

Framing deaf people and their problems in public discourse during the campaign for the legal recognition of Argentine Sign Language

Rocío Martínez¹

¹University of Buenos Aires (UBA) & National Scientific and Technical Research Council – Argentina (Conicet), rociomartinez@conicet.gov.ar

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The national association of deaf people in Argentina (Confederación Argentina de Sordos, CAS) has been advocating for the legal recognition of Argentine Sign Language (Lengua de Señas Argentina, LSA) since 2007. In 2022, a significant milestone was achieved when the LSA bill, which seeks to legally recognize LSA, was passed in the Lower Chamber of the National Congress. However, for the bill to become law, it still needs to be passed in the Upper Chamber, which is expected to occur in 2023. Throughout CAS' LSA campaign, the bill has faced strong resistance from various stakeholders. Over the years, different conceptualizations of deaf people, as well as the problems that the LSA bill aims to address, have been put forward. In this presentation, I will examine the way deaf people and the problem the bill seeks to address are framed in a selection of political messages in public discourses made by deaf and hearing stakeholders in different moments of the LSA campaign. To do so, I will draw upon Lakoff's cognitive understanding of frames (2014), which refers to the fundamental mental structures that shape our perception of the world, and of conceptual metaphors (2006), which refer to cross-domain mappings in which one mental domain is conceptualized in terms of another.

Through an analysis of the linguistic expressions made by stakeholders in selected discourses during the LSA campaign, in which I have been participating, I identify *the deficit frame* and *the minoritized group frame* as the two opposing frames that exist in the conceptualization of deaf people. These are similar, but not equal to the ones described by Bauman and Murray (2009): the hearing loss and the deaf gain frame. Then, concerning the construction of the problem that the LSA bill aims to address, I observe two main problems constructed through different spatial metaphors. On the one hand, the deficit frame highlights *the inclusion problem*, which relies in the metaphors SOCIETY IS A CONTAINER and INCLUSION IS MOVEMENT OF AN ENTITY FROM AN OUTER LOCATION TO A LOCATION WITHIN THE CONTAINER. The linguistic expressions used within the inclusion problem conceptualize deaf people as occupying an outer location because they are seen as lacking something (e.g., hearing or communication skills), while hearing people occupy an inner location within the container. The act of inclusion, or movement from the outer to the inner location, is initiated by hearing people and institutions, who are viewed as the agents of inclusion. Deaf people, on the contrary, are portrayed as the entity that needs to be moved, and, thus, are positioned as patients or beneficiaries. On the other hand, the minoritized group frame emphasizes *the inequality problem*, which centers on the asymmetry of power relations between dominant and subordinated group(s)/language(s). The construction of this problem is based on several spatial metaphors, as described by Massone & Martínez (2013). There are metaphors in the vertical scale, such as POWER IS UP, in which hearing people, institutions, and the government are positioned in upper locations, while deaf people and their groups are positioned in lower locations. In addition, there are metaphors in the horizontal scale, such as GROUPS OF PEOPLE ARE CONTAINERS OF DIFFERENT SIZE ACCORDING TO THE POWER RELATION AMONG THEM. In the latter, deaf people and their communities/groups are conceptualized as small containers with more or less porous boundaries in relation to larger, more powerful containers. I argue that the difficulty in passing the LSA bill and the resistance faced can be attributed to these two opposing frames, which result in vastly different constructions of the problem and the actors involved.

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