

# School Inclusion and Communication: perceptions about learning (which always happens)

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the communicative dimension in the learning process of special education students in its relation to the curriculum in the context of dealing with non-literate people in higher grades. The study draws theoretically on the systemic thinking advocated primarily by Gregory Bateson (1985, 1986) and Francisco Varela, and has as its guiding question: how can the body be related to a communicative dimension that goes beyond reading and writing as a means of sharing knowledge? It is a qualitative study that uses the narrative technique in combination with a literature review to report episodes involving 11 public general education students from the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, analyzing them with the first-person method. The analysis shows that the acquisition of a language is considered a prerequisite for learning school content and that the structuring relationship between individual behaviors and interaction contexts tends to be neglected. The idea of 'word-picture' was explored as a didactic way to integrate different forms of communication into the literacy process in mainstream schools, in addition to emphasizing that bodily experiences and emotions are the basis of all learning.

**Keywords:** special education; school inclusion; learning; communication.

## 1 Introduction

The process of universalization of schooling in Brazil shows that it has progressed, because “[...] in 1950, only 36.2% of children aged 7 to 14 had access to school. By 1990, this rate had reached 88%” (Goldemberg, 1993, p. 68). From 2007 to the present, the percentage of school attendance has fluctuated on the verge of 100% (Brasil, 2023), mainly in elementary school. However, research has pointed out that populations once excluded from formal education still do not have access to the right to learn, as the desirable presence of all in school has challenged this institution: What can a school-based measure look like that is



not based on the selective logic that has until then promoted the segregation of differences? The debate has progressed, but it seems that the challenge lies in the curriculum.

This paper presents a study aimed at investigating the relationship between special education and the school curriculum. This study analyzed the interactive and communicative process involved in the learning of special education students (individuals with disabilities, global developmental disabilities and giftedness) in general education contexts.

The current debate on school inclusion has highlighted issues related to the curriculum as one of the major challenges of this policy. In the context of this work, the curriculum encompasses the conceptualization of school and learning, as well as the didactic practices and the different means that facilitate access to academic knowledge.

Our guiding premises for the debate on the central theme of this text can be seen in the recognition that school inclusion policies can favor the qualification of the learning processes of all students, not only those with disabilities, if we analyze the organization of the school and its curricular, communicative and interactive dynamics. In this sense, it is important to emphasize the communication processes, which mainly include written and oral expression, as a means of supposed validation of school learning, as well as a parameter for evaluating the cognitive potential of students.

In the context of this study, the focused contexts arise from episodes involving nine primary school students and two college students who experienced particular situations in their interaction with the school curriculum between 1997 and 2022. These accounts (narratives, plural form) are organized in a narrative form as a research method (narrative, singular form) and analyzed through the so-called “first-person methodology” (Sade, 2009), which consists of taking a look “at oneself” to allow the experience to produce transformations and new ways of seeing oneself and the world.

The central point of the discussion relates to the invisibility of the learning of illiterate people participating in classes at the most advanced levels of schooling. Since communication at these levels is predominantly through written language, it may “appear” to the teacher that the student is not learn what is being covered in class because they cannot express themselves in writing as the teacher expects. This leads to a simplified, reductionist and infantilized parallel curriculum that contributes to the subject remaining in a state of alienation from what is being shared in the classroom.

It is based on the systemic assumption that a living being is constantly learning, because learn means maintaining the coupling with the environment in order to ensure the internal coherence of the organism and to stay alive (Maturana; Varela, 2001, p. 192). This phenomenon occurs constantly, because coupling and change are essential for the maintenance of life, even if the being’s performance does not always appear coherent or meaningful in the judgment of an external observer, such as a teacher.

The stories that make up this narrative research are analyzed in the light of systemic thinking, mainly represented by Gregory Bateson (1985, 1986) and Francisco Varela. This theoretical framework offers the analytic process the premise that people's bodily performances tell the story of their learning, just as the spirals of a snail's body tell the story of its growth (Bateson, 1986, p. 20).

The choice of narrative methodology is influenced by the story of Pedro (fictitious name), a student at a public community school in São Borja, Rio Grande do Sul, who was in the fifth grade of elementary school in 2017. He had a diagnosis of intellectual disability, did not know how to read and write and was a chess champion in the Open School Project (Brasil, 2010), in addition to being part of the football team that represented the school in external competitions. His story seemed to contain a paradox, because in our culture the ability to play chess is often associated with good intellectual development. So how is it possible for someone to be diagnosed with an intellectual disability and at the same time excel in an activity like chess?

In view of Pedro's paradox, the interest in analyzing episodes from everyday working life arose in the search for "information of difference" (Bateson, 1986, p. 35), which may go unnoticed.

The argument in this book assumes that science is a mode of perception and gives "meaning" to our perceptual objects. Perception, however, only works on the basis of differences. Any reception of information is necessarily the reception of difference information, and any perception of difference is limited by the input. Differences that are too small or presented too slowly are not perceived. They are not food for perception (Bateson, 1986, p. 35).

From the methodological perspective of the first-person perspective, the exercise of "letting come" consists in suspending the meanings built on experience itself. This practice, combined with the immersion in references of systemic thinking and enactive theory (embodied cognition) and the dialog with scientific productions dealing with related reflections, allowed the emergence of many previously unthought perceptions.

The study was guided by the following questions: How can the body be associated with a communicative dimension that goes beyond reading and writing as a means of exchanging knowledge? How do interactions between subjects who cannot read and write occur in an environment in which writing plays a central role in communication between social actors? How does the process of the emergence of a subject take place in a linguistic context? How do shared experiences occur between subjects who communicate in a way that is labeled "other"? How can we conceptualize communication to create a pedagogical process that enables a shared experience for all people?

## 2 Theoretical-methodological framework

Since it works “[...] with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes” (Minayo, 2009, p. 21), the investigation from which this text is drawn is referred to as “qualitative”. The narrative is used as a method and as a research technique and the first-person methodology as a means of analysis.

The narrative can be linked to a procedural aspect of research when you use stories to get in touch with experience. And it can be fused with method when the scientific paradigm underpinning the inquiry is consistent with the idea that the researcher is narrating themselves, rewriting themselves, re-elaborating themselves, in a process of constructing themselves as a predicament in the shared context of meaning that constitutes a worldview and science. This research is inscribed (or attempts to do so) in this double narrative perspective.

The narrative as a scientific practice places the subject at the center of the process, so that its becoming is simultaneously action and interpretation in/from the world. It produces a linguistic act that is not detached from the events in which it participates. Science becomes the synthesis of experiment with experience. A process in which the creation of works of art also becomes the creation of itself (Silva; Baptista, 2014, p. 34).

The theoretical-methodological perspective of this research is illustrated by the story of Alice (fictitious name), which is told under the influence of a way of thinking and communicating called the ego person methodology (Sade, 2009), which corresponds to the concept of “embodied reflection” (Varela; Thompson; Rosch, 2003).

By embodied we mean the reflection in which body and spirit are united. This formulation is intended to express that reflection is not only about experience, but that it is itself a form of experience – and the reflexive form of experience can be carried out with attention/consciousness. When reflection is done in this way, it can break the chain of habitual thought patterns and preconceptions to be an open reflection – open to possibilities that are different from those contained in the usual conceptions a person has of the living space (Varela; Thompson; Rosch, 2003, p. 43).

According to this method, by suspending immediate judgment in the interaction process, new meanings can arise that break down tautologies and create new patterns of relating, as the episode with Alice, a young woman attending college who has identified as a person with autism since she received this diagnosis in childhood, shows. Alice recounts experiences from her personal and academic life that she views as very negative

and which she associates with social incomprehension in the face of her behavior as an “autistic woman”.

In the everyday life of the institution where our meeting took place, one can perceive a state of constant mistrust and Alice's attitude of self-defense in the face of a supposedly foreign judgment. It is often the case that she values other people's silence and delayed reaction in the worst possible way, as if she were inferring negative judgments about herself from other people's behavior.

The event involving Professor Raul (fictitious name) is an example of this. This teacher received a message from Alice which can be described as “harsh” in light of an episode involving grades and attendance records. Alice associated the teacher's silence with discrimination due to her condition as a “poor” and disabled woman and stopped attending class. Professor Raul, in turn, responded to Alice with the following words:

Good afternoon, Alice.

It took me a while to reply to your message as I was on a business trip and had no internet access.

As for grades, I haven't registered all of them yet, so there is no record of your grades, but your work has been registered. And as for attendance, please let me know if you have a problem that you can justify your absence for valid reasons, such as the migraine attack you had a few days ago.

I apologize if my late reply made you nervous. It was not intentional, as I care about the well-being of my students. I am sorry if you felt that way.

I hope you will recover and be back for the next course.

Yours sincerely,

Raul

Faced with Alice's refusal to return to Prof. Raul's class, the educational support team had a conversation with her that showed that her initial assumption about the teacher's reaction did not seem to be confirmed. When asked how she had come to these conclusions, Alice admitted that she had assumed it all based on previous experience. It seems that this outcome was possible because the communicative pattern Alice had established in her previous relationships did not find reciprocity in the way the teacher responded to her. The cycle is broken. Alice has not found what she would normally have found in her life. So in the first-person perspective, we are not trying to define how Alice thinks, but how the environment reacts to and reinforces Alice's communication patterns.

But it is about the possibility of not immediately crushing reality with a thought and its already available language, in order to establish a zone of provisional relative silence and to make the necessary effort to relate to lived reality in a new way. There is a dimension of fertile emptiness that experientially escapes the parameters of

a world or a language in order to penetrate to an ontological level open to a more radical form and that can only appear in the chiaroscuro mode, in the mode of a contrast that emerges precisely through the suspension of letting go (Depraz; Varela; Vermersch, 2006, p. 83).

The story of Alice has been evoked to emphasize the mindset that permeates this research and is reflected in the researcher's relationship to everyday life and performance, which informs new experiences which in turn inform the narrative. Just as everyday experience is influenced by the methodology of first-person narrative, the experience also resigns itself to resurrecting personal memory in search of narratives, proving the absence of an objective reality which is external to the subject who experiences it, or at least "brackets it", as Maturana and Varela (2001) refer.

From the perspective of "letting come", the stories told in this text are drawn from the daily life of the first author, who simultaneously worked in educational institutions of the public network for basic and higher education. Varela, Thompson and Rosch (2003, p. 39) point out that "attention means that the mind is present in the embodied experience of each day [...]".

The first two stories were written in the context of the discussion about bill no. 4.909/2020, which provides for bilingual education for the deaf in Brazil. Then the stories of Rafael and Gustavo (fictitious names) come to mind. They are two deaf students whose school careers were characterized by what the teachers called "communication problems".

The decision to look at the structure of meaning in literacy learning from the listener's perspective was influenced by studies on "embodied reflection", which entail the principle that it is not possible to "translate" the sensorimotor experience of another being (Sade, 2009, p. 48). With this in mind, we wondered how we could contribute to this discussion from the experience of a listening learner.

The other stories "came" as a derivation of the considerations made in relation to the first stories. There are 11 episodes in total. Nine of them were experienced directly by the first author, as a teacher and pedagogical coordinator in basic education or as an educator in higher education. And there are two stories that emerged from the accounts of other people.

The period covered by the reports extends from 1997 to 2022, a period that corresponds to historical moments characterized by important changes in the field of Brazilian education, especially in the field of special education, with the construction of international pacts such as the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990), the Salamanca Declaration (Brasil, 1994), the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Brasil, 2001), the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Brasil, 2009), which have influenced the design of public policies such as the National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (Brasil, 2008).

The research also established a dialog with productions that share the concern of this study, based on a search focused on the Dissertations Digital Library Portal (BDTD), the Google Academic platform, the journal base Redalyc and the journal Espaço Magazine, associated with the National Institute of Education for the Deaf (INES), considering the period from 2000 to 2022 as a time frame. Ten doctoral theses, 11 master's theses and 38 scientific papers were selected.

The dialog with the selected productions was developed from three axes:

The first axis discusses the meanings attributed to the production of language and languages, taking into account different areas of sensorimotor experience. The analytical work focuses on the shared experience of hearing, blind and deaf people.

Based on references about the production of language in the enactive perspective (Bottineau, 2008), a dialog has been included with productions that explore contexts such as that of learning Portuguese written by deaf people. Such studies reveal the theoretical context that may have influenced the drafting of Law No. 10,436 of April 24, 2002 (Brasil, 2002), the so-called "Libras Law", and Decree No. 5,626 of December 22, 2005 (Brasil, 2005), which regulates this law. This influence arises from the presence of the expression "language of instruction" to define the function of the Libras and the spoken Portuguese language in relation to the learning of the Portuguese written language and school content – a view held by many of the academic works dealing with the learning of the Portuguese written language by people with deafness, including Pires (2014), Martins (2015), Oliveira (2015), Felipe (2018), Abreu (2020). From the perspective examined in these studies, a language would have to be learned first, and through it "teaching" could take place in relation to school content. This study attempts to "suspend" the seemingly "natural" course of the process described by the theoretical frameworks mentioned above. It brings together elements to problematize this linear order that gives languages the status of a transmission tool.

The second axis deals with the emotions as a central element of the affectional process which gives meaning to the shared experience and through it acquires meaning in a circular process of mutual specification. The view that the mastery of a language must be preceded by the learn of school content seems to coincide with the theoretical line of the cognitive sciences, which assigns to the brain exclusively the function of "representing" the external world in ideas and fulfilling a symbolic and abstract function that would be intrinsic to it. We attempt to problematize this widely held view by engaging with authors such as Maturana (2004), Maturana and Varela (2001), Parejo (2008), Colombetti (2010) and Odendahl (2021), who relate the emergence of thought to the experience of the body interrupted by emotions, which emerges as self-consciousness in social interaction. Language would be the assignment of meanings to bodily actions that a social group has agreed upon in order to coordinate its actions for the purpose of maintaining the group. Languages and idioms

would be creations of men and women as they interact with each other and with nature in the face of the imperative of survival of the species. This is what Maturana (2004) calls “love”, the need to cooperate that enables the preservation of living species. In this sense, nature and culture act in a complementary way.

The third axis deals with the curricular means of managing school times and spaces and their relationship to the production and reproduction of contexts of meaning. Studies that analyze the school curriculum, such as Gomes (2006), Parejo (2008), Haas (2016), Miranda (2016), show how curricular devices such as time management, the place occupied by art, methodological inventions, differentiated discourses based on physical differences, create contexts of meaning that in turn perpetuate certain effects that are considered “natural” and result from genetic differences, without considering the possibility that genetics are produced under the influence of experience over many generations.

Thus, different social meanings are attributed to physical differences, which are used as criteria for the classification and hierarchy of different human segments. Such criteria justify investments in different forms of interaction, which in turn produce different forms of action of bodies in a circular movement of mutual specification – as happens with female and male bodies.

In the way in which the narratives that make up this text were produced and analyzed, these two processes – production and analysis – take place simultaneously. Through a reflection attentive to everyday experience, the identification of experiences that provide elements to problematize the research questions is linked to a way of thinking that in a way produces them, in a circular effect.

In asking how the process of subject emergence occurs in a linguistic context, the pattern that connects people to different conditions of sensorimotor perception, and how meanings and understandings about life are produced, using the theoretical lens of systemic thinking – most notably advocated by Gregory Bateson (1985, 1986) and Francisco Varela – a number of narratives emerge with regard to what has been defined as the (im)possibilities of subject learning in some contexts.

### **3 Communication beyond writing**

Under the influence of the discussions on bilingual education for the deaf (Brasil, 2021), which have attracted the attention of the education sector in Brazil, especially in the field of special education, the first two stories about deaf students are told: Rafael and Gustavo (fictitious names). These are events that took place at different historical-political moments with regard to Brazilian special education policy: the episode concerning Rafael takes place in 1997 and the one concerning Gustavo in 2006.

Although the perspective of inclusive education had been developed in several countries since the 1980s, special schools and classes still existed in contexts such as the one in which Rafael was placed. Although Rafael was “promoted” from the special class to the normal school at the age of 14 at the insistence of the principal, who saw great potential in him, he stayed in the so-called second grade for two years and was admitted to the third grade without being able to read and write, but failed again and left school when he turned 18. Although he was aware of everything that was going on at school, as he acted as an assistant to the principal and worked part-time in a city store providing banking services for the owner while he remained at school, his descriptive opinion remained unchanged: “You didn’t reach the goals because you have communication problems”.

Almost ten years later, in 2006, another deaf boy, whom we call Gustavo (fictitious name), entered the first year of elementary school in another school of the same municipal education system. He was admitted by the teacher Isabel (fictitious name), who had already participated in training in the Inclusive Education Program – Right to Diversity (Brasil, 2004), also with regard to Brazilian Sign Language – Libras. Professor Isabel decided in 2006 to prioritize the learning of Libras in the whole class in which Gustavo participated, and in 2007 she linked the literacy activities to Libras. By the end of that year, she felt that Gustavo could read and write at the level of most of the students in the class. However, the second grade teacher questioned Gustavo’s reading and writing abilities, and from then on he was automatically admitted to fourth grade in elementary school without significant interaction with the classroom experiences. At this stage, there was a teacher who knew Libras and whom the school team hoped would finally be able to communicate with Gustavo to facilitate the learning of the Portuguese written language and the school content covered in the common lessons. However, Gustavo refused to use Libras and reverted to the homemade signs learned by the teachers to a certain extent for basic everyday communication, but without Gustavo being able to participate to any significant extent in the co-curricular activities. Thus, Gustavo’s school attendance was limited to the support room, and he was automatically admitted until he completed elementary school.

In the case of both Rafael and Gustavo, it is clear that the school waited for them to master the written Portuguese language before investing in their effective participation in the common curriculum. As expected, since both never learned the Portuguese language in its written form, they were never included in co-curricular activities to give meaning to the use of a language in the shared experience. Such a pedagogical practice reveals the relationship between “time” and learning in the school culture, where time seems to be believed to be something separate from activity and experience.

Haas (2016) reflects on “time” as a curriculum tool in a doctoral thesis. It is the way in which the school culture stops investing in what the person offers ‘here and now’ and waits

for the ideal moment. When they become adults, it is no longer believed that they can “gain back” everything they lost during their school years. Without focusing on the potential of the experience as a learning exercise, they go from “it’s not time yet” to “it’s time” without taking advantage of the precious time “now”.

The French linguist Didier Bottineau (2008) states that a language cannot be taught because it is “enacted”, i.e. it is produced in the interaction process by combinations of interactants who assign meanings to sounds and body movements with regard to a coordinated action. Language in its written form would be the result of a memorized association between sound and letter. It is a convention that has nothing natural about it: It is agreed that the sign “b” represents the sound produced by the vocal cords when the upper lip touches the lower lip (bilabial articulation); in Libras it is represented by the thumb folded in front of the other four outstretched fingers. The graphic signal with which it is represented has nothing to do with the phoneme or the hand sign “b”, and the name “ball” has nothing to do with the “ball” either. But in order for us to share the same idea (meaning) about a signifier (a real thing), it is necessary to combine forms, positions and orders that acquire an arbitrary character, that is, they can only be changed by a prior combination of the participants. What therefore guarantees communication is the combination of interaction partners, which can be constantly renegotiated according to the needs and contingencies of the relationship.

Odendahl (2021, p. 488) emphasizes that

[...] physical experiences make sense. [...] The key to the emergence and understanding of meaning – following the premises of embodied cognition – lies in looking nowhere else but in the body; or more precisely, in bodily experience.

According to this author, the combinations involved in communication are bodily experiences, and the meaning attributed to the signal arises from the association with bodily experiences. If we think in this way, we problematize the idea promoted in some theoretical productions such as Martins (2015), Oliveira (2015), Felipe (2018) that Libras can be a “language of instruction”. This idea may have influenced the elaboration of the so-called “Libras Law” (Brasil, 2002), which also contains this expression. To challenge this idea, it is assumed that there is no natural relationship between the spoken Portuguese language and the written Portuguese language, as an element that would support a possible differential facilitation of listeners in learning the written language. It can be said that there is, in fact, a history of didactic and methodological constructions dedicated to the promotion of the memoristic association between letters and sounds. The questionable aspect of the formulation regarding a supposedly instructive character of language is based on the perspective of

non-priority between any language and the living learning that characterizes living beings from a systemic point of view.

Understanding a text on a particular topic is preceded by understanding the topic itself, and a keen interest in tangible objects promotes the understanding of such texts more than any program of reading strategy. It is assumed that the so-called “poor readers” and “educationally disadvantaged” pupils not only come from “educationally disadvantaged backgrounds”, but above all from backgrounds with few incentives in terms of the opportunities for body-related experiences with a multi-faceted environment. This is where it is particularly important to start in the classroom. Teaching text comprehension always means first and foremost: creating access to an understanding of the world (Odendahl, 2021, p. 492).

In this perspective, the production of a language is linked to the participation in a world by a group of interactants who participate in the negotiation of shared meanings and attribute meaning to this experience. The process of attributing meaning is in turn influenced by affects.

In analogy to blind people who associate each color with a texture or each subdivision of the wallet with a “place value” to identify banknotes, this study merges some learning experiences of people with different conditions of perceptual-motor performance into a shared context. The “pattern that connects” (Bateson, 1986) is sought for deaf and hearing people, blind and deaf people, blind and sighted people, and all of them with each other.

In the continuity of the research, then, we seek a relationship between the experiences of the deaf students Rafael and Gustavo and the visually impaired student we call Jorge. In this way, we learn how a person who does not have the sense of sight knows the world and relates to it in everyday life at the college.

After looking at the learning process of hearing, deaf and blind people with the help of Bateson (1986) and searching for “first order” connections, we will now look for “second and third order” connections:

1. The parts of each member of a living being must be compared with other parts of the same individual in order to establish first-order connections.
2. Crabs must be compared to lobsters or humans to horses to find similar relationships between the parts (i.e. to establish second-order connections).
3. The comparison between crabs and lobsters must be compared with the comparison between humans and horses in order to establish third-order connections (Bateson, 1986, p. 19).

It is assumed that the pattern that connects blind and sighted, deaf and hearing, deaf and blind, when we refer to learning, are mental images constructed through physical performance. Irrespective of the senses involved in the coupling of the living being with its

environment, they all have in common the formation of mental images from different sensorimotor and emotional experiences.

Accounts from blind people about their shared experience with sighted people in relation to color provide a context for understanding this phenomenon. A similar dynamic is evident, for example, in the story of a blind person whose favorite game was sewing clothes for her dolls from the scraps of her father's tailor shop. The colors identified by association with textures were combined with the participation of sighted partners.

The film "Vermelho como o Céu" (Red as the Sky) (2007) tells the story of Mirco Mencacci, a well-known sound editor in Italian cinema, who was blinded by a gun accident at the age of 10. As people with disabilities could not study in normal schools in 1970s Italy, Mirco had to leave the city where he lived with his family to study at a boarding school for blind boys in Genoa. In the new environment, he was confronted with many forms of violence shown by some of the older students towards the younger ones, but also with the school management's disbelief in the students' potential. Mirco broke the rules regarding the prohibition of relationships with people outside the school and befriended Francesca, a sighted girl who lived near the school and with whom he had great adventures, such as bike rides around the city and trips to the movies. The partnership with Francesca enabled him to have experiences that were denied to him in the seclusion of life among "equals". In the continuity of this partnership, and with the support of a teacher (Giulio), Mirco's disobedience provided other blind peers with experiences of art through the creation of an audio narrative system that engaged everyone and gave new meaning to their lives. Both Mirco's story and the making and combining of the clothes for the puppets show that the greatest richness of the learning process lies in the complementarity that is revealed in the encounter between people who have had different experiences of their human condition.

When it comes to the relationship between hearing and deaf people learning Portuguese together, it is assumed that a hearing person cannot speak for a deaf person because it is impossible to translate the sensorimotor perception of another being (Sade, 2009, p. 48). Thus, from the perspective of the hearing person, an argument is problematized that appears again and again in most academic works dealing with the learning of Portuguese by deaf people: the belief in a supposedly natural relationship between spoken and written Portuguese.

Favoreto da Silva (2020), in a doctoral thesis that examined the experiences of deaf children with writing in the literacy process in a special school for the deaf, came to the conclusion that there is no difference between the process of "acquiring" the Portuguese written language by deaf and hearing students. It was found that in the process of learning the Portuguese written language by deaf people, as in the process of literacy and literacy of hearing people, the use of pictographic writing, letters of their name and the alphabet with different combinations of random criteria is present (Favoreto da Silva, 2020, p. 335). This author

warns of what she calls the “turning point”: in her opinion, the moment when the process of learning written language requires an association between letter and phoneme – what in the studies of Emília Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky (1984) is called the “alphabetic level”.

In the perspective advocated here, the letter/phoneme association that hearing learners make would be induced and would not be related to a “natural threshold” associated with the degree of organic maturation, but would depend on the experience of reading and writing through the association of letters with sounds. By abolishing a supposedly “natural” link between text and sound, the “turning point” referred to by Favoreto da Silva (2020) seems to depend on new didactic inventions aimed at creating an educational context for reading and writing in which the reading and writing experience is shared by hearing and deaf people.

Certainly, this is about articulation between Libras and Portuguese teachers and opening up to a process that may involve ‘translanguaging’, as Sousa (2021) suggests, following Yip and García (2018): “Translanguages refer to the internal perspectives of what speakers do with the language that simply belongs to them” (Yip; García, 2018, p. 169). These authors suggest that teachers should accept students’ “[...] full linguistic repertoire as an additional resource for learning rather than a problem to be solved” (Yip; García, 2018, p. 170).

When thinking about the “turning point” that Favoreto da Silva (2020) speaks of, it can be seen as a crossroads: Deaf and hearing people walk together in the first writing hypotheses corresponding to the level called “presyllabic” by the psychogenesis of written language (Ferreiro; Teberoski, 1984), but didactics, historically invented for and by hearing people, always tries to make the learner of written language combine letter by letter, using sound association. But even when this association is present, the words already memorized begin to be identified by the listener as an image that differs from the other “image-words” by the order of the letters.

How to build a didactic that has an equivalent in the possibility of memoristic association for people with non-oralized deafness to share the experience of literacy with listeners? Do you associate each Libras sign with a “word picture”? Or each grapheme with the Libras hand articulations? It is well known that the SignWriting system for writing in Libras already exists. But how can this system be integrated into the literacy didactics of normal teaching? It seems that the “word” picture” is a “pattern” that connects” listeners and deaf people who use Libras. This is a challenge for didactic invention.

#### **4 The intertwining of “languaging” and emoting**

One can guess, even if only rudimentarily, that making a picture accessible to a blind child or translating a term for a deaf or foreign person represents a level of the communication process. Provided that these people participate with their differences and know the

combination that enables the collective construction of the idea about this image, a more comprehensive level would be configured that includes the previous one through inclusion.

But mental images are anchored in memory and evoked by the association between the experience the body makes and the emotions it evokes. These are essentially linked to two original meanings: that which causes pain and that which produces pleasure (Odendahl, 2021).

The moment of research that illuminates the “feeling” concerns the series of stories whose protagonists are Léo, Sofia, Miguel, Augusto and Vítor (fictitious names). These narratives provide communicative contexts to analyze the performance of interactants who are influenced by emotions. In this way, the view that considers rational thinking as the only basis of understanding will be disregarded.

Both Léo and Vítor find themselves in communicative situations in which they do not understand what is expected of them. Léo is a child in his fourth year of elementary school and is unable to carry out the suggested activities. The teacher keeps ordering him to do them and repeat them. So Léo throws the school materials at the teacher. Vítor is a child with an autism diagnosis who tends to pay attention to the meaning of words; he is enrolled in a fifth grade elementary school and asks the teacher to tie his shoelaces; she sets as a condition for the fulfillment of his request that he say the “magic words” (an expression commonly used to refer to a series of other expressions such as “please”, “thank you”, “excuse me”), an utterance whose meaning he is not aware of. Victor begins to struggle desperately. In both cases, the school establishment sought the support of external actors such as the family and special educators and requested measures to control the children’s reactions. This shows that these reactions were not associated by the school team with their context of origin, i.e. the insistence of an interlocutor who demands something from them that they do not know what it is about at that moment.

Reactions such as those of Léo and Vítor, interpreted according to the biomedical model of disability, usually justify referral to a clinical examination carried out by professionals who subscribe to the same model of thinking and tend to confirm the prognosis. The confirmation of a disability, understood as an organic precondition of the subject related to the functioning of his “brain”, is often used to justify educational measures that exclude the subject from the shared social/school experience. It is a tautology through which the production of a condition that seemingly escapes social interference is maintained, even though it is produced by it.

The stories of Sofia, Augusto and Miguel show the importance of engaging with the student’s utterances, however absurd they may seem, and engaging in a communicative act with them so that a trusting relationship can develop between those who share the learning experience. Sofia and Augusto learned to read and write in the sixth grade of elementary

school, in 2014 and 2020 respectively. Sofia has a physical disability due to cerebral palsy and Augusto has been diagnosed with an intellectual disability. Sofia's ESA (Specialized Educational Service) teacher felt challenged to invest in her literacy through a training event that demonstrated the progress that is made invisible by the measuring devices commonly used in school. Augusto surprised his ESA teacher by learning to read and write by working with family members to carry out the activities sent to him during social isolation due to the COVID 19 pandemic (2020-2021). Similarly, Miguel, who attended a third grade at a school in Santa Catarina, learned to read and write within six months during the pandemic. This was done in dialog with a teacher who visited his family and appreciated his stories and drawings and from these productions built a relationship of trust that enabled Miguel to learn to read and write.

Maturana (2004) explains that emotions drive the learning process and are related to the trust that develops between beings who cooperate and converse in the coordination of actions and emotions:

Emotions are central to the evolution of all living beings, because they determine the course of their activities: where they stay, where they go, where they look for food, where they reproduce, where they raise their young, where they lay their eggs, and so on. Well, the same thing happens to humans. The thrill, the flow of emotions, determines the place where the things they do in life will take place. So if a person moves, for example, from frustration, this continually determines the relational space they are in and the course they have to live. If you live out of trust, you will take a different path. So what guides the flow of individual life are emotions and also the evolutionary constitution. It is the "emotionalization" that is preserved in the learning of children from one generation to another (Maturana, 2004, p. 3).

The experiences described in this study provide evidence to question the feasibility of promoting the teaching of a language as if it were a prerequisite for shared experiences. It is assumed that language is part of the construction of something common that gives meaning and generates the need to establish communication in order to coordinate action.

The idea of "pedagogical theatricality", advocated by the Italian teachers Laura Bertocchi and Mario Maviglia (Teatralità [...], 2022), based on the principle of the theatricality of social life developed by Erving Goffman, is associated in this research with the premise of the pedagogical context as a facilitator of shared experiences between subjects who communicate in a way identified as "different" and has at its core the story of Carolina (fictitious name), a deaf student enrolled in a first grade class at elementary school. Carolina participates in the Escola da Floresta project, inspired by the proposal of the Escola da Ponte, conceived by the Portuguese educator and thinker José Pacheco and developed in Caçapava do Sul/RS.

The aim is to create a network of people who are willing to share their knowledge and skills with the community. A school without walls, where people learn from each other, from their personal needs and interests through a tutoring system. Tutoring begins from each child's subjective curriculum, with the question: what do you want to learn? To then stimulate the development of research, investigation and evidence of learning, always with the aim of awakening the autonomy of the learning subject (Moraes, 2020, p. 1).

Carolina is taken by her class for her precious knowledge: another language! Everyone approaches her to learn the Brazilian Sign Language – Libras. It seems that the kind of relationship Carolina builds with her class is made possible by the way the educational context is organized. If each child sat in their own place and Carolina was accompanied by her translator/interpreter, the chances for this interaction would be significantly lower.

In this sense, the idea contained in the concept of “active pedagogy” remains valid. Miranda (2016), in a doctoral study, seeks to understand whether the active methodology favors communicative skills in children with the aim of collaborative problem solving (CPR). The systemic perspective is used as a theoretical reference and CPR as a didactic situation. It is concluded that the teacher is not only “a mediator of formal and informal knowledge”, but supports the students’ metacommunication. A new relational and communicative paradigm for education based on “[...] being, acting, communicating and learning in the present time – in a collaborative, reflective and responsible way” (Miranda, 2016, p. 219). The author relates learning to experience and recursion; she emphasizes co-evolution, consensus and multiple interactions. She argues that the ability to mobilize and interact with knowledge is significantly influenced by the abilities to interact with others and the environment (relational dimension), which is considered an “[...] intra- and interpersonal ability that is constituted in the course of interaction rather than individually” (Miranda, 2016, p. 221). Co-evolution means active participation in the “[...] constitution of the meanings of each other and of the environment itself [...]” (Miranda, 2016, p. 223, our translation).

The point is to think of ‘listening’, as Haas (2016, p. 43) suggests, in the face of Pietro’s teacher’s imperative: ‘Sum up, Pietro’. Haas (2016) points to the teacher’s role in organizing strategies to help the learning subject to organize his narrative, to take care to communicate to the other, to be part of a combination that makes communication possible. Pietro cannot be expected to communicate what he is doing in excessive detail in a more synthetic way if he does not even know the meaning of “summarize”. For Pietro to understand the meaning of the word, it is perhaps necessary for him to experience new ways of storytelling that consider this principle of synthesis in action. The question is whether the pedagogical theatricalization he experiences is an invitation to do so.

In light of the above, it is clear that Leo's behavior in this narrative is an unconscious way of expressing his despair at the difficulty of playing in the "orchestra". The orchestra is a metaphor used by Yves Winkin (1998) to refer to the agreed aspect of communication.

A communication that is no longer and only seen as an individual act, but as a cultural fact, as an institution and as a social system. A communication that is no longer and only seen as relational telegraphy, but as a ritual enactment, extremely sensitive and sensual (Winkin, 1998, p. 10). [...] The social actor participates not only with words, but also with gestures, looks and silence (Winkin, 1998, p. 15).

So if the principle is that all people should participate in the shared learning experience, and this is not happening as imagined, one may need to question the beliefs that give meaning to the practices. By reframing beliefs, it is possible to return to the practices and reframe them. But this is not an easy process, it would be thwarted by what we usually interpret as 'failure' (Praise [...], 2018). When things do not meet expectations, a 'meta-level' may emerge. For Bateson (1986), the meta-level is a broader level of thinking that integrates dichotomies. In this way, an ongoing evolutionary perspective would emerge for all participants, which we believe is consistent with the "ethics of pedagogical communication" defended by Meirieu (2002, p. 79), according to which we accept the invitation to constantly change in order to build ourselves and the world in constant co-evolution.

The "agreement" at issue in this study would not only be one that comes about through a grammar that is read by all and adopted as an external rule, but it is the agreement that arises from common experience. Words take on a different meaning for each person, depending on their personal experience, the uniqueness of which is influenced by society. At the same time, these "words of meaning" reach their limits in the face of the encounter with the experience of the Other in coexistence; the being is caught in a paradox and must constantly redefine them. This "other" of coexistence can be a person with whom one shares life, but it can also be a book or an episode that triggers the need to revise oneself. There are usually several of these interlocutors who act in complementary ways. In the context of this work, this is learning. The provisional product that emerges is what we call knowledge. In this sense, it can be said that "we are the information" (Simondón, 2020) and the "context is a meta-message", as Gregory Bateson (1985, 1986) suggests.

## 5 Final Considerations

By analyzing the communicative contexts in which the other 10 students (Rafael, Gustavo, Alice, Jorge, Sofia, Augusto, Miguel, Carolina, Léo and Vítor) are involved, it is possible to resume Pedro's story and the initial question of the investigation: How can the

body be associated with a communicative dimension that goes beyond reading and writing as a means of exchanging knowledge?

In dialog with Gregory Bateson and Francisco Varela, one can argue that Pedro's good performance in chess points to the possibility we all have of transferring the skills of one activity in which we have great skill to another that involves the same skill. You can think of chess as a field game brought down to a reduced level – Ashton transports his body from the football field to the board. On the board, as in field and court football, he must anticipate the other player's trajectory in order to intercept him and defend his own trajectory to end the game.

From the perspective of this work, the supposed deficit that is eventually observed in certain areas, as well as the high abilities in other areas, would be associated with the specialization of a skill through the repetition of something that is meaningful to the person, as they find interlocutors in the relationships in which they are involved. This would form a kind of field of action that includes contexts of meaning into which one's physical skills can be transported – a perspective of “context of contexts” that corresponds to level II of the Theory of Logical Types, as proposed by Bateson (1985, p. 212). In this relationship, the individual organism emerges as a figure in relation to a background, which would be the school curriculum.

Something similar seems to be assumed for the blind person who, when writing Braille, transfers himself into the Braille cell through the mental image of his body acting in the living space. This also seems to be the case when this person listens to a text in their screen reader, evoking images and emotions of these experiences. In this perspective, both chess and writing cease to be symbolic intellectual activities of the brain and are seen as sensorimotor performances that are transformed into mental images. Such mental images would be generated by the body as a whole and shaped by emotions, as they are part of an experience shared with others, which in turn influence the actions of the body in other contexts.

Another problem that emerged from the research is the fact that when looking for learning subjects who met the initial criteria of the research, namely the presence of paradoxes in their school learning history, it was mainly stories of males that emerged. Although there were girls who were in a similar situation at the same time and in the same place, there was not much information about them: they did not stand out in sports, they did not show protagonism outside the classroom and in general they were great copyists. In the search for studies that deal with this phenomenon, there are studies such as those by Gomes (2006), Garbarino (2021) and Santos, França and Batista (2022).

According to Gomes (2006) and Garbarino (2021), girls were raised from an early age not to take risks. Female bodies have long been kept under control and therefore seem more in line with the behavior that school expects and values.

Probably because he was a boy, Pedro had many opportunities to learn how to play soccer from an early age, which allowed him to become highly specialized in this skill. As Garbarino (2021) notes,

The environment reinforces, for example, the unequal development of spatial abilities, which on a genetic level is a slightly differentiated ability in favor of males, but which is greatly exacerbated by the range of toys and games “for boys and girls” (Garbarino, 2021, p. 6).

In view of the above, we will try to give an – albeit provisional – answer to the question: How can the body be associated with a communicative dimension that goes beyond reading and writing as a means of exchanging knowledge? The body communicates not only through speech and tongues, nor through facial and bodily expressions as additional elements of a language. Rather, through its performance, the body tells the story of the construction of itself, its social group and its species.

By using the first-person methodology to reflect on the pedagogical process, an attitude of vigilance of attention itself is proposed. This study is an invitation to turn our attention away as much as possible from the aspects we are conditioned to observe and perceive, and from the outcomes we are used to expecting from students and processes. It is an attempt to recognize how much is made invisible by the automatisms of long accumulated experience.

In the preliminary synthesis of the analysis carried out in this study, the common experience is emphasized as a founding concept that brings to light what it has to offer at the moment in which it takes place, neither before nor after. In this sense, the question formulated by the school – how to make the curriculum accessible to the student? – seems to extend its spectrum to include another fundamental question: “How can we coordinate our actions in order to live and learn together at school?”. For according to what is thought to be possible, and for which scientific arguments are collected in the context of this work, there is a way to share the curriculum with that person, even if they never speak or write. Just as cognition is not dependent on the brain, communication is not limited to one language. The stories that make up this narrative show us that the great richness lies in the complementarity experienced by those who manage to associate and cooperate.

The “embodied reflection” proposed by Varela, Thompson and Rosch (2003, p. 43) seems to be a powerful and necessary movement to welcome the other into shared experience. Openness to this possible experience makes us available for constant renewal that can reconcile us with the cycles of life and the beauty of the whole, as Gregory Bateson (1986) suggests.

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