

Signing to write: SignWriting in classrom

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Nowadays it's hard to imagine a language without a written system. Actually, writing is a way of representing a language, it's a way of preserving its existence and, at the same time, writing allows people to know language evolution through the years. Without that register we couldn't be sure that languages had changed and evolved which make languages alive and dynamic.

Therefore, because writing production is directly connected to natural language (in the case sign language), it's very important that deaf children have early contact with SignWriting. They will need that in order to become fluent linguistic adults.

This work is based on an experience of teaching – learning the writing system SignWriting. This happened at college and the subject was part of the Portuguese Sign Language Degree.

Teaching SignWriting for the first time was very challenging. Besides, it was a huge responsibility to be an important part of the education of interpreters and teachers. For these this was the first contact they had with the SignWriting system.

This work shows two perspectives: that of a teacher who was a beginner in this field. It also reflects her experience methods and difficulties while preparing the classes and the materials and also the strategies she used to destroy the barriers. And also the perspective of the students who were also beginners in SignWriting writing and they had begun to learn Portuguese Sign Language a short time before too. Besides, with this work we intend to present the students opinion on SignWriting as well as the importance and benefits of the system for them as future sign language professionals.

It's important to add that SignWriting isn't a reality in Portugal yet. Although it exists in the Curricular Program of Portuguese Sign Language but only in secondary school. This makes no sense due to deaf people's nature which is the acquisition of a visual language and, therefore, its written system.

Thus, this experience is very important because SignWriting can only be a reality in deaf children education once there are teachers with knowledge and skill to teach this subject. Therefore, it is crucial that future teachers have the opportunity to learn how to write Portuguese Sign Language.