. He attended regular school in the morning and in the afternoon he had reinforcement classes at a special school that worked with deaf students.

After he lost his hearing, he lost little by little the diction (the notion of how pronouncing words, their intonation, rate, intensity, etc) of some words. At this time, the work of a Speech-language pathologist (SLP), terminology used in the United States and Canada, or Speech and Language Therapist (SLT), terminology used in the United Kingdom, Ireland and South Africa, needed to be used. This professional corrected his speech and trained him.

During the first six months, the student and his family needed to travel sixty kilometers to see a SPL/SLT in Santa Cruz do Sul/RS. After six months, a specialist in the area began to work in Lajeado/RS. Until the age of eighteen, he used to see the SPL/SLT to correct his speech. For twelve years (from six to eighteen years old), he also wore a hearing aid - that "is an electroacoustic body apparatus which typically fits in or behind the wearer's ear and is designed to amplify and modulate sounds for the wearer" (HEARING Aid, 2009)". This hearing aid helped in the SPL/SLT's job, because the student was able to use what remained of his hearing (10% in one ear and 15% in the other).

It is also important to say that during his first years of school, a teacher of his had great influence over him and his family. She told the family that he should not learn the Brazilian Sign Language because if he would be able to use the signs, he would lose his speaking ability. So, the family accepted the idea and worked with the SPL/SLT to improve his lip reading ability, which "is a technique of understanding speech by visually interpreting movements of the lips, face and tongue with information provided by the context, language, and any residual hearing."(LIP Reading, 2009).

The student's family had another strong purpose to improve his lip reading ability, which was the desire to see him attending regular schools and college. They believed that if he was not able to read lips and to talk, he would not be able to attend college.

According to the family's desire and his as well, he attended college and graduated in Business Administration. Later, he decided to attend an English course. He joined the course in the Basic IV level, after a placement test in the English language. He joined a group of his level, but did not feel comfortable and welcome. After his first week of class, I was invited to be his teacher during the Basic IV level. When we finished this level, his studies went ahead and I continued being his teacher in the following levels: Intermediate I, II, and III; Advanced I and II, as well as one semester of 'Conversation'.

In 2005, when we began our classes, we were interviewed. At that moment, the student said to the journalist that he had always had the desire to learn English and that he had well defined goals in learning the language: besides the professional possibilities, as working in export trading companies, he wanted to be able to search for information on the web and to attend a post-graduation program – examples of instrumental motivation and how the 'affective filter hypothesis' worked favorably related to his needs and motives.

4 THE RESEARCH

This research is a case study developed with one deaf student enrolled in a private individual course.

My goal in this investigation was to find out what kind of teaching activities/ linguistic aspects were difficult for the deaf student and which ones were not. To develop it, I chose a book and a site to work with the student during the classes. The book 'American Inside Out' was a suggestion of a teacher that I accepted because it has a lot of reading material and the site 'Better English' was chosen because I had used it a lot during my time as an English student.

The gathering of information followed three stages.

In the first stage I prepared ten classes of two hours each, totaling twenty class/ hours.

In the second stage, I taught and observed those prepared classes. At the end of each class, a questionnaire was answered by the student. The questionnaire involved issues about the materials used in class.

In each questionnaire, the names of all the activities developed were written and the options easy and difficult were given. The student had to match the way he felt about each activity (easy or difficult) and, moreover, it was asked why the activity fit that category (easy or difficult).

The third and final stage was the analysis of the answers of the questionnaires. This analysis was done by grouping the answers into difficult and easy. In this analysis I used the knowledge that I acquired in my pedagogical practice as an English teacher in different levels and places. It is also fundamental to say that when this research was developed, I had already worked with the student involved in this investigation for 3 years and a half and this experience was used to comprehend his answers and to reach my purpose.

To answer my research question – 'What kind of teaching activities / linguistic aspects were difficult for the deaf student?' - I analyzed the questionnaires answered by the student at the end of each class. I realized that one of the greatest difficulties of the student was understanding the meanings of the words.

It is important to emphasize that the difficulty in understanding words reflects a hurdle in understanding texts and other exercises offered by the book and by the site. The student expressed his difficulty by writing that he considered certain activities hard to do because there were words that he did not know how to translate.

Some of the contents worked during the semester of the research were the Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous, because these verbal tenses often appear in advanced readings and the student had already showed difficulties with them. His difficulties seemed to be about understanding these verbal tenses because they are more complex and do not always have obvious equivalents in Portuguese. Furthermore, verbal aspect is not even always worked in Portuguese – it certainly will be more difficult in English if not worked in the mother language. About these

verbal tenses the student wrote: "I think that Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous are very difficult."

When we worked linking expressions of addition, contrast, cause and effect, the student had difficulty handling these structures. An illustration of this was an exercise where the student had to modify texts adding linking words to improve them. Maybe, if a research was done in his mother language, he probably would present the same difficulty.

In reading exercises observing the pronunciation, the student only came up against new words or expressions. In the class when we worked with text messages, the student mispronounced words like 'survey' and 'nightclubs' and had difficulties understanding and pronouncing colloquial messages like 'Wat ru trying 2 say?' (What are you trying to say?) and 'Do u wan2 c me l8r 4 a drink?' (Do you want to see me later for a drink?)

The use of collocations (which are "two or more words that often go together" (COLLOCATION, 2009), as the definition given by the site EnglishClub. com) was also hard for the student. The student tended to translate word by word, but it does not always work. So, he did not place the words as he should have done. But if analyzing the progress of the student, I can see that he has been extricating himself of this idea as time went on.

Concerning the answer of the question: 'What kind of teaching activities/ linguistic aspects were not difficult for the deaf student?', the student demonstrated easiness when he could make relations between the content and his reality.

When we revised the words 'for' and 'since', the student made links with his life. He wrote that it was easy because he learned this content when he had read imported beer cans.

The link with his reality again was considered important when we discussed the purposes of text messaging. The student said that the topic was easy, because it was part of his daily routine. (Easy – "Because I am 100% used to sending and receiving messages on my cell phone. […]")

Another proposal considered easy by the student was writing a quiz about him using multiple-format questions. Some answers to the questions had to be true and some false. When elaborating the quiz, the student said it was easy because he could use his own ideas.

In exercises of the site, usually there were no explanations about what should be done. There were also few theoretical explanations of the content being worked. So, I used to offer a brief revision of the content that would be worked and guided the development of the exercise. Having this help, the student usually considered the exercises of the site - multiple choice and revising exercises - easy. He used to say that the answers that he could choose were easier to understand. The exercises of filling in the blanks with given option in the book were also considered easy.

The book offered many readings followed by understanding exercises which were organized in many different ways. When the student coped with understanding

hurdles of the words and understanding hurdles of the text, he used to say that after reading the text, the exercises became easier to do.

The texts with simple vocabulary were considered easy, as the ones that he had to read at home. He wrote that preparing himself previously made the task easier. (Easy - "Because I had already prepared myself and then I could understand easilier the exercises.)

The theoretical reading offered by the book involving Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous was considered easy by the student. Here I observed an improvement in the student's learning, because in the beginning he said that he considered those grammatical tenses too hard, and later he considered the theoretical reading about them easy.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The knowledge acquired in the English teaching process keeps teachers always attentive to new learning tendencies. Nevertheless, the work with a deaf student was something cognitively riveting in my education as an alumna of second language teaching.

During the beginning of the classes with this student and in search for teaching materials that could help in his learning process, I have encountered a didactic gap in terms of region, state, and I dare to say, in terms of Brazil: there is lack of information and material in the schools, libraries and colleges that could guide this kind of work. As I have had this difficulty so current, the theme of this research arose: Are the teaching materials – electronic or not – in accordance to the necessities of the deaf student?

Besides this, I began to question myself about which would be my student's facilities and difficulties during the classes that were taught by me. To facilitate the apprehension of knowledge, I chose an internet site and a book, both mentioned before.

Thus, having the thoughts involved by these questions - the main question and the secondary ones – I began the work and encountered other hurdles that he presented. In association with this, some aspects are important to be elucidated to obtain the expected cognitive result: the answer to my main question.

In the empirical social context of some deaf students, lip reading is part of their lives. However, the student involved, who is integrated to this reality, demonstrated that he had trouble reading lips when the language used was English, which did not occur in Portuguese. I suppose that it can be a frequent situation in this context, because when interpreting a sentence in English, the student has to make more ties to understand, as reading (the lips), recognizing (what is said with each movement), interpreting (the word and sentences as a whole), and understanding (what the words and sentences mean). Besides this, the student has to remember that the pronunciation is different from the writing in English. A deaf student, who does not have his/her hearing, has to remember the words and their pronunciation relying only on his/her visual memory, which is a disadvantage.

Here, it is suitable to add a sentence from the student: "Everything that I learn, I learn reading and watching." This sentence underpins my idea above and was said when we were talking about his difficulties in the world and that not all people were aware of this.

My student's hardship is similar or equal to other deaf students that study English as a second language. Following, there is a question asked by a deaf student learning English in a forum of an internet site specialized in the English language:

I am hearing impaired (severe losses), but I have normal speech. I am attending a course, using the fourth book (basic intermediate) [...] and I would like to know about some English teaching methodology for people like me. I "remember" vocabulary and grammatical rules with ease, but my biggest (and worst) difficulty is the hearing. **I am practicing lip reading but it is torturing me because there are many many words that are almost impossible to "interpret" during a conversation.** I do not know and do not use sign language. [...] **Is there a more practical way for me to improve my lip reading? Is there any methodology? Are there any courses abroad for people like me?** (ENGLISH, 2008)[3]

I believe that this aspect could be solved having a strong and systematic work by the teacher for this purpose, with the support of a Speech-language pathologist (SLP) or, as it is called as well, Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).

Another difficulty that seemed very particular to a deaf student was related to the cognitive process of improvised speech in English, without any preparation, that is, without writing and elaborating it before. When this action was required, I realized that the student had great difficulties in organizing and pronouncing the sentences, which he remembered from his visual perception, since he needs to remember the way the words are written, their meaning and relate them to their pronunciation.

Many people could think that working reading and writing with deaf students is enough. So, they could question the fact of working the speech and pronunciation with a deaf student. But we did this due to the fact that this student does not have sign language as his first language. His first language is Portuguese, spoken and written. If he was able to pronounce words in Portuguese, it was his desire to pronounce words in English as well. Besides this, I had the pronunciation work as a motivational allied during his learning process. I remember his joy when

---

3 Sou deficiente auditivo (perdas severas), mas com fala normal, estou cursando o 4 livro (intermediário básico) [...] e gostaria de saber sobre alguma metodologia de ensino do inglês para pessoas como eu. Tenho facilidade de "fixar" vocabulário e regras gramaticais, mas a minha grande (e pior) dificuldade é a audição. Venho praticando a leitura labial mas isso está me atormentando pois existe muitas e muitas palavras que são quase impossíveis de "interpretar" durante uma conversação. Não conheço e não faço a linguagem dos sinais. [...] Existe alguma forma mais prática para me aprofundar na leitura labial? Alguma metodologia? Cursos no exterior para pessoas como eu?

he leaned to pronounce his first words in English. He expressed his satisfaction and said: "I had never been taught to speak in English. It is cool!"

Now, it is important to remember Krashen (apud LIGHTBOWN & SPADA, 2004), who says that 'the affective filter hypothesis' is like an 'affective filter' that limits what the student acquires. If the student is in a good state of mind, good emotional state, and is motivated, he will acquire more- which was this student's case in learning the speaking.

With the exception of what was said before, I think that the learning process of the deaf student happens the same way as it happens with people that have normal hearing capacity. It was showed in the answers of the topic number 4.

But it is important to say that the student who I worked with makes connections between the content of the classes and his social reality, which makes the comprehension and the understanding of what is being worked possible. That is, it is very easy for the student to 'read the world', however, not every deaf student or Brazilian student declared 'normal' has the same nimbleness.

Therefore and taking his already explained weaknesses into consideration, the 20 class/hours taught by me and the 3 years and a half of experience with the same student, I believe that I have achieved my so expected answer: the teaching materials - electronic or not – are not in accordance to the necessities of the deaf student.

The classes and the teaching materials must focus on the specific necessities of the deaf student. The teacher that works with this audience needs to be prepared with the particular troubles of the deaf student.

How can teachers work, for example, phone talking – a common exercise in English teaching books – with a student that has never used the phone for this purpose? It would be incoherent to use as a theme something that is not part of his/her reality. Thus, themes and explanations must be adapted to the deaf student to make his/her learning possible.

It is crucial to emphasize that even if the process of learning happens in the same way, as I already mentioned, it is important to teach the deaf students according to their special needs. The 'target' is the same, but teachers must reach it with different focuses and concerns.

The relation between the classroom and daily life is also important. Everything that is much beyond his/her understanding and life experience will not be learned. In this case, starting from the reality and from more simple and illustrative questions is important. This was a problem met in the site, however. Most of the exercises proposed were very abstract and demanded ample mastery of the language. There was lack of details in the explanation of the site activities. They were only able to be done due to my constant help.

In respect to the chapter of the book that I worked, it was limited offering the same kind of activities. It would be interesting to vary the exercises not to be repetitive and facilitate significant learning.

At last, I think that every deaf student needs to have the same opportunities as those with 'normal' hearing capacity. The globalized and digital including world, where we are living, can be an ally to deaf people in society. Therefore, deaf people need to take part in this world and learn English to have the same access to information as others, without depending on someone.

Concerning the teacher preparation and the social use of this research, it is valid to read the extract below:

> A teacher of the public teaching system of Paraná communicated to the school administration that he would not teach a fifth grade class anymore that had a deaf student. In accordance with the secretariat, he alleged that he did not have formation to teach a student with special needs […] The case frustrated the mother of the eleven year-old student, who communicates by sign language. According to her, until last year, the son had studied in a special school. This year, when he went to the fifth grade, the option was enrolling him in a regular school.
> – She reacted as every mother would react. Who ever enrolls a child in a public school hopes that he is included – says Angelina Mattar Matiskei, head of the Special Education and Educational Including Department of Seed. (NETO, 2009)[4]

To foster an education with quality and equality, as the law requires and the teachers desire, the professionals of education need help to understand how they could work better with this audience.

Therefore, it is necessary to deepen this study. I wish to make this investigation an institutional research and assume the study of more groups, in order to develop teaching material according to the necessities of the deaf students to help teachers who work with this audience.

REFERENCES:

BETTER English. Disponível em: <http://www.better-english.com> Acesso em: 09 ago. 2008.

BRASIL. LDB. Lei 9394/96 – **Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional.** Disponível em: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/seesp/ arquivos/ pdf/lei9394_ldbn1.pdf>. Acesso em: 05 abr. 2009. ❶

---

[4] Um professor da rede publica de ensino do Paraná comunicou a diretoria da escola que não daria mais aulas para uma turma da 5ª série que possui um aluno surdo. De acordo com a secretaria, ele alegou que não tinha capacitação para atender um estudante com necessidades especiais [...] O caso revoltou a mãe do estudante de 11 anos, que se comunica pela linguagem de sinais. Segundo ela, até o ano passado, o filho estudava em uma escola especial. Neste ano, quando ele ingressou na 5ª série, a opção foi por matriculá-lo em uma escola regular.
– Ela reagiu como toda mãe reagiria. Quem coloca o filho numa escola pública espera que ele seja incluído – diz Angelina Mattar Matiskei, chefe do Departamento de Educação Especial e Inclusão Educacional da Seed.

COLLOCATIONS. EnglishClub.com. Disponível em: <http://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/collocations.htm> Acesso em: 09 mai. 2009. [1]

ELLIS, Rod. **Second language acquisition**. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16]

ENGLISH made in Brazil. Educational site. Fórum de Discussões. Disponível em: < http://www.sk.com.br/forum/display_message.php?message_id=7572> Acesso em: 15 dez. 2008. [1]

HEARING Aid. Wikipedia. Disponível em: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hearing_aid> Acesso em: 5 abr. 2009. [1]

KAY, Sue. **American Inside Out**. Student's Book. Upper Intermediate. Macmillan: Oxford, 2001.

LIGHTBOWN, Patsy M.; SPADA, Nina. **How languages are learned.** 2. ed. Oxford : New York, 2004. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [31]

LIP Reading. Wikipedia. Disponível em: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lipreading> Acesso em: 5 abr. 2009. [1]

MENINGITIS Research Foundation. Disponível em: <http://www.meningitis.org/> Acesso em: 1 mai. 2009. [1]

NETO, João Sorima. **Professor se nega a dar aula para turma que tem aluno surdo no Paraná.** O Globo, 05 mai. 2009. Disponível em: < http://oglobo.globo.com/cidades/ mat/2009/05/05/professor-se-nega-dar-aula-para-turma-que-tem-aluno-surdo-no-parana-755703289.asp> Acesso em: 5 maio 2009. [1]