

Sign Bilingual Education: Policy and Practice

Ruth Swanwick and Susan Gregory

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Introduction

In 1998 the document 'Sign bilingualism – a Model' was published. It was developed by Miranda Pickersgill and Susan Gregory, and many schools, services, universities and individuals contributed to and endorsed this original publication. It has been used largely as a policy reference document for sign bilingual education since that time.

The model of sign bilingual education as presented in the 1998 document has evolved over the last 10 years as practice has developed and the educational context has changed. There have been a number of significant and diverse changes in deaf education including developments in sign language teaching and research, and a steady increase in the number of profoundly deaf children with cochlear implants. These changes have prompted a revision of the original document.

This new document sets out to describe the current status of sign bilingual education. It is not intended as an academic publication, but rather a working document looking at sign bilingual education as it is practised. It differs from the last document in that it now draws on practice both in the UK and internationally, whereas the previous document was largely aspirational written at a time when sign bilingual education was only beginning. This document also looks at UK research into sign bilingual education.

As with the previous document, we anticipate it being used as policy reference document for sign bilingual schools and services. For that reason the first page is intended as a stand alone page which can be used as a statement of current understanding of sign bilingual principals, and it is available to be photocopied if required.

Because changes in education practice both within and beyond the sign bilingual context are critical to an understanding of the way in which sign bilingual education has developed, the first section looks at the current context of sign bilingual education

The document sets out key policy statements and section two looks at how these are realised in practice. Section three further explores this topic by providing a series of case studies of contexts in which sign bilingual education is developing. School and services were invited to describe their setting and current issues and developments. While the section may not be comprehensive, it does provide a good overview of practice in the UK at the current time. Section four provides a summary of UK research into sign language as it relates to sign bilingual education and relevant research. The summaries are provided by the researchers themselves.

Clearly sign bilingual education has been developing not just in the UK but throughout the world and we wanted this document to reflect this. We invited a number of educators in different countries and some were able to send us details of development in their own country. which are included in section five. The Appendix discusses in greater detail some of the more complex concepts raised in the document and provides some definitions. Finally, a list of resources; publications, websites, relevant journals, Deaf studies centres and organisations is given.

While the document was developed by Ruth Swanwick and Susan Gregory, the work was facilitated by a much larger group of people through two meetings and email circulation of drafts of various parts for comment. Contributions were also invited for some sections.

Feedback came from individuals and from local groups convened to discuss various points. Thus many people have contributed to the development of the document and they are listed below.

The completed document was sent to members of the group and other relevant organisation and interested parties for endorsement and the list of those endorsing the document is presented at the end.

Throughout this document we use Deaf to refer to those deaf people who consider themselves as culturally deaf, who use sign language as their main or only language, and identify with the Deaf community. This use of the term Deaf follows a convention which was introduced by James Woodward and later developed by Carol Padden to refer to members of a cultural minority group which uses sign language as its first or preferred language.

Ruth Swanwick and Susan Gregory

References

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Padden C, and Humphries T. Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture. London, Harvard University Press, 1988.

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Sign Bilingual Education: Definition, Philosophy and Policy

Definition

A sign bilingual child is one who uses two or more languages in their daily life, at least one of which is a sign language.

Sign bilingual education is an approach to the education of deaf children which, in the UK, uses BSL and English.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the sign bilingual approach to education has its roots in a linguistic and cultural minority view of deafness and a social model of disability. It is based on recognition of the following:

- Equality of opportunity regardless of language, ethnicity, race, gender, and disability
- The value of diversity in society, including linguistic and cultural plurality
- The language and culture of Deaf people
- The goal of the removal of oppression and the empowerment of deaf people
- That deaf children have the same potential for language and learning as hearing children and the right to access to the knowledge, skills, and experiences available to hearing children, in an appropriate and relevant curriculum

Policy

- The terms used to describe deaf children reflect linguistic and cultural preferences.
- Deaf children are expected to achieve the same levels of educational attainment, social responsibility, employment and citizenship as their hearing counterparts.
- Decisions made about deaf children's education and educational requirements are based on their strengths and abilities, not on what they are perceived as being unable to do.
- Deaf pupils are potentially members of both the hearing society and the Deaf community.
- BSL has a significant role in the development and education of deaf pupils.

Section 1 The context of the document

As stated in the Introduction, sign bilingual education has evolved over the past ten years during a period of development in sign language teaching and research, in deaf education, and in education in general. This section sets out the changes during this time that have affected sign bilingual education, and also developments in the wider educational context.

- There has been a growth of research into sign language linguistics and deaf studies
- Tools for the assessment of children's BSL have been developed
- British Sign Language was officially recognised as a language by the Government in March 2003
- Many deaf organisations have become more explicit in their endorsement of sign bilingualism as an approach to the education of deaf children
- There is greater acceptance and recognition of the role of BSL in schools, as evidenced by the number of hearing teachers who join BSL classes and the increasing number of well qualified deaf professionals working in education
- There is a greater deaf awareness in education generally and more opportunities for hearing and deaf pupils to pursue an increased number of nationally recognised sign language qualifications and vocational CACDP qualifications
- There is evidence that deaf children in sign bilingual programmes develop positive self esteem and a strong sense of identity *
- Sign bilingual settings have evidence of improved pupil attainment *¹
- Deaf students entering college from sign bilingual settings are now better equipped and qualified to continue their studies.*
- There are opportunities for teachers to pursue the mandatory teacher of the deaf qualification with a specific focus on sign bilingual issues

Whilst sign bilingual education has developed, the wider educational context has also changed in response particularly to government priorities and advances in medical and audiological practice. These factors are changing the educational opportunities for deaf children and are likely to impact upon the future of sign bilingual education.

- As more provision is made for SEN children to be educated in inclusive settings, the number of schools for the deaf is decreasing and the population of these remaining schools is becoming increasingly complex. More than 90% of deaf children are now educated in a mainstream setting.
- The current national emphasis on 0-3 provision and the establishment of newborn hearing screening nationwide will facilitate early diagnosis, early years support and audiological intervention
- More than half the population of profoundly deaf children entering school now have a cochlear implant and this number is increasing. For these children, there is an expectation that access to spoken language will be a priority in their education for the benefits of the implant to be realised.
- The Deaf community and Deaf culture are changing with the rapidly developing communication technology including SMS messaging and the internet

¹ evidence for these statements is presented in the research and the case studies sections

Section 2 Policy into practice

This section outlines seven key areas of sign bilingual education. It identifies particular principles and essential features of good practice.

Curriculum access

Sign bilingual classroom practice should facilitate every pupil's entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum and to full access to the assessment process whether this is through English or BSL. The bilingual teaching team should be able to make decisions about individual routes to curriculum access taking into account pupils' language skills and priorities. Sign Supported English (SSE) is likely to have a significant role in terms of support for curriculum terminology but would not be expected to be the main form of curriculum delivery (see appendix for full discussion of SSE).

Good practice in this area would include opportunities for:

- access to the curriculum through BSL with planned exposure to spoken and written English (e.g. for curriculum terminology) or follow-up work in specific language groups
- access to the curriculum through spoken English with focused BSL support (e.g. for background or contextual knowledge), this might be pre or post teaching support or available in parallel with the English delivery.

Language use in the classroom

Classroom practice should be based on the planned use of BSL and English as appropriate for the learning outcomes; the language repertoire of the pupils and the specific learning needs of individuals. The emphasis on planning indicates the focused use of either language as the teaching language. This is seen as distinct from the normal flexible use of both languages in the teaching context in response to individual need. Good practice in this area is evident where teachers are clear about which language they are using and for what purpose and where pupils demonstrate awareness of the differences between BSL and English are clear about their distinct roles in the teaching context.

Language support

Focused and proactive support for pupils' BSL and English development should identify and respond to diverse individual language profiles. This includes individual audiological management and attention to both the acoustic/listening environment and the visual/signing environment as appropriate. This implies high expectations of pupils language development, whatever their degree of bilingualism and a readiness to ensure that pupils English and/or BSL development is being appropriately challenged. Good practice in this area necessitates that all pupils have individual language programmes which identify targets for both BSL and English and that these are communicated across the full team.

Assessment

BSL and English should be used as language of instruction and assessment as appropriate but should also be explicitly taught and assessed/monitored areas of learning in their own right. Pupils are not expected to have equal skills in both languages but are more likely to have one language more dominant than the other and this may change over time. Pupil progress will therefore be assessed against individual goals. There is a range of assessment tools used for spoken and written English and for receptive and expressive BSL development. In addition, schools and services use a range of means of describing and monitoring pupil language development. Good practice in this area is evident where

assessment is formatively used to review and monitor pupil language development and where individual progress can be clearly identified.

Staffing

The staffing structure and organisation and skills base should reflect the bilingual community of the school. How this is realised will depend on whether bilingual provision is made in a special school or in a mainstream school. At a structural level this means that the management team of the school or service provision will include deaf staff and that at all levels of the organisation the perspective and skills of deaf staff are equally valued. One of the characteristics of sign bilingual provision is a shared respect for individual language and culture and recognition of the central role of deaf adults. Staff training should address deaf and hearing professional development needs. Hearing staff need to be able to communicate with and understand the deaf pupils and adults and first language BSL users need to be able to access the written curriculum. This should normally be stipulated in the language and communication policy. Good practice is evident where the bilingual teaching teams facilitate flexible provision allowing individual language strengths to be deployed to meet pupil need.

Parents

Parents should be recognised as essential participants within the immediate school community and as partners in their children's learning. This entails an understanding of and respect for parental views and wishes and a commitment to good communication. In particular schools should ensure that all parental choices are informed as a result of their access to the full information and the appropriate support provided. The school or service should provide an essential bridge between the deaf and hearing community for parents and facilitate opportunities for parents to develop their BSL skills at all levels and in ways appropriate for family communication. Good practice in this area involves the development of creative strategies to involve parents in the school community such as the establishment of parent groups, information days, inclusive community events and continued opportunities for home visits beyond the pre-school setting.

Deaf and hearing worlds

Deaf culture should be recognised as central to the deaf pupil's experience and promoted through special curriculum provision, such as the recently developed Deaf Studies Curriculum and community links as appropriate. This presents very separate challenges for schools for the deaf and inclusive settings.

Within a mainstream school the sign bilingual team have to promote and maintain an ethos which is deaf aware and inclusive through their work with the deaf pupils but also through their involvement with the full school community. While an awareness of deaf culture is more easily achieved in a school for the deaf setting, the challenge for these settings is to ensure that deaf pupils have the opportunity to develop English skills and are supported within this environment to develop their identity as a deaf individual with English as their dominant or equal language. In both settings, good practice exists where deaf adults have a specific responsibility as role models and also potentially as mentors for the deaf pupils as they develop their identities, esteem and confidence as individuals in both deaf and hearing worlds.

Section 3 Sign bilingual education in the UK

This section provides accounts of a number of sign bilingual settings in the UK, looking at their current situation and the issues that they face.

Blanche Nevile School, Highgate and Muswell Hill, London

Blanche Nevile School is a special school for deaf children working in partnership with a mainstream primary school in Highgate and a secondary school in Muswell Hill, North London. There are 70 children on roll aged between 2 and 19 years from a wide range of London boroughs. Within the sign bilingual philosophy, we have a child centred approach to learning and communication. Blanche Nevile offers specialist teaching in small groups, reverse inclusion groups and support in mainstream inclusion classes. Pupils are taught and supported by qualified teachers of the deaf, deaf instructors, communication support workers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants. All children receive speech and language therapy in small groups and individually, depending on need. Speech and language therapists use Live English to address the range of strategies used to communicate through English in face to face communication with hearing people.

Blanche Nevile School for deaf children and Highgate Primary School share the same school site and work in close partnership at all levels. There is a continuum of inclusion, where deaf children are included in mainstream classes depending on their needs, and hearing children are included in Blanche Nevile classes, providing good language models and benefiting from smaller group work. BSL is widely used throughout the community and BSL clubs/classes are provided for children, staff and parents from both schools. There is deaf awareness training for all staff and children, and a number of Blanche Nevile staff provide role models as Deaf adults. The schools have a signing / singing choir for deaf and hearing children. The schools are also fully accessible to those with physical disabilities. Staff from both schools share expertise, knowledge and practice; have opportunities for joint training and work together to continually improve a fully inclusive school community.

The Blanche Nevile School secondary department is housed in a new purpose-built provision on the site of Fortismere Secondary School. As with the primary pupils, they follow child-centred inclusion programmes, and both schools work in partnership to ensure inclusion opportunities are maximised and developed. Both primary and secondary are recognised by the DfES (Department of Education and Science) as being in the top 5% of schools nationally for value added progress at all Key Stages. At secondary level, all pupils take an average of 6 GCSEs, (General Certificate of Education) as well as other qualifications. Blanche Nevile School is a BSL assessment centre, and all pupils, parents and staff have the opportunity to train.

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Elmfield School, Bristol

Elmfield School for deaf children is a Special School based in Bristol which serves as a regional resource for children 3-16 years. There are presently 58 pupils on roll from 10 different local authorities. The school has 3 departments, Early years, primary and

secondary. The secondary department has recently moved from the same site as the primary to a new purpose built provision as a 'school within a school' with a mainstream site. The school primarily caters for pupils who have BSL as their first language and can access the National Curriculum; it also has pupils with a range of needs.

We have been developing our Sign Bilingual practise over the past 10 years. This has ensured that we have put in place specialist staff, both deaf and hearing to effectively support each child's learning. These include teachers of the deaf (TODs), teaching assistants (TAs), communication support workers (CSWs) and deaf instructors (DIs).

Over the years we have developed our curriculum to reflect the bilingual approach to learning. This has included putting in place assessment of each child's progress in both BSL and English. The deaf instructors in both the primary and secondary department have put in place an effective Deaf Studies curriculum which effectively supports each child's self identity and self esteem.

The structured approach to the teaching of English ensures that the curriculum is carefully matched to needs of the pupils as bilingual learners. The success of this approach has been recognised by the Basic Skills agency in awarding the school the Quality mark. A close partnership with speech and language therapists also supports the development of 'Live English' skills for each child (that is the full range of strategies used to communicate through English in face to face communication with hearing people).

The success of the school's bilingual approach is reflected in the good progress the pupils are making across the curriculum. Value added outcomes have placed the school in the top 5% nationally for KS2, KS3 and KS4 over the past few years.

The school has strong links with the deaf community and actively seeks their input into the school e.g. as school governors, BSL poetry festival, drama workshops.

We are currently developing a BSL curriculum within our mainstream school and outreach through the extended schools partnership.

One of our current challenges is to continue to promote the positive outcomes of a bilingual education especially in our early years and primary department. A second is developing inclusion and securing adequate funding to make it work.

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Firbeck Primary and Nursery School, Nottingham

Firbeck Primary and Nursery is a mainstream city school with an Individual Needs Centre (INC) for deaf children. There are 208 pupils in the school and foundation unit, including 11 deaf children between the ages of 5-11. Nine of the deaf children have a severe to profound hearing loss and there is one pupil with a moderate/severe loss and additional needs.

The INC is staffed with 1.8 (equivalent) teachers of the deaf (TOD) and 5 teaching assistants (some of whom are part-time) (TA) including one deaf TA. The majority of mainstream staff have level one sign language skills and all INC staff have level 2 or above.

All aspects of school, including the senior management team, are deaf aware and inclusion of deaf pupils is high on the management agenda.

In this setting Sign Supported English (SSE) British Sign Language (BSL) and spoken English (SE) are all used for different purposes. For example, all literacy sessions in the INC are delivered in either SE or BSL as appropriate. Where possible both languages are discussed and pupils are encouraged to recognise the differences and discuss their preferences. Children are encouraged to decide for themselves whether to sign or use their voices. SSE is used predominantly when reading word for word with a child and then to check if the child has actually read a word. TAs or TODs interpret all mainstream lessons where the emphasis is on using the best possible BSL. The TAs and TODs are usually given the planning /stories/assemblies to prepare the BSL content for the lesson. There are two groups of four deaf children in two mainstream classes where one TA or TOD signs, using BSL, and the other writes in English or draws pictures to interpret what the mainstream teacher is saying.

Three out of the eleven children have cochlear implants (CI) and three others have good use of residual hearing via digital aids. The CI children have additional 1:1 speech sessions as well as a group session. More voice without sign is used in communication with the CI children. There is practical (assessments) and advisory support from the Ear Foundation.

The school is part of the 'early reading development pilot', which involves daily teaching of synthetic phonics in Foundation stage-year 2. We have been surprised by the way in which some of the deaf children have been able to use their phonic knowledge based on their lip reading skills to develop spelling and reading strategies.

The BSL instructor visits every week and spends 30 minutes to an hour with each group. The children's receptive and expressive BSL is assessed annually. We are targeting our BSL teaching to cover identified gaps in BSL narrative skills.

We are constrained by curriculum pressures and initiatives in the mainstream setting. This makes it difficult to find time to prepare quality models of BSL, access deaf role models and deaf studies teaching. There is a fine balance between withdrawing children into the INC to teach in small groups where it is possible to differentiate communication modes, and keeping the deaf children in mainstream where all benefit from adaptations needed to communicate with hearing children. Consequently, sometimes small groups of hearing and deaf children are being withdrawn from mainstream to be taught by the teacher of the deaf with an INC assistant. The teacher of the deaf and mainstream teacher plan together but this takes more time. Access to speech and language therapy has also been constrained by funding and staffing issues.

We also feel that more support for parents and families is needed regarding their children's language development at home (BSL or SSE). A parent support group for parents of school age deaf children is being started at the school.

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Frank Barnes School , Camden, London

Frank Barnes has a national and international reputation as a centre of excellence in Deaf education and hosts regular conferences, training and also sessions every half term for

visitors to observe teaching, meet curriculum leaders and share resources and good practice. The school has very good supportive partnerships with parents and provide opportunities for parents and the wider community to access BSL Level 1-2 classes and hosts weekly parent support groups. It was the first school for the deaf to be granted Beacon status, awarded to schools that perform significantly well in an inspection and has two School Achievement Awards.

Frank Barnes School is a sign bilingual community specialist school for 33-45 profoundly deaf pupils, aged 2-11 years and located in the inner London Borough of Camden. It has a high ratio of Deaf staff (55%) employed in a variety of roles including members of the leadership team and the governing body and has strong links with the Deaf community and deaf organisations. It is a regional resource that serves 16 local authorities across Greater London. Although the school primarily caters for profoundly deaf children who have BSL as their first language and for those who can access the National Curriculum, it also has some pupils with a range of additional special educational needs.

The school has high expectations and provides an outstanding curriculum designed to meet the needs of the deaf children. All pupils take part in SATs at Key Stage 1&2 and value added outcomes have placed the school in the top 5% nationally for Key Stage 2. The curriculum is delivered through high level BSL and all staff attend annual residential BSL training. Each child is treated as an individual. The school ethos and Deaf Studies curriculum supports them to develop a positive sense of their deaf identity, high levels of self esteem and confidence, and to become independent and successful life long learners. In addition to the national curriculum we provide the children with individualised speech and language therapy programmes including Live English led by our excellent on site speech and language therapy team. The school also has a structured approach to the teaching of literacy and an extensive range of assessments and resource materials, including BSL expressive and receptive assessments, pupil subject trackers such as literacy and numeracy.

Currently the school has a number of new leading developments and initiatives which include:

- Establishment of a service level agreement with the National Deaf Children's Society to provide home-school communication support workers to families
- Developing extended school initiatives such as a summer play scheme
- Implementation of the learning to learn agenda that includes explicit teaching of thinking skills and a thinking skills framework
- Implementation of pupil data analysis system to track individual pupil progress across subjects
- Liaison with social services departments to create standardised service provision for deaf children across London
- Developing the Healthy School scheme
- Publication of teaching materials such as Literacy Toolkit, Deaf Studies Curriculum
- Developing a training programme and regular open days for staff who work with deaf children
- Development of a live school website www.fbarnes.camden.sch.uk
- Development of a Model of Good Practice for Research and engaging in research projects to support developments in deaf education

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Leeds, Sensory Service-Deaf and Hearing Impaired Team (DAHIT), Education Leeds.

Leeds Deaf and Hearing Impaired Team (DAHIT) has around 450 children on caseload, who are supported from birth to age 19. 3 of these children are in resourced provision, in a mainstream primary or secondary school. The majority require access to the curriculum through BSL. The remainder are supported in local mainstream or specialist provision and in the home. 3 BSL users are supported in non-resourced provision.

DAHIT comprises 8 teams which include peripatetic teachers; communication support workers (CSW); bilingual family support workers (BFSW); Deaf instructors (DIs); audiologist and technician; nursery resourced team; primary resourced team; and secondary resourced team.

Leeds now has a language and communication policy which incorporates many elements from the former sign bilingual policy but which reflects the changing context of our work, as well as an increased regard for pupil and parental rights. Trends indicate that more and more children are receiving cochlear implants and parents are choosing mainstream, non-resourced provision.

DAHIT is able to meet a range of individual needs in a very flexible way. For example, all staff are highly trained and many have achieved Level 4 NVQ BSL. Likewise, many staff have accessed training around issues of supporting children with CI s in Bilingual settings.

The current priority is to continue to raise achievement for all children. Support for the large cohort of under 3s and their families is very flexible and can be intensive if parents choose. Pathways are being developed for transition from nursery to reception for children with CIs. There is also a large and increasing cohort of Resourced deaf children with complex needs.

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Longwill Primary School for Deaf Children, Birmingham

Longwill is a 50 place, Birmingham Community Special School for Profoundly Deaf children from 2-11 years old throughout the West Midlands Region. Over 50% of pupils from homes where languages other than English are used and 53% are entitled to free school meals. Birmingham local authority offers a continuum of provision ranging from Resourced-Bases in primary and secondary schools for pupils requiring inclusion support in to mainstream and a primary (with nursery) and secondary special school.

Longwill is a sign bilingual, bicultural learning environment, which strives to support and develop the children's' communication needs and abilities, so that the pupils are equipped to function effectively within both the hearing and the Deaf worlds. We aim to educate the pupils to be independent free thinkers, ready for 21st century life, capable of embracing the technology of tomorrow. We aim to educate deaf children who are adaptable, self reliant, resourceful and tolerant of change and who can contribute to the wider community. We

have introduced the 4Rs throughout school to teach Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reciprocity and Reflectiveness. We use the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials and programme to ensure the emotional intelligence of the pupils is developed as fully as possible. We have recently trained two Deaf and one hearing teaching assistants as learning mentors.

The six Deaf staff work either as part of the family team or as teachers of BSL to parents and pupils. Each pupil is encouraged to reach Level 1 BSL by the end of year 6. We teach English through a variety of means, using BSL, signed English, sign graphics and visual phonics. There is a growing use of drama and role play to enhance the understanding of concepts and provide a base for literacy and foundation topic activities as well as supporting their emotional well-being. The wider subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and based on creative cross curricular topics.

There are a number of new initiatives including

- Training teachers to become Teachers of the Deaf and remodelling the staff to take on different roles within school: assistants in Speech and Language Therapy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) , audiology, learning mentors.
- Teaching BSL courses in school and encouraging a wider community of schools to teach BSL as a Modern Foreign Language in the primary curriculum.
- Action Research into developing ways to teach thinking and how to make Deaf children better learners.
- Using Visual Phonics by Hand to make sense of phonics for deaf pupils who are visual learners.
- Teaching French, Japanese, Spanish and German as part of the Modern Foreign Languages in primary schools initiative.

Our current challenges include teaching English through Sign Bilingual methods and improving assessment and working with our local authority to rethink strategy for the next 20 years and continuing to 'fight the corner' for this small group of sign bilingual schools

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Royal School for the Deaf Derby

Royal School for the Deaf Derby is a non-maintained day and residential special school for deaf pupils aged 3 – 19 years. All pupils at the school are profoundly or severely deaf and there are currently 104 pupils on roll. It is a child centred school, which gives equal status to BSL and English and provides deaf children with access to literacy, numeracy and all curriculum areas. It promotes a strong sense of identity and through its 24 hour curriculum prepares young people for adult life. As an approved centre, it offers levels 1, 2 and 3 and NVQ 3 BSL courses to parents and outside agencies. CHASE (a video production company), as part of the organisation, offers a BSL video/DVD production facility. The school is involved in local partnerships and is on the regional partnership planning group.

Pupils can join the school at any time in the school year. Over 50% of them are in weekly or part-time residence, living in family style houses on the edge of the campus. The 2007 Commission for Social Care Inspection gave judgements of excellent and good. They

commented in particular on the fact that students felt safe at the school because it felt like home and they know the staff, and the inspectors thought the students to be polite, confident young people.

The foundation stage focuses on the establishment of a first language and there is evidence to suggest that learners who join the school at the age of three achieve significantly better than those who join at a later phase of education. Pupils have access to deaf staff who are natural users of BSL. They are taught by teachers of the deaf and subject specialists and also receive support from speech and language therapists and an educational audiologist. 34% of staff in the school are deaf themselves.

The school is in the top 5% of all schools for value added. The profile of pupils attending the school has changed over the last few years and it has adapted its communication strategy and the 14 – 19 curriculum accordingly. Pupils at the school take SATs at all key stages, GCSEs and other external examinations. In 2006 they achieved an average of 6/7 GCSEs, as well as other qualifications. The school is involved in a partnership with Derby City Local Authority and examples of joint working include strong links between the school's foundation stage and a mainstream nursery; Key Stage 4 pupils and Derby College. Post-16 pupils follow individual programmes at mainstream colleges with key skills, basic and life skills delivered at school by teachers of the deaf and specialist staff. A transition process is in place to phase the student into their local college.

The strengths of school include: access to deaf peer groups and deaf role models; delivery of the curriculum by teachers of the deaf and subject specialists giving equal status to BSL and English; access to BSL 1, 2 & 3 and Deaf studies as part of the curriculum; over 30% of the teaching staff are deaf themselves; individually adapted curricula to meet the specific needs of pupils; regular assessments of BSL, English and core subject areas; communication profiles for each pupil which identify modes of communication and access to a programme of independent travel

The school's current priorities include: working towards Specialist School Status in ICT & Maths; offering unitarised BSL1 & BSL2 and level 3 NVQ BSL classes to staff at school, parents and carers of pupils and external fee paying students; providing tuition for groups of students enrolled on Derbyshire courses; audiology training; further development of outreach in partnership with the local authority; involvement in the regional partnership.

The current constraints are the method of funding for pupils and access to unbiased information about the school for parents of prospective pupils. As it is difficult to predict numbers of pupils, this poses challenges in terms of planning for staffing and resources.

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Wakefield Service for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children, Wakefield

The service has around 250 children on its caseload. Of these, 26 are in resourced sign bilingual provision. As a service we employ teachers of the deaf, deaf instructors, communication support workers, education support assistants and a speech therapist to work in different settings in the local authority, supporting pupils, schools and parents and offering Deaf awareness and BSL classes.

In our two resources we have 26 children, eight with cochlear implants. Deaf instructors work at each resource for most of the week, teaching BSL to mainstream pupils and staff and working in small groups delivering literacy with the teacher of the deaf. They also work on developing deaf identity and self-esteem through personal health and social education (PSHE) sessions from a Deaf viewpoint. Mainstream pupils learn signed songs for assemblies and school productions.

Pupils are supported in mainstream classes according to their prime communication need and are withdrawn to resource as appropriate. Speech therapy programmes are devised by our speech therapist and are delivered in small group or 1:1 sessions.

The speech therapist is currently trying out the visual phonics programme (based on the visual representation of sound), developed at Longwill School for the Deaf, as an additional method of working with our younger BSL dominant pupils at our primary resource.

Good links have been established between the primary and secondary resources. Pupils have a lengthy transition programme which involves regular visits to a feeder primary for the high school.

The high school resource has a weekly beginners' signing class, an improvers' class for those with level 1. and a highly successful after school club which offers social opportunities to deaf and hearing pupils. This has led to involvement in authority wide projects in which the deaf pupils have a voice. Pupils have access to a programme of independent travel and the opportunity to link with the local college for car mechanics classes. One of our deaf instructors also teaches hairdressing in the mainstream and in this positive role increases inclusion and awareness in the school as a whole.

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Section 4 UK research into sign language and deaf education 1996-2006

Susan Gregory, Sandra Smith and Alison Wells. Language and identity in sign bilingual deaf children

This particular research forms part of a much larger study of bilingual education in which 25 deaf children from two settings using a sign bilingual approach were studied over the period of one year. This study is based on interviews, carried out by a deaf researcher, when the children were aged between 7-11 years. It explored the extent to which these children understood the difference between deaf and hearing and between BSL and English, their ideas about deafness and hearingness, and their sense of their own identity.

Despite the complexity of some of the issues covered, all of the children were able to answer most, if not all, of the questions. Most of them had a developing understanding of the difference between deaf and hearing people, although some located this difference in the ability to communicate through sign language. The children valued sign language for the facility it gave them to communicate, form relationships and to participate at school. However they also saw English as important and a significant factor in interacting with the hearing world. The children were confident that they would grow to be deaf adults and appeared to have a strong sense of their own worth as developing deaf young people.

Reference

Gregory S, Smith S, and Wells A. Language and identity in sign bilingual deaf children. *Deafness and Education, The Journal of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf*, 1997; 21 (3).

Ros Herman, Sallie Holmes and Bencie Woll Assessing BSL Development: Receptive Skills Test (RST)

The RST is a video-based assessment of children's comprehension of morphology and syntax in British Sign Language. The assessment was developed on 41 native signing children and standardised on 135 children. The standardisation sample included native signers (hearing and deaf) and deaf children from hearing families. The latter were carefully selected as using BSL as their preferred means of communication. Approximately half of these were children on established BSL/English bilingual educational programmes; the remainder were selected from total communication programmes.

Through use of the RST, it was established that deaf children on bilingual programmes achieve BSL scores that are comparable to native signers, indicating the success of bilingual programmes in developing BSL as a mother tongue for deaf children whose parents are not themselves native signers. Children on total communication programmes did less well, unless there were other deaf family members to provide further communication opportunities in BSL outside of school.

Subsequent data collection from the wider population on BSL users in the UK (Herman and Roy, 2006) confirmed the advantage to children in native families in terms of the BSL development and showed that overall, deaf children in hearing families were at risk of not achieving age-appropriate BSL skills.

Development of this assessment was funded by North Thames Regional Health Authority Research & Development Office (1999)

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Ros Herman, Nicola Grove, Sallie Holmes, Gary Morgan, Hilary Sutherland and Bencie Woll

Assessing BSL Development: Production Test (Narrative Skills).

Data collected in the initial assessment development project was used to develop a test of narrative skills in British Sign Language. Using an elicited story recall task, norms were derived from 75 children from the original sample. Data analysis revealed a pattern of development of narrative skills closely matching that observed for hearing children developing spoken narratives.

References

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- Herman R. Narrative Development in BSL. Research Seminar, City University, London 2004.
- Herman, R. Narrative Development in BSL. European Science Federation Workshop on Sign Language Assessment, Zurich, September 2006.
- Herman R, Morgan G, and Woll B (forthcoming) Narrative Development in BSL.

Ros Herman, Bencie Woll and Tyrone Woolf Development of a BSL version of the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory (CDI)

The CDI is a parent report tool of lexical development and has been translated into many languages, including American Sign Language. This project currently underway to develop a BSL version of the CDI is run by City University and the Centre for Deafness, Cognition & Language (DCAL) at University College, London. Data is being collected on 68 native signers aged 6-36 months. The project is linked to the Positive Support study and will be completed in 2008.

References

Herman R, Woolfe T, and Woll, B. BSL MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory. European Science Federation Workshop on Sign Language Assessment, Zurich, September 2006.

Ros Herman

Atypical Language Development in BSL.

With the development of a range of assessment tools and increasing knowledge about normal patterns of sign language development, it has become possible to identify children with unusual language acquisition. This is important in that language disorders are not currently being identified and as a result, children with such difficulties may not be offered appropriate intervention. This research is in its early stages and will link with researchers based at the Centre for Deafness, Cognition and Language.

References

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Morgan G, Herman R, and Woll B. (in press) Language Impairments in Sign Language: Breakthroughs and Puzzles. *International Journal for Language and Communication Disorders*.

Gary Morgan

British Sign Language: narrative discourse and development

Narrative in BSL has been an under researched area. This research, among other areas, looks at how deaf children can be taught the rules of sign language narrative or other frozen texts in order for them to use this as a bridge into written English

References

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Morgan G. Learning to use referential space in sign language discourse In K Bernhardt (ed), *Papers in Linguistics from the Univ. Manchester* 1997; 1: 145-156.

Gary Morgan, Bencie Woll, Ros Herman, Isabelle Barriere and Sian Hurren

The acquisition of British Sign Language

A number of studies looking at the early acquisition of sign language. A particular focus is on early signs - the first 50 signs, looking at how regular errors like handshape substitutions can tell us how children acquire phonological representations and how this leads the way for successful language development.

References

Morgan G. (in press). The first signs of language: phonological development in British Sign Language. *Applied Psycholinguistics*

Morgan G. Children are just lingual: The development of phonology in BSL. *Lingua*, 2006, 116: 1507-1523

Hilary Sutherland

Sign Bilingualism through the Eyes of the Child

The focus of this study is an exploration of deaf children's perspectives, experiences and attitudes towards their Sign Bilingual education. It is carried out in their first language (BSL). Eight children, initially age 9 to 10 years, took part. They were sampled again aged 10 to 11. Little data of this type have been previously collected.

The researcher set out to explore the principal question, using a child-centred and deaf-friendly approach:

“From the deaf child’s perspective, what are the experiences, advantages and disadvantages of Sign Bilingual education?”

In order to elicit the children's views, careful planning has gone into the three-part study, including a series of six workshop sessions related to their home and school experiences, one-to-one interviews and a self-evaluation interactive questionnaire programme especially developed for this research. All data captured on tape, including the children's video diaries, were transcribed and a qualitative analysis approach used.

The children were asked to consider the four issues:

- Their understanding of a Sign Bilingual approach to education;

- Their preference/adaptability in using language when communicating with different people in their lives;
- The importance of access to deaf peers in their developing self-confidence and self-esteem;
- Do they perceive Sign Bilingualism as the right option for them?

Two sections of the study have been completed, analysed and findings written up. To finish the study, the researcher intends to report back to the children by developing an interactive computer programme, with the help of two IT technicians.

(University of Manchester) Doctoral Research Project (PhD):

Presentation

Paper presented at ICED, International Congress on Deaf Education, Maastricht 18 -21 July 2005.

Hilary Sutherland, Mary Griggs and Alys Young Deaf adult role models in family intervention services

A summary of the main findings of a national survey (England and Wales) of education, social services and voluntary sector service providers to discover the numbers, types and working practices of Deaf role models. Based on returns from 847 organisations, 36 projects reported the employment of 100 deaf people as role models with deaf children and families. Results are analysed by setting, pattern of contact, funding, target age, training and support requirements.

Reference

Sutherland H., Griggs M. and Young, AM. Deaf adult role models in family intervention services. In: C Galloway and AM Young (eds) Deafness and Education in the UK: Research Perspectives. London, Whurr, 2003.

Ruth Swanwick

Deaf children's developing sign bilingualism: dimensions of language ability, use and awareness

The focus of this study was deaf children's developing bilingualism in BSL and English (sign bilingualism). The research explored individual sign bilingualism focusing on ways in which deaf children use their two languages, their perception of the differences between them and the influences that that two languages have on each other. Six individual case studies were undertaken with sign bilingual deaf children between 7 and 8 years of age. Information about each child's strategies for moving between BSL and written English was collected through specifically developed translation and comparative analysis activities. From the data collected some of the individual characteristics of sign bilingualism including dimensions of metalinguistic proficiency were described focusing on the individual's skills within, between and across each language domain. The findings revealed dimensions of children's sign bilingualism which illustrate the potential of a focus on metalinguistic abilities for developing approaches to literacy instruction and for providing a framework for further research into deaf children's sign bilingual language development.

Doctoral Research Project: 1999.

References:

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Ruth Swanwick**The role of sign language for deaf children with cochlear implants: good practice in sign bilingual settings**

The aim of this project was to identify the role and benefits of sign language support for deaf children with cochlear implants by identifying good practice in sign bilingual settings which enables the associated cultural and linguistic values to co-exist with appropriate oral/aural exposure and support. The research focused on 3 main areas of educational provision. These were support for spoken language development; the role of sign language and attention to the social/emotional and cultural needs of the individual.

Six sign bilingual settings were identified for the research (2 Local Authority mainstream services and 4 Schools for the Deaf). The data collection entailed scrutiny of schools and services documentation (prospectus, mission statement and language policies) to identify the common and distinct features of sign bilingual practice, as identified by the participants. This was followed up classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with teacher of the deaf, speech and language therapist, educational audiology, deaf instructors and head teachers in each setting. The strong examples of good practice identified involved policy and practice which successfully combined attention to the individual and their personal deaf identity and social/emotional need with focused and proactive support and assessment for the development of speaking and listening skills.

Nuffield funded project reference: SGS/32041. (2006).

References:

Swanwick R. and Tsverik I. (in preparation) The role of sign language for deaf children with cochlear implants: good practice in sign bilingual settings, 2006.

Ruth Swanwick and Linda Watson**Deaf Children's Experience of Literacy in the home: Implications for Early Intervention**

This was a shared project between the University of Birmingham (Linda Watson and Jean Ellins) and the University of Leeds (Ruth Swanwick and Hilary Sutherland). For this study twelve parents of young deaf children were recorded sharing books with their deaf child – six from families using British Sign Language (BSL) and six from families using spoken English. Whilst all families were engaged in sharing books with their deaf child and concerned to promote literacy development, they approached the task differently and had different expectations in terms of outcome. The sign bilingual families concentrated on using the book to promote BSL development, engaging in discussion around the book but without referring to the text whilst the spoken language families were focused on features of the text and less inclined to use the book to promote wider knowledge. This project raises interesting issues for sign bilingual education regarding sign bilingual children's early

experience of books, implications for early intervention and support for early literacy in the home.

ESRC (Economic and social research council) funded project: (2005)

Ref: R451265197 2005

References:

Swanwick R, and Watson LM. Literacy in the homes of young deaf children: common and distinct features of spoken language and sign bilingual environments. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 2005; 5(1), 53-78.

Swanwick R and Watson, LM. Parents Sharing Books With Young Deaf Children In Spoken English And In BSL: the common and diverse features of different language settings (in press).

Alys Young

The impact of a cultural linguistic model of deafness on hearing parents, adjustment to a deaf child

This paper reports the findings from a qualitative interview study with 6 families, and the 6 teachers of the deaf and 6 deaf role models who worked with those families. It compares and contrasts assumptions about the impact of a bilingual/bicultural approach to early intervention that is home-based. In particular it focuses on the adjustment challenges for hearing parents involved in encountering a cultural linguistic model of deafness through interaction with Deaf people.

Reference

Young AM. The Impact of a Cultural Linguistic Model of Deafness on Hearing Parents' Adjustment to a Deaf Child, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 1999; 13(2), 157-172.

Alys Young

Conceptualising parent sign language use in bilingual early intervention

This paper reports the findings from a qualitative interview study with 6 families, and the 6 teachers of the deaf and 6 deaf role models who worked with those families. It focuses particularly on the similarities and differences in how hearing and Deaf interveners, working within a sign bilingual early intervention, conceptualised parents' progress in using sign language. The primary issue identified was not one of proficiency but rather one of expectations of sign use and the place of spoken language within an intention to sign within a bilingual model in the early years.

Reference

Young AM. Conceptualising Parents' Sign Language Use in Bilingual Early Intervention, *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 1997; 2 (4), 264-276.

Section 5 International perspectives on sign bilingual education

Canada

There are two natural sign languages most commonly used by the deaf community in Canada – American Sign Language or ASL, with some lexical variations specific to Canada (see Bailey & Dolby, 2002), and Langue des Signes de Québécoise (LSQ), which is used in the francophone province of Quebec. While Canada is officially bilingual (English and French), ASL and LSQ have not yet achieved official language status nationally or provincially, although they are recognized as languages of instruction in three provinces – Manitoba, Alberta and Ontario.

Because education is a provincial rather than a national mandate, there are differences among the ten provinces and three northern territories with respect to the availability of sign bilingual programmes (sometimes referred to as bilingual-bicultural or bi/bi education), and the numbers of students enrolled in them. However, it would be fair to say that nation-wide there are fewer students in sign bilingual programmes than there were a decade ago, particularly in the preschool and primary years. To a great extent this is a consequence of: (i) earlier identification via newborn hearing screening, with increasing numbers of younger children receiving cochlear implants, and (ii) the more general move to models of inclusive education for all students with disabilities (Dworet & Bennett, 2002; Hutchinson, 2002). While it may be the case that a form of signed communication (e.g., sign supported speech) is an aspect of educational programming for some of these students, it is not typically the case that they are enrolled in sign bilingual programmes.

As well, increasing numbers of students in sign bilingual programmes (and in other settings) have additional identified disabilities in conjunction with their hearing loss (e.g., autism, pervasive developmental delay). It is also worth noting that in some parts of Canada, mainly the larger urban centres like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, there are significant numbers of deaf students who have emigrated from other countries. These learners are faced with the challenge of acquiring ASL or LSQ, and English or French, often without having a solid foundation in their native signed or spoken language.

These shifts in student population have prompted some changes in educational practice in sign bilingual programmes. To meet the needs of learners with cochlear implants and those with enhanced auditory potential, more attention is being paid to the teaching of speech, oral language development and the use of amplification. There is also an increased focus on meeting the needs of students with additional disabilities, when the acquisition of any language can be challenging, and on developing strategies to work with students whose first language is not English, French, ASL or LSQ. For this latter group there are also issues of various cultural perceptions of deaf people that need to be addressed (see, e.g., Christensen, 2000).

References

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Dworet D. and Bennett S. A view from the north: Canadian policies and issues in special education. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 2002; 34(5), 22-27.

Christensen K. (ed.). Deaf Plus: A Multicultural Perspective. San Diego: DawnSignPress, 2000.

Hutchinson N. Inclusion of exceptional learners in Canadian schools: A practical handbook for teachers. Scarborough, ON: Pearson Education Canada, 2002.

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Denmark

Denmark does not officially recognise Danish Sign Language (DSL) as a minority language in law. However, DSL is included in different official guidelines, documents and curricula. This means that the use of sign language in deaf education, the use of interpreters and interpreter education is generally accepted and financed by the government.

Deaf schools in Denmark have found it important to involve deaf teachers and deaf teacher assistants in bilingual education. It is required that each class has at least one Deaf teacher. This happens as far as it is possible!

Sign Language has been the basal language in sign bilingual education in Deaf schools – some teachers are now creating a new curriculum/guideline for bilingual practice.

The table below shows the changes in the numbers or profile of pupils involved in sign bilingual education. As the number of children with cochlear implants grows, there has been a general fall in number of pupils in deaf schools in Denmark. Only the ordinary public school with deaf classes in Ballerup now has more pupils than in 1999/2000– see below.

The profile of pupils has changed as well. Children with cochlear implants need both sign language and spoken language. This has clearly influenced the profile of both the deaf children and the teachers.

Deaf School	1999/2000	2006/07
Ålborg	81	43
Copenhagen	129	85
Fredericia	115	75
Ringsted*	65	53
Ballerup*	36	59
Herning*	19	13

*) Deaf/hearing impaired classes integrated in regular public schools

As a consequence of cochlear implants more and more deaf children need speech and listening skills, therefore, spoken language is used much more in schools for the deaf. A hearing teacher has said that it is very different from 1970's and 1980's when deaf children were taught using total communication. Nowadays the children do hear sounds and are

able to give spoken feedback. According to one deaf teacher, the children now ask her to use her voice when speaking to or teaching them.

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Norway

In Norway, the introduction of sign bilingual education for deaf pupils took place in the 1990s. At the same time, policies emphasising inclusion as an overall value for compulsory education were implemented. Both processes can be related to initiatives on the state policy level during the last 30 years, based on principles of equality, integration, normalisation, participation and decentralisation.

In the period from 1970-90 several state schools for special education were closed. In 1992, the remaining state schools for special education were transformed into a system of 20 regional Resource Centres. The main objective for the centres is to support local services in municipalities and schools

In regard to deaf pupils, the 1998 Act of Education give pupils who have acquired Norwegian Sign Language (NSL) as their first language the right to education through the medium of the sign language (s. 2-6, Act of Education). The identification of pupils to be taught according to this section is done by the parents in collaboration with professional counsellors.

Further, the National Curriculum for the 10-year compulsory education (KUF, 1996) introduced four new syllabi for students educated according to s. 2-6: Norwegian Sign Language, Norwegian for deaf pupils, English for deaf pupils and Drama and Rhythmics for deaf pupils. In a national curriculum reform in 2006, the four syllabi remained in place, with some minor modifications.

Along with the introduction of these policies, other initiatives were taken by the government to enhance the competence in NSL use in schools and in families with deaf children. To meet regular teachers' need for competence a programme in NSL was developed at some universities and university colleges. Teachers, who are educating deaf students according to s. 2-6, are required to have competence in NSL at the level equivalent to one half-year full time study. A similar programme in sign language was established for hearing parents with deaf children. The parents are entitled to 40 weeks training in NSL through the first 16 years of the child's life, with full coverage of tuition, travel and accommodation and loss of earnings.

In a broad national study of the implementation of the new syllabi for deaf pupils, Ohna et al (2003) found that in 2001/02 there were nearly 350 pupils in compulsory education (6-16 years) following syllabi for deaf in Norway, which was almost 0,06 % of the total population of pupils (6 per 10.000 pupils). Approximately one third of the pupils were educated at their local municipality school, which usually means being the only pupil in the class using NSL. The remaining two thirds were educated at special schools or classes for deaf pupils, either within an ordinary municipality school or at a resource centre for the hearing impaired. In order to enhance access to NSL for pupils educated at their local

municipality schools, these pupils regularly attend short-time education together with peer pupils at the regional Resource Centre for hearing impaired. Analogously, pupils who are following s. 2-6 within a school at the resource Centre, have the right to participation in short-term education within the local municipality school. Other placement solutions, such as attending each of the resource centre school and the local school at certain days of the week, are also found.

Pupils in upper secondary education (aged from 16 years upwards) have a right, according to s. 3-9 of the Act of Education, to be taught either in NSL or through a sign language interpreter. Four ordinary upper secondary schools in the country have been designated "hub schools" ("knutepunktskoler") for pupils using NSL. No studies have been carried out to document language use in classrooms with deaf pupils in these or other upper secondary schools.

Since the early 1990s, an increasing amount of learning materials in most school subjects for NSL-using pupils in primary and secondary school has been produced at Møller Resource Centre in Trondheim. A sign language dictionary project at the same Centre has so far published a preliminary dictionary on CD-ROM in 2004, a simplified version of which was also published on the Internet.

Since 1994, a 4-year teacher education programme for deaf students has been offered at Sør-Trøndelag University College in Trondheim although in 2006, the number of applicants was too small for a new group to be admitted. Graduates of the programme are qualified as teachers in programmes for deaf pupils. There are no schools in which deaf teachers are in the majority, and all principals of special schools are hearing.

The Act of Education (passed in 1998) gives primary and secondary school pupils the right to being taught in NSL. The Norwegian Association of the Deaf has repeatedly argued for a more general recognition of NSL as an official language through legislation. In 2004, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs was presented with a report from the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority concluding in favour of a law recognizing NSL as an official language (Bergh, 2004).

References:

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Erik OS, Hjulstad O, Vonen AM, Grønlie SM, Hjelmervik E, and Høie G.: På vei mot en ny grunnskoleopplæring for døve elever. En evalueringsstudie etter Reform 97. [Towards a new compulsory school education for deaf pupils. An evaluation study after Reform 97.] Oslo: Skådalen Resource Centre, 2003.

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Sweden

Swedish Sign Language was officially recognized as the language of the deaf as early as in 1981. However, it is not protected by any legislation yet. A commission has been working with questions connected to this by order of the Swedish Government since 2003 and its final report was made public in 2006 (SOU 2006, 54). This report also embraces proposals as to a secured use of Swedish Sign Language within education, training in Swedish Sign Language for parents to deaf children and for deaf immigrants, the rights to interpretation, interpreters' training, enhancement of access to culture and media etc.

The schools for the deaf, in which the majority of deaf children are enrolled, have been working bilingually since 1983 with Swedish Sign Language and Swedish, mainly in its written form, as the two languages used and taught in school. During the last few years a growing number of children with cochlear implants have been enrolled and with many of them spoken Swedish is used as the main language of instruction. Thus, in 2005 27% of the pupils were taught in this way; however, all pupils are expected to be bilingual in the two languages when leaving school.

Another compulsory language subject is English. The general curriculum, as well as the syllabuses for the different school subjects, is fundamentally the same as in the school for hearing children.

In 2005 28% of the personnel were deaf/hard of hearing themselves. Among them, a large portion was employed for teaching tasks (32% of all teachers). The authority responsible for deaf education (SPM) emphasizes the importance of keeping a large number of deaf/hard of hearing people employed within the schools in order to secure good signing surroundings and good role models to the pupils.

(Source: SPM, 'Specialskolemyndigheten', Årsredovisning 2005 = National Agency for Special Schools for the Deaf and Hard of hearing: Yearly report 2005 (in Swedish).
(www.spm.se >Om SPM > Dokument>Årsredovisningar och delårsrapporter. 2006-12-22)

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Appendix Concepts in sign bilingual education

Bilingual

The definition of bilingual is itself complex. A commonly held understanding of a bilingual person within the general population would be a native-like user of two or more languages. However, in education in general, the definition is more complex, as the need for equivalent levels of competence in each language is not assumed. Thus a more flexible definition of bilingualism is necessary which recognises that children who operate in two languages can be called bilingual, regardless of the mode of language used or the level of competence. An operational definition that seems useful is one advanced by Fitouri:

The bilingual child is one who is learning and using two languages (of which one is mother tongue) irrespective of the level of achievement in the language at a given point in time (Fitouri, 1983).

Reference

Fitouri A. Working with young bilingual children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1983; 10: 283 – 92.

Sign bilingual education

Sign bilingual education is an approach to the education of deaf children which, in the UK, uses BSL and English. The relative use of the two languages (such as English and BSL) differs in different programmes but an essential feature is that each language is recognised as distinct and used differently. In addition to educational attainment, sign bilingual approaches emphasise pupil self esteem, the valuing of deafness and sign language, and recognition of the unique and distinctive deaf culture.

Sign bilingual approaches to education arose for a number of reasons including the recognition sign language as a full and proper language, the unacceptable low attainment of deaf pupils, and an acknowledgement of educational advantages for pupils who were bilingual in two or more spoken languages.

The advantages of spoken language bilingualism were attributed, in part at least, to the possibility of transfer between the two languages, such that skills acquired in one language could positively influence skills in the other. However, this last notion has been challenged by Mayer and Wells (1996). They suggest that because sign languages and spoken languages do not share a mode of production (e.g. speech or writing or sign), the argument that there can be transfer between the two languages is more complex. The notion of transfer may be different and more problematic than for two spoken languages. This view has been challenged by others and remains a current issue for debate and for practice.

Reference

Mayer C. and Wells G. Can the linguistic interdependence theory support a bilingual-bicultural model of literacy education for deaf students? *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 1996; 1(2), 93 - 107.

Multi lingual deaf children

Within the context of sign bilingual education, it is recognised that some deaf children may be actually or potentially multi lingual. A deaf child who is born and raised in a family in the UK where the sign language or spoken language used is of a different minority language (e.g. Irish, Urdu, Polish, Kurdish, etc), and is may not necessarily correspond to British Sign Language. With growing migration across

borders, this necessarily poses a huge challenge for education systems, and a policy of multilingual education may therefore need to be considered where this is the case in particular local communities. In an education context, and in line with UNESCO guidelines, this document agrees that this should not be considered a 'problem', but a 'challenge', and the deaf child's first native language should be respected and incorporated into the curriculum.

Reference

UNESCO position paper: Published in 2003 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy - 75007 Paris (France); www.unesco.org/education

Approaches to education that include the use of signs

a. Sign Supported English As well as the distinction between languages, there can be a distinction between modes. For children being educated in English, the mode of the language may be its spoken and written form, but it may also be presented in a signed form which takes the signs from the lexicon of BSL but uses them in conjunction with English, following English grammar.

b. Total communication Originally the term 'Total Communication' was used to refer to a philosophy with respect to deaf children using 'the full spectrum of language modes, child devised gesture, the language of signs, speech reading, finger spelling, reading, and writing...the development of residual hearing for the enhancement of speech and speech reading skills' (Denton, 1976). While the term Total Communication can be used to cover a variety of approaches, it is most often used to describe one using Sign Supported English, where spoken English is used in conjunction with some signs taken from the lexicon of British Sign Language.

Problems in defining language and communication approaches to the education of deaf pupils

Problems arise because of flexibility in the use of the various terms. The term 'Total Communication' is sometimes used to refer to any approach using signs, including sign bilingual approaches. Conversely, approaches may be described as bilingual, because they include some signing, when it is inappropriate because the necessary recognition and planned use of two distinct languages is not an element.

The role of sign supported English in sign bilingual programmes

This is controversial and views range from those who see SSE as having inevitable role in sign bilingual education, to those who believe it should not be used at all. Where SSE is used, it is generally agreed that it should be used in a prescribed and planned way, and is most likely to be used to present curriculum terminology or in teaching some aspects of literacy rather than to deliver the curriculum, or present conceptual information.

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Websites

Deafness at birth: material for professionals working with newborn screening and very young deaf children
www.deafnessatbirth.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission (2002) Education for All: Getting In, Getting On or Getting Nowhere?
<http://www.drc-gb.org/education/news/newsdetails.asp?id=712&ion=1>

Scottish Association Sign Language Interpreters (2002) Linguistic Access for Deaf and Deaf-Blind People: A Strategy for Scotland SASLI: Edinburgh
www.sasli.org.uk

Sign On Line: a resource for teachers and students of British Sign Language.
www.signonline.org.uk

Journals

Deafness and Educational International: Journal of BATOD and the Australian Association of Teachers of the Deaf (AATD)
<http://www.whurr.co.uk/whurr/index.asp>

Deaf Worlds: International Journal of Deaf Studies:
<http://www.forestbooks.com/system/index.html>

Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education
<http://jdsde.oxfordjournals.org/>

Deaf Studies Centres

ADPS: Edinburgh University.
www.education.ed.ac.uk/adps

Centre for Deaf Studies: Bristol University.
<http://www.bris.ac.uk/deaf/>

The Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre (DCAL): University College London
<http://www.psychol.ucl.ac.uk/gabriella.vigliocco/dcal.html>

University of Central Lancashire: Deaf Studies.
<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/class/edustud/deaf/index.htm>

Organisations

Association Sign Language Interpreters
www.asli.org.uk

British Deaf Association
www.signcommunity.org.uk

British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
www.batod.org.uk

CACDP, formerly Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People
<http://www.cacdp.org.uk/>

European Union of the Deaf
<http://www.eudnet.org/>

National Deaf Children's Society
www.ndcs.org.uk

Royal National Institute for Deaf people
<http://www.rnid.org.uk/>

Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters
www.sasli.org.uk

Scottish Council on Deafness
www.scod.org.uk

See Hear
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/seehear>

World Federation of the Deaf
<http://www.wfdeaf.org>

Books

Forest Books: specialist bookshop in relation to deaf education, sign languages and Deaf Studies (including publications and resources produced in sign languages)
www.forestbooks.com