

## PROPOSAL OF LITERACY FOR DEAF STUDENTS FROM TEXTUAL GENRES IN A SCHOOL SPECIALIZED IN DEAFNES

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### ABSTRACT:

**Introduction:** We aimed in this study, to present situations that describe the conditions of literacy of a deaf group, through the investigation of the performance of these students in reading and writing activities. **Method:** Ten (10) students, Brazilian Sign Language users (Língua Brasileira de Sinais – Libras – users), enrolled in a school specialized in deafness located in a city of Paraná, participated of the survey. Data were collected by a questionnaire with open and closed questions, from which were gotten information about the practices of reading and writing about daily experienced by the research subjects. So, the subjects were required to read and answer about the contents of eight (8) texts, being eight different text genres. **Results:** It was noticed, through the analyses, that the conditions of literacy of each subject are directly related to the living social practices, in their different life contexts. Then, it is known that in the context of deafness, we still have readers and writers who have great difficulty in the text interpretation and production process. **Conclusions:** We are aware that although this study was not conducted in all specialized schools where deaf students are included, it is undoubtedly important because it shows a need for the urgent development of a well-founded project with appropriate strategies to develop a literacy job involving practices in various types of textual genres.

**KEYWORDS:** deafness; literacy; special education.

### INTRODUCTION

In agreement with the demographic census of 2010 (IBGE, 2010), in Brazil there are about 14 million illiterates older than 15 years, equivalent to 9,6% of the Brazilian population. Approximately 5,7 million Brazilians, in other words, 1,12% of the total of the population of the country form the segment of people with severe hearing loss, users or not of the Brazilian Language of Signs, Libras, whose illiteracy tax is larger in comparison with the segment of people that does not present severe

loss in at least one of the considered census -visual, hearing, motive, intellectual or mental. (OLIVEIRA, 2012).

The contingent population of deaf, besides the relative problems to the literacy, is above the question of bilingualism, that is, of the learning of the Libras as first language, L1, and of the Portuguese Language as second language, L2. Especially, even if the deaf is user of L1-modality of visuospatial communication-the fact of not reading and writing in L2, for the rules of the demographic census, it is qualified as illiterate.

The discussions around the bilingualism, in the education of the deaf ones, stated to grown widely after Libras became an official language, in 2002, and implementation of public policies, more precisely the national policy of school inclusion, regulated in 2005. Since then, educators and representatives of the deaf community are presenting a series of reflections related to the deafness theme, bilingualism and literacy, which concerns aim at finding strategies to qualify the teachers again so in they are able to develop projects that, in fact, will contribute to the acquisition of the literacy by the part of the deaf ones that attend the regular net of teaching and schools specialized in deafness. Among the significant studies, in the national extent, stand out the ones of Rojo (2002), Fernandes (2004), Pictures (2004), Guarinello (2007), Soares (2010; 2011) and other.

Intending to contribute with such reflections, the present study was developed containing a field research, with the objective to investigate the performance and to discuss the conditions of lliteracy on a group of deaf students in reading and writing activities from a didactic material formed by pre-selected texts from different kinds of textual genre.

## **METHOD**

With support of the Nucleus of Work "Language, Deafness and Education", formed by students of the Master's and Doctorate degree in Communication Disorders of the from Tuiuti University of Paraná. As methodology, the study group developed twelve (12) Workshops of Portuguese Language, in the period from April to July 2013, with the participation of eight (8) deaf individuals, between 19 and 38 years old, all of them studied in an Special School for the Deaf, located in a city of the West Paraná/ Brazil. It was adopted, as inclusion criteria, registration and frequency of the deaf in high school, considering that, in that level of education, all the participants would already have lived significant literacy practices.

The Workshops were registered through filming and their transcriptions registered in log book, related to the interactivity of the language in L1 and L2. In all Workshops, the study group emphasized the writing in significant contexts, in which the participant subjects were capable to internalize L2 and to notice its functionality in the society and in the context in that they are inserted. It is emphasized that all of the discursive interactions that happened at the Workshops during the development of the project were moderated in Brazilian sign language, Libras.

In the last Workshop a questionnaire was applied with open and closed questions, forming a source of study, from which information were collected regarding the reading and writing practices lived by the subjects of the research, based on 8 (eight) texts of different textual genres. In this article, due to the restriction of the number of pages, from all the worked texts, only 2 (two) of them were chosen for analysis and description of the results.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Next it is going to be presented the analysis and the discussion of the logged results, starting from the accomplishment of the Workshops of Portuguese Language. During the accomplishment of the activities, it was noticed that, although the participants studied the last year of high school, among them, there was significant difference regarding the level of literacy shown by the subjects.

### **ACTIVITY 1 - QUESTIONNAIRE**

The first activity of the Workshop was the application of a questionnaire, destined to pick personal and other relevant information for the study, with the objective of identifying the level of the participants' literacy. In that activity, it was noticed that, of the eight participants, only one got to answer to the subjects of the questionnaire without the aid of the teacher. Among others, some demonstrated difficulty of understanding of L2, and some others did not manage, indeed, to do the reading and to understand what was read.

An episode called the attention of the study group during the development of that activity. One of the participants called the teacher and said that he/she needed help, therefore he/she did not understand certain subject proposed in the questionnaire. Then, the teacher quickly did in signs so that he/she could understand. The subject was: Which are the materials that you use to practice reading at home? The student quickly answered that she/he had already understood. His/her speech was: Humm! I know the construction materials, me in the store with my father to buy building materials.

In the subsequent analysis, to the study group it was evident that, for the fact of the deaf to accompany his/her father in bricklayer's work, probably road written material 'of construction ' in the stores that frequented and, consequently, for not having lived any other significant experience with other material ", he/she did not know them and, with that, it did not get to associate such entry in other historical contexts, besides what was referred in the questionnaire. In spite of, it was noticed that the doubt manifested by the student was common among the participants.

To aid the participants in that subject and to solve possible doubts, activities with different sources of materials that could be bought were used, in which stores of the city and where each item was used, for instance, school materials, of cleaning, of construction, among others that were approached by the students in L1.

Finally, in each one of the Workshops, before the start, it was adopted the inhabit of reviewing the contents previous worked in the classes. In one of them, it

was present a student of another city that, while visiting the school, she/he participated in the project actively. In other, as the teacher began the review, the participant that showed difficulty in understanding and interpreting the subject related to the “reading materials” he/she got up and asked to do the review of the content worked at the previous Workshop. It was understood, then, that the objective had been reached in agreement with their respective understanding difficulties, that there are different types of materials, that are part of life and that are used the whole time in the accomplishment of daily practices. However, the participants did not know them with such significance and they did not know how to write them, even learned in Libras, because the social registration is written in L2. Then, the importance of the deaf ones dominate the structure of L2, once they are inserted in a learned society, it explains Quadros (2004).

Soares (2010) affirms that literate is more than to alphabetize, it is to teach how to read and write inside of a context, in which the writing and the reading make sense and are part of the subject's life. In the literacy process it is just not enough to join letters to form words and to gather words to compose sentences; it is fundamental to understand what is read, to assimilate different types of texts and to establish relationships among them. It is, therefore, which the study group proposed and got the participants of the Workshops to understand the meaning of the word ‘materials’, in their different contexts.

## ACTIVITY 2 - CARTOON

In the second activity, the textual genre used was a cartoon with the purpose of using a text whose social sphere has daily circulation (PARANÁ, 2008, p. 100).



In this case, the cartoon was printed and given to the participants for the accomplishment of reading and, consequently, interpreting it. Soon afterwards, subjects were proposed: Which is the meaning of refrigerator in the first message, first balloon? Which is the meaning of refrigerator in the second message, second balloon? All the participants interpreted the word refrigerator in the denotative sense, in other words, the reading in Libras and the expressed sign of the refrigerator, literal expression of the word, for the orthographies in both balloons. It was noticed, then, that they did not get to understand the sense that the word refrigerator was used in the second balloon, in its connotative sense, subjective, exactly because to the sign it was attributed new meaning, coldness or feeling absence.

At the end of the activity, after working the meaning that the word refrigerator had in each context (balloons) and it was noticed that the participants really understood the proposed activity, the difficulty of the deaf ones was verified in interpreting connotative text. Starting from that, several other sentences and texts were explored with linguistic artifices in L2, as, for instance, this old saying: “water dripping day by day wears the hardest rock away<sup>1</sup>”. For Soares (2011), to alphabetize means teach/learn to read and write understanding the meaning of the words and the context in which each meaning is used.

## **CONCLUSION**

After three months working on the project Workshops in Portuguese Language, it was noticed that the experiences of the deaf ones regarding the reading and writing in L2, when significant, produce surprising results. This affirmation is possible due to the fact that the participants of the Workshops, after demonstrating their difficulties and being helped by the teacher, they were capable of successfully complete all the proposed activities. In that way, we noticed that the deaf ones are capable to learn the linguistic structure of L2 and plus, to interact in different social contexts through that language. However, the school should create well-founded literacy projects in order to provide experiences with different textual genres. Sometimes, the failure of the activities about text production is ruled in the absence of quality of the teaching that it is done with didactic-pedagogic use of the text, for the text and on the text. When the teacher provides work situations with textual genres that are effective there is an improvement in the quality of the teaching. That was clear during the activities developed at the workshops.

Another important point to focus on concerns the use of the language of signs during the discussions and learning mediation. It was noticed that the participants felt more comfortable to expose their opinions, to comment on, to question, using L1, but the same did not happen during the writing in L2. The participants repressed themselves whenever any text written in L2 was presented. It was noticed, then, that L1 is extremely important as mediator in the process of literacy of the deaf, because the constructions written in L2 were only possible because there was a language shared by the participants and the teachers, Libras. Such perception reinforces the defense of Rojo (2002), Fernandes (2004), Pictures (2004), Guarinello (2007) and other theoretical ones, that the success of the teaching-learning of the Portuguese Language by the deaf ones necessarily goes by the possible mediation using the Language of Signs.

Finally, it stands out that the main goal of the project was to develop literacy alternatives for the deaf ones so that they are capable to interact in different social contexts that requires the reading and the writing in Portuguese Language. The objective was reached once the deaf ones, at the end of the activities, interacted and

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<sup>1</sup> The sentence is replacing the Brazilian old saying: “Água mole em pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura”.

understood the social function of each textual genre worked during the development of the workshops.

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