Experiences of Deaf Students in Chile: A Contribution to Social Justice

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Abstract

In Chile, education of deaf students historically revealed a position of subordination with respect to the hearing population, oppressive dynamics, and reparatory inclusion mechanisms. Therefore, the following questions are to be answered from the individual experiences of deaf adults: What situations experienced at school represent areas of social justice and injustice? And what do Chilean deaf adults expect from education in terms of social justice? The methodological approach corresponds to a biographical-narrative design, with the participation of six deaf adults connected to the educational system. The findings reveal the absence of affection, unequal treatment, and a lack of social esteem in the experiences related in these narratives in regular classrooms. That is, there is no information in the narratives revealing that Honneth's (1997) fundamental principles

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of reciprocal recognition were respected in their experiences. The narrators also state that deaf individuals should be taught through Chilean Sign Language (LSCh) and other visual strategies. The main conclusions indicate that a cooperative work is necessary to vindicate the spheres of recognition as a social justice approach, especially in favor of the linguistic and cultural rights of the deaf community.

Introduction

Years of audist practices have reinforced the belief that those who speak are in a position of superiority over those who sign, which is, in turn, reinforced through educational practices, public policies, and family dynamics (Reagan, Matlins, and Pielick 2021), which consider deaf people as incomplete. Critical approaches refer to "disability as oppression, [which] means recognizing and making visible the inferior position of people with disabilities in society, and also acknowledging that this position was related to ideologies that justified and perpetuated it" (Revuelta and Hernández 2021, 18).

Therefore, it seems necessary to observe reality in places where scientific research about Deafhood and its narratives is still scarce (Morales-Acosta, Lenis Cajiao, and Aguilar Arias, 2020). Such is the case of Chile, a country whose educational system tends to standardize, stratify, exclude, and make differences among students invisible (Ferrada et al. 2021).

As a consequence of the principle of equal opportunities established by the current Constitution in 1980, different governments have distributed resources, goods, and services in the educational system to repair or compensate for deficiencies, so that all students have the possibility to meet the requirements of the established standards and to compete for the opportunities that society may offer (Ferrada 2018, 2023). Correspondingly, there is Law 20.422 to "ensure the right to equal opportunities for people with disabilities," both in education and in employment and other social areas (Ministry of Planification 2010, art.1). This law categorizes deaf people as "handicapped," although, after a decade, it has been modified to add cultural elements specific to the Chilean deaf community, starting with Law 21.303 (Ministry of Social Development and Family 2021). Thus, only since 2021 has the Chilean State recognized Chilean Sign Language (LSCh) as the first language of deaf people and as the central element of their identity

and culture. In this way, it "guarantees access to all contents of the common curriculum through sign language as the first language and in written Spanish as the second language" (art. 34).

In this context, it is also stated that LSCh, ideally, will be taught by qualified deaf adults. So, it is worth asking how deaf people will meet the required qualifications if, during their oralist school years, there probably was not adequate communication; they could not learn through their first language; they were marginalized and even punished (Cuevas 2013). In educational practice, both globally and locally, the majority of hearing individuals have related to deaf people through prejudices, power, or ignorance regarding an "identity" that does not imply disability or incompleteness (Reagan 2020), especially teachers, who have invisibilized the voice and expression of the deaf for a long time, due to ignorance of the characteristics of deaf culture and beliefs of oralism superiority, as indicated by other studies in Chile (Becerra-Sepúlveda 2020; De la Paz and Salamanca 2009; Muñoz et al. 2020).

We argue that epistemological progress regarding the education of the deaf in Chile has been very slow, regardless of the promotion of diversification in teaching strategies, curricular adjustments (Ministry of Education of Chile 2015a), and legislative efforts (Ministry of Social Development and Family 2021; Ministry of Education of Chile 2015b; Ministry of Planification 2010). The appreciation of deaf culture and the establishment of levels of LSCh teaching are still pending, especially with the possible incorporation of deaf teachers or co-educators (González and Muñoz 2022).

Regarding the preparation of deaf teachers in Chile, Initial Teacher Training (ITT) with specialization in deaf education is only offered at two universities: the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación, located in the city of Santiago (the capital of the country) and the Universidad Austral de Chile in Puerto Montt (Los Lagos Region). Therefore, the options for training are very limited in the country. Although other higher education institutions may open their doors to the deaf community, generally, they do not have specific programs for deaf education.

In this regard, we also argue that there are low expectations for deaf students to continue their education at a higher level despite

accommodations or compensatory support. Specifically, between the years 2018 and 2022, at the national level, only 253 deaf students applied for the admission process to Chilean universities; of them, only 3.5 percent were selected (DEMRE 2023).

In the event of successfully entering university, deaf students are socially classified as "hearing impaired," a situation that allows them to apply for scholarships or other financial assistance so that, from this classification, they can access benefits (De Meulder 2015). Here lies the complexity of the political discourse, situated in the perspective of the rights of "less capable" individuals to participate in society, but without valuing their social contribution or differences in identity and culture. This is a mistaken position that causes feelings of social injustice in the Chilean deaf community and hinders progress toward social integration, which, for this study, we understand, based on Honneth's theory of social justice, as "a process of inclusion through stable forms of recognition" (Honneth 2018, 136).

It is in this context where the educational experiences narrated by deaf adults about their time as students allow us to access the episodes of struggle or oppression they experienced in school as well as the characteristics of their learning. The Chilean deaf adults who have shared their stories in this research as narrators were educated in the 1980s and 1990s according to the oral model established in public schools for the deaf. Therefore, they went through their schooling seeking recognition of their culture and language (Becerra-Sepúlveda 2020; Larrazábal, Palacios, and Espinoza 2021) and, currently, they have mobilized actions to strengthen deaf culture in educational spaces.

Therefore, two questions are intended to be answered from a narrative and critical perspective situated in Chile. Firstly, what situations in the history of school life represent areas of social justice and injustice? And secondly, what is expected from the education system in terms of social justice in the eyes of Chilean deaf adults? To address these questions, the regulatory framework specific to deaf education in Chile is first reviewed, and the articulation of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition is considered. According to Honneth, "social justice arises from the mutual recognition of others, who they are, what they do, and their inherent value" (McArthur 2019, 68). This

is because mere criticism of a punitive system is insufficient; at the same time, we must strive for change. In this sense, this philosophical theory will help us arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature of injustice experienced by the deaf community; "the theory of recognition establishes a link between the social causes of widespread feelings of injustice and the normative goals of emancipatory movements" (Honneth 2018, 91).

As hearing teachers and researchers, we can contribute to the transformation of deaf education in Chile by recognizing the lived experience of deaf individuals, accessing their identity and culture in a culturally respectful, critical, and transformative perspective (Mertens 2021). This aligns with other research that has repositioned deaf culture globally: Padden and Humphries (1998, 2005) from the United States and the research of Ladd (2003) and De Meulder (2015) contextualized in Europe. In Latin America, there are contributions from Herrera (2010) in Chile, Cruz-Aldrete and Villa-Rodríguez (2016) in Mexico, and Quadros (2019) in Brazil, just to name a few authors.

Then, the methodology is described, which involves a collaborative effort with six deaf adults, a deaf research assistant, two LSCh interpreters, and the researchers themselves. This collaborative effort aims to validate the narratives both culturally and linguistically. Following this, the findings are presented and divided according to the research questions, and a discussion concludes the article.

Literature Review

From "Audism" to Efforts of Social Integration in Chile

In Chile, the history of education for deaf students reflects both international influences and internal policies with a mercantile orientation that has shaped an educational system with high rates of segregation, exclusion, and reduced learning opportunities (Parcerisa and Falabella 2017; Flórez and Rozas 2019). In particular, Chilean deaf students have experienced the invisibilization of their culture despite political discourses promoting quality and equity in Chilean education. In this sense, some relevant events will be reviewed.

Formal and public education for the deaf began in the city of Santiago in 1852 with the creation of the School for the Deaf-Mute, the first in South America. Its teaching methodology was oralist, and

its rules prohibited any form of manual communication (Adamo and Cabrera 1991; Herrera 2010). This methodology left several generations of deaf students at a basic level of speech, namely, at the level of greetings accompanied by guttural sounds, which generally excluded them from communication processes. Therefore, groups of deaf students who did not develop oral language tended to converse clandestinely through their hands, facial, and bodily expressions.

In 1980, the impact of the Hamburg Congress was positive for the country, as it opened the doors to the incorporation of LSCh along with other strategies, such as auditory stimulation, fingerspelling, gestures, and lipreading, in special schools for the deaf, where deaf culture was better cultivated by sharing it and learning with other deaf individuals within a set of social interactions in LSCh (Herrera 2010). However, also in the 80s, during the period of military dictatorship, the gradual integration of deaf students into the regular education system of the country began, maintaining the oralist model (Caiceo Escudero 2010) in the name of the principle of equal opportunities to the right to education. This was a process of school integration without a welcoming framework; in other words, teachers were not prepared to receive deaf students in their classrooms because, in general, they did not know LSCh. Additionally, there were no professionals to support them or adequate materials. Simultaneously, the gradual closure of special schools for the deaf, especially in the northern and southern regions of Chile, meant that the access to the only educational settings where dialogue in LSCh was natural among students was denied (Herrera 2010).

Regarding the curriculum, the first plans and study programs for the education of deaf students were regulated by both Decree 15/1981 (Ministry of Education of Chile 1981) and Decree 86/1990, which tended towards oralism, towards a clinical approach, and viewed deaf students from a deficit perspective (Adamo and Cabrera 1991; Ministry of Education of Chile 1990a).

In the 1990s, following the return to democracy, the same constitutional principles remained in place, and the School Integration Program (PIE) was implemented. This program emerged "as a strategy of the educational system that seeks to improve the quality of education provided in schools, favoring the presence and participation primar-

ily of students with temporary or permanent disabilities" (Tamayo et al. 2018, 163). This is materialized through the allocation of greater economic resources to the public and subsidized schools that enroll these students. It is important to clarify that deaf students are not the only ones included in this compensatory program; it also includes a diverse group, including blind students and those with intellectual disabilities or autism.

In 2015, there was a significant change in regulations following the promulgation of Decree 83, "with the purpose of guaranteeing equality in the right to education" (Ministry of Education of Chile 2015a, 3), serving as the regulation of the General Education Law 20370 LGE (Ministry of Education of Chile, 2009). This decree placed a pedagogical emphasis on the education of students with special educational needs in preschool and primary education, moving away from the medical perspective, and repealed the previous curriculum guidelines for deaf students (Decree 15/1981 and 86/1990).

In the same line, it was established that deaf students would participate in the classroom accompanied by a deaf adult and a sign language interpreter, according to the linguistic and cultural needs of the Chilean deaf community (Ministry of Education of Chile 2015a). However, given the diversity of institutions, the heterogeneity of the territory, and the scarcity of deaf professionals in the country, it seems reasonable to question the equal application of Decree 83 and whether it only translates into benefits for some deaf students. We do not have data documenting that this regulation has been implemented at all educational levels and in all schools nationwide.

Returning to the PIE, currently in its operationalization, deaf students from first to fourth grade attend classes together with their hearing peers and are accompanied by a deaf co-educator. This professional teaches LSCh and conveys deaf culture in informal spaces, for example, during recess or workshops at alternate times. This responsibility arises from the absence of regulations that would allow for the implementation of Law 21303/2021—that recognizes LSCh—leaving deaf co-educators adrift and in the hands of administrators who know little or nothing about the subject, especially because there is still no specific curriculum for LSCh that establishes the levels and content that must be formally taught in school (González and Muñoz 2022).

Additionally, the communication that may occur in the classroom between hearing students and the hearing teacher is not understood by the deaf student and the deaf co-educator since, at these levels, there is no interpretation service, which leaves both isolated again.

The LSCh interpreter supports the deaf students from fifth to twelfth grade (in Chile, referred to as the fourth year of high school) in the classroom with their hearing peers. The interpreter shares the classroom with the teacher responsible for each subject to fulfil the role of conveying the pedagogical message in LSCh. This happens provided that deaf students know LSCh, a situation that is relative, as it depends on the student's age of entry into formal education and the opportunities they have had to learn their vernacular language.

Regarding support professionals, it is necessary to emphasize that the situations described above occur only in the most suitable scenarios in the country (i.e., in those institutions with a PIE program and the corresponding professional team). However, the 2,227 Chilean deaf students registered in the educational system (Ministry of Education of Chile 2022) are distributed according to their families' free choice or simply according to their available options among the various types of public institutions (regular schools with the PIE or special schools) and private ones receiving state subsidies. But there are cases where there is no PIE (such as in rural contexts, which deserves further discussion elsewhere), and the deaf student is left only with the support their family can provide or relying on the good intentions of hearing teachers. Accordingly, the educational response for deaf students is not the same in all contexts, and it is not even the same as the response received by hearing students. Likewise, the PIE has not succeeded as an educational response for deaf students because the predominantly visual linguistic-cultural specificity of this deaf community has not been sufficiently acknowledged to make space for the development of their skills and learning.

In summary, we cannot overlook the lack of progress in education for deaf Chilean students, because the problem seems to be structural. There is a constitution and regulations that posit education as a right for all and a singular curriculum that sets out contents and evaluation with adaptations respecting national and international conventions about quality education for all. However, this is all within a singular

model in which everyone must fit and for which everyone must compete. A decree that proposes the bilingual-bicultural model and how to carry it out in any type of educational setting, whether special or regular, in urban or rural areas, has not been passed yet.

Toward the Comprehension of Social Justice through Mutual Recognition

Comprehending social justice requires an analysis of its philosophical traditions through decolonial or humanizing viewpoints that will contribute to generating a fair, contextualized, and supportive education. Beyond conceptualization, educational applications of social justice are important since, in this context, "the role of culture in upholding values and identities in societies across global and historical dimensions remains fundamental" (Samier 2020, 3).

If we consider the notion of social justice through the prism of deaf culture, this necessarily implies recognizing that "both as individuals and as members of a community, deaf people have been and continue being subjected to discrimination, marginalisation, and to social and educational efforts to be incorporated to the hearing world" (Reagan 2020, 18). From this point of view, Axel Honneth's theory of social justice is coherent for many reasons. Firstly, his work finds its roots in *critical theory*, a term representing members of the Frankfurt School, who since the early twentieth century have been committed to both "a critical understanding of the social world and working to change that world" (McArthur 2019, 52). In the historical evolution of this theory, three generations of thinkers are distinguished: (1) Adorno and Horkheimer, (2) Habermas, who introduced a communicative turn to social criticism, and (3) Honneth, the current representative of the third generation, who develops the notion of recognition from an original perspective compared to his predecessors. He places recognition as the central moral category from which the construction of social, cultural, linguistic, and personal identity becomes possible (Honneth 1997, 2011).

Secondly, we ask why this theory of recognition would be important for the education of deaf students in Chile. From Ferrada's (2023) perspective, the prevailing model of social justice in the country has tended towards social fragmentation, influenced by structural political conditions. At this level, normative foundations have promoted

conceptions of justice that reject differences. The policy of equal opportunities (implemented in 1973 and ratified in the Political Constitution of Chile of 1980) has systematically sought to ensure that all students are treated without discrimination or exclusion. Therefore, in the fundamental laws of the Chilean educational system, both in the Constitutional Organic Law on Education LOCE (Ministry of Education of Chile, 1990b) and its update with the General Education Law 20370 (Ministry of Education of Chile, 2009), the State reaffirmed its commitment to providing necessary support in case of any deficiency. Thus, a model of social justice persists where:

> The particularities of individual and community diversity (cultural, territorial, linguistic, geographic, etc.) are not recognized. Thus, they start from an assumption of homogenization that "equalizes" all individuals, meaning there is a universal justice where "the same" opportunities are offered to everyone to strive for the best positions in society in the case of equal opportunities. (Ferrada 2023, 191–92)

Therefore, we have a single official curriculum and a standardized assessment system called the System for Measuring the Quality of Education (SIMCE) that seeks to hyper-monitor the academic performance of students and the quality of teaching by educators and institutions, and assigns high stakes according to the results (Parcerisa and Falabella 2017; Falabella 2015).

So, like any other neoliberal state, approaches based on standardized testing gained relevance in shaping educational policy (Flórez and Rozas 2019; Parcerisa and Verger 2016), without consideration of the realities lived by the individuals, let alone their diverse identities. Therefore, we can infer that within this structure, with greater complexities than those outlined, deaf primary and secondary school students have been pathologized and made invisible, forced to communicate, learn, be evaluated, and graded according to the standards of another culture. They are subsumed into broad discursive categories, such as individuals in need of "special education," or other specific ones that directly identify them as disabled, that is, as those students who suffer from a condition called "deafness or hearing difficulty," and categorized within a minority group (1.1 percent) composed of girls, boys, and adolescents who suffer from the disability or permanent condition of deafness (Ministry of Social Develop-

ment and Family of Chile 2023, 77). Furthermore, they are classified under teaching code 211, referring to "Special Education—Hearing Impairment" (Ministry of Education of Chile 2023). Subsequently, if deaf individuals are motivated to pursue higher education, they must present their disability certificate and be registered in the National Disability Registry, either to request accommodations in entrance tests and/or to apply for compensatory support programs.

Therefore, in Chile, there is a double discourse. On the one hand, equal opportunities for access to and retention in the educational system are sought through equal legal rights, which is insufficient if the inferior position of deaf students is reaffirmed without recognizing their identity and culture.

The Chilean educational context, as a whole, operates within the framework of Rawls' theory of distributive justice (2017), which understands justice as fairness. According to this theory, regardless of their characteristics, learners must conform to the "same starting line and have a clearly defined and common finish line, but all other factors are ignored in the name of impartiality. Exceptions are dealt with in terms of charity: exceptional circumstances and benevolent exemptions" (McArthur 2019, 58). Rawlsian theory adheres to a procedural approach to social justice that relies on foundational assumptions where people are seen as free, equal, and independent, and assumes idealized notions of reality without conflicts or individual interests (Rawls 2017).

On the contrary, Honneth's (2018, 1997) theory of recognition aims at the identity formation of individuals and emphasizes their differences and widespread feelings of injustice. Thus, of interest to the present study is to understand the dimensions of the theory of recognition due to its relevance in the school context, in which both hearing and deaf students develop and learn.

The relationships between the diverse actors within each educational community and the experiences lived in the classroom account for a wide range of human complexity beyond political boundaries. On a moral level, "recognition is intrinsically embedded in the ways we interact with others and also in the ways we express our own individuality" in the very interaction with others (McArthur 2019, 64). Consequently, Honneth's theory regarding social justice would be

of an intersubjective nature; therefore, every individual experience is anchored in the social realm. In other words, moral progress towards a good and just life includes both self-realization and social integration. According to Honneth (2018, 110),

> The practical self-relationship of human beings—the capacity which makes recognition possible, to reflectively ensure its own competencies and rights—is not something that originates once and for all; like the expectations of subjective recognition, this capacity expands with the number of spheres that differentiate in the course of social development for the social recognition of specific components of personality.

For the construction of a good and just society, Honneth (2018) refers to three spheres that constitute the normative core of mutual recognition. The first aspect concerns affectivity in the sphere of love, based on the principles of affection and attention, which every child/student requires. In school, it is essential to provide adequate treatment because, through the practice of affective recognition, students acquire the confidence that their visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, or other needs are as valuable as those of their peers.

Regarding deaf students, their communication in the family environment is often affected when their parents do not know sign language, since most deaf students have hearing parents (Klatter-Folmer et al. 2006; Meek 2020). "Therefore, deaf children's communicative abilities and exposure to full language may depend largely on the type (deaf parent or hearing parent) of family a deaf child is born into" (Obosu et al. 2023, 529). In this sense, deaf children often find themselves excluded from everyday participation because they try to express their needs or opinions using gestures recognized by those close to them, known as *home signs*. However, the affection and attention from parents or direct caregivers can be lost due to lack of full access to communication (Muñoz-Vilugrón, Aliaga-Rojas, and Sánchez-Díaz, 2024). What Meek (2020) refers to as the *Dinner Table Syndrome* describes this family experience, highlighting that most parents of deaf children are hearing people. This situation prompts deaf students to seek deaf companions in schools to converse with and to connect with the deaf community during adolescence as well as adulthood.

The entire school institution is responsible for fostering affective recognition. This involves, for example, starting from the basics like greeting in LSCh, emphasizing facial expression, looking at the face when communicating with deaf students, and searching and using appropriate visual materials. In short, it means to build environments where both LSCh and Spanish are present, to engage the community in cultivating the learning of a different culture, and to enable both deaf and hearing individuals to develop self-confidence throughout the process of human developmet.

Secondly, the sphere of respect pertains to the practice of "the legal recognition of the individual—their status recognised as a member of society, protected by certain rights" (Honneth 2018, 111). In this context, when a person possesses legitimate rights, it is a consequence of their honorary position (i.e., the value attributed to them by the other members of society). This issue also involves attributing egalitarian obligations that are mutually granted. In this way, the interaction of rights and obligations nurtures the autonomy of individuals and fosters a sense of responsibility.

In this regard, we may ask ourselves: What happens to the rights of Chilean deaf children in school? Specifically, what about language rights and the right to education when they do not speak Spanish? The situation becomes difficult if the institution fails to provide the necessary professionals, for instance, a co-educator who is a deaf adult and a native user of LSCh. This co-educator could be responsible for teaching sign language and facilitating deaf culture, having personally experienced what it means to be deaf in a predominantly hearing society. This is an experience that an LSCh interpreter may not fully comprehend. Without the teaching of their language, their linguistic rights would be denied, thus violating the principle of equality and respect for deaf students.

The third sphere corresponds to social esteem, governed by the principle of success established by the social hierarchy. Within this sphere, individuals "learn to understand themselves as subjects who possess valuable skills and talents for society" (Honneth 2018, 113); in other words, they feel valued for their abilities and talents, irrespective of their occupation, contributing to the common good. In the case of the deaf community, Bauman and Murray's research (2014)

introduces the concept of "Deaf gain," denoting the contributions that deaf people make to the hearing majority, particularly through sign language, which can also be used by non-deaf individuals. This translates into social advantage and appreciation. Moreover, both deaf and hearing individuals possess their own talents that educational institutions must support and develop.

In the interaction of these three spheres, it is understood that "justice or the well-being of society must be proportional to its capacity to ensure the conditions of mutual recognition, in which the formation of personal identity and, consequently, individual self-realization can develop appropriately" (Honneth 2018, 136). In this case, Chilean deaf individuals make social claims and fight for the recognition of their collective axiological convictions to make their identity and difference more visible or repositioned.

In order to have greater social presence and advocate for their rights, the Chilean deaf community has organized through various deaf institutions that have allowed for the creation of spaces for reflection and support with and for their community. These include the National Federation of the Deaf Community of Chile (FESOR CHILE), the Center for Deaf Educators of Chile (CES), the Professional Association of Deaf Teachers (Unidos AG), the National Sports Federation of the Deaf of Chile (FEDENAS Chile), and the Nellie Zabel Foundation (Deaf Women).

In sum, in this literature review, the first section described some local (historical, scientific, and regulatory) background information regarding the education of Chilean deaf students, which has been influenced by other global events or trends. This provides an understanding of the specific context in Chile. We also presented the theoretical foundations that underpin the concept of "social justice as reciprocal recognition," which, as we will see later, is the fundamental moral category that allows us to categorize experiences of social justice and injustice within the school context and thus respond in a situated manner to the research questions.

In the Method section, the selected method for accessing the educational experience of an empowered group of deaf adults in Chile is discussed. These individuals have been able to overcome social bar-

riers to develop their life projects and to defend and value their own epistemology and their unique yet diverse knowledge system.

Method

The methodological approach corresponds to biographical-narrative research, using a multiple case study design that places life history as its core (Denzil and Lincoln 2015). According to Vega (2018), "[T]his type of study explores the use of extensively narrated life history as an opportunity to construct an authentic discourse which directly expresses the tensions experienced by an individual at a particular moment of their life" (178). In our case, thanks to the cooperation of a diverse team of people, both dialogue and the construction of meanings with each deaf narrator were possible.

Influenced by the work of Mertens (2021), as hearing researchers (HR1 - HR2 - HR3, according to the authorship order of the article) and teachers who have had or currently have the responsibility of educating deaf students at various levels of the Chilean educational system, we assume a transformative stance under the axiological, ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that guided the study.

The ethical-transformative axiological assumption of research in education contributes to the learning of deaf students, in particular, and to the common good of society in general. In this sense, being outsiders to deaf culture and responsible for the research, the authors explore our limitations and engage in a reflective-critical process about the professional experience we have lived. Thus, we consciously address our position and the power imbalances that could interfere in the design as well as in the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of new information, all with the purpose of contributing to greater social justice (Mertens 2020; Mertens and Wilson 2019).

Furthermore, it was necessary to initiate and sustain the research work on the basis of recognizing the knowledge held by deaf individuals in Chile (from Honneth's perspective 2018), who, from their lived experience as a minority in a hearing world, cultivate knowledge and identify difficulties, strengths, and dreams, among other

characteristics inherent to deaf epistemology (Herrera-Fernández 2014; Muñoz -Vilugrón, Rodríguez-Ponce, and Bachmann-Vera, 2023). Under this assumption, culturally respectful relationships were cultivated to contribute to mutual trust among all involved in this research, namely, deaf adult narrators, hearing researchers, and collaborators: a deaf research assistant and two hearing LSCh interpreters.

The ontological assumption suggests that reality is susceptible to transformation when we critically interrogate the various versions of reality, such as audist, egalitarian, compensatory, or welfare-oriented ones, among others, which, in turn, may be linked to beliefs about deaf individuals that are rooted in the dominant culture in an unconscious manner, such as associations between deaf individuals and disability or the notion that they require the support of "more capable," or hearing, individuals. Therefore, reflective-critical dialogue and collaboration between deaf and hearing individuals were fundamental to opening ourselves up to the possibility of challenging manifestations of social injustice and contributing to the dismantling of the "oppressive status quo" (Mertens 2021, 2). The aforementioned assumptions underpinned the decisions made in the methodological realm (Mertens 2021; 2020). In this sense, for the design of the research, care was taken to foster teamwork through mutual collaboration.

Research Team

The researchers (HR1, HR2, and HR3) have extensive experience in educational research and the creation of pedagogical materials in collaboration "with" deaf professionals and for deaf students. Furthermore, they have strengthened their own intercultural and international experience through research in Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, and, in the case of HR1 and HR3, also in Brazil. Among their differences, there are certain relevant distinctions that shape a multidisciplinary team that enriches the study.

HR1: Special education teacher with a PhD in education and thirty years of involvement in the Chilean deaf community, first as a teacher in regular primary schools and schools for the deaf, later, as a university professor. Both her master's and doctoral studies, among other national and international research projects, are linked to the

education and social integration of deaf people, so she has continuously specialized in deaf epistemology and communicates in LSCh.

HR2: Primary school teacher with a specialization in language and communication and an EdD in education, with nine years of involvement in the Chilean deaf community. Initially, she worked as a primary school teacher and then in the management of pedagogical practices for the FID (Formación Inicial Docente—the undergraduate teaching preparation program). Subsequently, as a university professor, she has participated in research projects associated with social justice, understood as mutual recognition, a philosophical perspective that underlies her collaborations in various studies.

HR3: Speech therapist with an EdD and a specialization in interculturality. The researcher initially connected with the deaf community in Colombia, even before starting her university studies, which is why she has a trajectory of more than forty years of experience together with deaf people in different countries. She communicates in LSCh, Colombian Sign Language (LSC), and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). Currently, HR1 and HR2's work is linked to the FID, while HR3 works in the field of health sciences.

Deaf research assistant (DRA): Deaf co-educator in school centers and an LSCh instructor at both the school and university levels. He has collaborated in both qualitative and participatory studies about Chilean deaf culture and is proficient in written Spanish. Additionally, he was the president of the National Federation of the Deaf Community of Chile, FESOR Chile, during the period of 2020 to 2021. Internationally, he completed an internship at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.

Interpreters: Special education teachers, specialized in LSCh and with experience in qualitative and participatory studies. They are also linked to the Chilean deaf community through the Association of LSCh Interpreters and Facilitators (AIFAL) in the Los Lagos region in southern Chile. The role of each team member is detailed in table 1.

The Deaf narrators told their own school experiences in LSCh. Subsequently, two interpreters translated this narrative into written Spanish, which was culturally and linguistically validated by a deaf research assistant and the deaf narrators. The researchers then analyzed

Table 1. Roles of Each Member of the Research Team

Research Team	Main role in the research
DN1, DN2, DN3, DN4, DN5, DN6	They narrated the experience lived during their school education stage in depth.
DRA	The DRA conducted the interviews in LSCh and validated the written information in Spanish (by interpreters) together with deaf narrators to clarify and/or rectify any socio-linguistic aspect.
LSCh Interpreters	They observed the recording of each interview and translated the dialogue in LSCh into Spanish (the interpreters were not present at the time of the interviews).
HR1	HR1 (the project director) participated in all interviews and conversed with the participants in LSCh. She developed the contextual analysis to understand the history and culture of the Chilean Deaf community, research design, and resource management. She also conducted the analysis and discussion of results.
HR2	HR2 developed the theoretical framework and methodological articulation from the perspective of social justice. She was responsible for the definition and scope of analysis categories. She carried out the analysis and discussion of results.
HR3	HR3 gave a critical analysis of the results.

Source: Own elaboration.

and interpreted the information, which would later be published in scientific journals for educational purposes and with the aim of contributing to the strengthening of deaf culture. In this final aspect, we acknowledge that our study still presents limitations because it is necessary to move towards more participatory and community-based research approaches (Mertens 2021), where deaf narrators also validate the researchers' interpretation in the final version of the reports resulting from the research that concerns them.

Given the above-mentioned consideration, this article is the result of the interrelation, selection, and joint reinterpretation of the experiences narrated in LSCh. In this way, the criteria of consistency (Creswell 2013) and credibility (Given and Saumure 2008) were achieved through the triangulation (figure 1) of researchers, narrators, and collaborators with different trajectories, professions, and experiences (Martínez 2006) as mentioned earlier. This investigative work
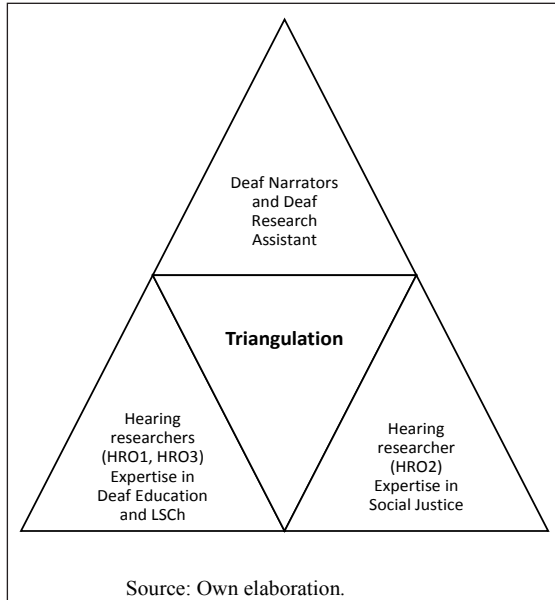
Source: Own elaboration.

FIGURE 1. Triangulation process.

involved attention and respect towards linguistic and cultural characteristics, as well as more research time and economic resources for its development.

Finally, readers of the article situated in different countries and "in a specific performance context [will shape] both individual and collective identities, as the discourses it generates constitute a common *topos* of understanding" (Vega 2018, 182). In this sense, the final text is seen as an ongoing process to generate new meanings and shape experiences of another collective, all-in order to address the complexity of communicative interactions between the Deaf world and the hearing world.

The intention was to reach an understanding of those experiences lived in the formal education system in Chile. In this scenario, the singularity of the method allowed the authors to investigate the meanings of individuals who, at the same time, are collective subjects, since their personal lives have been constructed in interrelation with others (Vega 2018). These experiences become relevant from an individual point of view as a contribution to social justice.

Table 2. Narrators in the Study

Narrators	Age	Profession or Job	Educational Level in Which They Work
DP1	22	Occupational therapy student	University
DP2	35	LSCh instructor	University
DP3	40	Special education teacher	Elementary school with PIE
DP4	38	Special education associate teacher	Special education school
DP5	45	Primary teacher	Special school for the deaf
DP6	40	Co-educator	Elementary school with PIE

Source: Own elaboration.

Narrators: The narrators were deaf individuals who were invited to participate by the deaf research assistant because they became role models in their local deaf communities. All of them are connected to the educational context and currently live in the cities of Puerto Montt, Concepción, and Santiago. As an ethical consideration, each of them agreed to participate through informed consent, and therefore, their identities will be protected in this article. Each participant identified themselves as a deaf person and was given a number (DP1, DP2, etc.).

Categories of Analysis

For this study, three categories of analysis were considered as follows:

1. Reciprocal recognition: The fundamental and central moral category for this study, "which forms the basis of the normative expectations of the members of society, as well as their readiness for conflict" (Honneth 2018, 124). This category is built upon generalizable principles that people consider legitimate, and the absence of these principles motivates individuals or certain groups to question the social order and mobilize practical resistance based on their moral convictions.

2. Recommendations for deaf education: This category corresponds to an education that embraces new ways of understanding the world. It represents the critical perspective that deaf individuals

TABLE 3. Categories and Subcategories of Social Justice as Recognition

Category	Subcategory	Definition
Social justice as reciprocal recognition	Affectivity [Love/lovelessness]	Social relationships of affection and attention, characterized by mutual concern [in the school classroom]. This helps people understand themselves as individuals with their own needs.
	Equal treatment/unequal treatment	Social relationships where individuals are respected with the same rights as all other members of society, being able to influence decision-making [in school].
	Social esteem/social rejection	Social relationships in which individuals [. . .] feel that their skills and talents are respected by the other people.

Source: Del Pino, Arias-Ortega, and Muñoz (2022, 140)/

have regarding their learning style and how they should be taught during their formative process in regular classrooms within bilingual and intercultural frameworks (Cuevas 2013).

3. Empowerment: Refers to a critical point of view, resistance strategies, or associations among deaf individuals based on "self-understandings originated within their own culture. These practices have emerged as a response to the history of oppression experienced by the deaf" (Cuevas 2013, 709).

The first and second categories were selected before collecting the data as topics to explore, whereas the third category emerged from the data.

Regarding social justice as reciprocal recognition, the theoretical approach of the German philosopher Honneth (1997) was selected. This philosophical proposal was systematized in Chile by Del Pino, Arias-Ortega, and Muñoz (2022) for research in the field of school evaluation (table 3), which becomes relevant in this study.

These categories "[allow us] to interpret the injustices from the normative cores such as people's identity and institutional claims" (Del Pino et al. 2022, 135), which made it possible to address the research questions of this study.

Data Collection

Semistructured interviews were conducted (Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza 2018). The interview consisted of twenty questions organized into four dimensions: personal information, cultural aspects, educational environment, and significant learning experiences for deaf narrators. The interviews respected their own narrative pace (Flick 2012).

Procedure

The interviews were conducted through the virtual platform Zoom in recorded sessions lasting around sixty minutes each. The dialogue was carried out in LSCh by a deaf research assistant and one of the researchers. Subsequently, the transcriptions from LSCh to written Spanish were performed by interpreters and reviewed by the deaf research assistant to preserve cultural and linguistic aspects.

Information Analysis

This data was fed into and organized within the hermeneutic unit of the ATLAS.ti software (qualitative data analysis and research software). The analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved coding each paragraph of the narratives, according to the subcategories established in table 1, which were then tested independently by each researcher. From there, experiences of social justice/injustice were selected addressing Research Question 1: What situations experienced at school represent areas of social justice and injustice?.

The second stage involved the selection of contributions about the education of deaf students in the formal school environment, aimed at addressing Research Question 2: What do Chilean deaf adults expect from education in terms of social justice?

Findings

From a general perspective, the central category of social justice as reciprocal recognition is not present in the narratives. Therefore, the opposing category is inferred, which we have termed *epistemic violence*. This category represents three distinct levels of injustice: lovelessness (oppression), unequal treatment (invisibility), and social disregard

(integration), all present within the teaching and learning processes throughout the educational history of the deaf narrators.

The organization of the findings is presented in relation to each research question.

Social Justice as Recognition

This category of reciprocal recognition relates to Research Question 1, which aims at unveiling which situations experienced at school represent areas of social justice/injustice according to the individual experiences of deaf adults.

Subcategory: Affection–Love: No Information. The narrators had no experiences associated with positive emotional treatment during their school years. Only one of them recalls the constant support of their father within the family, and it was through that love that they were able to achieve personal development. However, they mention that in school, "I was completely alone, they didn't teach me much."(DF6)

Subcategory: Lovelessness–Oppression. This refers to episodes in the history of deaf education in Chile that have been suppressed due to people's deafness. In other words, their needs were invalidated:

> [I]n this school, they only used oral communication, and at home I would see my father and mother communicate in sign language. We were accustomed to signing, but then we would go to school, and the teachers would teach us through oral language. There was a teacher . . . strongly focused on oralism, she had a very pronounced approach. She suggested to my mother that we stop using sign language at home so that we could speak because she believed sign language hindered the process of learning oral language. My mother was very upset, but the teacher told her: "Please, no more sign language at home! The children must learn oral language, and if they continue using sign language, they will never do it." (DP5)

Another narrator recounts that this lack of love and recognition of their basic communication needs as deaf students even came to devalue their own characteristics.

> In the oralist school, they forced me to speak, and I accepted that, I was subjected. They told me to speak so much, I was under a lot

of pressure, so I grew up with a rejection of sign language, and I thought that deaf people looked like monkeys when they signed, with a derogatory look towards them, I saw them as unintelligent, basic. (DP5).

Now, while this account is related to the inequality of treatment subcategory, it also demonstrates a lack of respect, indicating that the spheres of recognition are in constant interaction.

Subcategory: Equal Treatment. According to the narratives, respect for the rights of individuals in school is realized through the implementation of the School Integration Program (known as PIE in Spanish), described previously as part of the support given by the State to students having special educational needs. In this sense, it corresponds to a mechanism created to equalize educational opportunities in mainstream education. Deaf students who had access to this program value the following:

They provided me with a lot of support; there were interpreters, some knew sign language and were familiar with deaf people. I tried to communicate with them, and the teacher was accompanied by an interpreter, or they would write to me, and I would try to understand. (DP2)

They also emphasize the relevance of collaborative work in the regular classroom:

We need to respect the deaf experience; that's necessary. Achieving collaborative work between hearing and deaf individuals is essential in order to teach literacy-related content more effectively, to help conceptualize learning. It has to be a joint effort. Because of all of this, it's important to me that there is collaborative work between a hearing teacher and a deaf one for the benefit of deaf students. Working in isolation is by no means positive. (DP6) [emphasis added]

Subcategory: Inequality of Treatment–Invisibility. Despite the above, in general, the teaching of reading and writing is carried out considering only the characteristics of hearing individuals, which results in a lack of respect for linguistic rights, as sign language is not considered as L1 (first language), and Spanish as L2 (second language) in schools.

I feel that it's very difficult to write the connectors, the articles . . . to incorporate words that are not present in sign language. For

example, "en" (in): What does it mean? It doesn't exist in sign language. When I write in Spanish, I write very little. I try to avoid it because I make a lot of mistakes and don't understand, even if I make an effort. (DP1).

Deaf students express the importance of learning Spanish for social and occupational reasons, but they view it as a second language. They highlight how challenging the learning process is, regardless of the effort they dedicate to its study.

> I believe that learning Spanish is very important for deaf individuals because, in the future, they can pursue jobs, communicate. Deaf people can write, but I understand why some people find it difficult to connect, to make sense of it, because sign language is natural for us. However, adapting to Spanish grammar and incorporating is complex. (DP2)

> Later, I went to a regular school, and it was harder there. My classmates helped me, but even holding a pencil and making different strokes was difficult for me. I had bad grades, all red marks and 4.0. I didn't have high grades; it was very tough. (DP1)

From these last words arise new questions: What opportunities do deaf students have to demonstrate their knowledge and learning? And what qualities should a fair evaluation for deaf students possess? These questions will remain open for future research, as the rights perspective necessitates new investigative efforts, as indicated by DP5:

> Regarding deaf culture, the most important aspect is sign language because it's specific to the community. Deaf culture and sign language encompass many things. For example, defending the right for this to be our natural language, our first language. There's the right to accessibility through sign language interpreters. As a deaf person, I need to accept myself, recognize myself as a deaf individual. Some deaf people sometimes say, "I'm not completely deaf; I can hear a little." But honestly, I tell them that's not true. You should really accept yourself for who you are. (DP5) [emphasis added]

Subcategory: Social Esteem. No information is available in the narratives.

Social Underestimation Subcategory. If deaf students are no longer educated in special schools and are integrated into hearing contexts, adverse effects can occur in some centers if the necessary conditions for the development of deaf students are not provided:

> There was no interpreter, and I was alone. My classmates and I looked at each other, but we didn't communicate. It was the first time the integration processes began, and the teacher's approach was to place us next to hearing students. I didn't know that hearing person . . . and the teacher had the idea that I should teach sign language to my hearing classmate and that he should copy his notes [for me], and that's how it went. (DP3)

In the integration process, there is an omission of deaf culture; deaf students are merely present but forgotten in their needs, and their knowledge is not valued as a contribution to society.

In summary, the narratives associated with the central category of the study reveal the absence of affectionate treatment and the failure to respect the linguistic and cultural rights of deaf students, which, in turn, results in a lack of equality to support their learning in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, their knowledge and social contributions are not valued. In other words, there is no information in the narratives that supports the existence of the fundamental principles of reciprocal recognition. On the contrary, experiences of social injustice stand out, manifested in concrete actions of oppression, belittlement, and the invisibility of deaf culture. Consequently, an epistemic violence permeated the educational experience of these Chilean deaf adults, who express that being, existing, and demonstrating any learning was very difficult.

Recommendations for Deaf Education

Research Question 2, "What is expected from education in terms of social justice from the perspective of Chilean deaf adults?" is precisely linked to the subcategory of social esteem, where, as mentioned in the previous section, no information was found. Hence, it is of vital importance to highlight the knowledge and insights of the epistemology of the deaf in order to recognize the contributions that deaf individuals can make to enhance educational practices in the classroom.

Deaf adults projected two key axes for the learning of current and future deaf students: sign language and Spanish.

> The foundation is for children to master sign language, to learn fingerspelling . . . just like hearing children learn, because through hearing, they grasp concepts, learn words, and use them. In contrast,

deaf individuals do this visually, through sign language. It's difficult for us to teach them concepts; it's like an image that passes by and doesn't make much sense. (DP3)

First, I would explain about sign language, and I would tell them that they can communicate through these two things [LSCh and Spanish written language]. In contrast, hearing individuals have their first language as spoken Spanish and writing. I would also explain that they are different and won't be written the same way, because sign language and Spanish are very distinct [considering that the LSCh does not have a written form], and that's important. For a deaf person, it's important to learn how to write, and for a hearing person, it's important to learn signs so they can communicate with each other. But it's a whole process; in my opinion, a deaf person should learn signs and written Spanish simultaneously. Sometimes, there's a gap between these two learning processes, and it depends on each individual. (DP4)

First and foremost, a deaf role model is necessary. For me, the most important thing is an adult deaf role model who knows how to read and write. This way, the younger ones see that a deaf person can learn to read and write and can identify with this older person who has achieved it. (DP6)

Additionally, some narrators mentioned that the teaching and learning process should be carried out rigorously, catering to the interests of the students, communicating with them to build self-confidence, and encouraging them to ask questions or question the world around them. In this regard, the narratives relate to the realm of equal treatment and emphasize respecting their learning rights:

No one ever asked me if I was interested in what I was reading or if what they were explaining made sense to me. They never did that with me. I believe it's always important to focus on the children and their characteristics through communication. (DP4)

Schools lack economic resources. I say: Pay attention; children have the right to learn with visual materials. It's important to provide texts with colors. This way, they mentally visualize and associate reading with comprehension. That's very, very important. The government should allocate resources to improve reading and writing. Another example, a lion, an image of a lion in the reading material, is in black and white. . . . I mean, where's the orange? The child can't make the connection between the color and the image; they

> can't find it. They'll imagine a black and white lion. Which color? That's not right. The image should include orange, brown, and yellow with the identifying movement of the lion. This way, the child will make the color connection. Explain to them. . . . Colors help! (DP 5; MunÞoz-Vilugroìn, Aliaga-Rojas, and Saìnchez-Diìaz 2024, 306)

> The most important thing is respecting the needs of each deaf individual. For instance, what does a deaf person need? Access to information through sign language, maybe through an interpreter. What about reading and writing? Can the deaf person read on their own, or do they need support? If they need support, then we help them. We provide someone to reinforce these things. It's also important to inform the school about having a deaf classmate and the need to respect them, to speak to them directly so they can read lips, for example, to communicate effectively. Consider bringing in an interpreter to facilitate and mediate communication. All of these things are necessary, but I didn't have them in my school experience. (DP6)

Nonetheless, if skills in reading and writing are developed through visual teaching strategies, it would be possible to learn other areas of the national curriculum and cultivate various talents for better opportunities in personal development.

Empowerment

As previously mentioned, in the educational relationship, the absence of recognition for deaf students is evident due to power dynamics and, regardless of the artifacts that constitute discourses, policies or too-inclusive strategies, as authors like Cuevas (2013), Reagan (2020), and Reagan et al. (2021) have already pointed out. In contrast, the narrators highlight the need for social changes driven by moral convictions, which we have labeled as the empowerment category.

This category is linked to the central category of reciprocal recognition because, from a theoretical perspective, deaf individuals—as other cultural groups—"consider that they are not respected in certain aspects of their abilities or characteristics because they are convinced that the institutional practice of a legitimate principle of recognition does not reflect these dispositions in an unjustifiable manner" (Honneth 2018, 125). Therefore, as a form of practical resistance, through empowerment, the taking of responsibility, effort, and motivation by

the deaf community is present to bring about the social changes they need, as they express in the following:

> I wish all deaf people could be leaders in certain situations because in this country, there are many communication barriers for deaf individuals. There are many areas of work where much still needs to be done. I can't expect the "leader" to take charge of all these situations and do nothing myself. . . . We all have a lot to do, the whole community. (DP3)

> To be honest, in Chile, there are only eight, nine, or ten people who are considered leaders, and they are very few throughout the country. There are many intelligent people who spark movements, but an empowered leader who faces situations doesn't exist. They are focused on other areas. Also, comparing to years ago, there was no technology, no cell phones; in the past, there was much more effort required to bring about movements within the deaf community. There was a need for persistent efforts, always facing barriers to communication accessibility. (DP6)

> I gather different groups of deaf people to discuss these matters. There's a concern about how to motivate and try to reestablish the connection among people, as it used to be in the past. This is very important because deaf children observe this in adults, and we serve as role models. When they see a leader, they consider following in their footsteps. But if there's no motivated leader, what happens to those children? That's a significant concern. (DP6)

These narratives highlight the questioning of practices that have been carried out so far and reveal the need to reflect on them.

Discussion and Conclusions

Understanding that narrative [research] is "a way to comprehend one's own actions and those of others, to organise events and objects into a meaningful whole" (Denzil and Lincoln 2015, 69), we should be able to distinguish the consequences of our own actions as educators and researchers. Therefore, this study offers us a bidirectional opportunity to, on the one hand, address the research questions and, on the other hand, examine how hearing individuals engage with the deaf world. In this sense, we have developed three areas of discussion:

First, due to the identification and differentiation of spheres of recognition, we have "the opportunity for greater individuality,

understood as the possibility of increasingly securing the uniqueness of one's personality in a context of social approval: with each sphere of mutual recognition, another aspect of human subjectivity arises" (Honneth 2018, 114), which we, as individuals, can positively cultivate in an intersubjective manner towards moral progress with greater social justice.

Attention, respect, and social esteem for the cultural, linguistic, and sensorial components of being deaf are key spheres for the development of deaf students in various social spaces. Authentic valuation of deaf epistemology, as a challenge and resistance against prevailing audist ideologies in schools (Reagan et al. 2021), demands the respect of deaf people's rights, as they indicated:

> We need to respect people's differences and value them because here in Chile, we're accustomed to teaching in schools as if everyone were the same, but that's not the case. Everyone has their own characteristics, all different. It's the school's task to respond to the students' characteristics, to identify differences so that equity can be promoted. (DP6) [emphasis added]

Deaf movements, through the voices of these empowered individuals, are expressing the need for a more humane education for their community, primarily based on the sphere of equal treatment, which means respecting them as they deserve.

Furthermore, the biographical narratives in this study highlighted the need for the cultivation of deaf culture in schools, with the teaching and use of LSCh. According to the interviewees, deaf communities should receive sufficient recognition to contribute to the education of the new generations of deaf students, preventing the repetition of oralist practices that once caused so much harm in their lives.

The second area of discussion relates to the contributions to the Chilean educational system, emphasizing visual teaching strategies and the connection with the unique visual cultural perspective of this community. In a few words, deaf students recognize themselves as visual learners (Muñoz-Vilugrón, Aliaga-Rojas, and Sánchez-Díaz, 2024). In this sense, and following Mertens (2021), one contribution that is projected is a pedagogical tool inspired by the findings of this research in a comic book format that will be available to all schools

in the country. We hope to publish it during 2024 (Muñoz-Vilugrón and Aliaga-Rojas, 2024).

And in the third area, from the emergent category of empowerment, it becomes evident that deaf individuals are aware that they are not lacking or incomplete beings; rather, they are responsible for generating social changes and contributing to new epistemic breakthroughs in schools. These narratives seem to reflect their own evolution regarding the three spheres of mutual recognition. This evolution involves the conviction that their needs are valid, that they have enforceable rights, and that, as deaf individuals, they can contribute to the development of society as a whole.

As the main conclusions, we can highlight that the following:

- Deaf individuals assert their rights and acknowledge their capacity and responsibility to contribute to the changes needed in Chilean deaf education.
- Collaborative efforts are necessary to reclaim the spheres of mutual recognition as a focus of social justice, particularly in the context of linguistic and cultural rights.
- Further research is needed concerning appropriate teaching methodologies for deaf students and suitable assessment approaches aligned with their language and culture.

Acknowledgments

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