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ray@yorksj.ac.uk

# Bourdieu, plurilingualism and sign languages in the UK
## Dai O'Brien[1]

## Abstract

This chapter examines the history of deaf education in the UK, with particular attention paid to education policy, through the lens of Bourdieusian theory. This lens lends a sociological grounding to the exploration of the (denied) possibilities of plurilingual education in the UK by using the concepts of linguistic capital, linguistic habitus and linguistic marketplace. Based on analysis of historic deaf education policy documents, reasons for the inhibition of plurilingual bimodal education environments are outlined, with a possible way forward based on the example of the revitalisation of the Welsh language by successive legislative and policy acts.

## 1 Introduction

Over the last few years, plurilingualism has enjoyed something of a day in the sun in the field of education studies, with many researchers in different fields such as TESOL and language teaching promoting it as a way of encouraging people to learn more languages, and to challenge traditional notions of language learning (for example, see Taylor and Snoddon 2013, Tupas 2011, Moore and Gajo 2009, and Mariani 2008). For the sake of this chapter, plurilingualism is defined following the Council of Europe's position on language learning, founded upon the notion of the language repertoire which 'is made up of different languages and language varieties at different levels of proficiency and includes different types of competences. It is dynamic and changes in its composition throughout an individual's life' (Council of Europe, ND). Plurilingualism is therefore considered as a way of understanding the range of different capabilities individuals have in different languages and modes and how they put these capabilities together, sometimes in creative ways, to make themselves understood and to understand others.

While some academics, language teachers and others have embraced this definition (see, for example, Swanwick 2017) it has thus far failed to make much positive impact on education policy connected to deaf children and young people in the UK (O'Neill 2017). Education policy in the UK still favours the monolingual approach, and deaf education policy still fails to officially recognise the specific importance that British Sign Language (BSL) could offer to deaf young people in schools.

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[1] Dai O'Brien,
School of Languages and Linguistics,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX
d.obrien@yorksj.ac.uk

This chapter will use a novel application of the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu with respect to historic UK deaf education policy documents to explore why this is the case. Bourdieu's work on linguistic habitus and capital will be used to understand both why there has long been reluctance to recognise the benefits of plurilingualism relating to the field of deaf education in the UK and how this can be challenged.

## 2 What is Plurilingualism?

Plurilingualism is different from the notion of multilingualism, which focuses more on competency in more than one separate language, treating each language as independent and usually seeing any 'leakage' between languages as a bad thing. Multilingualism can also be used on a geographical scale. By this it is meant that an area which is rich in different languages could be called a multilingual neighbourhood, even if individuals who lived in that area were each only familiar with a single language. Plurilingualism, rather, is the dynamic interaction and interrelation between different languages in a single person's repertoire.

It has been a traditional view of multilingualism in education that each language is separate, and the measure of competence in each language is the achievement of a level of native-like competency; in effect, becoming a fluent monolingual speaker of multiple languages with no seepage or feeding between them (see, for example, Cenoz and Gorter 2013).  In the field of Deaf Studies, rather than using the term multilingualism, it is more common to see the term bilingualism being used. There has, in fact, been some debate about whether or not such linguistic transfer is actually possible between a sign language and a spoken/written one, because the modalities of each are so different, although there is growing evidence that such transfer does indeed happen (Swanwick 2016, Menédez 2010).

To date, plurilingualism in deaf education has been little researched (see Swanwick 2017, and Swanwick, Wright and Salter 2016 for exceptions), but there is a growing interest in deaf plurilingualism, which often also engages with the concept of translanguaging (see Kusters, Spotti, Swanwick and Tapio 2017; for more on translanguaging in education, see Garcia and Wei 2013 and Canagarajah 2011). One such example is the Ishaare project, in which a team of researchers explored the language use of deaf citizens of Mumbai, showing their ability to switch between Indian Sign Language, mime, gesture, and spoken/written forms of language (Kusters and Sahasrabudhe 2018). These sort of rich language environments and skilful switches between languages, codes and modalities are everyday experiences for most signing deaf people, which matches the Council for Europe's pragmatic definition of plurilingualism very well.

## 3 Plurilingual Education Environments

Plurilingual education environments are increasingly being recognised in academic literature as beneficial for children. Benefits are not limited to the learning of other languages, but also accrue from lowering children's frustration in language learning by allowing use of both L1 and L2 in classrooms to encourage free and fluent expression of ideas and 'not dampen their excitement' (Lin 2013, 535). Plurilingual learning environments also allow learners to use their 'discourse and pragmatic knowledge of other languages when writing… or when formulating speech acts in a communicative situation' (Cenoz and Gorter 2013, 597), or in other words, to learn effective ways to

use languages, and how these ways can be transferred between languages. As discussed below, this contributes to the development of richer resources of linguistic capital through understanding of the 'secret code' (Bourdieu 1992, 51) of languages, how to use pauses and silences, understanding not just the vocabulary to use, but how to use it well. As Bourdieu points out, 'the Sophists used to say that what is important in learning a language is to learn the appropriate moment, Kairos, for saying the appropriate thing' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

# 4 Bourdieu's Concepts

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological work on language was often very critical of linguistics as a field, but his insights concerning the use of language as intrinsically interwoven with the social conditions of its use are very important and useful in helping us to understand how languages work. It is relatively recently that sustained engagement with his ideas about languages and linguistics has been made (see, for example, Hasan 1998, and the subsequent discussion in the same journal by Chouliaraki and Fairclough 2000, Collins 2000, Corson 2000, Robbins 2000, Hasan 2000, Grenfell 2011). Until recently, within the field of Deaf Studies very little has been published regarding his work. However, his concepts provide effective and thought-provoking tools to analyse and understand the social context of language use and language power.

The key concepts which we will discuss in this chapter are habitus, field and capital. Habitus can be defined as

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu 1990, 53)

In this sense, habitus can be understood as a concept which helps us to understand how we both structure our past and present circumstances and are structured by them in turn. Bourdieu conceptualised habitus as working unconsciously on us; we do not consciously make decisions but are guided by the dispositions that the habitus engrains in us. These dispositions are durable – while they can be changed, to do so takes time. Furthermore, dispositions are transposable as they can be transferred to different social situations. As such, they structure what is and is not acceptable for a particular social agent to do in particular social situations.

Habitus cannot be understood as a concept by itself alone. All habitus exist in relation to field. The field, as defined by Bourdieu, is a particular social space within which different forms of capital, as discussed further below, are at stake. Social actors compete within the field for control of this capital, and to determine which form of capital is legitimate. A useful analogy would be one which Bourdieu himself uses on several occasions (Thomson 2008, 68), that of a playing field. Each field has defined positions that are analogous to the positions of a team in a game, rules of what can and cannot be done, boundaries, and stakes which can be won or lost. Within each field are the commonly held truths, or doxa, which are used to explain or justify the behaviours and beliefs of the field. The doxa 'misrecognises the logics of practice at work in the field' (Thomson 2008, 70), which allows agents within the field to see their 'truths' as natural and unassailable. Examples of field

which Bourdieu has used in his work are the field of the economy, of education, of higher education, and of languages. Habitus and field are intrinsically intertwined; the one depends on the other.

Bourdieu uses the idea of linguistic marketplaces to show how language and language competence can cross many different fields. The metaphor of a marketplace illustrates that the only legitimate language is the one which bears value in a particular set of social circumstances. In order to exert any control over the market, or indeed to partake in the market, an agent will need to have sufficient capital in the legitimate language, and a habitus which is well suited to the field associated with that market (Grenfell 2011).

Capital is the third concept of Bourdieu's which will be used in this chapter. Capital is not equivalent to monetary exchange but denotes symbolic values which can be staked or exchanged within or across fields. Symbolic capital, in this sense, illustrates how much influence, power and interest an agent can wield. Within different fields, agents can hold not only different types of capital (for example, social, cultural, or linguistic), but also different forms of capital that are embodied, objectified or institutionalised. Embodied capital shows the agents' taste, their culture, their knowledge of the rules of the game and the ability to exploit those rules for personal gain through the ways in which they behave, act, and physically carry themselves. Objectified capital is capital which is embedded in objects; for example, possession of an expensive painting or first edition, which shows an agent's ability to appreciate and understand the cultural value of an object. Institutionalised capital is capital which has been officially recognised and found worthy; for example, the award of a university degree, honorary award, or similar bestowment of recognition by a respected institution.

For this chapter, we will consider these concepts from the linguistic perspective. I will discuss the linguistic habitus which is the prior and continuing experience agents have of languages and how that experience structures and is in turn structured by their social practices. Linguistic capital is the capability that agents hold in languages, not only their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but also their ability to use the language in meaningful ways and their understanding of the secret codes of the language. The multiple linguistic fields in which the agent lives are the marketplaces in which the agents can bring their linguistic capital to bear. It is only through the interplay of these three concepts that the full picture of the social experience of agents and their plurilingual and pluricultural competence can be understood.

To illustrate, Bourdieu writes as follows:

> Any speech act or any discourse is a conjuncture, the product of the encounter between, on the one side, a linguistic habitus, that is, a set of socially constituted dispositions that imply a propensity to speak in certain ways and to utter determinate things (an expressive interest) as well as a competence to speak defined inseparably as the linguistic ability to engender an infinite array of discourses that are grammatically conforming, and as the social ability to adequately utilise this competence in a given situation; and on the other side, a linguistic market, i.e. a system of relations of force which impose themselves as a system of specific sanctions and specific censorship, and thereby help fashion linguistic production by determining the 'price' of linguistic products. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 145)

Here, the concepts of habitus, field, market and capital are inextricably interwoven in determining the value or 'price', or indeed the very possibility of what is allowed to be said and what languages are considered to be permitted or legitimate. This is very important for the field of deaf education, where so much emotion, energy and ideology has been tied up in debates about which languages and modalities are most effective as a medium of education.

# 5 The Situation in the UK

A particularly useful aspect of Bourdieu's work is that he outlines why many nation states are monolingual in policy, if not in practice (or vice versa):[2]

> Thus, only when the making of the 'nation', an entirely abstract group based on law, created new usages and functions does it become indispensable to forge a standard language, impersonal and anonymous like the official uses it has to serve, and by the same token to undertake the work of normalizing the products of the linguistic habitus. (Bourdieu 1992, 48)

This shows how the creation of the nation state also creates a particular marketplace which values only one kind of capital. In order to work together, to impose and control the laws of the newly formed nation state, the language must be controlled and standardized. Similarly, in order for standardization, or normalization, of linguistic habitus to occur, the way in which these habitus are produced must be controlled as much as possible.

Bourdieu claims that the grounding of the habitus, or the primary habitus, is formed in the family. The language-based and other experiences of a child, as they grow up are largely centred around the family, and so the habitus is structured by what the child encounters. Subsequent refinement of this habitus occurs in the school, which according to Bourdieu is not really an educational institution, but rather a site of reinforcement of legitimate capital and habitus. In *Reproduction* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), Bourdieu outlines the way in which the school is selective: rewarding and reinforcing those who already hold legitimate linguistic and cultural capital learned from their families and punishing and excluding those who do not.

Each field has a legitimate language. For most of the UK, particularly in the educational field, this is Standard English. However, it is important to understand that this language is not pre-ordained but is dependent on various social and cultural factors. The hierarchizing of minority and majority languages is dependent on 'very specific historical processes' (May 2011, 151), which affect the taken-for-granted attitudes and approaches taken by people and policy makers to value certain languages over others. Bourdieu himself explored this in relation to his native Béarnais language and the relative status of French (see Bourdieu 1992, 68). Indeed, it has been suggested that education has been '*the* key agency of linguistic standardization (some might call it linguistic genocide)' (May 2011, 257, emphasis in original), and thus the establishment of a legitimate language in society often, but not always, comes at the expense of minority languages.

In order to understand the historical processes which have led to the pursuit of a monolingual approach in education for deaf children which disparages the role of sign language, we need to take a diachronic approach to language policy (May 2011). A historical understanding of where the

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[2] Thanks to Dr Clare Cunningham for this useful insight.

dominance of English came from in UK deaf education is needed in order to understand more clearly why English (particularly in the spoken mode) is valued so much more than sign language. While many who read this volume will be familiar with the decision of the Milan Congress in 1880 to pass resolutions which claimed the 'incontestable superiority of speech over signs' in deaf education, less may be known about how these resolutions specifically affected the education system in the UK for deaf children and young people. Below, I explore in more detail historic policy documents which outline the place of oralism and sign language deprivation in the UK education system.

The first legal document in the UK which explicitly dealt with the educational methods to be used for deaf children and young people was the 1889 Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, The Deaf and Dumb etc. of the United Kingdom in 1889. This document illustrates the attitudes of its authors to deaf people, including disturbing references to views such as that deaf people should be 'strongly discouraged' from marrying one another to prevent the causation of 'a deaf variety of the human race' (Blind etc. Commission 1889, xlviii). Alexander Graham Bell, the originator of this term was one of the expert witnesses called by this Commission. Beside these troubling references to eugenics, the Report is also notable for the conflation of 'language' with 'speech.' Throughout the report, speech is consistently referred to as 'language', whereas sign languages are referred to as 'systems'. These are references which belittle the status of sign by denying it the possibility of being a language. There is also no record made in the report of the use of sign language outside the school system. For example, in the UK sign languages had been used in marriage ceremonies since at least 1576 (Cox 1910), and community records of signing deaf people exist from 1602 (Carew 1602). However, there is no mention of this in the report, nor is there any mention of potential linguistic markets for sign language outside schools.

The implication here is that deaf children arrive at a school in a state of tabula rasa, with no language at all. This is a problem because it does not take into account the possible home language contexts and repertoires of deaf children, some of whom may have deaf parents. It is mentioned in the report that upon arrival at school, children might be able to express themselves using 'natural signs' or 'finger language' (Blind etc. Commission 1889, lv), but there is no consideration of the home language environment of the child, or how the languages used in and outside school could complement each other. This lack of acknowledgement of the social context of language use and learning causes a misrecognition that such 'linguistic deprivation' is natural, rather than socially constructed, and can be treated purely as a technical challenge, that is, through rote learning of speech (Grenfell 2011, 53). This ignores wider considerations of the development of the deaf child's linguistic habitus from birth, and how the primary and secondary habitus are developed by the interaction between conditions at home and at the school (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 43-45).

There are two further important points within this document. The first is that the summary of recommendations includes the point that 'sign or manual systems' of education must be reserved only for those deaf children who are 'physically or mentally disqualified' from learning under the 'pure oral system' (HMSO 1889, xc). This sets a clear hierarchical relationship between signed and spoken languages. Sign languages were relegated to use by 'failures' of the oral system. This is a clearly a case of socially constructed superiority within the education system. Despite evidence in the report that 'under the manual system a child can get a larger amount of knowledge in four years than under the oral system in the same time' (HMSO 1889, lviii) and that the oral system requires much more investment due to 'the necessity of a large number of teachers, fully one-third more

than the manual system' (HMSO 1889, lxvi), it was decided that the pure oral system should be adopted in the UK. Again, this shows the greater value placed on speech. Policy makers were prepared to support the slower, less efficient and more expensive teaching method simply because of the greater prestige that speech held over sign.

The second point is the recommendation that 'all teachers should be in possession of all their faculties and have had previous experience in teaching hearing children' (HMSO 1889, xci). This point not only denies deaf adults the possibility of teaching in schools for deaf children, but also, by reference to the 'teaching of hearing children', implicitly denies the possibility of pedagogic sign language development. Preventing sign language peoples from teaching suppresses the development of the requisite vocabulary for pedagogic purposes, further devaluing sign language. Indeed, this exclusion of deaf people from teaching carried on in the subsequent formation of colleges for training teachers of the deaf in the UK (see Branson and Miller 2002, 205-206). Upon the 1912 amalgamation of the different teacher of the deaf training colleges, the National Association for the Oral Instruction of the Deaf was formed (Branson and Miller 1998), which also illustrates the linguistic approach taken.

While some deaf people qualified both as teachers and as Teachers of the Deaf (ToD) during these years (see Silo 1991, for an account of the struggles it took to qualify), it was only much later in the twentieth century, after the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act, that larger numbers of deaf people were able to become ToDs. Even then, deaf teachers were obliged to train in oral approaches under the British Association for Teachers Of the Deaf (BATOD), which, while no longer an awarding body for ToD qualifications, still emphasises that any prospective ToD should be an 'effective spoken language communicator with clear lip patterns'. The commitment to 'acquire basic sign language skills'[3] seemed to appear as an afterthought. These restrictions on who was allowed to teach impacted the structure of the educational field, the linguistic marketplace existing within that field, and the habitus of the deaf children being educated in that field. The dominant individuals within the school system were hearing, and they shaped the system in order to replicate their beliefs grounded in their own habitus and field. By banning both sign language and deaf teachers, the education system removed any possible expansive influences these entities could have on the linguistic market within the field.

Later, the Board of Education (1938) produced a report on 'problems relating to children with defective hearing' that proposed to classify children with 'defective hearing' into four grades depending only on their hearing levels. This report accepted that it was 'natural' for deaf children and young people to sign together after-hours in school (p.68), but still held that it was of utmost importance that signing and fingerspelling must not be used in class for educational purposes.

While the 1944 Education Act encouraged the attendance of young disabled people in mainstream schools, most deaf children were educated in residential schools (Borsay 2005, 111). This was at least partly attributed to the relatively low incidence of deafness, which made provision of local support in mainstream schools difficult, and so 'the boarding school fills a necessary role' (Ministry of Education 1946, 14). However, deaf students were placed in mainstream schools only on the premise that they 'develop and retain their spoken language to a degree commensurate with that reached by hearing children of similar age and intelligence' (Ministry of Education 1946, 15).

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[3] See http://www.batod.org.uk/index.php?id=/resources/teaching/training/teachingdeaf.htm

Otherwise, as oral failures, 'they should be sent to special schools' (Ministry of Education 1946, 15), again, emphasising the primacy in the government's eyes of speech over sign.

Guidance published by the government in 1946 recommended that 'the pupils' attainment of high academic standards must not be expected since nearly all the handicapped are to some extent backward' (Ministry of Education 1946, 33). These attitudes towards sign language and deaf teachers continued throughout most of the early and middle twentieth century. Some examples of the fetishisation of speech over language include Lack's (1955) *The Teaching of Language to Deaf Children*, which is preoccupied with speech training and does not mention sign language once. Similarly, Dale's (1967) *Deaf Children at Home and at School* emphasises that deaf children 'should be encouraged to try to speak rather than make signs,' and that parents 'should put as little emphasis as possible on the use of the hands' to the extent that they should 'at all times resist temptation to point to things' (52). Lynas, Huntington and Tucker (1991) insist that oralists had a '*moral* responsibility to enable deaf children to acquire the *dominant* language of our society as a first priority' (127, emphasis in original). Again, the refusal to provide any space in the field to sign languages, or to recognise any kind of linguistic capital other than that of the dominant, spoken modality, is clear.

Language is both the medium and subject of students' learning (Hardy 2011, 172). However, if the balance is in favour of the learning of a language as a subject at the expense of the language being a medium of learning, this becomes a problem. The 'inculcation of correct oral attitudes from the infant stage throughout school … and total immersion of speech teaching within and at every stage of language development' has for long been the order of the day in deaf education (McLaughlin, 1987, 107). Many deaf people who explain their experiences of education state that schools focused so rigidly on speech and listening that deaf learners left school with little or no academic success or knowledge of the world outside the school (Mason 1991, Craddock 1991, Fitzgerald 2010). This all-consuming focus on speech is shown again in McLaughlin (1987), who states of physical education in schools for deaf children, 'the gains in balance, good breath flow and rhythm were always to be placed at the service of speech and language' (121). This shows that it was not just that the linguistic capital of spoken English was revered above that of other languages, but that other forms of capital, including physical capital (see Shilling 1991, Edwards and Imrie 2003) were also to be considered subservient to the linguistic capital of speech.

The Lewis (1968) report investigated whether there was a role for fingerspelling and signing in the education of deaf children in the UK. While the report concluded that there was potential for both to be useful in the education of deaf children and young people, and thus eventually opened the door to the introduction of Total Communication in the 1970s (Ladd 2003, 43), the way in which the report reached this conclusion is problematic. The report was particularly effusive in its praise of the artificial language system developed by Paget and Gorman, which attempted to show English syntax and grammar on the hands and praised it for 'having the characteristics of a language' (Lewis 1968, 27). This suggests that the report's author used similarity to English as the only marker of whether something should be considered a language or not, which makes one wonder what the authors of the report thought of other spoken/written languages such as French or Spanish, each with their own syntax and grammar different to that of English, and how these would fit their definition of 'language.' While this report was published after the ground-breaking work of Stokoe, Casterline and Croneberg (1965), which proved American Sign Language was indeed a language in its own right, this

work was not yet common knowledge in the UK. The Lewis report's dismissal of sign language as 'ungrammatical' and 'parasitic upon well developed mastery of conventional language' (Lewis 1968, 27) shows the widely held attitudes, or doxa, towards sign language in schools at the time.

The Lewis report called on the views of many expert witnesses on the topic of whether sign language and fingerspelling should be included in schools. It included many professionals' viewpoints, including those of ToDs and trainers of ToDs, such as Sir Alexander Ewing, who was an avowed oralist. These people may be considered to have had an investment in maintaining the status quo. Submissions from deaf adults were treated more sceptically. The report's authors accepted that many deaf people would have difficulty submitting written evidence due to linguistic barriers. However, it refused to include the many submissions from members of the British Deaf and Dumb Association which had created a pro forma template to circumvent those barriers (Lewis 1965 55-56, 79). This denied many deaf people the opportunity to contribute to a process which had immediate impact on the lives of deaf young people in the UK.

In 1979, the Conrad Report investigated 600 deaf school leavers in England and Wales who were between the ages of 15 and 16 and a half. The report showed that deaf school leavers from a system which was almost solely oral in approach had an average reading age of a nine-year-old hearing child (Conrad 1979, 154), no more skill in lip-reading than 'untrained and inexperienced hearing children' (189) and speech that was so unintelligible that Conrad concluded 'there can be no escape from the conclusion that speech communication between hearing and profoundly deaf people remains a problem of immense magnitude' (216). Conrad (1980) reiterated the findings of his Report and called for sign language to be given a place in the linguistic repertoire of deaf children. This damning indictment of pure oral education did not have immediate impact on deaf education in the UK but remains a key reference for anyone researching deaf children's education or language acquisition in the UK.

Both the Warnock Report (1978), which preceded the Conrad Report, and the Education Act, which followed it in 1981, recommended that 'the majority of children with special educational needs will have to be … helped within the ordinary school' (Warnock 1978, 95). Again, this shows the recognition of only a single linguistic market in UK schools, and the determination to try and integrate deaf children into that market, to try and construct habitus which would fit fields in which English is the legitimate, and only language. While there is no outright prohibition of sign language in the Warnock Report (which makes occasional reference to 'techniques for communicating with profoundly deaf children', 94), there is a suggestion that the number of children with specific special educational needs (SEN) within a particular school should be limited to prevent 'the formation of a separate sub-group' (103). By extension, this would lead to the suppression of opportunities for deaf children to socialize and learn within the school and thereby to prevent the establishment of a signing linguistic market among children.

The next major legislation affecting deaf children and young people was the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (SEND COP), first published in 2001 and updated regularly in subsequent years, with the most recent version in 2015. This Code of Practice defines who is eligible for support in schools and in what form. A child or young person is considered to have an SEN if they have 'a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her' (DfE and HoH 2015, 15). A child or young person is considered to be disabled if he or she:

has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or

has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions (16).

Within this definition, young deaf people are considered to have an SEN if they are unable to make use of the same facilities as the hearing majority without support or intervention to make these facilities more accessible, whether this is through providing artificial hearing technology or through sign language. This short definition may finally allow for the re-entry of sign language support in schools and the creation of a plurilingual environment as a way by allowing the use of sign language as a medium of education to redress these 'difficulties' and 'hindrances.' The SEND COP (2015), however, states that 'difficulties related solely to learning English as an additional language are not SEN' (p. 85). To get support in schools, deaf young people and their families must therefore 'buy into' their framing as disabled, and their need for sign language then becomes framed as a way of supporting a disability, rather than sign language being valued as a language in its own right. This further diminishes the status of sign language within the language market, harking back to the 1889 policy that sign is only for those who have failed under the oral approach. In fact, the SEND COP (2015) has no mention of sign language at all, but several mentions of speech and language therapy support for deaf or hard of hearing students. This reinforces that the legitimate language, English, is the legitimate language of the state and education system in the UK, and thus any habitus or fields which make use of sign languages are devalued.

Thus, the implication is that when a student or family attempts to campaign for language access or for recognition of their linguistic capital in sign language, they are not just fighting against a single teacher or school, but the whole educational establishment and the weight of history. Bourdieu makes this point in connection to colonial languages:

> In this case the dominated speaks a broken language… and his linguistic capital is more or less completely devalued… In short, if a French person talks to an Algerian, or a black American to a WASP, it is not two persons who speak to each other but, through them, the colonial history in its entirety, or the whole history of the economic, political, and cultural subjugation of blacks (or women, workers, minorities, etc.) in the U.S. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 143)

Here, Bourdieu uses the term 'broken language' from the viewpoint of the colonial power or ruling class. This shows the difficulties that speakers and signers of oppressed or minority languages can face when trying to achieve recognition for their languages. They are not just challenging the current circumstances, but also the weight of history. For deaf young people and their families, the historic power of the oralist hegemony and the influence of the Milan Congress of 1880 are still present. This use of the term 'broken' does not only apply to languages. For Bourdieu, language and identity are inextricably linked (May 2011). Linguistic habitus, or the dispositions of language use, is only part of the wider habitus of an individual. This habitus both structures and is structured by an individual's social identity and their position in and interaction with the world. To portray a language as 'broken' is also to portray the linguistic (and by association, the entire) habitus of an individual who uses that language as broken or deficient (see, for example, Bourdieu 1992). This impacts the self-worth and

self-esteem of a deaf child in possession of what is perceived as a 'broken' habitus, who is thus deemed an 'oral failure.' This is also evident in the literature authored by deaf people concerning childhood experiences in schools in the UK, their struggle with acquiring English and the denigration of the legitimacy of a 'deaf' habitus, which resulted in deaf people whose self-image was of being 'stupid' (Ladd 1991, 93).

The priority of these deficit discourses (Lamb 2015) is to ensure that those who have a different language than the dominant language are made to 'fit' by trying to develop their capacity to use the language of the school. For children whose multilingualism includes capacities in languages which are not recognised by the school (such as deaf children who sign BSL), the discourse focuses more on 'their deficit in English than on their potential plurilingualism, as their languages are seen as a barrier to formal learning' (Lamb 2015, 154). This is especially true of those whose 'deficiency' can also be linked to a physical or sensory disability, as it then becomes easy to conflate issues linked to language or culture with those of disability and reproduce ideologies regarding deaf children's sign language learning as a marker of a deficient social identity.

## 6 Plurilingual Sign Language Environments

How would one combat this view of sign languages? Bourdieu has been criticised in the past for being deterministic and not providing scope within his theoretical framework for resistance or change of the system. This is not a fair assessment. It is true that Bourdieu often emphasises how imbalanced the scales of social justice can be, but there is scope for resistance (see Yang, 2014, May 2011). Habitus, while conservative, is not impervious to change. Recognition of plurilingualism and pluricultural competence in education is one such context in which change is possible. Bourdieu suggests that

> It is for this reason that those who seek to defend a threatened linguistic capital … are obliged to wage a total struggle. One cannot save the value of a competence unless one saves the market, in other words, the whole set of political and social conditions of production of the producers/consumers. The defenders of Latin, or in other contexts, of French or Arabic, often talk as if it the language they favour could have some value outside the market, by intrinsic virtues such as its 'logical' qualities; but, in practice, they are defending the market. (Bourdieu 1990, p. 57)

It is here clear that you cannot preserve a language or linguistic capital simply by demanding that it be taught in school. There must also be a market for it. It is not enough that signing deaf children may have a market for their language at home or within their community if it is not recognised by the educational establishment as a legitimate market. In order to promote a plurilingual approach to education for deaf young people, a plurilingual market needs to be promoted.

According to Grenfell,

> Teaching knowledge is not the transfer of known things to unknowing subjects (pupils), but the transformation from unknown to known things in relationships with a pedagogic other. The extent this can happen depends on pupils' and teachers' habitus and their interplay within a field context. Pupils learn when they interpret and take control of knowledge, but

this arises in relationships which are imbued with field and habitus specific generating structures. (Grenfell 1998, 87).

According to the above, teaching and learning relies on interaction. If there is no interaction between the habitus of the pupil and teacher and the field, then learning does not occur. If there is no way for the pupil and teacher to fully interact, that is, if they cannot communicate with one another, learning cannot happen. If there is no way for the pupil to access the field of education (for example, through reading course books, accessing classroom discussion, incidental learning, understanding the value of specific forms of knowledge and behaviour), then again, learning cannot happen. So there must be a demand for plurilingualism in BSL and English to allow for this interaction to occur. There cannot be a meaningful level of interaction of the sort outlined by Grenfell between a habitus which is solely or mainly a BSL habitus (the pupil) and a habitus and field which is monolingual in English (the teacher). There is already some provision of Communication Support Workers and interpreters in schools to facilitate this interaction, but this is not standardised under any national policy guidance, and there is little or no evidence that these support workers are utilising plurilingual competencies in contrast to simply proceeding with a dual-monolingual model. Furthermore, there is no evidence one way or another to show these support workers are enough to create a plurilingual environment, as they can simply be viewed as compensatory tools.[4]

# 7 Ways Forward?

One of the key issues in ensuring that plurilingual sign habitus are valued is to ensure that there is a market for the linguistic capital that they produce. This requires that the value of BSL is recognised in schools and beyond as a practical, functional language which is used and is useful in everyday life.

A recent UK parliament debate on 5 March 2018[5] considered whether BSL could be included in the UK National Curriculum as a GCSE subject (equivalent to CEFR A2/B1 level). While the proposal was rejected by Nick Gibb, the Conservative Minister for School Standards, the proposal itself would not have succeeded in creating a plurilingual sign field within the school. BSL was only to be a single optional subject students could elect to take at GCSE level, rather than a medium of education in its own right. In Scotland, the BSL Act Scotland of 2015 may provide an opportunity for invigoration of the market for BSL, rather than focusing simply on provision of BSL as an optional subject at GCSE level. The Act requires that a National Plan be published by the Scottish government, followed by other public bodies publishing their Authority Plans, which should reflect the views and needs of the BSL community in Scotland and also what can realistically be delivered in terms of providing access to public services in BSL. It is hoped that this official recognition will reinvigorate the market for BSL, particularly if the plans refer to the need for more translation and interpretation of information into BSL, and more access for young people and children who use BSL in school. In Bourdieu's terms, this will not just defend the threatened linguistic capital, but also the marketplace in which it is used.

An interesting parallel is with the Welsh language in Wales. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 stated that it is a legal requirement for public records and official documents to be presented throughout

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[4] Thanks to Dr Kristin Snoddon for this insight.
[5] http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/981f3ea2-b033-4599-a3de-56036727acf7;
https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-03-05/debates/553511A4-468B-4B1E-9AD9-A55DCBF3ED06/BritishSignLanguageNationalCurriculum;

Wales in both Welsh and English. Subsequent publication of Welsh language strategies, such as 'Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers' (Welsh Government 2017), (as well as Welsh Assembly Government (2010) and Welsh Government (2011, 2012, 2016, 2017), outline common themes of encouraging Welsh to be used every day as part of the general linguistic market of the country. This is well described in the 'Vision' of Cymraeg 2050 (Welsh Government 2017):

> The year 2050: The Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society and economy of Wales. (4)

This desire to not only foster increasing numbers of Welsh speakers, but also ensure that Welsh is 'used in every aspect of life' is essential, in Bourdieu's view, to maintaining a market for the language. The document also states an aim to 'create favourable conditions – infrastructure and context' for this vision (2017, 4). The growth in the marketplace for Welsh has resulted in an increase in the number of Welsh-English interpreters and translators. As more immigrants arriving in Wales are learning Welsh, those with Welsh language habitus have an advantage in the field.

Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital to analysis of the field of deaf education in the UK provides a useful way of looking at the historical influences which have shaped the current reluctance in the UK to contemplate a plurilingual school environment which values BSL as an equal to English, either as subject or medium of education. Bourdieu's concepts also point to possible means for instigating widespread, sustainable change in the field, a change which would not only be beneficial to deaf young people, but also to all members of society.

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