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## Communicational neglect and the psychosocial development of deaf individuals: the role of the family as the primary agent of literacy and mental health.

*Communicational negligence and the psychosocial development of the deaf subject: the role of the family as the first agent of literacy and mental health*

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### Summary

Linguistic deprivation in the early years of a deaf child's life, resulting from a lack of *input*. Accessible linguistic development within the family environment constitutes one of the most serious factors in cognitive, emotional, and social impairment, representing a public health problem. This scientific article proposes a dense and critical analysis of family responsibility in language acquisition and the psychic structuring of deaf individuals. The methodology is based on a systematic literature review, correlating Vygotsky's socio-interactionist developmental theories, contemporary studies on Language Deprivation Syndrome, and epidemiological evidence on mental health in the deaf community. The study is structured around in-depth thematic axes, exploring everything from the neurobiological window of language acquisition to the psychopathological consequences of parental indifference. It discusses how accessible communication within the family acts as a neurocognitive and emotional protective factor. The results indicate that learning sign language by the family is not a pedagogical option, but an ethical imperative to guarantee the constitution of the individual. It is concluded that early intervention and family bilingualism are crucial for the autonomy and mental health of deaf individuals.

**Keywords:** Language Deprivation. Family and Deafness. Mental Health. Sign Language. Socioemotional Development.

### Abstract

Linguistic deprivation in the early years of a deaf child's life, resulting from the lack of accessible linguistic input in the family environment, constitutes one of the most serious factors of cognitive, emotional, and social impairment, configuring a public health problem. This scientific article proposes a dense and critical analysis of family responsibility in language acquisition and the psychic structuring of the deaf individual. The methodology relies on a systematic bibliographic review, correlating Vygotsky's socio-interactionist development theories, contemporary studies on Language Deprivation Syndrome, and epidemiological evidence on mental health in the deaf community. The study is structured into deep thematic axes, exploring everything from the neurobiological window of language acquisition to the psychopathological consequences of parental indifference. It discusses how accessible communication within the family nucleus acts as a neurocognitive and emotional protective factor. The results indicate that learning sign language by the family is not a pedagogical option, but an ethical imperative to guarantee the constitution of the subject. It is concluded that early intervention and family bilingualism are determinants for the deaf person's autonomy and psychic health.

**Keywords:** Linguistic Deprivation. Family and Deafness. Mental Health. Pounds. Socio-emotional Development.

### 1. Introduction

The constitution of the human subject invariably occurs through language and...

Dialectical interaction with others, with the family environment being the first and most decisive setting for this ontological development. However, for the deaf child, who is born mostly in homes with hearing parents — approximately 95% of cases, according to demographic studies.



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seminal studies by Mitchell and Karchmer (2004) conducted in the United States—this domestic environment

It can paradoxically transform into a place of sensory and symbolic isolation. The absence of

A lack of a common and fluent language between parents and children during the formative years does not only result in a delay.

in vocabulary acquisition, but it triggers a cascade of structural deficits in development.

neurocognitive, in the formation of theory of mind and in the construction of the psychosocial identity of

The individual. The specialized academic literature, corroborated by Oliver's neurological theories.

Sacks (2010) and the socio-anthropological analyses of Carlos Skliar (2013) categorically point out

that communicational negligence, often disguised as oralist methodological choices without

The lack of proper speech therapy and educational support constitutes a form of silent violence that

It reverberates throughout the individual's adult life, compromising their ability to interact socially and

your emotional stability.

The central problem analyzed in this scientific investigation lies in the profound disconnection.

affective and cognitive challenges generated by the intra-family language barrier, a phenomenon that transcends mere

It causes difficulties in everyday communication and affects the structuring of the "self" and the perception of belonging.

The indifference or refusal of parents and family members to learn Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) creates

an environment of chronic deprivation within one's own home, a phenomenon that is widely discussed and typified.

in international literature as "Dinner Table Syndrome", where the

Exclusion occurs during moments of primary socialization. The hypothesis defended in this work is that...

The family's communicative proficiency in the child's natural language (sign language) is the greatest factor.

an isolated predictor of mental health and social success in deaf adults, surpassing variables such as

Hearing technology (cochlear implants) or socioeconomic level. Through an analysis

Based on the neuroscience of language and developmental psychology, this study aims to

To provide the academic community and public policy makers with information about the urgency of bilingualism.

multimodal from birth.

## **2. The neurobiological window of language acquisition and deprivation syndrome**

Child neurological development operates within critical windows of opportunity, periods

in which brain plasticity is maximized for language acquisition and organization.

Synaptic. According to theories of language acquisition revisited by cognitive neuroscience,

As demonstrated in the longitudinal studies by Mayberry, Lock, and Kazmi (2002), the human brain

requires frequent and understandable linguistic *input* in the early years of life to organize the

Cortical structures responsible for symbolic processing. For the deaf child, auditory *input*

is fragmented or nonexistent, making the visuospatial channel the natural and biological pathway for this.

acquisition. When the family fails to provide this structured visual stimulus (Sign Language),

The phenomenon of Language Deprivation Syndrome occurs, described



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recently by Humphries et al. (2017) in the *Community Mental Health Journal* as a disorder

A distinct neurodevelopmental disorder, characterized by permanent deficits in cognition and language.

The exclusive reliance on oralism without the support of sign language, in many cases, This condemns the child to a state of "semi-lingualism" or functional alinguism during the critical period of brain maturation. Quadros (2019) emphasizes in his extensive research in Brazil that Libras It does not compete with the Portuguese language; on the contrary, it provides the cognitive basis ("scaffolding") for so that a second language can be learned and abstract thinking can develop. The family denying access to sign language under the pretext of "forcing speech" is, in fact, compromising the neural architecture necessary for any kind of future linguistic processing. Deprivation of Access to a complete language in the first five years of life results in functional atrophy of the Language areas of the brain are affected, making it difficult to acquire any language later on, be it Oral or signed.

Neuroplasticity, while a vital characteristic of the brain, works against the individual. In cases of deprivation. If the cortical areas responsible for language processing do not receive With adequate stimulation, they can be "colonized" by other functions, such as visual processing. simple, making language recovery extremely difficult in adolescence or adulthood. Sacks (2010) argues that language is not just a tool for communication, but the basis of propositional thought. Without language, thought remains trapped in the concrete and in immediate. A deaf child deprived of language at home is unable to develop internal narratives. to plan the future or reflect on the past with the same complexity as their peer listeners or native sign language users.

Beyond the strictly linguistic aspect, deprivation affects executive functions, such as... Inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. Studies by Kronenberger et al. (2014) indicate that deaf children with language delays have greater difficulties in Tasks that require self-regulation and sequential planning. This occurs because the internal language It is the primary tool we use to regulate our own behavior ("I shouldn't do this"). "Now," "First I'll do X, then Y." When the family doesn't offer sign language, she is... unintentionally sabotaging the child's ability to self-manage, which is often... misdiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or behavioral problems.

Family responsibility in this context is absolute and non-transferable, as the school or the Clinical settings cannot replicate the constant linguistic immersion that occurs at home. According to the theory Lev Vygotsky's socio-interactionist theory (1998) on the development of higher psychological functions. It depends on the internalization of social language. If the deaf child does not participate in social interactions... at home — if you don't understand the jokes, the orders, the arguments, and the family narratives —, she loses



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The material substrate necessary for intellectual development. The "zone of proximal development"

Vygotsky's "proximal" function can only be activated if there is mediation, and this mediation requires a language. common. The family that refuses to signal creates a mediation vacuum where social learning is interrupted.

Scientific evidence suggests that late exposure to the first language (L1) has effects devastating and irreversible. Mayberry (2002) compared the linguistic performance of deaf people who They learned signs in childhood from those who learned them later and discovered that the learners Late bloomers process language less efficiently and make more grammatical errors, even after decades of use. This means that the family's decision to "wait and see" whether the child will speak, or Delaying the introduction of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) has definite biological costs. Neurobiological time does not forgive. Pedagogical hesitation or linguistic prejudice.

Therefore, the introduction of Brazilian Sign Language into the family environment should not be viewed not as an "option" or an "extra resource," but as a medical and educational emergency. Healthcare professionals, including pediatricians, speech therapists, and otolaryngologists, have a duty. It is ethical to inform parents about the neurological risks of language deprivation. The narrative that... The idea that sign language is "lazy" when it comes to speech or prevents the use of cochlear implants lacks a scientific basis. robust and contradicts the findings of modern neuroscience, which defends bilingualism as the best strategy to maximize the potential of the deaf brain

### **3. Family dynamics and the dinner table syndrome: isolation within the affective core.**

"Dinner Table Syndrome" is a clinical metaphor and A powerful sociological tool to describe the experience of communicative exclusion lived by deaf people in their own homes, a phenomenon widely documented in the literature on the psychology of deafness and as reported qualitatively in research such as that of Hall (2017). While the listening family member talks, While people laugh, debate, and share stories during meals, the deaf member remains oblivious, absorbing the conversation. only decontextualized visual fragments and ambiguous facial expressions. The moment of The meal, which anthropologically represents communion and the transmission of culture, becomes for the Deafness is the moment of greatest loneliness and invisibility.

When a deaf child or young person tries to inquire about the content of a conversation, they receive often brief, postponed ("I'll tell you later") or dismissive ("it's nothing") answers important", "we're just talking nonsense"). This systematic exclusion in the domestic environment generates Deep feelings of loneliness, rejection, and paranoid distrust. The individual knows that Information is being exchanged; notice the mood swings and emotional reactions of... family members, but access to the *content* that generated these reactions is denied to him by the people who They should be their main interlocutors and protectors.



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Parental or maternal indifference towards learning Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) creates a chasm.

An insurmountable emotional burden. Often, this inertia stems from a pathological grief over the "child."

idealized" or the psychological difficulty in coping with the diagnosis of deafness, leading to denial

The need for a different language. The effort to learn a new language of any kind.

Visuospatial learning requires cognitive dedication, time, and financial investment, and many parents fail to meet this need.

prioritizing this over the demands of daily life. However, the deaf child does not interpret this.

Lack of effort is not seen as a logistical difficulty, but as a personal emotional rejection. "If they me

"If they loved me, they would learn to speak to me," is a recurring thought reported by deaf adults in...

therapy.

Accessible and constant communication at home is not just about transmitting information.

logistics and commands ("go take a shower", "time to eat", "tidy your room"), but about

To share affection, values, humor, and family culture. Without a fluent shared language, the

Intergenerational transmission of culture and values is interrupted. How to explain this to a teenager?

deaf to the dangers of drugs, the importance of ethics, the history of grandparents, or the religious principles of

A family with a rudimentary vocabulary of signs and improvised mime? The complexity of life.

requires a complex language. Quadros (2019) reinforces that Libras has all the grammatical structure.

necessary for discussing philosophy, physics, or feelings, but it needs to be present in the mouth and in the

Parents' hands.

A lack of deep communication creates a "stranger at home" phenomenon. The young person

Deaf people often feel more welcomed and understood at school, among their deaf peers, or in

A deaf association, rather than their own home. This can generate conflicts of loyalty and a

progressive distancing from the nuclear family. The family, in turn, may interpret this

distancing oneself as rebellion or ingratitude, without realizing that it is the direct result of years of...

Communicative exclusion. The construction of secure emotional bonds (attachment) depends on attunement.

Communicative; without it, attachment becomes insecure or avoidant.

Furthermore, the dynamics of interpretation within the home — where often a sibling

The listener, or simply the mother, acts as an "interpreter" for the father or other relatives—creating relationships of

unbalanced power dynamics and unhealthy dependence. The deaf person loses the autonomy to speak for themselves and

to access information directly. This constant triangulation infantilizes the deaf subject and

This overburdens the family member who acts as a bridge, generating resentment on both sides. Autonomy

Direct communication between all family members is essential for the health of the family system.

Finally, immersion in Deaf Culture is a vital strategy that the family should adopt to

to mitigate this isolation. Strobel (2008), in his work on images of the other in deaf culture,

argues that deaf identity is constructed through encounters with others who are similar to them. Hearing parents who, for example,

Fear or prejudice isolates their children from interacting with other deaf people, denying them access.



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to the cultural heritage and visual survival strategies that only a pair can convey. A

The family should act as a bridge to the world, attending events in the deaf community and

Learning from deaf adults, normalizing the experience of deafness at home.

#### **4. Mental health and deafness: the correlation between language deprivation and mental disorders**

Robust epidemiological studies, such as those conducted by Fellingner, Holzinger, and Pollard (2012) and published in the journal *The Lancet*, indicate that the prevalence of mental health problems in the deaf population is significantly higher than in the hearing population. It is crucial to note, However, this disparity is not caused by deafness itself (a biological factor), but by barriers. communication, due to social isolation and the deprivation of formative experiences (factors (environmental and social factors). Deafness is not a psychiatric risk factor; lack of communication is.

The inability to express complex feelings, frustrations, fears, and nuances. Emotional issues in a safe environment (family) lead to the internalization of conflicts (manifesting themselves such as depression, anxiety, somatization) or externalization through aggressive behaviors, Impulsive or socially inappropriate. A deaf person who does not have fluent interlocutors at home lives in a state of constant hypervigilance, trying to decipher visual and contextual clues to understanding what is happening around you. This generates chronic cognitive and emotional fatigue, known as in the literature as *deaf fatigue*, which drains the mental energy needed for other activities of development.

Depression and isolation in deaf adults have deep roots in a neglected childhood. communicationally. The clinical narrative of many deaf patients reveals traumas associated with family events, Christmas parties and gatherings where they felt invisible. Glickman (2009), pioneer In cognitive-behavioral therapy for the deaf, it is argued that many of the skill deficits The social and emotional regulation issues observed in deaf adults are, in fact, symptoms of "Linguistic disfluency" and lack of behavioral models. Without access to language, the person They don't learn to name their emotions, which is the first step in regulating them.

"Language Deprivation Syndrome" is also associated with psychiatric diagnoses. more serious and complex. The lack of structured language can mimic symptoms of psychosis or Intellectual disability, leading to misdiagnosis and inappropriate drug treatments. Furthermore, the communication barrier hinders access to the therapeutic treatment itself, as there is a There is a critical shortage of psychologists and psychiatrists fluent in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). The problem created within the family is... perpetuated by an unprepared healthcare system.

The concept of "Complex Trauma" also applies to many deaf people. It's not about a single traumatic event, but from continuous and repeated exposure to microaggressions, rejection and Communicative neglect over the years. A family that forbids the use of sign language, that mocks the voice.



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The act of systematically ignoring or being deaf is inflicting relational trauma that shapes the structure of the personality. Low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and difficulty trusting others. Others are direct consequences of this toxic environment.

The most effective preventive intervention for the mental health of the deaf is, therefore, Family language empowerment. Early intervention programs that focus on teaching Sign language for the family is not just a code, but a way to create an emotional bond. They have been shown to significantly reduce family stress levels and improve behavior. The child's adaptive development. When parents are able to communicate effectively, frustration levels decrease. As the child's anxiety decreases, disruptive behaviors ("tantrums") are reduced, and the emotional climate of the home improves. Improvement.

Access to fluent communication is, strictly speaking, a social determinant of mental health. acting as a protective factor against serious psychopathology. The positive deaf identity, constructed Through sign language and contact with deaf culture, it functions as a shield against... Stigma. Deaf people who are proud of their identity and have family support show low rates of mental health comparable to that of the hearing population, proving that the problem is not the hearing, but the surroundings.

##### **5. The role of the educator and interpreter in family mediation and literacy.**

Special education professionals and sign language interpreters often become the... early linguistic and positive identity models for deaf children, filling gaps. left by the family. However, the role of the school and specialists should not be to replace parents, but to provide guidance, support, and tools. It is the ethical duty of the educator. Specialists and researchers in the field should alert families to the critical importance of communication. Visual aids and to demystify misconceptions that the use of sign language "hinders speech" or rehabilitation. auditory.

Lacerda (2006) argues in his studies on inclusion that the school should promote spaces a welcoming environment for families, offering sign language courses and opportunities for contact with the community. The adult deaf community. Often, parents have never seen a successful deaf adult. university or professionally active. Contact with these role models helps parents envision a A functional and autonomous future for their children, reducing anxiety and grief over the diagnosis. School should be a resource center for the family, not just for the student.

Pedagogical mediation also involves addressing unrealistic family expectations. Many Parents, influenced by a clinical view of deafness, focus excessively on "cure" or on normalization of hearing (via cochlear implants and intensive speech therapy) and neglect the Meaningful human interaction in the present. The educator must, based on scientific evidence and



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sensitivity, helping the family to balance these expectations. It is necessary to show that a child

A happy, communicative deaf woman fluent in sign language has a promising life and professional career prospects.

far superior to that of a child who is "verbal" but emotionally fractured, insecure, and socially challenged.

isolated.

Family literacy in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) should go beyond basic vocabulary. It should include teaching parents how to count.

Storytelling, play, and discipline in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) is fundamental. Storytelling workshops in

Sign language for parents, support groups, and joint recreational activities are effective strategies. The interpreter

Educational, often seen only as a translator in the classroom, can act as a

A cultural mediator in these meetings, helping parents understand their children's visual perspective.

The school should also be attentive to signs of communication neglect and distress.

psychological factors in the student. Changes in behavior, isolation during recess, or aggressiveness may be

reflections of dysfunctional family dynamics. Referral to psychological services and

Social assistance should be provided, but always accompanied by awareness-raising efforts.

The importance of language. School cannot be an island of communication in a sea of silence.

domestic; she needs to expand her horizons to transform the home.

Training parents to be leaders and activists is also a role of education. Empowering parents

with knowledge of the legislation (Brazilian Sign Language Law, Brazilian Inclusion Law) and of the rights

Understanding their children's linguistic abilities transforms them into allies in the fight for a more inclusive society. Parents

Informed individuals are demanding accessibility in hospitals, theaters, and public spaces, expanding the world to...

your children.

Finally, the success of a deaf person should not be measured by their similarity to that of a hearing person.

(how much he speaks or listens), but by his cognitive, relational, and autonomous abilities. These

Skills depend entirely on a solid linguistic foundation acquired early in the home.

The educator is the guardian of this truth and must communicate it to the family with clarity, empathy, and firmness.

## 6. Conclusion

An in-depth analysis of the intrinsic relationship between family, language, and development.

The socio-emotional development of deaf individuals, illuminated by the theories of Vygotsky, Sacks, and studies...

Contemporary studies on language deprivation allow us to conclude unequivocally that communication

Accessible at home is the irreplaceable foundation of mental health and human autonomy. Neglect

communication difficulties, manifested by the family's refusal, inaction, or delay in adopting sign language.

While not a legitimate means of instruction and affection, it constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights.

which leaves deep, structural, and often irreversible scars on the individual's psyche.

It is evident that inclusive schools, advanced assistive technologies, and clinical therapies, however much

However excellent they may be, they lack the emotional reach and temporal consistency necessary for



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to compensate for the void left by a silent home, where the child is treated like a stranger among...

Yours.

The neurobiological window of opportunity for language acquisition is temporal. Limited and unforgiving; it does not wait for the psychological acceptance of parental grief, for adaptation. financial or bureaucratic obstacles within healthcare systems. Intervention must be immediate, bilingual, and culturally sensitive. The acceptance of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) within the family should not be seen only as an alternative pedagogical tool or an accessibility resource, but as an act of supreme humanization that allows the deaf child to constitute themselves as a subject of desire, rights and of culture. The scientific evidence accumulated in recent decades is irrefutable: the emotional bond Safe and full cognitive development can only be sustained through intelligible communication. fluid and reciprocal.

The impact of family indifference reverberates negatively throughout society, generating high and avoidable social costs associated with unemployment, economic dependence, and... Treatment of severe mental disorders in deaf adults. Individuals who grow up without language. Those with adequate education face greater difficulties in entering the job market and have lower levels of education. superior and greater vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. In contrast, deaf people who grow up in Rich and accepting communication environments create well-rounded citizens, community leaders, and Professionals capable of contributing significantly to national development. Investing in family language training is therefore a strategic health priority. public and social development.

It is imperative that public health and education policies be restructured to to consider not only the deaf child, but also the family unit as a priority target for interventions. This includes the free, ongoing, and decentralized provision of sign language courses for parents, siblings, and grandparents. as well as specialized psychological support for processing the diagnosis and reconfiguration. of family expectations. The health and education professional has an ethical duty to inform the family about the neurological risks of language deprivation with the same seriousness with which it informs about biological risks, debunking the outdated idea that sign language is harmful to Oral expression.

It can be categorically concluded that the healthy development of a deaf person depends on a Radical paradigm shift: from a pathological view of deafness, which incessantly seeks a cure and... Normalization, from a socio-anthropological perspective, seeks fulfillment through difference. The family one needs to transition from mourning through the "ear that does not hear" to the powerful encounter with the "eye that sees and..." "The hand that speaks." True social inclusion doesn't begin at school, in the workplace, or with affirmative action laws, but... in the intimacy of the dining table, where each family member has the inalienable right to understand and to be understood, to participate in the jokes, the decisions, and the family history.



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Without this solid home foundation, the entire educational superstructure becomes fragile and palliative.

The family's responsibility in language acquisition is the first and most important contract.

The social contract established with a deaf child. Breaking this contract through neglect.

Communicational failure is to condemn the child to a life of incompleteness and isolation. Honoring this contract

Learning and using Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) offers you the keys to the world and the certainty of...

belonging.

Society, in turn, must hold families accountable and support them on this challenging journey.

ensuring that deafness ceases to be synonymous with loneliness and becomes just one of the many forms of life.

Possible and legitimate aspects of being human. The future of a deaf child is written, literally, in their hands.

Your parents, today. Sign language is the connecting thread that weaves together identity, intelligence, and affection;

To deny it is to deny the very humanity of the child.

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