

Signing to write: SignWriting in classroom

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SignWriting learning experience

- One experience – two perspectives:
 - Teacher
 - Students



Teacher perspective

- Begginer;
- Classes preparation;
- Balance between theory and practice;
- Materials;
- Difficulties;
- ...



Students perspective

- New subject;
- First contact with the writing system;
- Started learning sing language (SL) recently;
- ...



Students perspective - Inquiry

- Individual and anonymous;
- Students opinions;
- Students point of view;
- Benefits of the writing system;
- Students difficulties;
- Application of the writing system on their future profession;



Inquiry - Was it useful to learn SignWriting? Why?

- Helpful to the SL learning;
- Possibility to read and write SL;
- Consider the SL in the same level of other languages (Portuguese);
- Possibility of knowing and learning another SL;
- Way of helping SL production;



Inquiry - Was it useful to learn SignWriting? Why?

- Recognition of the language;
- Prove that SL is a real language and not a way of miming;
- Another tool besides video;
- An asset to Deaf people.



Inquiry - Was it useful to learn SignWriting? Why?

- “In my opinion it’s an asset to Sign Language learning, also to Sign Language reading and writing”;
- “It’s very useful because Sign Language isn’t just miming like a lot of people think and it’s important to show the Sign Language writing system”;
- “Yes, it’s a way of recognizing the language”;
- “Yes, because other languages have writing system and Sign Language should have it too”.



Inquiry - Were the class hours enough for a good learning?

- Important subject with few hours of learning;
- New language with a very complex writing system;
- Writing system with a lot of specificities;
- Need more hours to get more knowledge and a good consolidation of the system;
- Insufficient hours to clarify all the doubts.




Inquiry - Were the class hours enough for a good learning?

- “This subject need more hours so we can have more practice”;
- “We should have more hours because it was a lot of information and it wasn’t easy”;
- “It was much complex for just 2 hours for week”;
- “We should have more hours because it’s a new language”;
- “This is a very important subject and we need more hours to have a good and solid learning”.

Inquiry – At students, which are the advantages of the contact with the SW system?


- Excellent tool to Portuguese SL study;
- Allows writing new signs learned recently;
- Take simple and quick notes about signs;
- Possibility of register the signs and later remember it;
- Understand the Sign Language cherems;





Inquiry – At students, which are the advantages of the contact with the SW system?

- Correct production of the signs and also sentence structure;
- Be able to compare two languages (PSL and SL)
- Get to know International signs;
- Possibility to teach SW to students, in the future;
- Fullfillment.



Inquiry – At students, which are the advantages of the contact with the SW system?

- “I think that the writing is something very important for every language and SW allows Sign Language to have its writing”;
- “It’s like if I speak Portuguese and I don’t know how to write it! It’s very important to know how to write the signs that we produce and we can do that with SW”;
- “I can have a writing conversation with someone who also knows SW”.

Inquiry – Main difficulties while the learning of SignWriting?

- First approach;
- SW is a complex system;
- Hard to know how to start writing;
- Shape of the hands;
- Distinguishing between the plans;



Inquiry – Main difficulties while the learning of SignWriting?

- Understand the movements (hands, forearm, circular);
- Put all together: movements, shape of the hands, hands orientation and localization;
- Writing in columns.



Inquiry – Main difficulties while the learning of SignWriting?

- “There are a lot of hand shapes and at the beginning was a little scary”;
- “While we were progressing in the subject it becomes really hard to arrange the movements with the hand shape and orientation”;
- “My biggest difficulty was the first approach to writing because it was a new information and it seemed very hard”.



Inquiry – Real application of SignWriting in the future?

- Possibility of learning a new SL;
- Possibility of remembering signs which are written;
- Possibility of having a good knowledge about language and its grammar;
- Written communication with someone who also knows the system;



Inquiry – Real application of SignWriting in the future?

- Quick writing of new signs;
- Possibility of teaching SW in the future;
- Possibility for deaf people to write and read their native language;
- SW it may be a reality soon in Deaf education.



Inquiry – Real application of SignWriting in the future?

- “Unfortunately SW isn’t taught to deaf students but the more people learn it more likely SW may be a reality in deaf education”;
- “As any written system, SW helps the language consolidation and also its grammar”;
- “As a future teacher it’s crucial to learn SW so I can teach it to my students”;
- “It allows me to write the signs so I can remember them later”.



Inquiry – Comments/observations

- Surprised to know about SW;
- Teachers and interpreters should know the system;
- Very interesting and useful subject;
- Difficult subject;
- Need more learning hours or include the subject on the following years.

Inquiry – Comments/observations

- “This system should be taught to deaf children as soon as possible just like hearing children learn to write the system of their spoken language”;
- “I really enjoy the subject and I think it’s very important to students who are learning sign language”;
- “We should have more hours of this subject”
- “It was very unexpected for me because I have no idea that it existed”.



Conclusion

- SignWriting is a fundamental tool for those who are learning Sign Language;
- Practice makes it better – so it's important to continue the process and try to improve the skills;
- Crucial that future teachers and interpreters have the opportunity to learn how to write the PSL.



Final Thought

- SignWriting can only be a reality in Deaf education once there are teachers with knowledge and skills to teach this subject.



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**Thank you for
your attention**

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