Linguistic Human Rights: To Reform, Reframe. Implications for Education

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Linguistic Human Rights: Overview

Reframing mindsets to maximize potential and outcomes

Understand linguistic human rights and cultural minorities policies

Identify how to create teamwork for positive change in programs serving Deaf students
Reframing to Reform Education

- Respect for Diversity
- Sign Language as a Human Right for All
- One can live without Speech but not Language
- Bi/Multilingualism and Culturalism as a PLUS
- Languages as Resources
- Community of ASL Users
- Self-Representation – of, for, by Deaf People
- Deaf People as Leaders and Professionals
- Collaborations/Coalitions/Legislative Power

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Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights
National Minority People Have These Rights:

✓ To use and to learn in their own language
✓ To be taught by proficient language teachers
✓ To be involved in planning curriculum and programs
✓ To be involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of these programs.

UN Standard Rules 1993, Sign language should be considered in the education of Deaf children, families and communities
UNESCO Salamanca 1994, Right to Sign Language in Education
UNESCO Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, Barcelona 1996: Articles 3, 5, 26
UNESCO Education Rights of National (Cultural) Minorities, Hague, 1996: Articles 1, 11, 12, 20

Purpose: to promote, protect and ensure full access and equal human rights on local, national and international levels. Full access including Sign Language, professional interpreters and technology, in homes, schools and communities. Linguistic identity, Deaf culture and Sign Language are human rights.

http://www.un.org/disabilities/

International Congress on Education of the Deaf 2010: The New Era Accord

Purpose: to apologize for the repression of Sign Language and Deaf People since 1880 and to support full access to language and communications

http://wfdeaf.org/news_ICED.html

“Nothing about us without us.”
The Brain and Language

- Proper stimulation can increase a child’s IQ score by **30 points**. If denied stimulation, the brain atrophies.

- The brain needs environmental feedback to thrive.

- Most Deaf children are needlessly stalled in language acquisition until they start formal schooling. Quality education becomes essential. (Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003)

- **Deaf children of Deaf adults** generally have a head start in language acquisition, communication development and educational/social prowess.

- Literacy and language **are not the same** as speech. Early speech development does not guarantee language and literacy skills. Early visual access does boost these skills.
Evolution of Views on Language

- Language as a Problem
- Language as a Right
- Language as a **Resource for ALL** (Ruiz and Nover)

Accountability and limited time

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Early Intervention and “Choices”

- Re-conceptualizing our way of doing and thinking
- A choice is: an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities
- Soup or Salad Decisions ?!
THROUGH YOUR CHILD’S EYES: American Sign Language
A TRAVÉS DE LOSOJOS DE SU HIJO: con lenguaje estadounidense de señas

- Right of Deaf and hard of hearing babies to visual language

- This 13 minute video is presented in American Sign Language English & Spanish.

www.throughyourchildseyes.com
Support

- Research findings, e.g.
  Research brief from VL2
  Advantages of Early Visual Language
  http://vl2.gallaudet.edu/index.php

- Newly released research, publications and media, e.g.
  Through Your Child’s Eyes
  www.throughyourchildseyes.com

- Policies and legislation re Human Rights
- Policies and legislation re Diversity and Identity
- Heightened Educational Expectations and Accountability
CALIFORNIA STAKEHOLDERS FOR ASL AND ENGLISH (CAL-SAE) -- FORMERLY THE CALIFORNIA DEAF NEWBORN IDENTIFICATION AND ADVOCACY STAKEHOLDERS

- DEAF and ASL Users Community united, in collaboration with CAD, IMPACT, CALED and DBC Leaders
- Educators
- Advocates & Allies
- Families
- Professionals
- Community Service Centers and Providers
- And many others...

www.YestoASL.org/blog
CALIFORNIA STAKEHOLDERS FOR ASL AND ENGLISH: GOALS

* Protect ASL as a linguistic human right for all babies
* Ensure appropriate early intervention focusing on brain and language development
* Ensure Deaf and ASL User representation (Nothing about us without us!)
* Stop oppression and audism; improve education for all
* Work with legislators and agencies
What do we want? 
ASL & English for ALL!

- ASL and English -- a human right for all babies.
- Language professionals, not audiologists as the first contact.
- Involvement of Deaf professionals, families with Deaf signers, community centers and other professionals in Deaf education.
- Education, not Health Department, should be the lead agency -- being Deaf is an educational challenge, not a medical issue
- Accountability of the government is a must for successful programs for families and Deaf babies.
- Incorporate language benchmarks at 6 month intervals for assessments.
- Must involve Deaf representatives & ASL Users!!
Deaf-Friendly Early Intervention

- Child-centered focus & valuing Deafhood as part of diversity
- Positive professional advice on timely acquisition of natural language and multiple-literacies
- Early identification and educational intervention for whole families with use of both ASL and English
- Creating Deaf-friendly homes
- Teams of Deaf and hearing professionals and families
- Advocating best practices and outcomes
- Benchmarks and ongoing assessments
- High expectations

Legalize Sign language & quality lifelong education for all.

Implement high standards for teachers and education policies or guidelines; hold programs accountable for outcomes.

Provide resources to teach Sign language & Deaf Studies to Deaf adults, families, professionals, interpreters & service providers.

Support professional development programs for Deaf people to become teachers, researchers, professionals, & administrators.

Ensure full access to programs & media (signed & captioned), professional interpreters & other needed support services.

Support more research on strategies to teach & assess indigenous sign languages & fluency development.
What you can do to promote ASL/English access for all babies for educational success:

• Join your state or country association of the Deaf, WFD and Deaf Bilingual Coalition (DBC) to promote ASL for all and to reduce audism.
• Attend or request workshops. Encourage others to join in.
• Befriend families of young deaf toddlers/kids, share the beauty of ASL and reading literacy with them.
• Become a volunteer or train to become a language mentor in ASL/English with the Early Intervention/Early Start programs in your area.
• Work with your regional programs to employ Deaf people.
• Know your legislators and educate them about the importance of language acquisition from birth for all babies and families, high expectations and accountability.
The Human Rights of a Deaf Person
are inalienable and recognized
by the United Nations, UNESCO, WFD & ICED

- To be one’s self as a person
- Identity as a visual being
- Use of Sign Language
- Full access and quality education
- Bi/multilingualism and multiculturalism
- Community and diversity
- Citizenship and independence — empowerment and self-representation

These rights are born with
and belong to each person.

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References and Resources

National Association of the Deaf  http://www.nad.org
World Federation of the Deaf  http://www.wfdeaf.org
ASL & English for Babies  www.throughyourchildseyes.com
VL2 at Gallaudet University  http://vl2.gallaudet.edu/index.php
Deaf Bilingual Coalition  http://www.dbcusa.org/
Deaf Education and Families Project  www.csun.edu/deafproject/
American Society for Deaf Children  www.deafchildren.org/

Check NAD and WFD websites for updates, position papers and membership forms

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