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The implementation of South African sign language (SASL) and sign bilingualism in a school for the deaf interpreted through the identity metaphors used by school leadership (SMT) and teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this case study is to explore and understand how the school leadership of a school for the Deaf, through the principal and School Management Team (SMT) experiences and understands and assists the process of transformation to South African Sign Language required for the implementation of CAPS SASL curriculum and sign bilingualism. Secondly, how teachers of the Deaf change and re-imagine themselves as sign bilingual teachers of the Deaf within the new pedagogical space of CAPS SASL. Thirdly, how the researcher's autoethnography contributes towards the sign bilingual narrative of Deaf epistemology research.

A theoretical framework of narrativity of SMT and teachers identity is used to understand the post-colonial, transformation. Literature around the concepts of post-colonialism, audism, bilingual education, sign bilingualism (as second wave dynamic bilingualism), context of South African Deaf Education, ontological and conceptual metaphors, identity and space are reviewed. A model of cognitive transformation (i-PTSD) is proposed and used to interpret teacher's mental transformation (border crossing, Martin, 2010) to a new paradigm and discourse of sign language and sign bilingualism. In addition, the transformational leadership model of Fullan (2004) is used to interpret school leadership's narrative of transformation.

This case study collected narrative data from three focus groups, three key interviews and sixteen journals of teachers at a school for the Deaf in the Western Cape Province pioneering the transforming to SASL. A modified phenomenographic research method is used to interpret the narratives of teachers to understand the architecture of transformation within hearing and deaf teachers and within school leadership. The researcher's blogs provide a parallel reflective autoethnographic narrative.

The findings show that school leadership's (SMT) alignment with the five person-centred, practical and visionary transformational leadership principles: re-culturing through re-languaging of minds to and through SASL, developing people as signing, bilingual teachers of the Deaf as 'bridges' and supportive teams (SMT), the principal as critical thought leader on SASL language policy and pedagogy and implementation of sign bilingualism, the moral purpose of transformation to support teacher's growth of sign language for equality and educational access

of learners through an epistemology of empathy and the leadership identity of the principal as a 'servant leader' (Greenleaf, 2003) through critical dialogue. This meso-level (Fullan, 2004) narrative of transformation was both instrumental and essential in supporting teacher's cognitive (micro-level) transformation and implementation of SASL and sign bilingualism.

Teachers' professional identity was changed and re-imagined around the epistemological metaphor as educational (learner-centred) 'partners' through their nearness and connection with sign language and sign bilingualism.

Through post-audism, sign bilingual is recognised as a valid post-colonial identity space. Post-audism is a powerful lens for interpreting post-colonial narratives of sign bilingual Deaf epistemology and ontology.

Similarly, the autoethnographic narrative provides a subaltern voice to an unexplored post-audist Deaf epistemology of a deaf sign bilingual researcher.

Key words
Transformation, identity, narratives, metaphors, CAPS SASL, sign bilingualism, audism, post-colonial, bricolage, phenomenography, deaf epistemology, re-imagining, autoethnography