

YOUTUBE BRAZIL AS A POSSIBILITY TO ACCESS DISCOURSES PRODUCED ABOUT DEAFNESS

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION Since its inception the main internet role is to disseminate information. It was possible to reduce cultural barriers due to internet arrival. On account of this increased flow of information, deaf people have increasingly accessed information on the Internet, as well as performed speeches demonstration through the virtual environment. **PURPOSE/METHOD** The present study aimed to analyze the discourses that deal with deafness on YouTube. The method used in this study was to collect YouTube videos within one year time (November 2009 to November 2010) in the YouTube Brazil. In the first survey, 759 videos were obtained, among which the 200 most viewed were chosen. **RESULTS** A quantitative analysis of 200 videos was then performed. From these 200 videos, 25 videos were chosen presenting deaf people discoursing on topics directly related to deafness in sign language. Thus, this study provides the data and conditions to consider that YouTube provides the deaf person a new interactive space in discursive productions arising from social ties created in our society. **CONCLUSIONS** It was possible, therefore to conclude that, via YouTube, the deaf were able to establish grounds for an appreciation of "being deaf", which makes it possible to build a new view on deafness and sign language.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet, associated with a large worldwide network of computers, considered to be the biggest invention of the twentieth century, expands access to shared digital content around the world. To Garbin (2003), this network, as well as providing search information and personal interactions, participates in the formation of public opinion and has fostered the production of knowledge. Now,

geographic barriers no longer have limits in the virtual environment, which has become deterritorialized cyberspace (Nicolaci-da-Costa, 2005).

Computer-mediated interaction is also recurrent among deaf people¹ who use their computers for the same purposes as hearing people, or to participate in chats, send emails, browse websites, seek information, conduct research and establish networks of communication with others. As a result of these uses, many deaf people have developed their own websites, producing virtual spaces for conversation and establishing specific relationships between deaf, besides forming networks for advertising services and products aimed at this population. From this perspective, studies point to the fact that the use of the Internet strengthens interactions between deaf people, developing new forms of communication between these individuals (Power, Power, & Horstmanshof, 2007).

As the Internet has increasingly grown, few specific aids for the deaf have been developed. It is known that the deaf use corresponding visual strategies to search the Internet more than a semantic approach to make decisions about navigation (Fajardo, Arfé, Benedetti & Altoé, 2008). So videos in sign language can support effective navigation searches for deaf signers, i.e., when sites have translation in sign language and not only in written texts, the deaf sign language users become less disoriented in their searches (Fajardo, Parra & Cañas, 2010).

Regarding the use of the Internet by the deaf in Brazil, some authors have been conducting research in this area since the 90s. Among these, Arcoverde (2006) believes that the Internet and "new technologies value the verbal interactions and enlist deaf and hearing, plurilingual interlocutors in a new space of social interaction" (p.251).

Our study is based in the Brazilian literature research about deafness that emphasizes that deaf people have a culture, history and education. It also relates the dissemination of sign language, as a way to empower deaf communities; the militancy of the deaf in demanding their rights and studies on deafness which these communities are founded and unfold in recognition of Deaf Studies (Goldfeld, 2002; Quadros & Karnopp, 2004; Santana, 2007; Strobel, 2008).

Given that the Internet is presented as a possible way for the deaf to expand their interactive possibilities, exchange ideas, form part of virtual communities, and that YouTube makes it possible to circulate speeches made by the deaf, this work analyzes some discursive positions of Brazilian deaf subjects that uses sign language and belong to a deaf community as conveyed in videos on YouTube about deafness, and it also discusses YouTube as a means used by deaf people in the virtual environment.

METHODS

The methodology for this study is characterized by a qualitative analysis based on content analysis, which show characteristics of the individuals involved and scenarios that cannot easily be described numerically. Content analysis was based on Frequency deduction, which consists of enumerating the occurrence of

¹ Deaf people in this study are considered those who have a profound hearing loss, and are inserted as part of the deaf community, besides that these people are sign language users.

the same linguistic sign that recurs frequently in the survey data in order to confirm the existence of a significant linguistic material (Bardin, 2011).

Procedures

The data (videos) for research were searched for on YouTube. The videos were selected using three criteria: 1) videos related to the keyword "deafness"; 2) "Brazilian" videos; 3) "most viewed" videos, i.e., organized according to the number of views (from the most to least viewed). The collection of videos occurred in November 2010 and the sample consisted of videos posted on the site between 2006 and 2010.

In the first survey, 759 videos were obtained, among which the 200 most viewed were chosen. From these 200 videos, only 25 videos were chosen using the following criteria: videos performed by deaf individuals that use sign language and are part of the deaf community discoursing on topics directly related to deafness.

Afterwards, the 25 videos were classified and divided into three main themes according to the occurrence of the same linguistic sign, that is: deaf culture, aspects of coexistence in society between the deaf and hearing and political movements in the area of deafness. For the definition of these categories two criteria were used: 1) Title of the videos; 2) The main goal of each video. After that, the discourses produced by deaf people were interpreted and analyzed. According to Bardin (2011) at this stage, reflection and intuition, based on empirical data, determine relationships that deepen connections of ideas, which enable reaching, in some cases, the basic proposals for changes in boundaries of specific structures and general, as expected since the establishment of goals of the study.

Participants

The participants of this study are 25 deaf individuals who use sign language and are part of the deaf community. All of them posted one video in YouTube related to Deafness. It is noteworthy that this sample of 25 videos, all have speeches made in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) and some concomitantly presented the translation into Portuguese (in audio or through subtitles). Each video showed below represents one of the three themes analyzed, that is, deaf culture, aspects of coexistence between deaf and hearing people and political manifestations in deaf studies.

RESULTS

Regarding the 25 videos produced by the deaf subjects about deafness, Figure 1 shows that 40% of these are about deaf culture, 32% reported on aspects of coexistence between deaf and hearing people, and 28% are political manifestations in deaf studies. Below some samples of selected videos according to the above themes are described.

Video 1 – Video 1 "Technological Innovations in Digital Communication for the Deaf" (October/2008)

In this video, a deaf person (S1), using Libras, with translation into Portuguese audio, summarizes her end-of-course (EOC) work at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of São Paulo, on the theme "Technological Innovations in Digital Communication for the Deaf." The goal of her work is to present some possibilities in communication that the deaf person can find in a society that seeks inclusion. After submission of the summary, the author concludes on her video:

S2 - I invite you to watch the defense of my EOC at PUC entitled "Technological Innovations in Digital Communication for the Deaf" and learn more about this work that I'm sure could help the struggles and demands of deaf people. Deafness is often not as noted as other disabilities, but deafness deserves our attention towards the most basic of human needs: communication. How did I, as a deaf person, get here today? Unfortunately, most of the deaf population in our country is poor.

Vídeo 2 – "Work: Deaf Culture & Identity - Part II" (May, 2009):

In Video 2, a deaf person using sign language speaks about his life story and the vision of his parents about the discovery of his deafness:

S2 - I could not hear. They were concerned, "What is happening?" They took me to a hospital and examined me and diagnosed that I was deaf. My mother was sad, cried and was worried about how I would communicate because her daughter was deaf. Then I grew up and at ten they put me with a speech therapist. Time passed and I grew older, I began to meet with deaf people, meeting new people, and with time they were asking me out and that was when I first went to Asce (Association of the Deaf of Ceará). I began to realize and learn the signs that I did not know before, I felt ashamed, I could not communicate right, but now I have improved because I learned in interaction with the Deaf. I am very happy!

Video 3 - "CI vs. Libras - S3" (January, 2010)

The video presents a narrative performed in Libras, without translation, on the opinion of a deaf person about cochlear implants. The following excerpts were taken from the video:

S3 - But the implant is not good, because, for example, the implant means sadness, the deaf can talk, but it's sad, so medical doctors influence the world, saying that deaf people need to change, need the implant. That being deaf is bad, it is also better to get the implant because it will make the deaf speak. The family strongly believes this, and then they see information on television or in the newspaper about the implant. They open the newspaper and read about the implant and get surprised saying: Look at this! There is a cochlear implant, I love my son, but he is deaf, I need to put that implant in him! So the doctor does the surgery. But it is the doctors who is wrong, who are to blame (...)

DISCUSSION

It seems that despite YouTube already being seen by some researchers as a means of communication for sign language and deaf communities. And considering that it allows the use of sign language, there are still few deaf Brazilian subjects who use this genre to talk about deafness.

From Video 1, it can be seen that S1 considers education as a promoter of social change because her work presented on YouTube has the primary purpose of helping with the struggles and demands of being deaf. Thus, when using her video, S1 produces the statement "I like being deaf, how did I get here today?" She seems to be questioning how she managed to arrive at the university, since in Brazil there is still a lot of discrimination regarding social differences whatever they may be.

Regarding the qualitative analysis of this work, in Video 2, it seems that the family of the deaf person in question, when her deafness was discovered, had no knowledge of their communicative possibilities and not even about sign language. It's worth to note, that in Brazil it is very common, since deafness has still a late diagnosis, and many deaf parents with hearing people do not know anything about sign language and the deaf community (Guarinello *et al.*, 2013). For S2, the relationship with other deaf subjects seems to have given a new meaning to her life because she felt ashamed and could not communicate well. After contact with the Association of the Deaf, shame gave way to a sense of belonging to the world of language. Thus, the video shows that after meeting other deaf people, S2 had a deaf identity.

In Video 3, S3, in his statement, seems to be refuting a medical discourse on the normalization of deafness. In this sense, going against the existing trend in some of the media and the medical community about the urgency of giving the deaf implants so they can be closer to the standard normalized person. Expressing himself using sign language regarding the cochlear implant, S3 breaks with the current medical discourse, which refers to the control mechanism initiated in 1880, at the International Congress in Milan, where sign language was banned. This was true for most at that time, because it defended the idea that the deaf needed to learn to talk and adapt to the hearing society.

Through this situation, in which sign language became prohibited and oral language was accepted by most as the only language able to be used by the deaf in a society where most of the population is hearing, it's possible to identify what Geraldi (1997) defines as external control mechanisms discourse, with the contrast between true and false, since "the truth of a given era relies on a dense set of practices that involve the entire circulation of texts and speeches" (p. 63). Thus, the author states that there is no truth, "but it is in fact", resulting in exclusions of speech considered false, to be defined historically.

CONCLUSIONS

As a consequence, this study provides the data and conditions to consider that YouTube provides deaf people with a new interactive space in discursive productions arising from social ties created in our society. It is in interaction with

others that ideological content is absorbed, and it is in the perceptions of others, by its enunciation, that it is possible to make permanent the constitution of each deaf and non-deaf person. It was possible, therefore to conclude that, via YouTube, the deaf were able to establish grounds for an appreciation of "being deaf", which makes it possible to build a new view on deafness and sign language.

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