Applicability of the bilingual bicultural approach to the Tunisian deaf context

Aymen Nefaa (PhD student)
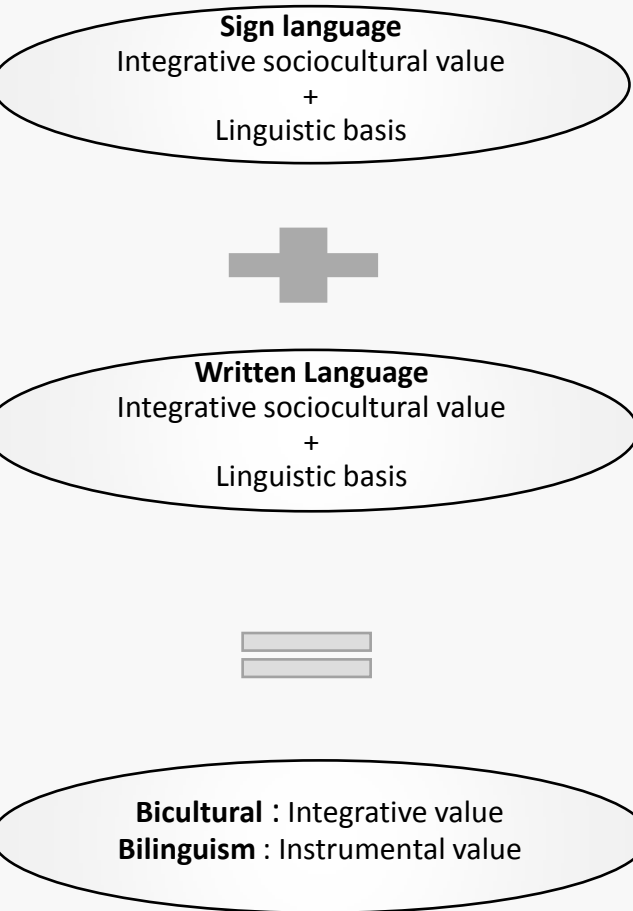Aix Marseille Université
Laboratoire Parole et Langage (UMR 7309)

Context

Research development on deaf language learning and literacy empirically demonstrated that Sign Language (SL) usage in the classroom provided the necessary underlying cognitive frameworks and metalinguistic knowledge for deaf students' literacy development (Cummins 1979; Prinz & Strong 1998; Grosjean, 2000; Blondel, 2009)

Model of Bilingual Proficiency Cummins (1979)
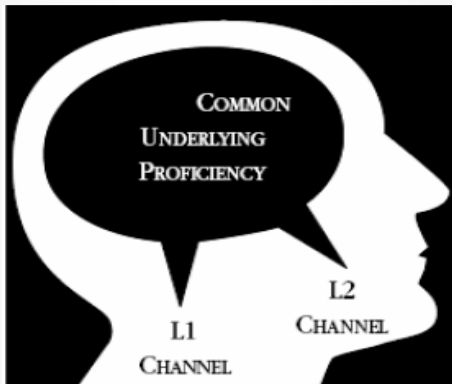
These theoretical premises propelled SL at the heart of the educational endeavor as a basis upon which literacy can be attained through a bilingual/bicultural model of instruction

Sign language
Integrative sociocultural value
+
Linguistic basis

Written Language
Integrative sociocultural value
+
Linguistic basis

Bicultural : Integrative value
**Bilinguism** : Instrumental value

Research problem

The Bilingual /bicultural model was designed to support literacy in monolingual speech communities where SL would assume the L1 role and the written language the L2 role.
The linguistic and sociocultural interaction between the two languages carrying each a distinctive cultural constructs would allow learners to identify themselves to both deaf and hearing cultures equally and simultaneously
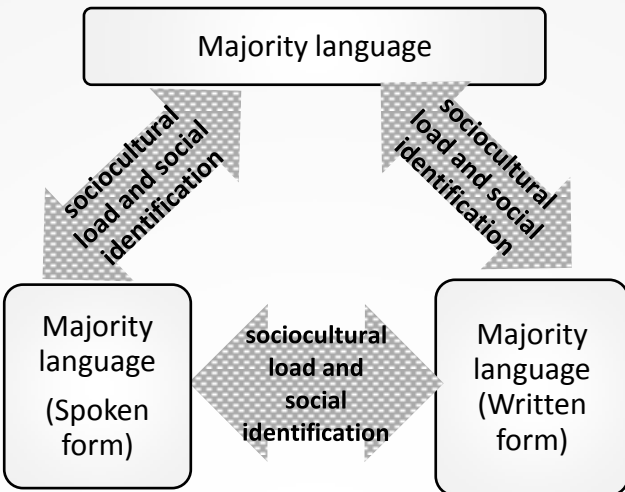

This model, however, is unlikely to account for a sociolinguistically more complicated contexts. **The Tunisian diglossic situation where the literacy language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), in its written form, doesn't correspond to spoken language which is Tunisian Arabic (TA)**
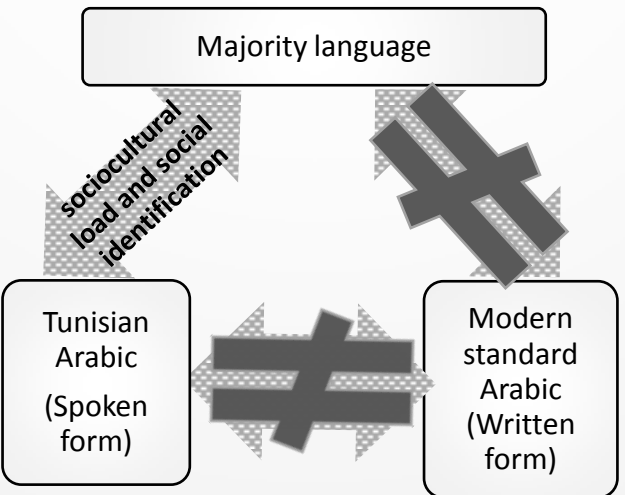
In this case, literacy in MSA would not allow the double and simultaneous and equal identification to the deaf and hearing community
This discontinuity in the social identification process would result in a social and linguistic alienation as well as high rates of illiteracy in MSA (Saiegh-Haddad & Spolsky, 2014; Hall, 2015)

Proposed model

Trilingual bicultural model
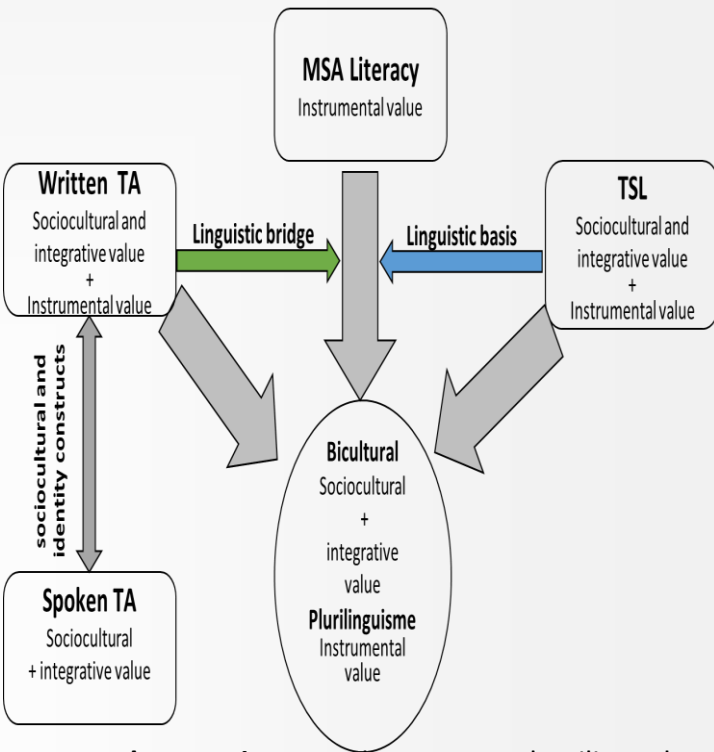
Research question: Is the proposed trilingual bicultural model able to yield better literacy results in MSA than the Bilingual model ?

Proposed experimentation

Population: A population of Tunisian deaf students between 8-16 years will be studied.
Method: the population will be divided into two groups
Control group: Instruction through the bilingual model for one academic year will be administrated.
Experimental group: Instruction through the trilingual model will be administrated
Learners' proficiency in LST, TA, and MSA will be evaluated at the beginning and at the end of the academic year
Instruments:
LST proficiency tests (Niderberger,2004),TA proficiency tests, and MSA proficiency tests will be designed to evaluate Tunisian deaf students in each language

Conclusions

Although the bilingual bicultural model provides major theoretical underpinnings to deaf children's literacy development, its adoption should take into consideration the particular characteristics of the Tunisian sociolinguistic landscape.

The integration of socio-linguistic as well as instrumental components in the Tunisian context would only be possible through a trilingual bicultural model encompassing TSL,TA, and MSA