

The history of sign language and deaf education in Turkey

Türkiye’de işaret dili ve sağır insanların eğitimi tarihi

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Sign language is the natural language of the prelingually deaf people particularly without hearing-speech rehabilitation. Otorhinolaryngologists, regarding health as complete physical, mental and psychosocial well-being, aim hearing by diagnosing deafness as deviance from normality. However, it's obvious that the perception conflicted with the behavior which does not meet the mental and social well-being of the individual also contradicts with the definition mentioned above. This article aims to investigate the effects of hearing-speech target ignoring the sign language in Turkish population and its consistency with the history through statistical data, scientific publications and historical documents and to support critical perspective on this issue. The study results showed that maximum 50% of the deaf benefited from hearing-speech program for last 60 years before hearing screening programs; however, systems including sign language in education were not generated. In the light of these data, it is clear that the approach ignoring sign language particularly before the development of screening programs is not reasonable. In addition, considering sign language being part of the Anatolian history from Hittites to Ottomans, it is a question to be answered that why evaluation, habilitation and education systems excluding sign language are still the only choice for deaf individuals in Turkey. Despite legislative amendments in the last 6-7 years, the primary cause of failure to come into force is probably because of inadequate conception of the issue content and importance, as well as limited effort to offer solutions by academicians and authorized politicians. Within this context, this paper aims to make a positive effect on this issue offering a review for the medical staff, particularly otorhinolaryngologists and audiologists.

Key Words: Deaf; education; habilitation; hearing loss; history; rehabilitation; sign language.

İşaret dili, özellikle dil edinimi öncesi işitme kaybı gelişip işitsel-sözel rehabilitasyon sağlanamayanların doğal dilidir. Sağlığı fiziksel, zihinsel ve sosyal bağlamda tam iyilik olarak algılayan kulak burun boğaz hekimleri, sağırlığı normalden farklılık olarak tanımlayarak, işitmeyi hedefler. Ancak, bireyin zihinsel ve sosyal olarak iyiliğini sağlayamayan anlayışın da, yukarıda belirtilen tanımlamayla çelişeceği açıktır. Bu makalede, işaret dilini yadsıyarak yalnızca işitme-konuşmayı hedeflemenin, Türk toplumu üzerindeki etkilerinin ve tarihsel yönden tutarlılığının istatistiksel veriler, bilimsel yayınlar ve tarihi belgeler üzerinden incelenmesi ve konuyla ilgili eleştirel bakış açısının desteklenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Sonuçlar, tarama programları öncesindeki son 60 yılda olguların azami %50'sinin yalnızca işitme-konuşma hedefli programlardan faydalandığını, ancak eğitimde işaret dilini içeren sistemlerin oluşturulmadığını göstermiştir. Bu veriler çerçevesinde, işaret dilini yadsıyan yaklaşımın, özellikle tarama programlarının geliştirilmesinden önce, uygun olmadığı açıktır. Ayrıca işaret dilinin Hititler'den Osmanlılar'a Anadolu tarihinin bir parçası olduğu göz önüne alındığında, Türkiye'de işaret dilini içermeyen değerlendirme, habilitasyon ve eğitim sistemlerinin neden hala tek alternatif olarak sağır bireylere sunulduğu yanıtlanması gereken bir sorudur. Son 6-7 yıldaki mevzuat düzenlemelerine rağmen, bu düzenlemelerin hala uygulamaya girmemesinin en önemli nedeni, muhtemelen sorunun içeriğinin, öneminin ve çözüm yollarının, akademisyenler ve ilgili bürokratlar tarafından yeterince kavranamamış olmasıdır. Bu bağlamda, bu makale kulak burun boğaz hekimleri ve odyologlar başta olmak üzere, tıp camiasının konuya bakışını olumlu etkilemek amacıyla kaleme alınmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sağır; eğitim; habilitasyon; işitme kaybı; tarih; rehabilitasyon; işaret dili.

Sign language (SL) is a main language of the deaf with prelingual hearing loss -who have not satisfactorily experienced hearing via hearing aids or cochlear implants, and speech habilitation.^[1-3] Although the deaf culture concentrated with/at/around SL is an integral part of disability rights^[1,4] as clearly stated in United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,^[5] it is not a familiar concept among Turkish medical staff.

It is clear that medicine aims to complete physical, mental and social well-being as stated by World Health Organization (WHO) in 1946.^[6] Hence, it is understandable that medical staff and particularly otolaryngologists accept hearing as being a part of completeness. However critical thinking on WHO's statement above aiming to point out the importance of providing social well-being for a human together with good mental and physical health, needs investigation.

Under Turkish laws, it is not clear that being culturally deaf has been accepted as a right for the parents to choose for their child born with deafness. In some western countries,^[1,4,7] the parents have right of choice of belonging either or both to hearing or/and deaf culture for their deaf babies.

Even if we set the legislation issue aside, attitudes of Turkish otolaryngologists as much as the majority of Turkish hearing society appear to be in accordance with the conception that deafness is a simply an 'incompleteness', and hence all children with deafness in any age are solely directed to hearing aids, cochlear implants and hearing-speech (re)habilitation programs by the system where SL use is forbidden (this is oralism).

'SUCCESS' RATE OF HEARING AND SPEECH (RE)HABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR DEAF PEOPLE IN TURKEY

Oralism remains on the agenda as the only medical, educational and cultural option (through the legal system in practice) for the deaf in the Turkish Republic for more than 50 years; where rules and practices carried out without the meanings inherent to Deaf culture. Most of the historical data about the deaf in Turkey available thus far, are informative as hearing perspectives.

According to the Turkish Disability Survey (TDS, 2002), 1/3 of all people with hearing loss had speech and language disorders (SLDs).^[8,9] That is, in this survey, about 84.000 deaf citizens of Turkish

Republic are documented as 'unable to hear and to speak'.

It should be emphasized that this survey includes all people with either unilateral or bilateral hearing loss with congenital or acquired origin including otitis media, presbycusis, etc. Therefore besides any cultural data, these 84.000 deaf citizens' exact ratio in sub-populations as people with prelingual or early-onset and severe bilateral hearing loss (SBHL) is not extracted from this survey. It is important to know the exact number of people with prelingual or early-onset SBHL, to estimate the 'success' rate of hearing and speech (re)habilitation.

According to newborn hearing screening (NHS) data, the rate of SBHL was found to be about 0.2% in both 2005 and 2008.^[10,11] The approximate number of live-births between the years of 2005 and 2008 are estimated as 1.350.000 yearly (the mean annual growth rate of the general population is about 0.14%), and it is estimated that about 2.700 babies with SBHL were born yearly in this period. Between 1940 and 2000, the mean annual growth rate of the general population was about 0.22% -with an increment of population from approximately 18 million in 1940 to 68 million in 2000.^[12,13] By using these data, we may estimate that less than 130.000 children with prelingual SBHL were born between 1940 and 2002. Hence, it could be estimated that 84.000 people with both hearing loss and SLD in 2002-survey^[10,11] comprise approximately 65% of all subjects with prelingual SBHL living (or lived) in Turkey between 1940-2002. That means, (if we take account only the rate of the children with prelingual and early postnatal SBHL according to the contemporary NHS data) the 'success' rate of the current ('only way is oralism') approach for deaf people appears to be less than 35% till 2002.

However, the numbers of the children with SBHL in early childhood after the newborn period might be assumed as significant because of the severe acquired infectious diseases in the pre-antibiotic era or late-onset genetic disorders due to more frequent consanguinous marriages in those years; thus even if an additional 0.05% must to be added to the population above, altogether, we may estimate that in 2002, there must have been not more than 170.000 people with SLD in relation to SBHL. Hence 50% as the best ratio could be assumed as the 'success' rate of hearing aids and

speech (re)habilitation programs for SBHL during childhood before 2002!

In accordance with our first assumptions above (as 35% 'success' rate), Gürboğa and Kargin^[14] documented that about 70-75% of the deaf adults in Turkey prefer SL in daily life communication; only less than 10% of them are used to speak for communication in any occasion.

SCHOOLING SYSTEM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR THE DEAF IN TURKEY

As a very distributive conclusion emerging from the discussion above, we could state that the hearing (re)habilitation system in Turkey before the NHS program appears to be very far from providing wellness by hearing and speaking tools to those with bilateral severe deafness with early childhood-onset. Now, in this section, we want to extend our content to the education side and pronounce that 'only choice' (oralist) attitude in Turkey has also been a mask to hide the reality in the school system.

The current system had a majority of the children with SBHL directed to the special deaf schools -as 'hearing disabled' ones- if SLD was evident. In the 2001-2 period, 84% of all elementary school children with deafness were enrolled in special deaf schools.^[15] However by this time in these schools, SL had not been used by teachers.

In the 1950s, special education had been started as a part of the formal education system in Turkey,^[16-18] and since that time there was no further hesitation on oralist implementation, although some Turkish papers also indicated alternative education systems.^[19-21]

Further, there were many hints to show that (re)habilitation based only on hearing and speech methods could not have been working well: First, the mean diagnostic age for deafness was 4.7 years in the 1970s in Ankara,^[22] and it raised only to 2.4-3.5 years in the early 1990s.^[23,24] The rate of hearing aids users was very low -about 21% of all with hearing loss.^[8,9] The school screening studies have also shown that although most of the students in the deaf elementary schools have SBHL, about half of them were not using the hearing aids.^[25] The E-isit project in 2009 clearly demonstrated that the majority of students in the deaf high schools in Ankara were using SL in daily life but not hearing aids.^[26]

In brief, clearly for more than 50 years, regardless of the fact that the early diagnosis and use of hearing aids were not accommodating and most of the children with prelingual SBHL were not for communicating through speech, formal special education system (deaf schools) have never used SL in Turkey.

CHALLENGES OF HEARING AND SPEECH (RE)HABILITATION APPROACH

It is a real challenge and long-lasting issue to (re)habilitate speech in any case with prelingual deafness particularly in late ages.^[19-21,23,27-29] The importance of brain plasticity and many other factors in this challenge have been reported.^[27] Therefore, it could be concluded that complete physical, mental, and social well-being by hearing and speech is mostly age-dependent: Early onset, late diagnosis and delayed (re)habilitation lessen human well-being by depriving hearing and speech. At that point, the otolaryngologist and other related staff should debate over both critical descriptions of human and further well being.

Bingöl^[30] points out 'mind' and 'transferring the thoughts and ideas' as main descriptive features for being a human and we know that SL is capable enough for perfect communication and education for these deaf boys and girls.^[1,4,7,19] If so, for instance in a case with SBHL who could not progress to speech till the elementary school-age, could we insist on having him/her to speak a few additional words in a daily life as an only challenge for all? Could an education system based on only hearing and speech provide this deaf person with opportunities as an equal citizen of society in today's world? How about considering -and having ready- all systems in the first day after diagnosis?

It is clear that the United Nations (UN's) first declaration in the 21st Century^[5] says 'no' to the first and second questions above and 'yes' to 'having all systems available' as a part of human rights. This point of view is still, unfortunately, not internalized by today's medical staff in Turkey, although being against 'SL' or against 'the deaf using SL' have never been an inherent characteristic of our history and culture as shown in the following section.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS ON SL AND EDUCATION OF THE DEAF

The history of SL and deaf education in Turkey are reviewed here, to provide a better view on the assumption above. Examples from other countries

are also contextually mentioned when a direct relation to the history of Turkey is evident.

SIGN LANGUAGE AND THE DEAF PEOPLE IN ANATOLIA

The oldest available story related to SL and the deaf in the world starts in Anatolia. The Hittites (2000 to 1.200 BC) were one of the ancient civilizations and states in Anatolia. Soysal^[31] clearly presented that deaf men and women were working in Hittites' religious ceremonies by using SL. Further, Murat^[32] reports a Hittite city as 'the city where deaf people talk' ('sağır insanların konuştuğu şehir' in Turkish) near 'Hakmis' (today called 'Amasya' -city- in Turkey). Although there is no more data found yet on what 'deaf people talk' mean in the ancient sources, we shouldn't overlook the fact that this city might have been the oldest signing community -as (i.e.) in some particular ways similar to the Martha's Vineyard Island in the United States (U.S.),^[33] Yucatec Maya village in Mexico,^[34] Desa Kolok in Indonesia,^[35] etc.

Overall, we may say that SL has been welcomed in Anatolia for at least 3.500 years of history. However, we should underscore that there is no data on both the rights of deaf people and their inclusion to the society in daily life of Hittites. Although the Hittite Empire was one of the first multilingual states in history since they used at least four different languages in their schools and daily life,^[36] there is no evidence of the Deaf education with SL in schools. We should also underscore the fact that there were evidences of SL use in ancient Egypt within the same time period with the Hittites.^[37] In an Egyptian papyrus (Papyrus Koller) from the 19th ancestry (around 1.200 BC), the following advice was written probably for a student of the temple:^[37]

"Thou art not a hunter of the desert, nor a Mazoi of the West! Thou art one who is deaf and does not hear, to whom men make (signs) with the hand."

In this period of time when Kadesh Peace Treaty was signed between Antic Egypt and the Hittites, it appears to be that both parties also may have shared a SL-reality of the deaf people in their homelands. Hence, we can conclude that SL was evident in both sides of the Mediterranean Sea between or around 2.000-1.200 BC.

After the Hittites, in Lydia's time (from the Bronze Age to the 6th Century BC), the first deaf person in the history has been reported by

Herodth from Caria (5th Century BC) (The History of Herodotus).^[38] The great but last king Krezues (called "Karun" in Turkish) of Lydia had a deaf son. According to the sayings of Herodotus, although he played an important role to save Krezues' life in the last war with Persians, his name was never mentioned in the history; he was only 'deaf son of Krezues', who was 'handicapped eventually'. Hence, this boy could also be considered as the first deaf person found in the history who was neglected by both the parents and historians.

The History of Herodotus provides us another early source for SL in antiquity:^[38] Krezues was worried about his state's future because of increasing Persian threat. He had to decide either to war or to keep peace with them, and he consulted the oracles as a usual way of that period. But, since it was a critical decision he wanted to be sure that the oracles he was consulted were perfectly eligible. Therefore, he organized a kind of examination for many popular oracles throughout Anatolia and the neighboring regions. One of them, the Delphic oracle (from Delphi which is an ancient city next to Mount Parnosus in Greece) answered his questions true by sending him a long poetry including the following lines:

"...I can count the sands, and I can measure the ocean;

I have ears for the silent, and know what the dumb man meaneth..."

As it is understood from this poetry,^[38] the Delphic oracle was very proud of him/herself since he/she knew the language of the speechless people. Although the Delphic oracle's prediction caused a terrible end for Krezues and Lydia at the end of the war with Persians, this poetry was clearly another direct evidence of SL in antiquity as linked to the Anatolia.

Another evidence of SL around Anatolia comes from Persian history: A royal person, Mordechai, who lived in the period of Persian King Xerxes I (519-465 BC) has been known as a person who knew deaf people's language and were eligible to translate it.^[39]

More recently, the great philosopher Plato (427-347 BC) from Athens' State emerged in history as the first person who described signing as an eligible language for communication. In well-known Cratylus' dialog, his Socrates refers to SL as follows:^[3]

Socrates: And here I will ask you a question: Suppose that we had no voice or tongue, and wanted to communicate with one another, should we not, like the deaf and dumb, make signs with the hands and head and the rest of the body?

Hermogenes: There would be no choice, Socrates.

However, Plato has not been noted as a cherished character in the Western disability history because of his following declarations about disability and chronic illness:^[33,40,41]

'...it will leave the unhealthy to die, and those whose psychological constitution is incurably corrupt it will put to death.'

In the Western Deaf culture, Aristotle (384-322 BC) who was the most prominent follower of Plato also emerged as a person who was not a friend of SL or deaf persons since the following conclusions pronounced his philosophy concerning deafness:^[42]

"Deaf people could not be educated, without hearing, people could not learn. Greek was the perfect language; all people who did not speak Greek were considered Barbarians. Deaf equals barbarian".

Further, like Plato, Aristotle -Macedonian in origin- also suggested not rearing the disabled child:^[40,43]

"As to the exposure and rearing of children, let there be a law that no deformed child shall live..."

Briefly, Anatolia and neighboring areas (Greece, Iran and Egypt) appears to be connected with SL of the deaf people from 3.500 years ago. Further, while deaf people with their SL in Hittites reported to be seen as performers of religious ceremonies and security guards; antique Greek civilization -its philosophers- appears to be the source of unfriendly approach to SL or speechless people. Also antique Egyptians showed their respect to the deaf society by pointing out the importance of use of SL in communication with the deaf.

SIGN LANGUAGE AND SPEECHLESS (‘DİLSİZ’) ROYAL PEOPLE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

There are well-described duties and positions of the deaf performers within the religious ceremonies of Hittites,^[31] but there is no information about the royal people and other staff whether they learned and used SL. Miles^[44,45] clearly states that the Ottomans' court was the first place in the world

in which SL was preferred as a communication skill on purpose. Miles reported that SL was a preferable communication skill in the Ottomans' court. Being speechless with or without being deaf was a major advantage for employment as a royal servant from the end of 15th to 18th Century in the Ottoman Empire. It was reported that some privileged royal Vezirs and regional governors, but not all, were also permitted to use 'Dilsiz' at their courts. Miles^[44,45] state that the Sultans, their children and royal staff learned SL, and there was a school within the palace's garden in which elder speechless people who live in İstanbul were coming to teach details of signing to the young generation. In that period, SL was also named as language of silence, and learning SL was called as 'learning beauty of silence or soundless'.

In the Ottoman palace, those people were named as 'Dilsiz' ('dil' as a word in Turkish means that both 'language' and 'tongue'; hence 'dilsiz' can refer to 'without tongue', 'without language' or 'speechless'). Indeed, it is known that not all of the 'dilsiz' staff were deaf; some of them had the tongue amputated on purpose for being liegeman in the court and other royal or governmental places. Although the western sources mentioned these people (either deaf or amputated 'dilsiz') as diverting staff such as dwarfs and buffoons, they in fact had important duties in the palace as convenient and secretive servants, guards, executioners and couriers.^[44,45] It is also reported that 'dilsiz' staff in the palace were mentioned by Evliya Çelebi as very watchful and observant; since they were capable of lip-reading, they inform the Sultan and/or other royal staff about what the visitors or even other staff in/around the palace talk about.^[42,45]

It has been written that after retirement, 'Dilsiz' staff mostly lived in İstanbul as arts-and craftsman. Miles reports them as capable people who could manage trade very well and were very aware of the daily life, politics and religious concepts. Miles^[44,45] says that 'dilsiz' bathhouse (bathhouse is called "hamam" in Turkish) was one of the places of business in which the deaf people worked or owned. It was reported that this bathhouse was particularly for the officers or upper class people of the Sultan.

Even if it is known that SL in the Ottoman court was capable of discussing many topics and transmitted to the next generations by either

teaching or natural ways, there was no evidence that today's Turkish SL (TSL) originated from the Ottoman court. In that, there is a big gap to consider between the Ottoman court' SL during 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and SL used in the Ottoman deaf schools in 19th Century.

In the meantime, from the 15th to 18th Century, SL was not popular in the Western countries, and the deaf people (if they were not able to speak) faced many social, economic and even religious limitations.^[32,39,41] Although Cardano^[46] (1501-1576 AC), an Italian doctor and mathematician, said that deaf people were capable of using their minds, and stated that deaf people could learn to read and write without learning how to speak first, oralist methods were the only way to rehabilitate a deaf child to provide his inclusion in the society and even the religion till the French Revolution in 1789.^[33,40,42,46,47] The French Revolution as a complementary to L'Eppee's prominent works in Paris (1760-1789) clearly stated that education and public service in SL were the rights of the deaf people as a part of the citizenship concept.^[33] Although education in SL started spreading into many countries after the French Revolution, it does not mean that SL has been accepted as the 'only choice' for all related staff, families, and even politicians in the Western countries. Oralist perspectives were also increased and schools using only hearing and speech methods with contribution of contemporary schooling systems and even hearing aids were improved.

Particularly the clerics supported oralism since speech was divine in their thoughts/beliefs. Further, in 1880, results from the international 'Milan conference' of deaf educators lead to prohibition of SL and declared that (re)habilitation for speaking should be the only -or superior- way of deaf children's education; it was assumed that religious pressure was the main source of this declaration.^[33,42,46] Results of this conference affected many countries. The schools teaching the deaf children by the deaf teachers or with the staff using SL were either closed or methods were changed and many deaf teachers went into retirement; somehow a journey to speaking for all started. The USA was the least affected country in this period and education and public service in SL also continued to develop in the US during the subsequent years by Gallaudet's and Clerck's leadership.^[33,42,46]

In spite of the implications in the Ottoman palace and court, it is also reported that the first deaf school in the Ottoman state was founded in İstanbul as a part of the İstanbul Commerce School by the Austrian merchant Grati Efendi (Monsieur Grati, who was also Director of a Commerce School in İstanbul) around 1889 and 1891. The first deaf teacher of this school was Pekmezyan who was graduate of a deaf school in Paris.^[17,44,48,49] Sultan Abdulhamid-II was the crown of the Ottomans in those years, and the Minister of Education was Münif Paşa.^[17,48,49] While the financial source of this school was partially provided by the state, there were also some special cuts from the salary of all governmental officers throughout the Ottoman state. In the historical state archives, there are more than many documents showing how the education ministry and the treasury of the Ottoman government strictly followed these cuts.^[50]

The crown-years of Abdulhamit-II were a major schooling period of the Ottomans although they were very tough years politically and economically.^[51] Before the First World War, it is known that four more deaf schools (Merzifon, Corfu, Selanik-Thessalonica and İzmir) were also founded in the Ottoman state.^[49] Building the deaf school in Selanik-Thessalonica was completed in 1909 by contribution of Edgart Farragi,^[45] but presumably education meant to be started by Fuat Bey between 1911 and 1913 -who graduated from the İstanbul Deaf School in 1911 and was noted as a founder of the Selanik deaf school and left Selanik in 1912.^[48,49] In this period of time the İzmir deaf school was also founded as a private school in 1910 by Karmona, who was a deaf tailor trained in the Paris deaf school^[45,49] as Edgart Farraci. Fuat Bey, previously founder of the Selanik deaf school was also seen as the founder of this institute.^[48] Probably after the First World War, he left Selanik as many other Turks did and later settled down in İzmir. The İzmir school thrived rapidly with growing numbers of students, which they as noted also stood out with their uniforms and brought attention.^[48]

We know that SL was used in the Deaf schools in both İstanbul and İzmir back then^[17,48,49] but no publication is present about the teaching system in Corfu and Selanik-Thessalonica deaf schools, which are both in Greece today. That means, in the light of evidences today, the Ottoman rulers did not force the founders of these schools to follow the Milan conference declarations.

The SL alphabet used in the İstanbul and İzmir Deaf schools was most probably originated from French SL (FSL), and used by adding some extra finger positions to demonstrate Arabic letters and Turkish vowels of the Ottoman Turkish. It was a one-hand alphabet as in FSL and American SL (ASL). Turgut and Taşçı^[49] reported that this alphabet was used in the deaf schools in İstanbul and İzmir till the Alphabet revolution in 1928 after foundation of Republic of Turkey. In 1928, founders of the republic changed the Turkish alphabet to Latin letters from the Arabic ones.^[52] Then, a two-hand alphabet, which is almost similar to today's Turkish SL (TSL) alphabet, became popular in the Deaf community. However, according to studies of Turgut and Taşçı, İzmir Deaf School used the old one-hand alphabet for a longer period.^[49]

Unfortunately the historical description regarding deaf and SL in depth remained dark and in decline due to various reasons as a poor accessibility of the historical data regarding lack of publication as well as having very limited literature to be transferred into new Turkish after the alphabet revolution, etc.

SIGN LANGUAGE AND DEAF EDUCATION THROUGH THE MODERNIZATION PROJECT OF TURKEY (REPUBLIC PERIOD, 1923-)

Westernization and Europeanization terms were commonly used among 19th-20th reformers in Turkey as constructional and universal form of modernization; which states the commitment to borrowing ideas, attitudes, institutions from Western countries. Although the history of Turkish modernization should be considered attentively, it was a more radical cultural change than a short description of a transformation as from Ottoman Empire -endowed with ethnic diversity- to a secular, nation-state Republic of Turkey.^[53] There were for instance series of reorganization of the institutions that also occurred in certain periods of Ottoman Empire; there may be significant civil organizational and schooling movements for/of deaf people during these periods. Paris deaf school' graduates for example -as mentioned above- stand out as a founders of some of the first deaf schools at the end of Ottoman State.

Foundations of the politics to implement SL use in education of the deaf in Ottomans remain unknown for now whether -for example- it was solely related to the Ottoman traditions of law and diversity or was there any contribution from the

French Revolution. There were however a wave in the West which gave a tremendous boost to oralism in the late 19th Century^[54] which in turn influenced schools in Republic of Turkey and might have some influences also at the end of Ottoman State.

First of all -contrary to popular belief among the public as 1950s-; 1925 was the earlier turning point in the history of Turkish deaf schools regarding not only the beginning of the restrictions to use SL but also the exclusion of the older deaf children from these schools in parallel with the decisions made to restrict and prohibit SL and to embrace oralist methods of Western modernity. The İzmir school was 'taken from' Fuat Bey and transferred to the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1925. Appointee chemist Aziz Bey also resigned as soon as he understood the task needed expertise; then Dr. Necati Kemal Kip, who was a neurologist, became a minister to the İzmir school in 1925.^[48]

When Kip was assigned in 1925, he started to use the German method of 'learning phonetic language with gestures' and 'completely removed the sign method'. Kip's experience came from his previous investigations in the 'German School for Deaf and Mute'. Gök^[48] states that the ongoing education mode with SL was told as the main reason of 'İstanbul deaf and mute school's abolishment and annexation to the İzmir deaf school, in parallel to Kip's application to the ministry with reference to unification of education.

In this new era, any deaf person over 12-years-old lost their right to be a student and was constrained to find their way through private institutions. By the time the Ankara deaf school was founded in the early 1920s and the new İstanbul deaf school as a private enterprise opened its doors in 1944 which later transferred to the board of education in 1953. While Kamona and Fuat Bey were founders of the İzmir school and were already used to sign;^[48,49] Süleyman Gök, who was a partially speaking deaf, founded this deaf school in Aksaray (İstanbul) in 1944, by using his own sources and partially supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and families of the deaf students,^[48,49] after the oralist movement started. Although Gök's^[48] book reflects forbiddance of SL, Turgut and Taşçı^[49] noted that SL, literacy and dactylogy were main topics in this school; Interestingly, Gök's school started using two-hand alphabet while the İzmir deaf school was still used to finger-spell by one-hand alphabet. Further, in 1950s, another deaf

school was founded in Diyarbakır and in early 1950s, special education was integrated to the formal education system and all deaf schools in Turkey were transferred to the Ministry of Education.^[16-18,48,49] Overall there were four deaf schools in the 1950s; in İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara and Diyarbakır cities serving as primary schools only.^[48]

Girgin^[17] reported that in 1952, foreign experts who specialized in the field of special education were recruited and a program to train Turkish teachers was started. McLaughlin, from New York, and Fronthaller from Austria were invited to give lectures. After Kip, this should be considered as a plus to spread attitude and beliefs for ignorance of SL in Turkish schools for the deaf. Although there is no evidence of bylaws issued to prohibit SL in any code, these implementations approved as a sharp turn starting in 1925-6 and reapproved in 1952-3 by the teacher training program and so on; 45 to 72 years later then the Milan Conference, teachers and academicians who came from or trained in particularly Germany and the U.S.A., prohibited SL as a principal item for educating deaf and it was injected by the officers to Turkey through the modernization project.

There is no exact data on how the transition occurred. But it probably originated from the Milan conference declaration in 1880s^[33] and earlier movements of German educated Kip in Turkey. It is clearly evident that after founding the formal special education system in Turkey, negative attitudes to SL has been progressively imposed by the related teachers and academicians upon society and particularly upon the parents. Today, an elder deaf informant says that particularly in the period earlier than 1980s, teachers and special teachers were like the 'enemy' to SL because it was thought that SL was preventing speaking (unpublished data provided by Doğan Özdemir, who is a promoting leader of deaf nongovernmental organizations in Turkey). Then, starting from the mid of 1980s, it was said that teachers and staff started understanding the necessity of SL for first keeping them under 'control'.

In 1995, the Ministry of National Education published a guidebook including a list of 2.000 signs ('Yetişkinler İçin Türk İşaret Dili Klavuzu', Guidebook of Turkish Sign Language for The Adults).^[55] In this guidebook, both two- and one-hand alphabets were introduced. In this book

it has been noted that studies on SL in the Ministry of Education started in 1983, and a special commission was founded in 1987, and ultimately they published this guidebook in 1995. In the presentation section of this guidebook, the Minister of Education in 1995 particularly underlines that 'this book has been prepared for the deaf adults' (*not for the deaf students!*) 'who were unable to continue (or succeed) the formal special education system in Turkey'. He also pointed out that the main purpose of the guidebook was to provide a source for these deaf adults to use a unified SL throughout the country. There was -not obvious but- delicate remark about this book; saying that they were absolutely sure that SL was not necessary for the deaf school children and their teachers, and although they published this guidebook, it could not be considered as a sign of any change in the conventional oralist system. In preface, the chief of the special education department in the Ministry also clearly noted that all deaf schools of the Ministry of Education were used to following speech methods. She, however, explained the purpose of this book by pointing out two realities in those days (as we mentioned in the previous sections): (i) Because of late diagnosis and fitting, there was a tendency to use mixed methods including signs, and (ii) the deaf people were used to use SL with each other.^[55] In this guidebook, although there was no definite grammar information, most of the sentence examples were as in the structure of Turkish, but not in TSL.^[55]

Although SL was ignored in the deaf schools from 1925s, these schools still provided the first real opportunity to the deaf children and youngsters to be together and recognize their SL as in the examples of some western countries.^[1,4,7,56] Most of the students were boarders, and hence they had much time to be together and learn TSL. Deaf NGOs and their umbrella organization, the Turkish National Deaf Federation (TNDF) as well as sports clubs and federations have been very active especially in particular big cities and covered the pupils very efficiently to help them learn SL and let them join into the deaf society.

Many associations founded as being influenced by first Aksaray association and TNDF was founded mainly by students of Süleyman Gök's school in 1960, and this generation played a very initiative role in keeping TSL and further signing society together during the ignorance years. After

the 1980s, in parallel to social and economical improvements and particularly after the mid of 1990s in parallel to increasing relationships with European Union, deaf NGOs increased their activities.

However, in the Western world, negative effects of the oralist approach and very positive results of SL have come in view of the scientific world since the 1970s^[1,4,7,33] In those years also, disability rights movements starting from the World War II had also a reasonable power in politics and it was increasing in parallel to improvements of democratic levels of industrialized Western countries. And SL strikingly returned to the Western education system for the deaf since the 1970s. In addition to tension between learning either manual or only through speech methods; now there are several ways of total communication that comprise speech therapy, SL or signs, lip reading and literacy altogether; and later also bi-lingual education considerably new approach established -in reaction to oralist perspectives including total communication- in which education is supported with both SL and speech language learning but (shortly saying) instead of altogether as in total communication, acquisition of further information is achieved through SL.^[1,4,7,20,21,33]

Presumably as a part of these improvements, since the 1990s, some of the volunteers, academicians and researchers from abroad started come to Turkey and supported the works in Deaf NGOs and managed some research. All achieved many positive outputs locally, some of them worked in cooperation with prominent Turkish deaf people and academicians, and were able to produced permanent products for deaf education in Turkey.^[56,57] In the 2000s, Zeshan^[56] organized the first TSL training program by using a special methodology and material. This program was continuously run under the name of the TNDF and mainly supported by the İstanbul City Municipality. Ozyurek^[58] in Koç University founded the first website about TSL including 750 signs. Then, in late 2000s, Boğaziçi and Gazi Universities also started SL studies in İstanbul and Ankara.^[59] Gazi University started to pursue SL works with the need emerged by founding the Audiology Department but furthered the aims and activities in accordance with the needs of Turkey; gathering different institutions' and specialists' interest to SL and Deaf Studies in several ways, including organizing countrywide

and international academic meetings regarding deaf studies and sign language concepts. TNDF carried out more and more SL courses for both the deaf and hearing people by using Dikyuva and Zeshan's book.^[57]

In 2005, the new disability Code indicated SL as a necessity for education and public service in Turkey.^[60] Although this Code directly nominated some governmental institutions to prepare the TSL facilities in cooperation with TNDF, there has been almost no change until 2007, and the only attempt was the workshop with a concrete result of voting to recognize two-handed TSL alphabet formally in 2007.^[61] Later, the finger-spelling system for Turkish words was also included in the electronic dictionaries of Turkish Language Institution ('Türk Dil Kurumu', TDK) in 2008.^[62] The workshop date (June 7) was named as Turkish Sign Language Day ('*Türk İşaret Dili Bayramı*'). In 2010, TDK held another meeting (Çalıştay), but couldn't implement the plans derived in this and succeeding meetings by the volunteers and contributors yet. In 2011, Gazi University urged to organize SIGN5 International Conference of Sign Language Users to boost academic, bureaucratic and communities' interest more, and the conference was a milestone for Turkey in many ways as to change prejudiced disabling, stereotyped attitudes towards deaf individuals.

Ultimately today, SL has not yet been used in the deaf schools nor included in the program of special education departments.^[63,64] The only gain is that remarkable numbers of teachers in the deaf schools are now willing to learn SL. Unfortunately, most of them still learn it from the deaf students when they start working in these schools, and further, a trend to signed Turkish instead of TSL has been developing among the teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of the Turkish people and Anatolia from antiquity reflects the familiarity of SL and the deaf people using SL in a positive way in contrast to the Western countries before the 19th Century. For 600 years (1299 to 1923 AC) the Ottomans did not share the same doctrines as the Greek philosophers (5-6th Century BC) who dramatically exaggerated the importance of speech to being human and suggested elimination of disabled people from society, or the declaration of Milan Conference (1880) in which education in SL was prohibited. As earlier Anatolians (Hittites), Ottomans also

used SL and had certain roles for deaf individuals, and the rest of the deaf people lived in society as free citizens. Even if no education and public service in SL was reported until the 19th Century, evidences show that there was no religious or public restriction for the deaf to live as an equal Ottoman citizen. And in the 19th Century, parallel to schooling process in European countries, the Ottomans also opened deaf schools but kept SL alive.

Schools during the Ottoman period were not influenced by related results of the Milan conference and continued to use SL in the institutions. It took gradually 55 to 80 years for oralist approaches to dominate over school systems in Turkey after the Milan conference. Since the 1925s, SL was ignored on purpose in Turkish deaf schools. Since those years having lost of all information on previous possible practices, no educational setting with SL has been available in Turkey; even though disability laws (in 2005) and the UN declaration on rights of people with disabilities (in 2009) was signed by Turkish Parliament. This is a real ambivalent situation regarding both history and current reality of Turkey.

Apart from the discussion whether choosing to be culturally deaf (that can also mean, not to be (re)habilitated via hearing and speaking) is a right for the parents to decide for their own child with hearing loss, there is a reality that only hearing aids and hearing and speech methods did not support all children with SBHL to provide them complete physical, mental, and social well-being in Turkey. We estimate that the best success rate of education via hearing and speech approach was 50% before NHS program started in 2003. Accordingly, the authors suggest drawing limits of normality of human beings not through an axis lining on hearing and speech, but doing it through the landmarks of diversity. By this approach, we will certainly recognize that SL will provide more information and cultural elements to share for all and having SL in education to foster self-fulfillment through this enhanced sharing opportunity for the deaf instead of the education by the oralist solo hegemony which -for many citizens- deteriorating 'hearing disability' and result in person without having any language -and participating- efficiently. It is clear that the deaf citizens using SL will (economically and socio-culturally) contribute to the society much more with self-fulfillment if they are not to be stereotyped, diagnosed and left out

-like 'having no language' and culture at all- unless their speech is heard by patronizing, prejudiced, eugenic, discriminative minds. That is, the policy implications and regulations to implement civil rights of the deaf people in Turkey should be revised in all levels and political actions should be taken in accordance with the human rights of all.

Bi-lingual education setting -including SL- should be added to formal special education programs from early childhood in Turkey. By giving major priority to early acquisition of language development, the system should include both options, and decidedly aim to better literacy levels of the spoken language for higher education and needs for mainstream social life.

And besides, it should be recognized that SL is not only necessity for educational settings, as well as other institutions, health service in SL is also a legal obligation in today's Turkey. Therefore, as one of the main social institution in relation to deaf citizens,^[64] we have to organize our system of hospitals and clinics to serve the deaf in SL.

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