

Abstract

Literacy in a Trilingual Context using SignWriting: the Paraguayan Experience

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In Paraguay, the Deaf tend to congregate in areas where there are Deaf schools, Deaf Associations, in major cities like Asunción (the capital city of Paraguay), and cities with potential jobs and services. However, there are deaf people living in the rural areas isolated from Deaf schools who do not have the opportunity to learn Paraguayan Sign Language (LSPy). Those deaf people use home signs or gestures, and are illiterate in LSPy, Spanish and Guaraní (the Guaraní language is one of the official languages of Paraguay and is an indigenous language to South America). Those deaf people will not be able to understand DVDs produced in LSPy. Another fact is that in rural areas, they do not have DVD players, or even access to electrical connections.

The proposal is that the Literacy Program using SignWriting (paper format) will improve literacy rates among (a) the rural and isolated Deaf, (b) the older generation of Deaf, (c) the semi-literate Deaf (d), and the well connected, urban Deaf.

The Paraguayan experience might be useful for those countries with high rates of Deaf illiteracy in sign languages.

The Literacy Program using SignWriting will help the Paraguayan Deaf Community to learn LSPy, improve their social life, and increase the literacy rates in LSPy, Spanish, and Guaraní.