

# Literacy of Deaf People: Language Social Practices between Two Languages/Cultures / *Letramentos de surdos: práticas sociais de linguagem entre duas línguas/culturas*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper, written in the light of Bakhtin's work, aims to discuss some specificities of literacy practices for deaf people, since they are constituted on the basis of social practices involving the two languages - Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) and Portuguese. These languages share the same space/time in different spheres of activities and have asymmetric social-cultural and ideological forces. This linguistic-discursive feature relates literacy practices in both languages by establishing, within them, a dialogue (not always peaceful) between languages/cultures. Based on these assumptions, an educational proposal will be presented in which students have developed literacy practices in both languages using their experience in Libras in its discursive/generic dimension. Although still in an early stage, this process might (re)signify and change the historical relationship that has been constituting the dialogue that deaf communities have established with Portuguese.

**KEYWORDS:** Bilingual Education for the Deaf People; Literacy Practices; Brazilian Sign Language; Written Portuguese

## RESUMO

*Este artigo, construído à luz das obras de Bakhtin, tem como objetivo discutir algumas especificidades das práticas de letramento de surdos, considerando que elas são constituídas a partir de práticas sociais de linguagem que envolvem duas línguas - Libras e português, línguas que compartilham o mesmo espaço/tempo nas diferentes esferas de atividade e que possuem forças socioculturais e ideológicas assimétricas. Essa particularidade linguístico-discursiva determina que práticas de letramento em ambas as línguas sejam postas em relação, estabelecendo, no interior delas, um diálogo (nem sempre pacífico) entre línguas/culturas. Considerando esses pressupostos, será apresentada uma proposta educacional na qual os alunos, a partir da vivência da Libras em sua dimensão discursiva/genérica, têm desenvolvido práticas de letramento nas duas línguas. Embora ainda inicial, acredita-se que este processo possa vir a (re)significar e transformar a relação histórica que tem constituído o diálogo que as comunidades surdas têm estabelecido com a língua portuguesa.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação bilíngue para surdos; Práticas de letramento; Língua brasileira de sinais; Língua portuguesa escrita

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## **Introduction**

In the last decade, several researches have been done to study literacy practices developed by deaf people. The texts related to this theme show different conceptions about written language, directly reflecting in the comprehension of the concept of literacy. However, even though there is a plurality of theoretical perspectives in which these studies are inserted, it can be said that there are convergence points among them: Firstly, the acknowledgement that written Portuguese is the second language for deaf communities; secondly, the idea that in this learning process Brazilian sign language (Libras) must be considered the first language.

Nonetheless, the relationship between these languages, which is part of this social-cultural group, differentiates the process of literacy of deaf people, since their bilingualism differs from that observed in hearing people, users or learners, of two oral/written languages. Their bilingualism is more related to that of other minority social-cultural groups living in specific geographic territories, but also different from them, since deaf people and hearing people, and therefore the two languages involved in the process, coexist in the same space/time.

Given this peculiarity, many aspects deserve to be discussed in a work aiming to deal with deaf people's literacy; nevertheless, given the limits imposed by a scientific article, some choices had to be made. Thus, for the construction of this text, discussion about some specificities of the literacy process of deaf people will be held in the light of Bakhtin's work. Later, some literacy practices for deaf students that take part in an educational proposal being developed in a city in the State of São Paulo will be presented.

### **1 Literacy Practices for Deaf People: Dialogical Process between Languages/Cultures**

For the development of the discussions which are the basis of this study, literacy is considered to be a set of social language practices related to the use of written materials, which are intrinsically related to social-cultural, linguistic-discursive and political-ideological values (SIGNORINI, 2001). Based on this assumption, there is the understanding that, in the case of hearing people, speaking and writing are inscribed in a

continuous, non-polarized, language development and therefore that practices developed in different *literacy agencies* (family, church, peer) overlap and establish multiple relationships with those developed in school spaces (ROJO, 2001).

This assumption, when related to deaf people's literacy, implies, then, to conceive that deaf communities take part, in the different spheres of human activity, in linguistic social practices in two languages: Libras, which is an unwritten language, and Portuguese, which is both oral and written. Therefore, this linguistic-discursive specificity invariably relates the process of literacy developed in social practices in Libras with those related to written Portuguese. Thus, literacy practices developed by the deaf should not be identified or reduced to a written ability: “to be literate, in this sense, is to be competent to participate in a certain form of discourse, *whether one can read and write or not*” (OLSON; ASTINGTON, 1990, p.711; emphasis in original). Literacy development involves, thereby, the participation and involvement of the deaf in the discourses of the literate culture in both languages. Being literate is to be able to speak about the discourses and metalinguistically reflect on what is uttered and on the senses that circulate among these utterances.

With this goal, it is understood that, firstly, the deaf should be allowed to be immersed in the interdiscursive stream which constitutes verbal interactions in Libras. Such process is only possible due to the connection to other deaf users of Libras in discursive practices loaded with senses and world and subjects' perspectives, therefore of a dialogical and ideological character, which differ, in different levels, from those which constitute the hearing society. They are discourses that allow the development of language practices in different spheres of the human activity, because, in line with Bakhtin (1986),<sup>1</sup> we understand that “language enters life through concrete utterances (which manifest language) and life enters language through concrete utterances as well” (p.63).

Therefore, when thinking of educational process for deaf students, their participation in different contexts where Libras is the language of interlocution is essential, as well as the participation of deaf adults, who are responsible for inserting

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<sup>1</sup> TN. The English version of this essay was published by the University of Texas Press. Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Transl. Vern W. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

students in the living and unstoppable stream of verbal communication in Libras. These discourses, when materialized in utterances, will constitute certain speech genres in this language, a discursive experience that might be put in dialogue with written Portuguese.

This relationship among utterances/discourses/texts and, therefore, among different social-cultural universes from the first (L1) and second language (L2) - characteristic of the different bilingual educational contexts - presents a specificity when dealing with deaf students: in this process, quite heterogeneous linguistic and ideological forces come into play. Those forces characterize the social-cultural relationship between Libras and Portuguese. This process can be understood analogically to what was discussed by Vološinov (1986)<sup>2</sup> when they dealt with the colonizer role of the foreign word in the different spheres of ideological creation, when civilizations were formed. A language that, loaded with forces and structures, determined that the foreign language, in the historical consciousness of peoples “led to its coalescence (...) with the idea of *authority*, the idea of *power* (...) [and] of *truth*” (p.75; emphasis in original).

Although Portuguese is not a foreign language to the deaf social-cultural group, since the relations lived by them every day are also permeated by Portuguese, it has historically been treated and imposed as foreign in the educational process of deaf students. However, as other foreign languages, Portuguese when understood as a second language cannot be treated as ideologically neuter. Hence, when thinking about the use of Portuguese by deaf people, one must consider that in this process an ideological confrontation, a field of struggles and contradictions, also emerges. Consequently, written Portuguese must be lived in its living forms; it must dialogue with the L1 of the learners in its dialogical and interdiscursive dynamic so that their social-cultural, historical and ideological process can be (re)signified.

In addition to the social-cultural and ideological force of Portuguese when compared to Libras, when analyzing the process involved in its learning by the deaf, there is another differential aspect to be regarded: different from other bilingual contexts, written Portuguese learning also involves learning to read and write texts, because Libras is an unwritten language (LODI, 2014a, 2014b). Making students read

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<sup>2</sup> TN. The English version of this book was published by Harvard University Press. Reference in English: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986.

and produce texts in Libras is a way of promoting this process. Later, the knowledge acquired can be transferred to L2. This process can happen if reading practices are understood as

a process of active comprehension in which the different senses presented in the text are constituted based on a dialogical relation established between author and reader, between reader and text and among the different utterances, the different voices and social languages echoing in the text. A moment of creation of the text, a process of verbal interaction, since it is here that occurs the sense creation process (LODI, 2004, p.12).<sup>3</sup>

These are texts/discourses which, as a product of ideological creation, are constituted in a given historical, social and cultural context and will always be in dialogue with other texts/discourses; texts which are born and keep a direct connection to an extra-verbal situation which is part of its sense; discourses which, being inexorably linked to certain spheres of activity, acquire sense in the context of speech genres.

In this process, there is another specificity of deaf literacy: understanding that all utterances are modulated by speech genres (BAKHTIN, 2000), “relatively stable social practices of sense creation through language, performed through discourse” (SOBRAL, 2009, p.86).<sup>4</sup> It also assumes the understanding that the use of Libras in different spheres of human activity is also performed through the utterances/discourse genres in this language. They become, thereby, ideological “portraits” of the world based on the sphere of activity in which they are inscribed. Considering the discursive specificity of Libras, these genres, i.e., their visual, gestural and spatial materiality should therefore be studied based on this linguistic specificity which is part of them.

However, some reflections deserve to be made regarding the secondary genres of Libras, since it is known that there are still few studies seeking to understand their social-historical constitution and, therefore, the similarities and differences among

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<sup>3</sup> Text in original: “um processo de compreensão ativa, no qual os múltiplos sentidos em circulação no texto são constituídos a partir de uma relação dialógica estabelecida entre autor e leitor, entre leitor e texto e entre os múltiplos enunciados, as múltiplas vozes e linguagens sociais que ecoam no texto. Um momento de constituição do texto, um processo de interação verbal, na medida em que nela se desencadeia o processo de significação.”

<sup>4</sup> Text in original: “práticas sociais relativamente estáveis de instauração de sentido via linguagem, realizando-se mediante discursos.”

Libras and Portuguese genres, since both languages share a common sphere, in the same space/time. Furthermore, it is noticeable that in the educational spaces, a *locus* planned and organized by and for hearing people, there is a predominance of discursive genres in Portuguese coexisting/dialoguing, asymmetrically, with those of and in Libras.

It is also important to consider that many deaf adults took part in an educational process that sought its normalization through oral Portuguese. This normalization would deceptively allow the articulation of the individual with the collective, and thus the control of behaviors in a particular standard as a way of bringing the different together in the egalitarian and homogenizing social space allowed by this language. Thus, deaf adults, today the privileged interlocutors of children and young deaf people in different language social practices, were also constituted according to the hegemonic ideology of a single language - Portuguese - which “gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization” (BAKHTIN, 2008, p.271).<sup>5</sup> Thus, these subjects were also constituted in an asymmetric ideological and linguistic-cultural relation, which has always made efforts to value the force of Portuguese.

Although there is a new social-cultural movement of deaf people seeking, in the last decades, a redefinition of the essential ideological basis (materialized when Libras was acknowledged as a language and had its value recognized in the educational spaces) for their constitution through language, the sociopolitical participation of deaf communities in the different spheres is still not significant. Since any transformation can only be felt if verbal interactions are taken into account - since it is in the word that the phases of transition and social change acquire new social-ideological shapes - it can be said that in the asymmetrical dialogue between social-cultural contexts shared by Libras and Portuguese, there are, within Libras’ secondary discourse genres, a certain ‘hybridization’: an involuntary, unconscious process in which there is a “mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of

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<sup>5</sup> TN. The English version of this text was published by University of Texas Press. Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Transl. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008, p.259-422.

an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated [...] by social differentiation [...]” (BAKHTIN, 2008, p.358).<sup>6</sup>

However, this process is not a linguistic and intentional hybridism characteristic of literary works as discussed by Bakhtin (2008).<sup>7</sup> It is a historical-organic hybridism, which although present in every utterance, given its dialogical essence, engages in a dialogue the two languages/cultures which have, within them, two different points of view, two perspectives and, therefore, two different verbal consciences of the world. We conceive this opportunity to reflect on the 'hybridism' present in Libras's genres as a way to open “new utterance spaces that reshape the geometry of cultural relations and question their power hierarchies” (PAGANO; MAGALHÃES, 2005, p.26),<sup>8</sup> a linguistic and cultural power that, according to the authors, is manifest in the practices of signification, and therefore, in the discursive events.

Thus, considering the relative stability and flexibility of genres that differentiate and expand according to the sphere and become more complex [as Bakhtin (1986) pointed out], and also the hybridization process, of utmost importance for the historical transformations of language, we may say that some genres in Libras are still being formed (SOBRAL, 2006) or are in a process of stabilization. And in these utterances, considering the constitutive dialogical processes of the historicity of deaf people, voices in Libras and in Portuguese live within these genres.

Some studies (LODI, 2014a, 2014b; PELUSO, 2007, 2011) have shown that texts/discourses produced and prepared in sign language, when recorded in video, may be an instrument for the perpetuation and the relative stabilization of utterances in sign language - speech genres (mainly secondary) - historically established from new verbal interactions of deaf people in different spheres of activity. It is believed that this practice enables the appropriation of the language by students, in its different utterance forms, therefore in different genres,

way[s] of saying that have their socially engendered rules and purposes, which gives to each discourse the feature of a social practice. [...] The rules and aims of genres are never fully explicit, and learning them requires from students the same skill that is

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<sup>6</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>8</sup> Text in original: “espaços novos de enunciação que redesenham a geometria das relações culturais contestando suas hierarquias de poder.”

required to learn a language, i. e., to be able to infer its rules from the use others make of it. Unconscious learning, in most cases, which should allow speakers to identify, in each situation they are in, which genre is in force (AMORIM, 2002, p.14-15).<sup>9</sup>

This learning process also enables reading and writing papers in Libras that reflect and refract the social-cultural horizon of deaf people, allowing them to take a stand on the different worldviews that materialize in different discourses in social circulation since “the word that becomes part of the utterance is a cultural unity of the living, dynamic discourse-language; as such it is endowed with all that belongs to the culture, especially cognitive, ethical and aesthetic senses” (MACHADO, 1997, p.154).<sup>10</sup>

## **2 Literacy Practices in an Educational Proposal for the Deaf**

The educational proposal, the focus of this article, has been developed since the second semester of 2009. It intends to promote the transformation of educational processes for deaf students, aiming to implement a municipal education policy that takes into account their linguistic and social-cultural specificities. In the first months of 2012, after the evaluation of the few learning gains deaf students had in the period in which they were in a classroom together with hearing students (1st to 3rd year of elementary school), a classroom where Libras was the language of dialogue between teacher-students and students-students, focusing on the development of educational processes, was implemented in the school in the 4th year. In this classroom, there were two deaf students, aged 10 and 12 (the only students enrolled that year), under the responsibility of a bilingual hearing teacher.

In addition to this division, some other activities began to take place in the school: a) an in-class training of hearing bilingual professionals, aiming to develop processes of teaching and learning similar to those offered to hearing children, the only

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<sup>9</sup> Text in original: “modo[s] de dizer que tem suas regras e suas finalidades engendradas socialmente, o que confere a todo discurso o caráter de uma prática social. [...] As regras e as finalidades dos gêneros não são nunca inteiramente explícitas, e sua aprendizagem exige a mesma competência que exige uma língua, isto é, a de poder deduzir as regras a partir do uso que fazem os outros. Aprendizagem inconsciente, na maioria dos casos, que deve permitir ao sujeito falante identificar, em cada situação em que se encontra, que gênero está em vigor.”

<sup>10</sup> Text in original: “a palavra que entra para a enunciação é uma unidade cultural do discurso-língua vivo, dinâmico; como tal, é dotada de tudo que é próprio da cultura, sobretudo as significações cognitivas, éticas e estéticas.”



difference being the language;<sup>11</sup> b) in-class training of a deaf teacher responsible for enabling the development of language/appropriation of Libras by deaf children in their discursive/generic dimension, hired in 2010 (this work was done in the afterschool); c) the creation of a space dedicated to the teaching of writing Portuguese as L2, considering the particularities involving this process and the very little writing knowledge children were able to acquire in the period in which they were included (also done in the afterschool). There was also an effort to ensure, by means of regular meetings, a dialogue among the work of the three professionals who were responsible for this educational process, since their practices were closely related.

In previous works (LODI, 2014a, 2014b), literacy practices developed by students through the reading of fairy tales and child and youth stories told in Libras by the deaf teacher and the students themselves were discussed. Since all activities were recorded in video, students could read/reread the texts as many times as necessary, establishing, thus, a continuous process of construction of senses. From these texts, the deaf teacher was able to focus and discuss Libras's specific utterance processes. These processes were not discussed as learning objects, but in their value of constitutive sense(s). The analysis of this practice elucidated

the possibility of facilitating processes of first language development/acquisition based on speech genres [...] [in addition to] the foundational role that this language [Libras] acquires for the educational processes of deaf students, since only on the basis of Libras may processes/practices of reading and producing texts - understood in its generic dimension - be implemented [...] which can only become possible when we are inserted in the chain of senses that constitutes the processes of verbal interaction. [...]

It also involves being able to construct senses of different discourses circulating within the school, the family environment and in a broader social-cultural context, dialoguing with the chain of senses constructed in the flow of verbal communication (LODI, 2014a).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This formation regards the development of educational methodologies and practices thought of and developed in Libras, since the teachers knew the language.

<sup>12</sup> Text in original: “a possibilidade de se propiciar processos de desenvolvimento de linguagem/apropriação da primeira língua a partir do olhar para os gêneros do discurso [...] [além do] papel fundante que esta língua [Libras] adquire para os processos educacionais de alunos surdos, a partir do momento em que apenas a partir dela processos/práticas de leitura e de produções de textos, compreendidos em sua dimensão genérica, podem ser instaurados/as [...] processos que só podem se tornar possíveis na medida em que somos inseridos na cadeia de sentidos que constituem os processos de interação verbal [...] Implica ainda poder construir sentidos dos diferentes discursos em circulação no interior da escola, no espaço familiar e no contexto sociocultural mais amplo, dialogando com a cadeia de sentidos construída no fluxo de comunicação verbal.”

This process, which preceded reading practices in Portuguese, was crucial for the implementation of the latter and, when developing them, we sought to respect the constituent and production of sense processes in both languages.

Reading written Portuguese before the activities of written productions in Portuguese was also considered fundamental for the appropriation, by the children, of Portuguese's structures and discursive processes which are part of the language's living dynamics. This fact will hopefully enable students to establish a relationship with Portuguese which allow them to reflect on other readings. It will also give them new abilities of saying in this other language, not as something already established, but as a process which involves the construction of sense in a language which is not constitutive of the children (LODI, 2014b).<sup>13</sup>

In this article, considering the processes described above, we will focus on the first written productions made in Portuguese by deaf students. Students only started writing in Portuguese after they had mastered the ability of reading texts in both languages.

The first activity was developed with the interview genre. First, students were introduced to the genre through discussions about interviews watched on television, observed/experienced in school projects, and through the understanding of the dynamics of this language practice in Libras based on videos taken from the internet. However, since we were aware that watching interviews would not be enough for mastering the genre, students started to experience this genre in its discursive integrity, so that they could know, understand and master the utterance as a whole, and would know how to shape their utterances to the specific stylistic and compositional forms of the genre, in addition to knowing how to “grasp a word promptly, to begin and end correctly” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.80).<sup>14</sup>

For this experience to succeed, the partnership between deaf teacher and hearing bilingual teacher was very important. Thus, in the beginning, the deaf teacher interviewed students using Libras on matters involving their lives and daily school

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<sup>13</sup> Reconhece-se ainda que a leitura da linguagem escrita da língua portuguesa antecedendo práticas de produção escrita nesta língua determinou que as crianças se apropriassem das formas da segunda língua e dos processos discursivos que a constitui em sua dinâmica viva, fato que, espera-se, venha a possibilitar o estabelecimento de uma relação com o português que os permita refletir sobre outras leituras, que lhes dê novas possibilidades de dizer nesta outra língua, não como algo pronto e fechado, mas como um processo que envolve a construção de sentidos em uma língua que não é a constitutiva das crianças (LODI, 2014b).

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 1.

activities. Later children, as suggested by the teachers, interviewed the teacher. In other words, there was an attempt to make students join social practices in Libras aiming to enable them to master the genre.<sup>15</sup> After students prepared the questions to ask the teacher (in Libras), it was suggested that they did some kind of written record, that would be a kind of script for the interview. Students were also free to write the questions the way they wanted, provided they were able to read their scripts at the time of the interview. After students interviewed the deaf teacher (also recorded in video), students watched the film and wrote the answers below to the questions prepared by them.<sup>16</sup>







1. André, Eu amo  l?	1. André, what do you like to eat? <sup>17</sup>
Eu amo a    	My girlfriend and I like Japanese food, draft beer and <i>caipirinha</i> .
2- Ele André 2013 agia amo 	2. André, did you go in 2013, like beach?
casa R\$ mãe	I stayed home, I had no money.

Figure1

In this first written production, it is already noticeable that children were more focused on maintaining the sense of the statements than in using the correct linguistic forms in Portuguese, because when they did not know how to write a word in Portuguese, they put drawings as a way of ensuring the completeness of the utterance.

Another important aspect in the dialogue between the two languages was the choice made by students of using the verb “to love” instead of “to like.” In Portuguese, these verbs have distinct semantic outlines, although in some contexts they are used interchangeably. These same characteristics can be observed in Libras. However, as in

<sup>15</sup> As there are no descriptions of this genre in Libras yet, this is recognized as a historical-organic hybridism. However, as the interactions happened in Libras, we understand that the activity developed by students facilitated the creation of new spaces of utterance. It also facilitated constitutive linguistic-cultural relations related to productions of sense chained in the said discursive events.

<sup>16</sup> The productions of only one child are presented in this article, because, even though activities were individual, the dynamics established in the classroom allowed that the work produced by students were constantly shared, a fact that resulted in the writing of similar utterances. It is understood thus, that the productions presented in the article represent both students and, therefore, the plural form is used for discussing data.

<sup>17</sup> In order to ensure greater understanding of the utterances in relation to the objectives of this article, the utterances from the interview (recorded in video) were translated into Portuguese by the authors.

Libras the utterance of these verbs is performed using the same sign, the difference in their respective senses would be made with facial and bodily expressions (non-manual aspects constitutive of senses in Libras) which were used by students when enunciating in this language. Two not mutually excluding hypotheses can be raised to understand the choice made by students. The first deals with the possible approximation of sense between the two verbs, a fact that may have led students to opt for the simplest form of spelling. The second is related to the activity plan itself - the requested written activity was given in the form of a translation (Libras - Portuguese) - a practice that may have distanced students from the living use of Libras, because they were in different times/spaces from the moment of dialogue, leading them to erase the processes of sense construction performed non-manually and in the enunciative processes in this language.

However, considering the engagement demonstrated by students with this language practice, other interviews were designed and conducted with and by the students in the following months. Once more, the deaf teacher was interviewed by the children (at their request), the students interviewed each other and they also did this with the bilingual teacher and other school professionals. The process used was the same: video recording of the interviews and later transcription of questions and answers based on the videos. However, seeking to help children construct utterances in Portuguese, the drawings gradually began to be translated into Portuguese by the teacher, always considering the context in which the word was enunciated. Another aspect to be highlighted refers to the use of pronouns in Portuguese, a process that was first discussed in Libras, and later related to Portuguese. The basis of this process was the text written by students.

Thus, the different ways of stating in both languages began to be the object of analysis and observation, ending up in the production below (fig 2.) - a transcription of the last interview conducted by them with a school professional.<sup>18</sup> In the transcription, it can be noticed that in the utterances written by students, little by little, they became

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<sup>18</sup> For the organization of the activity, after questions were prepared in Libras and recorded later, the students and the teacher worked in the construction of utterances in Portuguese, respecting the senses constructed by them in Libras. At the end, children asked to type the questions that would serve as a script for the interview.

more confident in the practice of writing and began to make use of some Portuguese discursive aspects.<sup>19</sup>

We may see that in the utterances produced in this activity the drawings, although still being used, have acquired a new sense: instead of being only places of significance, they now began to dialogue with the written information in order to be sure senses in Portuguese - a language still being learned - are correct. Thus, they sometimes appeared anticipating, sometimes following the written word (instead of replacing it). The beginning of a differentiation can also be noticed, as well as the coexistence of discursive processes in Libras and Portuguese in writings of the children.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qual é seu nome? <i>Érika</i></li> <hr/> <li>• Quantos anos tem? <i>41</i></li> <hr/> <li>• Você tem filhos? <i>tem Menino 1</i></li> <hr/> <li>• Onde você mora? Com quem (família)? <i>filho, pai eu [drawing] CASA</i></li> <hr/> <li>• Você gosta de passear, onde? <i>gosta [drawing] shopping</i></li> <hr/> <li>• Qual comida você mais gosta? <i>eu gosto - churrasco - [drawing]</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's your name? Érika</li> <li>• How old are you? 41</li> <li>• Do you have children? has boy 1</li> <li>• Where do you live? With whom (family)? son, father, I (drawing of a house) house</li> <li>• Do you like to go for a walk, where? like (drawing of the sign) shopping</li> <li>• What is your favorite food? I like barbecue (drawing of a barbecue stick)</li> </ul>
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Figure 2

However, the use students made of the first person singular personal pronoun: not explicit in *like shopping*, but explicit in *I like barbecue* is noteworthy. Even recognizing that in both languages, in the contexts in question, the ellipse of the pronoun is accepted, it is important to remember that the use of pronouns in Portuguese was the subject of a previous work considering the first production by students (Fig. 1). In this sense, although it is not possible to be sure, the presence of “I” seems to be a reflection of the previous work.

<sup>19</sup> To facilitate the reading of the writing productions of the students by the readers of this text, the productions were transcribed.

Then, new activities began, and with them new speech genres introduced in the experience of students. Fable was the first genre chosen, and the first text used was “The Goose with the Golden Eggs”.<sup>20</sup> For this work, we used some materials: a booklet in which the fable, adapted from the work of La Fontaine, is presented in Portuguese, and a CD-ROM, which contains the translation of the fable to Libras. The text in Portuguese was constructed in short utterances, separated into paragraphs, supplemented by images about the story. The Libras translation, which is part of the CD-ROM, is presented in a window placed in front of one of the images in the booklet projected on the screen (a lumberjack holding a golden egg in one of his trips to the city).<sup>21</sup>

Initially, the children watched the video in Libras, and after reading and discussing it in class, they received the book in Portuguese, also for reading. Then, students were asked to answer some questions so as to ensure that the answers were not explicit/ready in the texts. Moreover, the booklet was available for consultation by students if they had questions about the spelling of the words in Portuguese. It is important to emphasize that this was the first time students autonomously made a written production, i.e. without involving a translation process. The results were the following<sup>22</sup>:

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<sup>20</sup> TN. As the story in English is about a goose and not a chicken, we translated all occurrences of “chicken” accordingly.

<sup>21</sup> *Historietas contadas em Libras*. Rio de Janeiro: Arara Azul, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> As in figure 2, aiming to facilitate readers’ understanding of the written productions made by students, they were transcribed in the right column.

"A GALINHA DOS OVOS DE OURO"	"THE GOOSE WITH THE GOLDEN EGGS"
<p>1- Como vivia o lenhador? O que ele fazia?  R: casa pobre mulher filha esposa plantava milho e feijão criava galinhas</p> <p>2- O que ele descobriu que o deixou surpreso?  R: Ele descobriu surpresa botado ovo ouro</p> <p>3 - O que ele fez com os ovos de ouro?  R: de ovo ouro correu cidade trocou dinheiro mantimentos casa ovo ouro trocou comprou roupas e calçados família</p> <p>4 - Por que ele matou a galinha?  R: Ele matou galinha Pegar ouro</p> <p>5 - Como era a galinha por dentro?  R: galinha dentro não tem igual galinha</p> <p>6 - O que aconteceu depois que ele matou a galinha?  R: Ele matou galinha ambição quer tudo perde riqueza acabou (FIM)</p>	<p>1. How did the lumberjack live? What did he do?  Answer: house poor wife children fields grew corn and beans raised geese</p> <p>2. What did he find out that surprised him?  Answer: He discovered surprise laid golden egg</p> <p>3. What did he do with the golden eggs?  Answer: He gold egg ran city exchanged money groceries house gold egg exchanged bought clothes and shoes family</p> <p>4. Why did he kill the goose?  Answer: He killed goose Get gold</p> <p>5. How was the goose inside?  Answer: goose inside not has same goose</p> <p>6. What happened after he killed the goose?  Answer: He killed goose ambition wants all lost wealth over (END)</p>

Figure 3

We may observe, in the utterances produced by students, that the reading of the fable in Libras was crucial for the reflection of students on the text, a process which, when they prepared answers, allowed:

- a) the dialogue with the question: as the first question regarded the way the lumberjack lived and what he did, probably the students understood it was not necessary to repeat the reference (man/lumberjack or the pronoun - he). However, in the other answers, we observed a different process, which will be discussed later.
- b) the dialogue between students' experience and information not explicit in the texts, such as the utterance that the lumberjack lived in a poor house, created from the utterances present in both texts that he was a poor man.

Utterances - Libras	MAN POOR LUMBERJACK TO LIVE WOMAN CHILDREN FIELDS ISOLATED TO GROW CORN BEANS TO RAISE GEESE (...)
Utterances - Portuguese	A poor lumberjack lived with his wife and children in the fields away from everything

	He grew corn and beans and raised half a dozen geese (...)
Students answers	1. House poor wife children fields grew corn and beans raised geese

c) the establishment of sense relationships among utterances for the production of their own utterances (answer 6)

Utterances - Libras	AMBITION (...) THINK THIS GOOSE HAVE INSIDE <sub>HER</sub> TREASURE. KILL <sub>SHE</sub> (...) EASY DREAM GET MONEY OVER. MORAL STORY WANT EVERYTHING EVERYTHING LOOSE
Utterances - Portuguese	Really ambitious (...) the guy thought: "This goose must have a treasure inside her!" And killed her. (...) Thus, the dream of being rich was over. Moral of the story: he who wants everything, loses everything
Students answers	6. He killed goose ambition wants all lost wealth over

d) the search for concepts in Portuguese to signify concepts that are rendered by more than one sign or by the repetition of signs in Libras, establishing, this way, a relation of senses among concepts in both languages (answer 3)

Utterances - Libras	RUN CITY (shows the egg in his hand) SEE <sub>EGG</sub> SELL EXCHANGE EGG EXCHANGE MONEY FOOD FOOD FOOD ONE MONTH (...) COMEBACK CITY AGAIN EXCHANGE SELL EGG EXCHANGE BUY CLOTHES SHOES SNEAKERS DIFFERENT FAMILY
Utterances - Portuguese	He ran to the city and sold the egg really fast, bringing groceries for a month back home (...) In another trip and one more sale, the lumberjack bought clothes and shoes for all his family.
Students answers	3. He gold egg ran city exchanged money <i>groceries</i> house gold egg exchanged bought clothes and <i>shoes</i> family.

In the utterances made by students, it is possible to notice that, added to their voices, the voices of the narrator in Libras and the booklet's author in Portuguese were also present. These voices are alternated without leaving explicit marks, but they put the two languages/cultures in a dialogical and dialectical relationship within a single utterance.

This process can be observed when analyzing the utterance in answer 1, shown in the first table. This particular utterance makes noticeable the prevalence of the composition of utterances in Libras instead of Portuguese: *woman children fields grew*



*corn and beans raised geese*. The amount of geese the lumberjack raised was even omitted (the number was present in the text in Portuguese, but not in Libras). However, students did not neglect the fact that they were producing utterances in Portuguese and they were concerned with how to do it. Thus they dialogued with the author of the booklet to produce their own utterances. This process was materialized in the incorporation of Portuguese verb conjugations (grew, raised) in the same way it was done by the booklet author, and in the inclusion of the additive conjunction 'and' when joining words (corn and beans, also present in answer 3 - clothes and shoes).

It is important to highlight that past tenses in Libras can be performed in different ways depending on the enunciative context: by facial/body expressions, by the presence of temporal discursive markers (time adverbs) and by the utterance context. Therefore, their performance significantly differs from how it is done in Portuguese. As regards the use of the additive conjunction “and,” this process is performed in Libras by a brief pause and/or a change in head position by the enunciator. Therefore, there is not a specific linguistic element for this process, contrary to Portuguese. The dialogue established by the students in the production of utterances-answers suggests, then, that contrary to the first translation performed by them, the non-manual aspects of Libras became objects of attention in their significant role, a fact that led them to seek ways to ensure that the same senses constructed in Libras were also present in L2.

In the utterances-answers written by students an active understanding process of the subject of the question is also noticeable. For example, in question 5, “How was the goose inside?”, the utterance-answer was produced by the incorporation of the subject of the teacher's utterance-question - *goose inside* - responsible for the mobilization of the responsive process - *has not*. To complement the sense of the utterance in L2, students dialogued with the texts in Libras and Portuguese to finish the answer – “goose inside has not *same* goose.”

To complete this analysis, emphasis is given on the active understanding demonstrated by students regarding the particularity of this genre, embodied in the utterance-answer in question 6: to tell what happened after the death of the goose, the students resorted to the concept of ambition - the fable's theme - complemented by the presentation of the moral of the story: *wants all lost wealth over*.

## Final Thoughts

The processes examined in this text, though still preliminary, when put into dialogue with those found in previous works (LODI, 2014a, 2014b), indicate significant aspects for the understanding of literacy practices of deaf students. The possibility of these practices being initially developed in Libras - a language having a foundational role in constitutive and educational processes of deaf students - has become a differentiating factor for the development of literate practices by students. Reading in Libras, producing texts in this language, experiencing Libras in its discursive and therefore generic dimension so that, from this knowledge, these practices may be signified in written Portuguese, create a dialogue between languages/cultures that are present in all spheres of human activity in which they take part.

Added to this, there is the possibility that this process be developed from the experiences of languages in their social use, their concrete utterances, constituted in their historical, cultural, ideological, and therefore dialogical essence. Thus, when the students were inserted in the chain of senses that constitute the processes of verbal interaction in Libras and written Portuguese, they have been able to establish an interdiscursive relationship within the two languages/cultures, and in this experience, re-signify ideological values of each language in the Brazilian society.

From this practice, we believe that, gradually, students will see themselves as readers and producers of texts in Portuguese as well, changing the (negative) historical relationship that has been the dialogue deaf communities have established with Portuguese.

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