

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY LANGUAGE BARRIER ON THE EDUCATION OF DEAF STUDENTS: A BRIEF ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VYGOTSKY'S HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n2-079>

Submitted on: 01/10/2025

Publication date: 02/10/2025

**Charles de Castro Leite<sup>1</sup>, Cinthia do Carmo Gonçalves<sup>2</sup>  
and Suélen Rodrigues de Freitas Costa<sup>3</sup>.**

### ABSTRACT

This study briefly analyzes the influence of the family language barrier on the education of the deaf, based on authors such as: Vygotsky; Quadros and Karnopp; Sacks; L. The research, of a qualitative and bibliographic nature, highlights the importance of Libras, social mediation and family inclusion to overcome educational challenges and promote equity. We conclude that overcoming the educational barriers faced by deaf students requires public policies, continuing teacher training and the appreciation of Libras, ensuring an inclusive and equitable education that respects their linguistic and cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Education of the Deaf. Historical-Cultural Psychology. Language. Libras.

---

<sup>1</sup> Master's degree in Teaching, Basic Education and Teacher Training from the Federal University of Espírito Santo – Ufes. Effective Professor of the Municipal Education Network of Vargem Alta – ES and Cachoeiro de Itapemirim – ES.

Email: ccleite89@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9226-3926>

LATTES: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4133496406385080>

<sup>2</sup> Master in Teaching, Basic Education and Teacher Training from the Federal University of Espírito Santo – Ufes. Effective Teacher of the Municipal Education Network of Venda Nova do Imigrante – ES and Conceição do Castelo – ES

E-mail: tinthia\_riva@hotmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1705-701X>

LATTES: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8828139247412834>

<sup>3</sup> Master in Teaching, Basic Education and Teacher Training from the Federal University of Espírito Santo – Ufes. Effective Teacher of the Municipal Education Network of Ibitirama – ES

E-mail: suelenfreitas70@hotmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6581-0864>

LATTES: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6339735839658429>

## INTRODUCTION

The family is the first and most essential space for the child's socialization, directly influencing their development and learning. It is in this environment that the first social interactions occur, fundamental for the construction and consolidation of the subject's emotions and cognition. Through these interactions, the child learns to resolve conflicts, express their emotions, manifest their desires and understand the complexity of interpersonal relationships (Brito; Soares, 2014; Dessen; Poland, 2007).

However, when there are communication barriers within this nucleus, as often occurs in the case of deaf children in families that do not know Sign Language, this process can be compromised. The absence of effective communication limits the child's full development, restricting his access to fundamental experiences for his social and emotional formation. Studies indicate that the lack of interaction in an accessible language can negatively impact the cognitive and socio-emotional development of deaf children, making it difficult for them to be inserted in various social and school contexts (Charts; Karnopp, 2004). Thus, the lack of the need for accessible communication in the family environment can represent a significant obstacle to learning and the inclusion of deaf students in society.

We emphasize that in the process of human development, the school plays a fundamental role, being a space for socialization and construction of knowledge. According to Dourado (2007), education is a social practice that enables both the appropriation of knowledge historically accumulated by humanity and the production of new knowledge. However, for deaf students in Brazil, access to education still faces several barriers, with language being one of the main challenges. The lack of an educational approach that fully contemplates the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) significantly compromises the learning of these students, limiting their effective participation in the school environment (Goes, 2002; Lacerda, 2006).

With the objective of problematizing the influence of the family language barrier on the educational process of the deaf student, we conducted a qualitative study (Lüdke; André, 2017), through a bibliographic search (Minayo, 2009) on the Portal of Periodicals of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). For the search, we established a time frame from 2016 to 2023, using the following descriptors: "Vygotsky" and "deafness"; "Vygotsky" and "deafness"; "Vygotsky" and "Libras"; "Vygotsky" and "Libras". The search resulted in a total of 68 articles. In order to ensure the relevance

of the selected studies, we performed an initial screening based on the reading of titles and abstracts, followed by the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria involved articles that addressed the perspective of Vygotsky's Historical-Cultural Psychology<sup>4</sup> and its relationship with the development and learning of deaf students in the family and school context. The exclusion criteria, on the other hand, eliminated studies that did not present a direct approach to the theme or that did not establish relations with Vygotskian theory. After this process, we selected three articles that present in-depth discussions on the relationship between the family language barrier, language acquisition and the educational challenges faced by the deaf student. The analysis of these publications will allow us to understand how the absence of accessible communication in the family environment can impact the socio-emotional and cognitive development of deaf students, in addition to reflecting on possible strategies to minimize these difficulties in the educational context.

This article is organized into three sections, in addition to the introduction. In the first, we present the conceptualization of Vygotsky's Historical-Cultural Psychology and the link with the linguistic reality experienced by the deaf student. Then, we present the results found and discussions about the theme. Finally, we bring the final considerations.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

Vygotsky's Historical-Cultural Psychology emphasizes language as an essential instrument in the teaching and learning process, because, in addition to being a means of communication, it plays a structuring role in human cognitive development. For Vygotsky (2007; 2008), language not only reflects thought, but also transforms it, allowing the mediation between the individual and reality through signs. Thus, the construction of knowledge occurs in a dialectical process, in which social interactions enable the internalization of concepts and the formation of higher psychological functions.

However, the Vygotskian perspective also shows that the absence of accessible language can significantly compromise cognitive and social development. In the case of deaf children, if the family and school environment do not provide for the learning of Sign Language from the first years of life, there is a limitation in the internalization of fundamental concepts, which can impair their capacity for abstraction and complex

---

<sup>4</sup> The author's name can be found with different spellings. We chose this variation because it is the closest to the orthography used in the Portuguese language.

reasoning (Quadros; Karnopp, 2004). The lack of early exposure to an accessible natural language, such as Libras, can lead to the so-called "linguistic delay", which affects not only communication, but also the construction of critical thinking and autonomy in learning (Sacks, 1990).

In this context, it is essential that the educational and family environment recognizes Libras as the first language of the deaf student, ensuring their acquisition and linguistic development in a natural way. From this perspective, we share the view of Vygotsky (2007) when he states that the school should offer the student an environment that favors exploration, dialogue, access to information and the exchange of ideas. That is, a space that stimulates the collective construction of knowledge and collaborative learning among students, always with the mediation of the teacher. This perspective contributes to overcoming the conception of the student as a passive subject in the educational process, emphasizing his active role in the construction of his own learning. However, we observe that, many times, educational policies and pedagogical practices still neglect this need, sustaining, for example, in the context of the schooling process of deaf students, an oralist approach that imposes barriers to the development of these students (Lacerda, 2006). Overcoming these difficulties requires investments in teacher training, in the presence of interpreters and, above all, in the involvement of families in the learning of sign language, in order to ensure an adequate communication environment aligned with the needs of the deaf student.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to support the delimitation of the object of study, as well as to favor the articulation of the various knowledges about what we wish to reflect on, we have the selected works in the table below:

**CHART 1** - Mapping of articles that associate Vygotsky's Theory - Family - Education of the deaf

DESCRIPTOR	TITLE	AUTHOR / YEAR	SOURCE
"Vygotsky" and "deafness"	Deafness and Diagnosis: narratives of deaf adults	Monteiro, Rosa; Silva, Daniele Nunes Henrique; Ratner, Carl/ 2016	CAPES Portal/ Psychology: Theory and Research

"Vygotsky" and "deafness"	Eating at the table: the social inclusion of the deaf person by the family, through commensality	Oliveira, Ronaldo Gonçalves; Ferreira, Francisco Romão; Prado, Shirley Donizete/ 2017	CAPES/ DEMETRA Portal: Food, Nutrition and Health
"Vygotsky" and "deafness"	Communicative interactions between hearing family members and deaf subjects: possibilities of resignification	Cappellini, Michele Toso; Santos, Lara Ferreira dos/ 2020	CAPES Portal/ Special Education Journal

**Source:** Prepared by the authors (2025).

The study by Monteiro, Nunes and Ratner (2016) investigated how deaf individuals perceive the discovery of their deafness after diagnosis, analyzing the impacts of this experience on the formation of their identities and personalities. To achieve this goal, the authors conducted a qualitative research through a focus group with five deaf adults. The results highlighted the significant impact that the diagnosis can have on the parental relationships and social development of the deaf subject. This finding highlights the need for adequate follow-up for both the child and the family, since the way parents react to deafness can determine the child's opportunities for interaction and learning (Charts; Karnopp, 2004).

Corroborating this perspective, Oliveira, Ferreira and Prado (2017) analyzed the family relationship of the deaf subject and its influence on various aspects of life, including school learning. The study, with a qualitative approach and with a methodology of participant observation, revealed that the education of the deaf faces structural challenges that begin within the family environment itself. The authors concluded that family inclusion is the first step to overcome these barriers, as support and full communication between hearing parents and deaf children are decisive for the construction of deaf identity and emotional development. However, many families do not receive adequate support to learn Libras, which compromises interaction and can generate isolation within the family nucleus itself (Lacerda, 2006).

Reaffirming the importance of the family in the development of the deaf individual, Cappellini and Santos (2020) conducted a research with the objective of analyzing reflective processes between hearing family members and deaf subjects, investigating their communicative interactions in the home environment. The study, based on the historical-cultural approach and of a qualitative nature, included six families composed of hearing members and a deaf subject who used Libras, and the family members were in the process of learning the language. The results indicated significant improvements in communication

within these families, showing that the acquisition of Libras by parents favors the socio-emotional development of the deaf individual and strengthens affective bonds. Although the studies cited emphasize the relevance of family support, there is still a gap in the implementation of public policies that encourage the learning of Libras by the families of deaf students. The absence of accessible programs for parents and guardians results in the perpetuation of communication barriers and limits the full development of the deaf subject (Sacks, 1990). Thus, it is essential that inclusive education is not restricted only to the school environment, but also promotes initiatives that help families become active agents in the construction of the linguistic and cultural identity of the deaf.

We perceive the centrality of the family in the development of the deaf child, an aspect widely discussed in the literature of bilingual education and Historical-Cultural Psychology. Vygotsky (2007) highlights that the cognitive and social development of the individual is mediated by language and social interactions, with communication being an essential element in the construction of thought and learning. Thus, when the family is not fluent in Libras or does not recognize its importance, there is a significant limitation in the internalization of fundamental concepts, impacting not only the language, but also the socio-emotional development of the deaf child, which can, for example, generate isolation and learning difficulties (Góes, 2002).

In addition, the studies analyzed indicate that, when there is an effort to promote effective communication between deaf and hearing people in the family environment, the results are positive and directly reflect on the schooling and well-being of the child (Cappellini; Santos, 2020). However, it is observed that the Brazilian educational system still lacks the structure to articulate inclusive pedagogical praxis, as many families do not have access to Libras courses, adequate teaching materials or continuing pedagogical training (Lacerda, 2006). The absence of public policies aimed at the formation of bilingual families compromises the educational and social inclusion of the deaf, making the school environment the only space where, many times, the student can have contact with their natural language. This reinforces the need for programs that integrate family and school in the educational process, creating a support network for the development of deaf children (Skliar, 1998).

Given this scenario, it is essential that the educational approach of the deaf goes beyond the simple insertion in the school space and considers their linguistic and cultural identity. Vygotsky's theory (2007) points out that learning occurs in a more significant way



when there is interaction between peers and the mediation of a more experienced agent. This means that, for the deaf student, the presence of linguistic models – both in the family and at school – is crucial for the development of their higher psychological functions. When this mediation is limited or non-existent, learning and the constitution of subjectivity can be impaired, resulting in academic and social difficulties (Quadros; Karnopp, 2004). Therefore, investing in quality bilingual education, which includes not only formal education, but also family involvement, is essential to ensure that the deaf student has conditions for development and active participation in society.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

We conclude that the Brazilian deaf student faces a series of challenges throughout his educational path, which begin with family acceptance and extend to the neglect of his right to bilingual education, disregarding his linguistic and cultural specificity. The analysis of the selected researches, in the light of Vygotsky's Historical-Cultural Psychology, reinforces the centrality of the Social interaction and mediation in cognitive development and in the construction of knowledge. However, the lack of effective communication between family, school and society often results in obstacles that compromise the learning and identity formation of the deaf subject.

In view of this scenario, it is essential for the State to take a closer look at the weaknesses present in family and school contexts, as evidenced by the studies analyzed. The absence of public policies that guarantee the teaching of Pounds Both for deaf students and for their families, it reinforces the social and educational exclusion of this population. In addition, the lack of preparation of many education professionals to work in a truly inclusive model demonstrates that the schooling of deaf people is still marked by structural and methodological gaps that limit its full development.

Finally, the true process of inclusion is not limited to specific initiatives, but requires a Continuous and structured planning, involving actions that promote teacher training, access to bilingual pedagogical resources and social awareness. The effectiveness of an equitable education for the deaf requires Political and social commitment, in addition to raising awareness that inclusion is not an act of goodwill, but a fundamental right that must be guaranteed to all. Only through an integrated approach between family, school and State will it be possible to build a society that is more accessible and respectful of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the deaf community.

## REFERENCES

1. Brito, R. G., & Soares, S. S. (2014). Influência da família na aprendizagem escolar da criança: Ponto de reflexão [Influence of the family on children's school learning: A point of reflection]. *Exitus*, 4(1), 241–253.
2. Cappellini, M. T., & Santos, L. F. (2020). As interações comunicativas entre familiares ouvintes e sujeitos surdos: Possibilidades de ressignificações [Communicative interactions between hearing family members and deaf individuals: Possibilities for resignification]. *Educação Especial*, 33, 1–23. <https://periodicos.ufsm.br/educacaoespecial/article/view/48563>
3. Dessen, M. A., & Polonia, A. C. (2007). A família e a escola como contextos de desenvolvimento humano [The family and school as contexts of human development]. *Paidéia*, 17(36), 21–32.
4. Dourado, L. F. (2007). Políticas e gestão da educação básica no Brasil: Limites e perspectivas [Policies and management of basic education in Brazil: Limits and perspectives]. *Educação & Sociedade*, 28(100), 921–926.
5. Goes, M. C. R. (2002). Linguagem, surdez e educação [Language, deafness, and education] (3rd ed.). Campinas, SP: Autores Associados.
6. Lacerda, C. B. F. (2006). A inclusão escolar de alunos surdos: O que dizem alunos, professores e intérpretes sobre esta experiência [The school inclusion of deaf students: What students, teachers, and interpreters say about this experience]. *Cadernos Cedes*, 26(69), 163–184.
7. Lüdke, M., & André, M. E. D. A. (2017). Pesquisa em educação: Abordagem qualitativa [Research in education: Qualitative approach] (2nd ed.). Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: E.P.U.
8. Minayo, M. C. S. (2009). O desafio da pesquisa social [The challenge of social research]. In M. C. S. Minayo (Ed.), *Pesquisa social: Teoria, método e criatividade* [Social research: Theory, method, and creativity] (pp. 9–29). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Vozes.
9. Monteiro, R., Silva, D. N. H., & Ratner, C. (2016). Surdez e diagnóstico: Narrativas de surdos adultos [Deafness and diagnosis: Narratives of deaf adults]. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*, 32(5), 1–9. <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/revistaptp/article/view/19390>
10. Oliveira, R. G., Ferreira, F. R., & Prado, S. D. (2017). Comer à mesa: A inclusão social da pessoa surda, pela família, através da comensalidade [Eating at the table: The social inclusion of the deaf person, by the family, through commensality]. *Demetra: Alimentação, Nutrição & Saúde*, 12(4), 899–914. <https://www.e-publicacoes.uerj.br/demetra/article/view/28357>



11. Quadros, R. M., & Karnopp, L. B. (2004). Língua de sinais brasileira: Estudos linguísticos [Brazilian Sign Language: Linguistic studies]. Porto Alegre, Brazil: Artmed.
12. Sacks, O. (1990). Vendo vozes: Uma viagem ao mundo dos surdos [Seeing voices: A journey into the world of the deaf]. São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras.
13. Skliar, C. (1998). A surdez: Um olhar sobre as diferenças [Deafness: A look at differences]. Porto Alegre, Brazil: Mediação.
14. Vigotski, L. S. (2007). A formação social da mente [The social formation of the mind] (7th ed.). São Paulo, Brazil: Martins Fontes.
15. Vigotski, L. S. (2008). Pensamento e linguagem [Thought and language] (4th ed.). São Paulo, Brazil: Martins Fontes.