

ARTICLE

DEAF'S WAY OF LIFE AND ITS CULTURAL MARKERS

PEDRO HENRIQUE WITCHS^{1*}ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0850-2366>MAURA CORCINI LOPES^{2**}ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2419-9208>

ABSTRACT: This article problematizes the constitution of cultural markers that transform the experience of being deaf in different ways and proposes to discuss deafness as a required condition for the existence of a *way of life*. To do so, it first demonstrates how deafness began to be interpreted in cultural registry, and then develops the discussion of the concept of *way of life*, together with Deaf Studies and Foucauldian studies in education, to analyze the first seven issues of the *Ephphatha Journal*, published by the Brazilian Association of Deaf-Mutes between 1914 and 1915. In these it is possible to highlight the constitution of markers related to deafness in a period that preceded the subscription of this experience in the register of identities. Thus, cultural markers were identified and discussed related to *deafness as a primordial condition of distinction*; to the *soul in constant struggle and divided by (a)normality*; to *identity*; to *meeting in a physical or virtual space*; to *the look*; to *sign language*; to *visual-gestural experience*; and to *time*. Also, the importance of the linguistic mark is highlighted in the constitution of a deaf culture, and it is observed that the arguments that support this notion can be strengthened when more cultural marks attributed to deaf's subjectification process are evidenced. It is argued, therefore, that deafness determines something deaf in everything that expresses a subjectivity marked by it as the primordial condition of distinction.

Keywords: Deafness; Deaf people; Way of life; Cultural markers; Deaf education.

¹ Federal University of Espírito Santo, Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brasil.

² Unisinos University, Post-Graduate Program in Education, São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

*Doctor and Master in Education, Degree in Biological Sciences. Professor at the Department of Languages of the Federal University of Espírito Santo - UFES. Researcher of the Interinstitutional Research Group on Deaf Education - GIPES and the Research and Study Group on Inclusion - GEPI. E-mail: <pedro.witchs@ufes.br> .

** Doctor and Master in Education, Degree in Special Education. Dean of the School of Humanities and professor of the Post-Graduate Program in Education of the Unisinos University. Researcher of the Interinstitutional Research Group on Deaf Education - GIPES and coordinator of the Research and Study Group on Inclusion - GEPI. E-mail: <maura@unisinos.br> .

FORMA DE VIDA SURDA E SEUS MARCADORES CULTURAIS

RESUMO: O artigo objetiva problematizar a constituição de marcadores culturais que compõem a experiência de ser surdo de maneiras distintas e propõe discutir a surdez como uma condição necessária para a existência de uma *forma de vida*. Para tanto, inicialmente demonstra como a surdez passou a ser interpretada no registro cultural e, em seguida, desenvolve a discussão sobre o conceito de forma de vida para, juntamente com os estudos surdos e os estudos foucaultianos em educação, analisar os sete primeiros números da *Revista Ephphatha*, publicados pela Associação Brasileira de Surdos-Mudos entre 1914 e 1915. Neles, é possível evidenciar a constituição de marcadores relacionados à surdez em um período que antecede à inscrição dessa experiência no registro das identidades. Assim, foram identificados e discutidos marcadores culturais relacionados à *surdez como uma condição primordial de distinção; à alma em luta permanente e bipartida pela (a)normalidade; à identidade; à reunião em um espaço físico ou virtual; ao olhar; à língua de sinais; à experiência visual-gestual e ao tempo*. Destacou-se a importância do marcador linguístico na constituição de uma cultura surda e observou-se que os argumentos que sustentam tal noção podem encontrar fortalecimento na medida em que sejam evidenciados mais marcadores culturais atribuídos ao processo de subjetivação dos surdos. Argumenta-se, deste modo, que a surdez determina algo de surdo em tudo o que expressa uma subjetividade marcada por ela como condição primordial de distinção.

Palavras-chave: Surdez; Surdos; Forma de vida; Marcadores culturais; Educação de surdos.

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on a discussion developed by Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006) on *deaf cultural markers*—an expression used by the authors to refer to elements that unite and strengthen deaf people as a social group with its own characteristics. Our intention is to unfold this discussion with the aid of another form of argument not explored by the authors. We take the concept of a *form of life* (WITTGENSTEIN, 1996) without discarding what they have done in order to problematize the cultural markers that constitute the experience of being deaf in different and even unthinkable ways. In this sense, we will not take a position of binary logic in relation to being deaf, since our interest is “to think the thought itself and the truths that we create to guide others and ourselves” (VIEIRA-MACHADO; LOPES, 2016, p. 640).

In this sense, we propose to present and problematize some deaf cultural markers identified in records filed at the National

Institute of Education of the Deaf (INES), located in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Although the analysis presented here concerns specific documents, what leads us to notice the deaf cultural markers in them are the investment of more than two decades in research on the education of the deaf and in deaf communities. In addition to the markers already pointed out by Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006), we have added four more markers, articulating the discussion of the notion of a form of life. In this way we intend to broaden the debate, providing more elements to think about deafness and about individuals who have an experience that is lived, felt, and produced, but not necessarily translated by the identity and specific ways of being deaf.

Given that, this text is organized as follows: After this brief introduction, we discuss the relation of deafness with the notion of culture, with the intention of showing the ways in which this experience came to be interpreted by the cultural register; then we expand the discussion of the concept of form of life, so that it can be articulated with regard to deaf cultural markers identifiable in modern times; in the fourth section, we have shown these markers in the material composed of the first seven issues of the *Revista Ephphatha*, published by the Brazilian Association of Deaf-Mutes between 1914 and 1915, which are now maintained in the historical collection of the INES. Finally, we argue that deafness is a condition of life that determines something deaf in everything that expresses a subjectivity marked by it as a primordial condition of distinction. This does not mean that everything that is done by deaf people is something that can be pointed out and named as being deaf. There is no relation of cause and effect, but there is a relation between experience and subjectivities or possible forms of being of the subject.

DEAFNESS AND ITS RELATION TO CULTURE

Until the first half of the twentieth century, there were no epistemic conditions concerning a *deaf culture*; such a notion was not in the order of discourse. Besides the fact that cultural identities such as deaf identity have spread from the second half of that century, sign language—a primordial element that supports the notion of that culture—had no legitimacy or linguistic recognition before the 1960s. As a social group as they are known today, deaf people can be included in the movements that, according to Wieviorka (2002), seek to *reverse the stigma* of an identity that is reduced to the image of a particular nature and start to culturally assert itself in a visible and recognized

way. With the claims regarding the use of sign language and making it available in the educational field as a real possibility, deaf people began to highlight their cultural and linguistic differences to take their position among other identities. Therefore, it is not possible to deny deaf identity, but we understand that identities are for the politics and social movements fighting for the rights of deaf people, just as subjectivities are for the deaf person's experience of life, and it is on this second subject that we have developed our argument.

To discuss the cultural markers that constitute a deaf form of life, we considered it necessary to locate in this article the polysemic concept of culture: its formalization as it is known today, according to Laraia (2009), occurred in the nineteenth century, when Tylor synthesized in the English word *culture* the whole structure that contemplates knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, or any other capacities or habits developed by the individuals who constitute a society. The definition also began to oppose the belief in the acquisition of customs via biological determinism. Besides characterizing the whole possibility of human fulfillment in a single word, it also marks the strength of the learned character of culture. According to Eagleton (2005), before this definition, the concept of culture generally suggested a relation between the artificial and the natural, especially when it was thought from the perspective that the means used to transform nature came from itself.

In order for the concept of culture to emerge and the idea of a uniform man to weaken, Geertz (2008) states that it was necessary to consider that the definition of man could be involved “with where he is, who he is and what he believes” (p. 26). This consideration refers to the cultural relativism that Boas (2010) presented in the first decades of the twentieth century. Cultural relativism presupposes that different cultures express themselves in different ways and that, therefore, human activities should be interpreted in their own contexts—although such contexts were strongly restricted at that time to ethnic or nationalistic issues or in relation to a certain civilization.

It is possible to establish that a cultural understanding of deafness is partly due to a flow of works and theories on the contemporary status of culture in the second half of the twentieth century, as Mattelart and Neveu (2004) characterized Cultural Studies. In this field, culture is considered in its broadest sense, in which it comes “from a reflection centered on the culture-nation link to an approach to the culture of social groups” (MATTELART; NEVEU, 2004, p. 14). This change in emphasis from the notion of a single

universal culture to a notion of different coexisting cultures, despite being manifested in theory, is not to be reduced to an epistemological question for Veiga-Neto (2003). This author writes that “such change is inseparable from a political dimension in which powerful forces work in search of the imposition of meanings and material and symbolic domination” (VEIGA-NETO, 2003, p. 11).

In the same period in which the field of Cultural Studies received its definitions, one can see the linguistic recognition of the sign communication used by the deaf, which is now understood as a natural language with its own structure and grammar. We refer in particular to the studies of *American Sign Language* (ASL) of Stokoe and his collaborators, which were first published in 1960 and 1965. We understand that the linguistic recognition of sign language based on these studies, in accordance with other social and political movements, operated as a condition of the possibility of changing the understanding of deafness, above all in the way in which deaf education would be conducted in the following decades.

With the inauguration of Deaf Studies as a field that brings together these movements and that has been giving other meanings to deafness, the notion of deaf culture has emerged and spread in both the social and political spheres, as well as in the academic sphere. When approaching deafness as an ethnicity, Lane, Pillard, and Hedberg (2011) based it on the notion that an ethnic group comprises a collectivity with real or supposedly common ancestry, shared memories of the same historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements, just as sign language works when treated as a cultural element of the deaf. In a conceptual analysis of the spread of the notion of deaf culture, Magnani (2007) identified an indistinct, descriptive, and pragmatic use of the category *culture* in works from Studies of the Deaf. According to the author, the frequent use of the term “appears almost always without further explanation or as having a univocal meaning, accepted in an unquestioned, transparent way” (MAGNANI, 2007, p. 4).

According to Gomes (2011), deaf culture has become a conceptual imperative that has been defined in different ways. In deaf narratives analyzed by the author, the concept is synonymous with “language, difference, identity marker, essence, fundamental element of struggles and the innate characteristic of the deaf subject, private property or granted” (GOMES, 2011, p. 71). Moreover, Gomes (2011) adds that the defense of a deaf way of being was made by movements, struggles, and political discussions, allowing the concept

of deaf culture to emerge with the force of legitimacy and a scientific character. In a major study carried out by the Interinstitutional Group of Research in Deaf Education (GIPES/CNPq), the objective was to analyze the production, circulation, and consumption of Brazilian deaf culture. From a series of visual records, sign language writing, transcriptions of Brazilian Sign Language (BSL or Libras) for writing the Portuguese language, among other productions collected from the 1990s for this research, Karnopp, Klein, and Lunardi-Lazzarin (2011) emphasize that the deaf cultural productions they analyzed indicate the ways that deaf culture has been defined. According to the authors, the changes that have occurred in the way of understanding this culture “have been producing deaf subjectivities suitable for modern times” (KARNOPP; KLEIN; LUNARDI-LAZZARIN, 2011, p. 25).

Considering all these aspects and making reference to a set of elements that unite and strengthen the deaf as a group, Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006) explore the notion of *deaf cultural markers*. The *markers*, according to the authors, in addition to including a material dimension in their conception, are “impressions that, in reporting on how another sees us, imprint on us feelings that make us as a subject marked by another and therefore different in relation to another” (LOPES; VEIGA-NETO, 2006, p. 84). They argue that,

[...]besides sign language, deaf art, theater and poetry, the notion of struggle, the need to live in group and the experience of the look are markers that allow us to speak of deaf identities founded on an alterity and a way of *being deaf*. (LOPES; VEIGA-NETO, 2006, p. 82; emphasis in the original)

Thus, highlighting cultural markers of deafness in addition to sign language and the so-called deaf arts, such as literature, poetry, and theater, has been little explored in academic works that approach deaf culture in various ways. We understand that these elements are a fundamental part of this notion, as well as for understanding how people with deafness become deaf subjects. As we realize the need to expand this discussion, we present in the sequence the possibility of understanding deafness as a form of life.

DEAFNESS AS A FORM OF LIFE

We understand that the linguistic relation established in the conception of a deaf identity has a significant value. We note, however, that there is a lack of research that reveals other constituent

elements of what can be understood to be a *deaf form of life*. In academic, national, and international literature, deaf identity has been commonly characterized or represented by sign language. However, although the language of a people is one of the main elements of the existence of its identity, it is not a sufficient condition for understanding the subtleties in which a given community is immersed. Thus, the concept of the *form of life* developed by Wittgenstein (1996) becomes a powerful tool to approach other social markers that constitute practices shared by the deaf community.

In taking Wittgenstein (1996) as a reference, it is possible to affirm that the fact that human language can only be understood in relation to other discursive or non-discursive practices imposes some conditions on its analysis. In other words, when we are attentive to the *language games* involved in what is spoken/signed and about what is spoken/signed, as well as the criss-crossings of the context that determine the conditions of enunciations, it is possible to identify the meanings that are attributed to words. The meaning of a word enunciated within a given form of life can only be understood within the games that circumscribe it in a community. In Wittgenstein's words (1996, § 199):

It is not possible that only one person had followed a rule once. It is not possible that a communication had been made only once, an order that is given or understood, etc. — Following a rule, making a communication, giving an order, playing a game of chess are habits (customs, institutions).

In this sense, the use of language is associated with different everyday practices, discursive and non-discursive. The interaction of the use of language with human practices allows us to understand the complexity of the actions that comprise a given form of life, differentiating it from others. The word “look,” for example, has no meaning in itself. However, if we take it within a deaf cultural context, it can gain specific meanings distinct from its meaning in other contexts. This means that unlike other possible uses, its use in the deaf community is marked by an equation that operates with variables of movement, space, and visual-based communication. For a subject who lives with deafness as a determining differentiator of a cultural constitution, the meaning attributed to the word “look” is completely different than for those to whom the word is thoughtless or used only to represent an action of a sense. The meaning attributed to the word, added to its psychological and relational sense, is a specifically human and cultural action that occurs when we are immersed in a specific form of life.

Given the understanding of the concept of form of life, we present in this article an analysis of the constitution of some deaf cultural markers in Brazil dating from the beginning of the twentieth century. We emphasize that in the context of the analyzed period, discussions of cultural identities that were not related to such categories as ethnicity, nationality, or civilization were not common. In the case of deafness, as Davis points out (1995), there was no discussion of the deaf as a group before the end of the seventeenth century, nor was there a meaningful discourse around deafness before the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first educational projects directed at the deaf, in the mid-eighteenth century, made possible the emergence of this discourse on deafness. Therefore, we understand that historically the education of the deaf was a condition for the possibility of the formation of this social group as it is known today. Nevertheless, Benvenuto and Séguillon (2016) point out that the history of deaf mobilizations that are not directly linked to education has been little investigated in a systematic way.

To develop an analysis of the constitution of deaf subjects, it is also possible to assume deafness as a *matrix of experience* (WITCHES; LOPES, 2015). This way, the production of a deaf way of life is analyzed from the correlation of three axes that, for Foucault (2010), constitute an experience: the formation of knowledge, the normative behaviors, and the modes of being of the subject—modes which, as already mentioned, have been translated and named, so that the rise of identities may take place in debate. This implies for the understanding that what is done or what is said about deafness enables it to be configured as a historical form of subjectification—the process by which a subject or subjectivity is constituted (FOUCAULT, 2004). The formation of knowledge about deafness and deaf people, along with their normative behaviors and the modes of being of these subjects, makes it possible to understand some forms of being deaf in the Contemporaneity.

For Lopes and Thoma (2013), these forms can be seen as making up a deaf *ethos* that presents a set of characteristics or cultural markers that operate as evidence of this constitution. By *ethos* we mean “a mode of relation that is in touch with the present; a voluntary choice that is made by some; [...] a way of thinking and feeling, a way of acting and of conducting oneself, which at the same time marks a pertinence and presents itself as a task” (FOUCAULT, 2000, pp. 341–342). In this sense, the deaf *ethos* described by the authors presents markers that have been linked throughout history in the processes of subjectivation of individuals with deafness.

Given this, in the following section we explore a set of markers, such as those highlighted by Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006) and others, as shown in a series of publications by Brazilian deaf people in the first half of the twentieth century that allow us to expand the discussion of deafness as a form of life.

EPHPHATHA: OPENING POSSIBILITIES TO THE FORM OF LIFE

The word *ephhatha* has its origin in the Greek (ἐφφαθά), from the Aramaic word *pthach* (פּתַח), of Chaldean origin, which means *to open*. It appears in the verses of the Gospel According to Saint Mark and is used as a word that finalizes a set of miraculous actions for a deaf man who begins to hear and speak correctly. In its biblical sense of the liberation of the spoken language of the deaf, *Ephphatha* represents the genesis of deaf education. The word was modernized from the moment it no longer functioned as a biblical miracle, but rather in the form of precise and specific techniques of transforming the deaf into users of the national language, so that the goal of Modernity to expand and universalize humanism might also reach these subjects.

Ephphatha is also the name of the monthly publication organized by the Brazilian Association of Deaf-Mutes, founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1913 on the premises of the Central Institute of the People. The Association, according to Rocha (2016), was evangelical and of a philanthropic nature. According to the author, its Statute “of May 24, 1913, states that the main objective of the Association would be to *Promote everything for the good of the deaf-mute people of Brazil, physically, morally, intellectually, and socially*” (ROCHA, 2016, p. 12). The publication relied on the work of two deaf editors, and although the editor-in-chief of the journal, who was then a professor at the National Institute of Deaf-Mutes, could hear, it is possible to identify within its pages the constitution of certain cultural markers related to the deaf, which at that moment had already taken on a social purpose. For Benvenuto and Séguillon (2016, p. 61), “The news agencies created by deaf people for the diffusion of their struggles constitute a privileged ground of analysis that shape a political history of the collective mobilizations of the deaf people.” The content of *Ephphatha*, so to speak, can also be interpreted as a possibility of opening, at least in the national territory, the discussion of the deaf culture about which we speak today.

Thus, because it is a publication linked to an association of deaf people and although this may seem obvious, we propose

to think that *deafness as the primary condition of distinction* is a cultural marker of this form of life. This is because we notice that the meeting of deaf people in an association did not occur in this period because of an identity issue, but because of the condition of their deafness, which distinguished them from hearing people. Although we may have been speaking about deaf people for a longer time, it is historically recent to link deafness to the discourse of cultural identities. As at the present time, deafness as experience becomes the differential that distinguishes them beyond cultural identity. In light of this, we suggest that identity should also be configured as a deaf marker within a deaf form of life. As something that took shape in the 1990s, deaf identity constitutes the feeling of being deaf in a way that is very similar to practices that could be observed in this work, which however could not be named at that moment in the register of cultural identities.

Thus, it is possible to argue that the deaf soul is divided by the question of normality and abnormality: abnormality in the condition of a deaf person in relation to a hearing person; normality in the condition of a deaf person in relation to another deaf person. And for this bipartition to be maintained, the deaf soul finds itself in permanent struggle, which can be configured as a cultural marker of deafness. In the first volume of the journal, it is already possible to notice the struggle as a strong mark of that period. According to Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006), the image of a struggle that is constantly being fought marks the difference of deaf people. According to the authors, it “is an imperative fed by many deaf people because, with it, they manage to establish the tension that will enable the demarcation of their differences and a deaf identity” (LOPES; VEIGA-NETO, 2006, pp. 87–88). This struggle can be observed in this excerpt¹ from the first issue of the journal published in 1914, which explains the purpose of its publication by the Association:

To serve the Association, Ephphatha must seek to communicate with the families of the deaf-mute to direct them; it must become useful to educators, who seek to restore the deaf-mute to society, preparing them to win in the struggle of life; it has to develop an active social work to support those of the deaf-mute who, stricken with misfortunes, seem to want to capsize. (EPHPHATHA, n. 1, 1914, p. 1)

In this excerpt, we may note that the need to be part of society was already a claim made by the deaf themselves in the second decade of the twentieth century. In addition to guiding families and educators to ensure that this task is performed in the best possible way, this claim is made a flag, a cause in which the deaf as a group strive to conquer

a social place. In the same way, by associating with one another and uniting as a group with well-defined characteristics is a way to make this struggle visible. In this case, the news about the Brazilian Association of Deaf-Mutes published in the journal could not fail to mention the importance of the unification of the deaf people.

Almost all our members residing in Rio de Janeiro met last July 12 to elect the new Board of Directors of the Association. The meeting began at 7:30 p.m. Mr. J. Brazil Silvado Junior presided, making an opening address. He said that the Association had united the deaf-mutes who now become strong. Formerly the deaf-mutes were separated, they were weak; now they are united, they are strong. (EPHPHATHA, No. 1, 1914, p. 7)

The Association so hopefully founded by them has accomplished its goals, harmoniously developing the physical, intellectual, moral, and social conditions of its protégés. New deaf-mutes who, due to age, could no longer be admitted to the Official Institute, were enrolled in it and are receiving proper instruction. (EPHPHATHA, No. 2, 1915, p. 9)

In these excerpts, the importance of the unity of the deaf people expressed in a sense of association can be seen. We understand that the notion of deaf community has been stressed by some authors, mainly due to the problem of the term *community* itself. Just as with the word *culture*, the term *community*, for Burke (2010, p. 21), “seems to imply a homogeneity, a boundary and a consensus that are simply not found when basic research is carried out.” However, the term has been widely used in Deaf Studies to denote groups of deaf people that are sign language users. We realized that the term was also not used in the analyzed period; however, the realization of an association of deaf people, the growing conviviality between them, and the need to become a collective are possibly elements that contributed to the strengthening of a spirit of community. According to Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006), community life is not a unique characteristic of the deaf. However, “highlighting community life as a social practice that marks the need to be among friends” (LOPES; VEIGA-NETO, 2006, p. 89) is a cultural marker of the deaf. The conviviality of deaf people in the same space, which besides being physical can today be also virtual, marks deafness as a form of life.

Thus, the school institution as a physical space for deaf people to meet is seen as a deep-seated mark of this form of life. Lane (1992) already pointed out this strong relation between the deaf community and the deaf school. In light of this, we note in one of the excerpts above the need of the Association for the operation of a school for those deaf people who were not admitted to the National Institute of Deaf-Mutes, which was the only deaf educational institution in that period. Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006) argue that deaf cultural markers

are also challenged by space, time, and school subjects. According to the authors, “when the deaf community is formed in the school and cultural markers are made in the same space, the school practices end up pedagogizing the deaf (social) movements” (LOPES; VEIGA-NETO, 2006, pp. 82–86). This implies understanding that, even within the limits of an association of the deaf that was not directly related to the school institution, the constitution of a deaf form of life also went by school practices.

As an extension of the need for unity and a common life, the prominence of the community also comes into view in the look, care, and interest in deaf people of their peers, as can be seen in the section *Pessoas (surdos-mudos)* of the journal.

Ulysses Affonso Rodrigues paid us a visit. He came from Belo Horizonte, fat, flushed, and laughing. He told us many things. He came with Dr. Wenceslão and is now proud to be a miner. He finds Rio ugly and has returned to Belo Horizonte. Abilio Lemos, the farmer from Bemfica, Minas, also came to Rio. Abilio likes to travel and run cattle businesses in the interior. João Dias is still unemployed and ill. We very much want him to go back to what he used to be: well and earning an enviable salary. (EPHPHATHA, No. 1, 1914, p. 7)

Oswaldo Xavier Rabello baptized his interesting daughter Ruth on the last February 28. The party of the baptism was very lively, having been attended by several members and other deaf-mutes. [...] Aroldo Belens wrote us from S. Salvador, Bahia, telling us about his progress in painting. He has been awarded there and intends to earn a living in art. (EPHPHATHA, No. 2, 1915, p. 16)

This section shows how deaf people were attentive to and interested in the private lives of other deaf people. Even in the case of those distant from the Association, when they returned or somehow sent news, the information was transmitted so that all members could learn of it. This is how Lopes and Veiga-Neto (2006) translate one of the deaf cultural markers. Looking, not only as a sense, is a marker that allows the contemplation of “a way of life of different forms, caring for one another, interest in particular things, interpreting and being otherwise beyond the deaf experience” (LOPES; VEIGA-NETO, 2006, p. 90).

Another deaf marker noticed in the publication, although officially discredited since the notorious Congress of Milan in 1880, is *sign language*. This institution, which today occupies a central role in the constitution of a deaf culture, appeared less prominently in the first half of the twentieth century but was always used and mentioned, as can be seen in the excerpts that follow:

[...] the mime of Brazilian deaf people was imported from France, although today it is a dialect that is increasingly different from the mother tongue [...]. (EPHPHATHA, No. 2, 1915, p. 14)

A better study of psychology by deaf-mute teachers has recently led to a new and perhaps unexpected situation. Dactylogy has begun to occupy first place, relegating graphic writing to an auxiliary plane. Hence the creation in our days of the dactylogical method, for which true organization still has to be done. [...] Dactylogy and the dactylogical method would give us material for long considerations; but here we simply point out its first-line position among the methods of teaching the deaf. (EPHPHATA, No. 7, 1915, p. 50)

As can be noted, sign language was mentioned as mime or discourse about it was manifested concerning dactylogy as a technique, since the recognition of the linguistic status of sign communication postdated that era. Although at that time it was believed that the signs used in Brazil were imported from France, as if there had been no sign communication prior to that importation, it is interesting to identify the notion of a linguistic genealogy as well as the use of the term *mother tongue*. It is also interesting to note that, although formally banned from schooling, the use of signs among deaf Brazilians in that period was explicit, which even allowed the evolution of that language.

In the articulation between look, community life, and sign language, we can also think of the *visual-gestural experience*, which combines vision, space, and communication, as a cultural marker of deafness as a form of life. This marker gains intensity as deaf people begin to be questioned about the use of sign language, but before then, it could already be observed mainly in the articulation of the markers already mentioned. From the visual-gestural experience, we can also think of *time* as another marker, as we can infer from this excerpt on the character of the deaf:

About the character of the deaf-mute, we have read and heard opinions of several educators that are without a doubt remarkable. [...]

It is very interesting to know what Rev. Eugen Sutermeister has to say about that, being himself a deaf person and a deaf-mute minister in Switzerland. [...]

The faults he enumerates are: lack of self-government; lack of self-knowledge, introspection, and self-love; lack of sense of responsibility; contempt for others; ignorance of the world and credulity; envy and pride; too much sensitivity and irritability; being given to gossip, insults, and questions; unsociability; stubbornness, inability to learn, and ingratitude. (EPHPHATHA, No. 4, 1915, p. 29)

Disregarding the moral interpretation in this excerpt, we want to highlight the mention of issues such as *irresponsibility, contempt for others, ignorance of the world, and unsociability* as elements that can be associated with time as a cultural marker of the deaf form of life. The passage is followed by a counterargument from a professor of Gallaudet, who argues that such characteristics are also visible in many hearing people and are not exclusive to deaf people, who

should not be seen as a category but as individuals. However, we want to highlight these aspects and relate them to time, considering the time that the deaf used in communicating in sign language; the time they use to understand an untranslated world, or even one that is not fully accessible through visual-gestural experience: this always takes a longer time. In this sense, time in the deaf form of life has other measures and can be understood as a cultural marker to be considered when one thinks of deafness as a condition for the constitution of a deaf form of life.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Many other cultural markers could perhaps be identified in historical documents produced by deaf people. In this article, we highlight some of them and propose a re-reading of others, such as *deafness as a primordial condition of distinction; the soul in permanent struggle and divided by normality and abnormality; identity; meeting in a physical or virtual space; the look; sign language; the visual-gestural experience; and time*. We also pointed out that sign language has not always occupied a central place in the constitution of this social group as it is known in modern times, although its mark is a constant presence in the material. The evidence of such markers allows us to highlight the importance of further historical research on the lives of deaf people beyond the school institution. We understand that such research can expand what we know about this existence, contributing to the thought about the historical constitution of what we have understood by deaf culture. This allows the advancement of our understanding of the constitution of a deaf *ethos*, of a way to be deaf today, and consequently of a deaf form of life with significant historical aspects to its formation.

We consider it important to highlight the care that studies of deaf education may have in not reducing the deaf cultural difference to the use of sign language. Although we agree with the importance of the linguistic marker in the constitution of a deaf culture, we understand that the arguments that support such a notion may find strength as more cultural markers that may be attributed to the process of subjectivation of deaf people are evidenced. Besides, some of the elements pointed out in this article reinforce the point that the deaf community is strongly marked by school characteristics, and we are attentive to the possibilities of deaf difference being unpedagogized, that is, of the importance of stressing the relation of immanence between the school and the deaf community.

REFERENCES

- BENVENUTO, A.; SÉGUILLON, D. Primeiros banquetes dos surdos-mudos no surgimento do esporte silencioso 1834-1924: por uma história política das mobilizações coletivas dos surdos. **Revista Moara**, Belém, n. 45, p. 60-78, jan./jun., 2016.
- BOAS, F. **Antropologia cultural**. 6ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 2010.
- BURKE, P. **Linguagens e comunidades nos primórdios da Europa Moderna**. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2010.
- DAVIS, L. J. **Enforcing normalcy: disability, deafness, and the body**. London; New York: Verso, 1995.
- EAGLETON, T. **A idéia de cultura**. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2005.
- EPHPHATHA. Associação Brasileira de Surdos Mudos. Volume 1, número 1. Rio de Janeiro, 1914.
- EPHPHATHA. Associação Brasileira de Surdos Mudos. Volume 1, número 2. Rio de Janeiro, 1915.
- EPHPHATHA. Associação Brasileira de Surdos Mudos. Volume 1, número 4. Rio de Janeiro, 1915.
- EPHPHATHA. Associação Brasileira de Surdos Mudos. Volume 1, número 7. Rio de Janeiro, 1915.
- FOUCAULT, M. **Arqueologia das ciências e história dos sistemas de pensamento**. Ditos e escritos II. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2000.
- FOUCAULT, M. O retorno da moral. In: FOUCAULT, M. *Ética, sexualidade, política*. Ditos e escritos V. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, p. 252-263, 2004.
- FOUCAULT, M. **O governo de si e dos outros**. Curso no Collège de France (1982-1983). São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010.
- GEERTZ, C. **A interpretação das culturas**. Rio de Janeiro: LTC, 2008.
- GOMES, A. P. G. **O imperativo da cultura surda no plano conceitual: emergência, preservação e estratégias nos enunciados discursivos**. 2011. 101 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Santa Maria, 2011.
- KARNOPP, L. B.; KLEIN, M.; LUNARDI-LAZZARIN, M. L. Produção, circulação e consumo da cultura surda brasileira. In: KARNOPP, L. B.; KLEIN, M.; LUNARDI-LAZZARIN, M. L. (org.). **Cultura surda na contemporaneidade: negociações, intercorrências e provocações**. Canoas: Ed. Ulbra, p. 15-28. 2011.
- LANE, H. **A máscara da benevolência: a comunidade surda amordaçada**. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 1992.

LANE, H.; PILLARD, R. C.; HEDBERG, U. **The people of the eye: deaf ethnicity and ancestry**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

LARAIA, R. de B. **Cultura: um conceito antropológico**. 23ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 2009.

LOPES, M. C.; THOMA, A. da S. Subjectivation, normalisation et constitution de l'éthos sourd: politiques publiques et paradoxes contemporains. **La Nouvelle Revue de l'Adaptation et de la Scolarisation**, n. 64, p. 105-116, 2013.

LOPES, M. C.; VEIGA-NETO, A. Marcadores culturais surdos: quando eles se constituem no espaço escolar. **Perspectiva**, Florianópolis, v. 24, n. especial, p. 81-100, jul./dez. 2006.

MAGNANI, J. G. C. "Vai ter música?": para uma antropologia das festas juninas de surdos na cidade de São Paulo. **Ponto Urbe**, São Paulo, v. 1, p. 1-21, jul. 2007.

MATTELART, A.; NEVEU, É. **Introdução aos estudos culturais**. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2004.

ROCHA, S. M. da. A educação de surdos em rede internacional: análise de fontes documentais dos séculos XVIII, XIX e XX. In: XI COLUBHE, 11, 2016, Porto. **XI Congresso Luso-Brasileiro da História da Educação**. Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2016.

VEIGA-NETO, A. Cultura, culturas e educação. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 23, p. 5-15, mai./ago. 2003.

VIEIRA-MACHADO, L. M. da C.; LOPES, M. C. A constituição de uma educação bilíngue e a formação dos professores de surdos. **Educação & Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 41, n. 3, p. 639-659, jul./set. 2016.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. **Investigações filosóficas**. São Paulo: Nova Cultural, 1996.

WIEVIORKA, M. **A diferença**. Lisboa: Fenda, 2002.

WITCHES, P. H.; LOPES, M. C. Surdez como matriz de experiência. **Revista Espaço**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 43, p. 31-47, jan./jun. 2015.

NOTES

¹ In order to differentiate quotes from this journal from other citations in this text, the excerpts of the material analyzed are quoted in italics; the original spelling of the period in which they were published has also been retained.

Submission: 29/08/2017

Approbation: 03/06/2018

Contact:

Pedro Henrique Witches

Rua Dr. Moacyr Gonçalves, 70, Apto. 510, Jardim da Penha

Vitória | ES | Brasil

CEP 29.060-445