

## Storytelling in Libras from the teachers' perspective: reflections on its frequency and purpose

*A contação de histórias em Libras na perspectiva dos professores: reflexões sobre a sua frequência e finalidade*

**Lidiane Rodrigues Brito**

Instituto Federal do Norte de Minas Gerais – Salinas – Minas Gerais – Brazil

**Maria Clara Maciel de Araújo Ribeiro**

Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros – Montes Claros – Minas Gerais – Brazil

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to examine to what extent and for what purpose teachers of deaf students use storytelling and what images they construct for this practice. To this end, a semi-structured questionnaire with multiple-choice and discursive questions, both mandatory and non-mandatory, was created using *Google Forms* and was disseminated to teachers of deaf students. The questions, divided into six sections, cover the teacher's profile and questions about storytelling. Data indicate that teachers use storytelling in Libras for pedagogical purposes, especially for enhancing the cognitive and linguistic development of their deaf students. The results also demonstrate that there is a lack of genuinely deaf literature in storytelling practices.

**Keywords:** Storytelling. Libras. Deaf Literature. Teachers of deaf students.

**Resumo:** Objetiva-se neste estudo identificar em que medida e com que finalidade professores de alunos surdos utilizam-se da contação de histórias e quais são as imagens que constroem dessa prática. Para tanto, um questionário semiestruturado, com questões de múltipla escolha e discursivas, obrigatórias e não obrigatórias, foi elaborado no Google Forms e foi administrado a professores de alunos surdos. As questões, divididas em seis seções, abordam o perfil do professor e perguntas sobre o contar histórias. Constatou-se que os professores utilizam-se da contação de histórias em Libras com finalidade pedagógica, sobretudo para potencializar o desenvolvimento cognitivo e linguístico dos estudantes surdos. Os resultados indicam ainda que falta uma literatura genuinamente surda nas práticas de contação de histórias.

**Palavras-chave:** Contação de histórias. Libras. Literatura Surda. Professores de surdos.

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## 1 Weaving the first threads<sup>1</sup>

Storytelling moments have always been more evident in Early Childhood Education for hearing children. The Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 1998) considered the storytelling practice to be one of the permanent activities that meet children's basic needs of care, learning and pleasure and, therefore, it should take place with a certain regularity.

In Elementary Education, this activity no longer gains much prominence and perhaps, does not have the same regularity as in Kindergarten, due to the overall concern with the literacy process - which seems a contradiction. Despite this, several studies (to mention a few, PERES & NAVES, 2018; SOUSA & BERNARDINO, 2011) point the contributions of storytelling to the learning and development of hearing children in the early years of Elementary Education, many of them associating it with the literacy process and with the encouragement to form readers. According to Abramovich (2009, p. 16), listening to stories "is the beginning of learning to be a reader, and being a reader, is to have an absolutely infinite path of world discovery and understanding." This position is in line with our perception of the use of stories in reading and literacy education<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand, storytelling in Libras has never been enthusiastically highlighted in deaf children's education, perhaps because there is a lack of official references dedicated specifically to this audience and school group; and perhaps because bilingual education is still under construction in Brazil, albeit with an old and ongoing struggle. In any case, storytelling in Libras for deaf children in school education is a topic that remains little explored.

For Candido (2002), storytelling is one of the ways of satisfying the universal needs of citizens. According to the author, the literature presented in

storytelling has three main functions: the *psychological function*, which is to satisfy the universal need for fantasy and fiction; the *formative educational function*, which contributes to the formation of the personality, not according to the interests of the dominant groups, for literature reveals realities that the dominant ideology tries to hide; and the *function of the knowledge* of the world and of being, an essential function for deaf children - which is the one that provides a greater understanding of reality, as it gives the opportunity to reflect on fiction versus reality. Based on Candido (2002), we perceive storytelling as a social, humanizing, and also, as an educational nature tool.

In addition, from Bedran's perspective (2012, p. 25), "[a] child who listens to stories on a daily basis awakens his/her curiosity and creative imagination and at the same time has the chance to dialogue with the culture that surrounds him/her and, therefore, to exercise his/her citizenship." Based on Bedran (2012) and Candido (2002) and the fact that stories make up the lives of hearing children, we question whether for deaf children storytelling would happen at home and at school, as is so common for hearing children, or whether deaf children would be deprived of the pleasure and benefits of storytelling in these two environments. The answer assumes that, although most deaf children are deprived of storytelling within the family, since its members lack the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), they may find encouragement and the possibility of imaginative development at school in the hands of a storytelling teacher, in their meetings with deaf peers, and via a genuinely bilingual education. What remains to be seen, however, is how the school uses storytelling and the dynamics of this activity. In line with this, this study aims to answer to what extent and for what purpose teachers of deaf students use storytelling in Libras, and what images they construct of this practice.

<sup>1</sup>This article is part of a larger study presented to obtain a Master's degree in Education from the State University of Montes Claros entitled "From oral tradition to sign language: storytelling in deaf education", available at: <[https://sucupira.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.xhtml?popup=true&id\\_trabalho=13525501](https://sucupira.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.xhtml?popup=true&id_trabalho=13525501)>.

<sup>2</sup>Law no. 14.407 of July 12, 2022, amends the Law 9394/96 of Guidelines and Education Bases (in Portuguese, LDB - Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação), by instituting the responsibility of basic education with the reader education and with the encouragement of reading. It further encourages teachers to use the storytelling practice to form readers.

Guided by these questions, the study applied an online questionnaire to teachers of deaf students in different educational spaces, and discussed aspects of the dynamics of storytelling for the participants of this study.

To begin this discussion, we explain the meaning of the term *storytelling* and then, we present a study on teachers' representations of the *Tale Time* in Libras. Subsequently, we describe the research context and methodology, based on the analysis of the questionnaire that was sent to teachers of deaf students. In turn, we present the teachers' perceptions about the storytelling in Libras, and we end by discussing our final considerations.

## 2 A glance has already been shown...

This section is based, above all, on the results of Xavier Neta (2016), as no other research has proposed to investigate storytelling in Libras at school with such density. In her research in Porto Alegre and the Metropolitan Region of the teachers' representations of the *Tale Time*, the author contemplates issues of culture, literature, and deaf protagonism; the contributions of storytelling to the development of deaf students; and why this activity is kept neglected at schools. Xavier Neta's (2016) findings support the analysis and interpretation of the data of this study. But before we present what has already been researched by Xavier Neta (2016) in relation to the teachers' perceptions of Libras storytelling, it is worth understanding a little more about the term storytelling and its relationship with *story time*.

According to Fleck (2018),

"Storytelling" is a neologism referring to the act of narrating stories, and is often used in the educational context as a synonym for "tale time" and/or "story hour", during which oral narrations are sometimes mixed with reading stories aloud. (FLECK, 2018, p. 21)

In this quote, Fleck (2018) compares storytelling to tale time, to story time, and to stories reading. Later in his thesis, Fleck (2018) presents possible approaches of stories narration to the literature mediation, bibliotherapy<sup>3</sup> and *Storytelling*<sup>4</sup>. She emphasizes that "[t]he use of the term 'storytelling' is not unanimous among researchers in the field" (FLECK, 2018, p. 21). Sometimes, we can find the term being used as "stories narration", which for Cléo Busatto (2013) means the same thing.

We agree with Busatto (2013), but we chose to use the term "storytelling" because of the scope and historical stability of the concept. Regarding the terms, Tale Time and Story Time, we understand that these moments can involve both reading a story and narrating a story. Of course, reading a story is different from narrating a story. When we read a story, we need to rely on the text, to be faithful to the author's writing, while when we narrate a story, we use our own words and, as Sisto (2020, p. 36) points out, "[...] whoever tells a story, adds a period, a comma, an exclamation and an open mouth [...]" and for this there is a specific technique, although both activities have literary practice at school in common, and both play important roles in the teaching-learning process.

We understand it is necessary for teachers to clearly know the difference between these concepts, as they correspond to different actions, with specific objectives that also require different perspectives and approaches. In Xavier Neta's (2016) study, the Tale Time is seen as the time for narrating stories. Having understood this relationship between "stories narration" and "tale time", we move on to the five teacher representations of Tale Time presented by the author.

By establishing relationships between oral storytelling and storytelling in Libras, the author presents five significant teacher representations in relation to Tale Time as: i) a space/time for deaf culture; ii) a space/time for interdisciplinarity; iii) a

<sup>3</sup>Carla Sousa (2021, p. 59) defines bibliotherapy based on Clarice Fortkamp Caldin (2010) as "[...] caring for the development of the human being through stories, whether read, narrated or dramatized."

<sup>4</sup>Today, this term is associated with the use of persuasive narratives to promote ideas, especially in non-school environments, such as companies, businesses, etc.

space/time for deaf protagonism; iv) a space/time for (in)formation; and v) a space/time for discomfort.

For Xavier Neta (2016), the first representation, space/time of deaf culture, is a space for the development of deaf identity, since deaf children have contact with the cultural artifacts of the deaf community and there are the meetings deaf-deaf or deaf-hearing fluent in sign language.

It is clear that in the second representation, Tale Time as a space/time for interdisciplinarity, teachers are concerned about the difficulty deaf students have in reading. As such, teachers make this a time to expand vocabulary, encourage reading, and work with different knowledge areas. Thus, this second type is seen as a pedagogical tool for teaching curricular content, especially for teaching reading and writing of the Portuguese language.

The third teacher representation deals with Tale Time as a space/time for deaf protagonism. This representation is given, above all, to the students who are invited to narrate and retell the stories. Xavier Neta (2016, p. 89) states that “[the] Tale Time as a space/time for protagonism presents itself as a laboratory. A place to get to know oneself, express oneself, and experiment with new ways of being and communicating” since it is the students who plan and carry out the storytelling.

The fourth representation, which sees storytelling as a space/time for building (in)formation, benefits from stories to form habits and behaviors. This idea is evidenced in the following quote:

[by] the word, or by the sign, [...] [the teachers] hope to offer an adequate representation of conviviality, friendship, and collegiality to their students. Through literature, [...] they set out to order chaos and to regulate the students' actions, avoiding selfishness, prejudice, violence, and exclusion within their groups. The teachers therefore expected literature to present their students with models and codes of behavior that they considered to be socially acceptable (XAVIER NETA, 2016, p. 92).

In the second analysis, the representation of Tale Time as a space/time of (in)formation is related to the use of stories to form students through discussions

on different themes in the media, to which the deaf persons often do not have access due to the lack of info circulation in sign language. Stories are therefore a space for formation and “linguistic and social information” (XAVIER NETA, 2016, p. 96).

Although the teachers' representations of storytelling so far point to positive aspects of the practice, the fifth and final representation, the Tale Time as a space/time of discomfort, is discouraging, for the Tale Time is seen as a moment of uneasiness for teachers. According to Xavier Neta (2016), this teacher discomfort during storytelling is caused due to: the excess of demands linked to teachers' pedagogical and administrative work; the lack of time for study, research, planning and storytelling realization; the excess of school events; the need to comply with curricular content and the timetable of specialized classes; and the lack of material resources that makes the experience less than what the teachers wanted. The difficulties also refer to teachers' personal issues, such as the lack of contact with literature and children's storytelling; lack of knowledge of techniques, and difficulties with sign language. Thus, the teachers point to the

[...] need to increase fluency in sign language, the desire for more spaces for continuing training, and time to exchange experiences with other teachers on storytelling strategies. (XAVIER NETA, 2016, p.113).

In order to better understand the reason for this teachers' unease, we turn to Tardif and Lessard (2008). According to the authors, the school as the backdrop to teachers' work “[...] is not only a physical space, but also a social space that defines how teachers' work is distributed and carried out, how it is planned, supervised, paid for, and seen by others” (Tardif e Lessard, 2008, p. 55). In this sense, the organisation of school time and space has a major impact on teachers' work.

We also consider important to present the findings by Xavier Neta (2016) in relation to the stories chosen by teachers for Tale Time, because according to her “[...] the choice of works used in storytelling can

reveal the knowledge that is considered valid, the perspectives of the world that are valued, and the type of behavior that is valued" (XAVIER NETA, 2016, p. 59-60). Therefore, they reflect the teachers' vision of storytelling.

Xavier Neta (2016) observed that, although teachers recognize that stories with elements of deaf culture and identities make it possible to build positive representations of deafness, few works are chosen with this theme. According to the author, the choice of stories that teach about values and behaviors for living in society prevails. Karnopp *et al.* (2011) in their study about the editorial productions between 1999 and 2010, identified that most works were written by hearing people who presented a clinical view of deafness. From this perspective, we realise that even six years after the research by Karnopp *et al.* (2011), there was and still is a shortage of works dealing with deafness and its positive representations.

Another aspect explained by Xavier Neta (2016) that deserves to be highlighted is that teachers have doubts about the concept of deaf literature. As this subject is defined by various authors as difficult to conceptualize, we reserve a space for this discussion.

### 3 Views on deaf literature

As Mourão (2011) mentions, conceptualizing deaf literature is not a trivial task. "When we talk about it, specifically, we see that it is related to the representations produced by deaf people, in which shared meanings are produced in the form of discourse - without them there is no deaf representation" (Mourão, 2011, p. 72). The author also mentions that there are three types of production in deaf literature: translations, adaptations and creations.<sup>5</sup>

Translations are considered to be literature translated into Libras, for the dissemination and knowledge of deaf people of the literary heritage of

different cultures, times, and spaces. They are adaptations when authors replace the original stories of world literature with characteristics of the characters, placing deaf main characters and elements of deaf culture and identities, so that the discourse brings representations about deaf people. According to Rosa and Klein (2011), adaptations are more common in printed material than in multimedia productions (e.g., CDs, DVDs). Creations, on the other hand, according to Mourão (2011), are productions that emerge from the deaf community. In relation to creations, Rosa and Klein (2011) state that although deaf and hearing people, participants in the deaf community, create stories that make up what we call deaf literature,

[...] when produced by a deaf person, [the story] becomes different from the one produced by hearing people. This is because the deaf person is the one who experiences deafness, its culture and Libras. As much as a hearing person is fluent in Libras, has knowledge of the deaf culture, and actively participates in the community, he/she will have different experiences from those that deaf people have. For this reason, the deaf persons, in general, have the ability to produce stories that will be more easily absorbed and understood by other deaf people, and tell experiences with which other deaf people will easily identify (ROSA e KLEIN, 2011, p. 95-96).

The quote by Rosa and Klein (2011) strengthens the importance of the deaf-deaf encounter, which can also take place through literature.

With regard to translations, Sutton-Spence (2021, p. 222) emphasizes that "[...] all translations require adaptation and have an element of original creation on the part of the translator." The author subdivides translation into faithful and literary. Faithful translation follows the words of the text more precisely, while in literary translation the focus is not so much on the words of the text, nor on the content, but on the aesthetic effect and emotion that the text can generate. The author therefore states that

<sup>5</sup>To these types of deaf literature presented by Mourão (2011), Sutton-Spence (2021) adds another type: the retelling. However, it will not be listed here because we believe it is a reconstruction of a text or a text derived from another. Sutton-Spence's definition of this type of deaf literature confirms our idea. According to the author, "[e]ach retelling maintains the basic content of the originals, both in Libras and in Portuguese (or any other language). The topics are the same, the main characters and key events - even the overall structure - remain the same, but the narrator has the freedom to tell it as he or she wishes" (Sutton-Spence, 2021, p. 223). In this study we treat retelling as an activity to be carried out through storytelling. In this study, we treat retelling as an activity to be carried out through storytelling.

the main objective of the translation is to recreate, as much as possible, the same information produced in the Portuguese text in the Libras version. [...] There are translations of Libras that are very aesthetic and creative and that do not follow the words one by one, but always have a closer relationship with Portuguese because the words in the Portuguese text are recognized as important (SUTTON-SPENCE, 2021, p. 225).

The author warns that before conducting a translation, it is necessary to consider its purpose, to know the literary norms of the languages - of Portuguese and Libras - and also to take into account the rhythm, hand configurations, space, speed, the multiple and simultaneous perspectives, incorporation, the use of facial and body expressions, and the classifiers (SUTTON-SPENCE, 2021, p. 226). Additionally, Sutton-Spence presents some criteria that characterize a certain perspective of deaf literature, which are: “[...] 1) **to be made by deaf people**; 2) **to deal with the experience of being deaf and the knowledge of deaf culture**; 3) **to have the objective of reaching a deaf audience** and 4) **to be presented in Libras**” (Sutton-Spence, 2021, p. 40).

The author reveals that it is not necessary to meet all four criteria to be considered deaf literature. In explaining each of these criteria, she clarifies that deaf

literature can be written by deaf people, by hearing people, or in a deaf-hearing partnership. It can be written in Portuguese or in Libras, and it can also be created for deaf and hearing audiences.

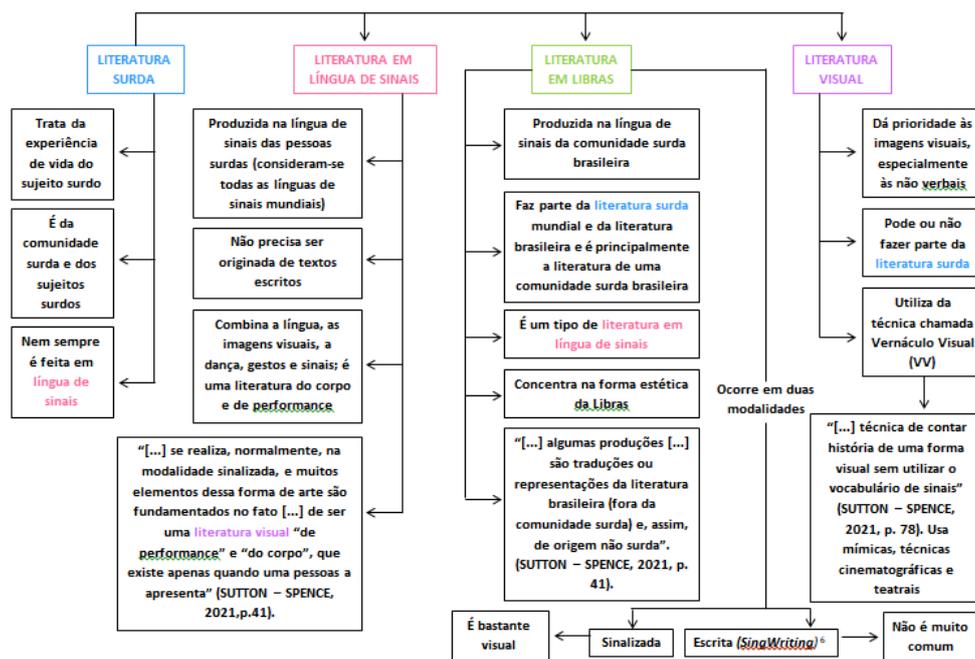
Still on the subject of deaf literature, Sutton-Spence (2021) states that

[t]here are several terms, in Portuguese and in Libras, as well as some similar concepts that we need to clarify, mainly 'deaf literature', but also 'literature in sign language', 'literature in Libras', 'sign literature' and 'visual literature'. (Sutton-Spence, 2021, p. 39).

For the author, it is not simple to define these types of literature because there is no simple definition. What exists is the possibility of conceiving areas according to our interest.

In order to better understand the terms and their relationships, and to name the one that best applies to our study, we present the following diagram based on the book *Literature in Libras* by Sutton-Spence (2021).

Figure 1: Schematic representation of deaf literature terminology



Source: Own elaboration based on definitions by Sutton-Spence (2021).

We can see from the diagram that the terminologies are interconnected in that literature in Libras is part of deaf literature and is a type of literature in sign language, which, in turn, is based on visual literature that, when it deals with the deaf experience, becomes deaf literature. Santos (2020, p. 33) complements this idea by stating that "[...] the nomenclatures *Deaf Literature*, *Visual Literature* and *Visual/Deaf Literature* are strictly linked, for they have their roots in the sociocultural context of the Deaf Community<sup>6</sup>."

Sutton-Spence (2021) also states that it is possible to study deaf literature from different perspectives, considering this as literature in Libras as well, because,

although it is not of deaf origin and does not deal specifically with the lives of deaf people, this translated or adapted literature in Libras is often presented by deaf people, intended for deaf people, in the sign-visual-spatial language of deaf people and is part of deaf literature. There are translations by hearing people included in deaf literature because what matters from this perspective is the language of presentation and the target audience (SUTTON-SPENCE, 2021, p. 41).

When the author focuses the literature on the language of presentation and the target audience, it reinforces our understanding that all the nomenclatures, literature in sign language, literature in Libras, sign literature, visual literature and visual/deaf literature, are part of a larger axis called Deaf Literature.

<sup>6</sup>It is clear that there are more narrow concepts, and others that are broader, which can sometimes generate doubts and questions. One of them is that simple translation is considered deaf literature, but it is this distinct conceptualization that creates accessibility for the deaf to world literature. There is, for example, a contingency between deaf literature and visual literature. Many of these forms of visual literature produced by hearing people are accessible to the deaf community because they don't use a sound-based language, even though they are not deaf literature (because they don't meet any of our four criteria for deaf literature). "[...] wordless theater and mime, picture books, comic books and comic strips are also part of visual literature. There is also non-verbal visual literature that does not use Libras (e.g., mimes and comics), but which is part of deaf literature because it is made by deaf people, because it deals with subjects that highlight the experiences of deaf people, and is aimed at deaf people" (SUTTON-SPENCE, 2021, p. 43).

#### 4 Connecting some concepts to literary works

Based on Mourão (2011) and Sutton-Spence (2021) regarding deaf literature, and for the purposes of this study, we present as an example of the previous discussion, 3 videos available on *YouTube* channels that tell the stories: (i) *The journey* (in Portuguese, *A viagem*)<sup>7</sup>; (ii) *Tibi and Joca: a story of two worlds* (in Portuguese, *Tibi e Joca: uma história de dois mundos*)<sup>8</sup>; and (iii) *The Deaf Little Bean* (in Portuguese, *O Feijãozinho Surdo*)<sup>9</sup>. The stories were chosen for their didactic potential for school use, aimed at the overall development of deaf people, considering the themes, vocabulary, and visual presentation of the stories. The analysis follows Sutton-Spence: "we can look at this literature in various ways, depending on the focus, observing its producers, its audience, the subject matter, its language and whether it is signed or written" (Sutton-Spence, 2021, p. 44).

The work *The Journey*, was written by Francesca Sanna (hearing). The story was not written in Libras, nor does it talk about the deaf experience, but it was translated into Libras by Carolina Hessel (deaf) in order to make it accessible to the deaf public. In this sense, based on the video translation, the story fulfills at least two of the criteria for being considered deaf literature: it aims to reach a deaf audience and is presented in Libras. In this sense, it can be considered deaf literature and according to Mourão's classification (2011) it is a translation.

The book *Tibi and Joca: a story of two worlds* was written by Cláudia Bisol (hearing), but has the special participation of Tibiricá Maineri (deaf). It talks about the experience of a deaf person in the hearing world. The book has lots of illustrations and on each page there is a key word in Portuguese and a translator character that signs the words. Although the aim of the book is to reach a deaf audience, it can

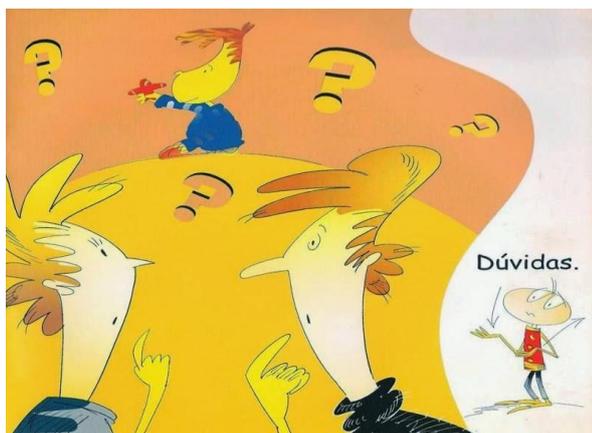
<sup>7</sup>Link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWbRo8wLeb0&t=464s>> acesso em 24 maio 2021.

<sup>8</sup>Link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8aEG6wjlyc>>; acesso em 24 maio 2021.

<sup>9</sup>Link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFc42M8N1XI&t=65s>>; acesso em 22 out. 2022.

easily be understood by hearing children, family members and friends of deaf people, putting them in touch with the reality experienced by deaf people, as it deals with the experience of being deaf. From this perspective, the story is part of deaf literature, for it meets the following criteria: it was made with the participation of a deaf person, it aims to reach a deaf audience, it addresses issues that deal with the experience of being deaf; and when taking into account the video presentation in the ALELIBRAS channel by Renato Borges Daniel (deaf), it meets yet another criterion as it is presented in Libras. As defined by Mourão (2011), it is a creation.

**Figure 2:** Book page showing the translator doll signing a keyword.



Source: Book *Tibi and Joca: a story of two worlds*.

The *Little Deaf Bean* is another story written by Liège Gemelli Kuchenbecker (hearing), based on her work with deaf children. The book contains short sentences in Portuguese, followed by SignWriting written by two deaf women: Erika Vanessa de Lima Silva and Ana Paula Gomes Lara. The book is accompanied by a DVD, in which a deaf person narrates the story in Libras. Other videos in which this story is told can be found on YouTube, such as on Michelle Schlemper's (hearing) channel *In every meeting I tell a tale* (in Portuguese, *Cada encontro eu conto um conto*). The work was prepared by Liège Gemelli Kuchenbecker for pedagogical purposes, considering the experience of deaf students. The presentation includes some accounts of the students'

identification with the Little Bean. Regardless of how it is presented, in print or the media, it also meets the criteria described by Sutton-Spence (2021), and is characterized as deaf literature. Following Mourão's (2011) types of deaf literature, it is a creation.

To exemplify an adaptation and the criteria it meets to be characterized as deaf literature, we refer to *Deaf Cinderella* by Carolina Hessel (deaf), Lodenir Karnopp (hearing) and Fabiano Rosa (deaf). In this work, Cinderella and the prince are deaf and communicate in Libras. When Cinderella rushes out of the party as it's getting close to midnight, her glove stays with the prince. The glove in the story represents the value of the hands, since it is through the hands that deaf people communicate, explore language and the world around them. The story is considered deaf literature, as it is produced with two deaf authors, deals with the experience of being deaf and the knowledge of deaf culture, and aims to reach deaf audiences.

By getting to know the teachers' representations from Porto Alegre and the Metropolitan Region of the Tale Time, and trying to unravel the concept of deaf literature, we see the importance of deaf literature in deaf education. It is necessary to know it and combine it with the teacher's objectives and the story's audience, observing their age group, school level, and fluency in Libras.

We consider that literature in Libras in the written modality is just as important as in the signed modality, as it also produces deaf subjectivities, "[...] but perhaps they don't 'dialog[ue]' in the same way as signed literature, not only because of the issue of deaf people's access to written language, but also because of the social role that sign language plays in the deaf community" (POKORSKI, 2020, p. 22).

Similarly, we can reflect on translations, adaptations, creations and the VV technique (visual vernacular) of visual storytelling without the use of signs, as shown in Figure 1. As Rosa (2020) states, translations and adaptations are important, but creations are paramount, especially those produced by deaf people, as they make deaf experiences more explicit.

The observations made by the authors cited so far help us analyze to what extent and for what purpose teachers of the deaf use storytelling and what images they construct of this practice. We move on to our analysis and reflections on teachers' views on storytelling from different regions of the country. Firstly, though, we take a look at the methodology path we took towards our goal.

## 5 The research methodology path

To access teachers of the deaf and understand how they proceed in relation to storytelling at school, we prepared a semi-structured questionnaire on *Google* platform, divided into six sections that aimed at outlining the profile of the storytelling teacher and aspects related to storytelling at school, such as: *do you use any resources to tell stories? How do you choose the stories to tell? At what point in the lesson do you tell stories? Do you promote any activities after the storytelling?*, and other questions (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire was circulated by email and *WhatsApp* between November 25th, 2021 and April 6th, 2022. To do this, after searching the internet, we sent the link of the questionnaire to the headteachers of four bilingual schools in different regions, asking them to publicise it among their teachers, as well as to some Education Departments. In addition, we sent the questionnaire link via *WhatsApp* to interpreters, deaf people, and teachers of deaf students, asking them to send it to potential participants in the study: to teachers of the deaf. Considering the specific nature of the participants, who had to be teachers of the deaf who tell stories, we had hoped to get at least 15 responses, but we got a total of 18 (eighteen) respondents. However, we chose to use 16 (sixteen) of the questionnaires answered in this analysis, given that one of the respondents has never worked with deaf students and the other, even though she has worked for between 1 and 5 years, reported that she does not use storytelling in her teaching practice. Therefore, this study includes the participation of 16 teachers of deaf students who claim to tell stories in their teaching

practices within inclusive schools, inclusive schools with a bilingual class, special schools or bilingual schools in different regions of the country.

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the fundamentals of Deaf Education. Thus, we first present the profile of the storytelling teachers who took part in the research and then the questions that allow us to understand how these teachers have used this practice and what their perceptions are of it.

## 6 The storytelling teachers

Teachers aged between 20 and 60 from all regions of the country answered the questionnaire. There is a predominance of women in the classroom - 88% of the participants - a process characterized by the co-called feminization of teaching (see Villela, 2003; Nóvoa, 1992), and 75% hearing. Stumpf and Linhares (2021) emphasize that the presence of deaf teachers is fundamental, although the presence of hearing teachers is not a problem as long as they are fluent in Libras. In addition to clear and fluid signing, a substantial knowledge of the principles of Deaf Education is necessary for teaching and learning to take place satisfactorily.

The teachers' training and the length of time they have been teaching deaf students indicate that the participants have some knowledge of Libras and that they would be prepared to work with this audience. 50% of them have been teaching deaf students for more than 10 years, 44% has a degree in Literature/Libras, and has postgraduate degrees *Lato Sensu* (81%) in various areas, such as Didactics, Statistics, Youth and Adult Education, Special Education, Libras, Translation and Interpretation, Libras with an emphasis on Translation and Interpretation, Codes and Languages, Psychopedagogy, and Inclusive Education, as well as having taken Libras courses of more than 180 hours and participating in study groups in the area of deaf education.

None of the participant teachers works or has worked in the first year of elementary education. As indicated, half of them work in the early years and the

other half in the final years. We are struck by the fact that a storytelling practice that is more common in Early Childhood Education and in the early years of Primary Education (from 2 to 6 years old), is being carried out by teachers in the early years of Primary Education, with children aged between 8 and 10, a sign that positive changes are taking place.

In addition, 63% worked in regular (inclusive) schools, corroborating that this is the reality in many Brazilian municipalities. We are also alerted by the small number (the remaining percentages) of teachers working in bilingual schools, inclusive mainstream schools with bilingual classes, and special schools.

Having presented the profile of storytelling teachers, we will now discuss the purpose and frequency of storytelling from their perspective.

## **7 Storytelling: frequency and purpose**

### **7.1 Notes on its frequency**

The majority of teachers (88%) indicated that they narrate storytelling in Libras, more than 50% of whom do so on a regular basis (daily and weekly), which leads us to assume that the practice of storytelling remains underutilized in the initial years of elementary education (as discussed above). Moreover, the majority of teachers tell stories at the beginning and during the lesson and not just at the end of their lessons, as was assumed, which leads us to realize that this practice, when it is carried out, has not been relegated to a secondary role in their lesson planning<sup>10</sup>.

### **7.2 Notes on its purpose**

The teachers were asked about the purpose of their storytelling and to explain the reason for this practice to their deaf students (for example, "do you

see any contribution of storytelling to the deaf student's development?").

In their answers, there is a recurrence of the use of stories to teach Libras and Portuguese. The teachers' discourse also recurs to the use of stories as a facilitator of the learning process, making it more apparent that the teachers see storytelling as facilitating the cognitive (clearly expressed by some) and linguistic development of their deaf students. However, their answers do not reflect the possibility of stories contributing to the cultural-identity development of deaf children, nor do they express this intention when telling stories, a point that needs to be investigated further, considering that the majority of teachers are hearing.

We infer that the choice of stories to be narrated and the activities to be carried out after the storytelling is directly related to why teachers tell stories and to their perception of the contributions of storytelling. Most teachers (81%) choose stories because of the relationship they establish with the content they are working on in class. As for the activities, most of them are retellings in Libras, conversation circles, and written activities that cover curricular content.

Regarding the type of activities they carry out based on storytelling, few teachers indicated the use of playful strategies such as dramatization, retelling through drawing, games, cut-outs, modelling and folding, while maintaining the delight of the stories. There seems to be a prevalence, even after storytelling, of traditional school activities, ritualised by school protocols that are for many unquestionable.

We realised that the stories that deaf children most need to have contact with, deaf creations, are the ones least told by the teachers and, without access to original productions, deaf children can be deprived of their cultural-identity development. This leads us to realise that there are gaps in the training of these teachers, who even though they have indicated that they have a degree in Languages/Libras, Pedagogy and post-graduate studies in related areas, they disregard the use of creations in deaf education.

<sup>10</sup>Empirical observation and professional experience indicate that in Brazil, perhaps due to a cultural trait, storytelling in primary school usually appears in the final moments of the lesson, which means that it is often seen as "entertainment" that students are entitled to after a "heavy" lesson. Being in the "final moments", little planning work is usually put into it, as well as little post-listening work. By refuting this hypothesis, this study perhaps demonstrates a change in culture taking place or a specificity particular to the classroom with deaf students.

In fact, teachers mostly tell adapted stories (which have their advantages, although they don't outweigh the so-called creations in our view). Secondly, there are stories available in school library books and it is assumed that these available stories, told by teachers (hearing and deaf) in Libras, are mostly stories written in Portuguese for the hearing public and translated into Libras by the teachers.

## 8 Final look

In this study, certain views of the teacher storytelling coincide, in many respects, with the representations found in Xavier Neta (2016). The purpose of storytelling as a pedagogical resource for interdisciplinary work in the search for deaf children's cognitive and linguistic development coincides. Our study broadens the perceptions of storytelling, as it reveals the extent to which teachers use this practice and the types of activities they use so as to give greater visibility to the contributions its practice in Libras provides to deaf students.

Storytelling has been used by the teachers of deaf students, although we still have a significant number of teachers who do not have this practice as part of their routine. We also realise that the teachers taking part in this study believe that storytelling has a positive influence on their students, as it not only promotes their development, but also their well-being. However, the participants do not express the use of this practice as an enhancer of the cultural-identity development of their deaf students. In addition, there is a lack of genuinely deaf literature, which works more on issues of the constitution of the deaf subject in the world, from the place of visibility, of deafness as the presence of something and not as a lack of (Karnopp, 2008). We believe it is essential that deaf literature - especially the creations - and storytelling are also seen by teachers as effective elements in promoting cultural-identity development, as deaf literature represents one of the main artifacts of deaf culture.

This article leaves us with the provocation that teachers still need to be made aware of what deaf literature is, its significance, and the importance of

storytelling for the construction of deaf identity. We cannot disregard the fact that deaf people are part of a group whose culture and identity have been constructed in opposition to the hegemonic standard of hearing. It is the role of the school to provide deaf people the opportunity to encounter their culture through a deaf-deaf dialogue, a deaf-hearing fluent in sign language dialogue, and through the encounter with deaf literature works, especially with deaf people's creations. Future research is needed to explore these aspects in more depth. To explore, for example, how Deaf Literature has been dealt with in teacher training courses, in Bachelor's Degree courses in Languages/Libras and Bilingual Pedagogy. Also investigate what strategies teachers use to realise translations in order to promote the cognitive, cultural-identity, and linguistic development of their deaf students.

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## APPENDIX A: Questionnaire for primary education I teachers of the deaf

**Important: this questionnaire is destined to professors with deaf students who act in the inclusive school, special school or in the bilingual school in primary education I.**

This questionnaire refers to the data collection carried out for the study entitled "From oral tradition to sign language: Storytelling in Deaf Education", developed under the Postgraduate Programme in Education at the State University of Montes Claros, under the responsibility of the researcher Lidiane Rodrigues Brito, under the guidance of Professor Maria Clara Maciel de Araújo Ribeiro. The aim of the study is to investigate the contributions of Libras storytelling in educational processes aimed at deaf people, considering the pedagogical and linguistic aspects that underpin this activity, the performance of the storytelling teacher, and their perceptions of the storytelling practice.

The study poses minimal risks to participants. They may feel slightly tired or uncomfortable when answering the questionnaire, or their eyes may feel uncomfortable or irritated due to exposure to the brightness of electronic devices. In the case of the interview and video analysis, shyness or discomfort may occur. However, filling in the questionnaire is voluntary, as is making the videos available for analysis and taking part in the interview. Participants can withdraw their consent at any time without any penalty or prejudice. The privacy of the images and the answers to the questionnaire and interview will be guaranteed. Furthermore, in order to reduce risks, the interview will be conducted in a private and secure environment and the questionnaires will not be identified.

The possibility of the research causing physical, psychological, moral, intellectual, social, cultural or spiritual harm to the participants is minimal. With regard to possible risks, precautions and measures will be taken to prevent situations from causing harm. Participants will be guaranteed secrecy, privacy and confidentiality. All ethical precautions will be observed by the researcher, but in the event that the participants suffer any damage, resulting directly or indirectly from the research, full assistance will be provided.

The data will be stored securely, used solely for the purposes of this study and only the team responsible for the research will have access to it. No fee will be charged for taking part in the research and there will be no remuneration for participation. We guarantee, in accordance with the law, the right to request compensation in the event of damage resulting from participation in the research, as well as the right to reimbursement of expenses for participation. There will be no direct benefits to the participants, but drawing attention to the theme of storytelling in Libras and pointing out its contributions to didactic processes for deaf students will show teachers the viability of using this activity in their classes, with the possibility of linguistic, cognitive, cultural and identity development. Participation in the study will therefore contribute to the literature by adding information on the subject. If you have any questions about the research, you can contact the researcher at [rodriguesbritolidiane@gmail.com](mailto:rodriguesbritolidiane@gmail.com). The results of the study will be presented to the participants in the form of a scientific article, which can be published or accessed on the Programme's website <https://www.posgraduacao.unimontes.br/ppge/dissertacoes/>.

\*Mandatory

Do you agree to collaborate with the research under the terms above? \*

Yes

No

### Profile of the participating teacher

2. Are you deaf or hearing? \*

Deaf

Hearing

3. Gender\*

Male

Female

Non-binary

I prefer not to categorise myself

- Prefer not to answer
- Other.

## 4. Age\*

- 20 to 25 years old
- 25 to 30 years old
- 30 to 35 years old
- 35 to 40 years old
- 40 to 45 years old
- 45 to 50 years old
- 50 to 55 years old
- 55 to 60 years old
- Over 60 years old

## 5. What region are you from?

- North
- North-East
- Centre West
- South-East
- South

## 6. Do you currently have a deaf student? \*

- Yes
- No

## 7. How long have you been teaching deaf students? \*

- 1 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

## 8. Which grade do you teach? \*

- 1st year of primary school
- 2nd year of primary school
- 3rd year of primary school
- 4th year of primary school
- 5th year of primary school

## 9. The school is\*

- Regular (Inclusive)
- Regular (Inclusive) with a bilingual class
- Bilingual
- Special school

## 10. What is your educational background? \*

- Degree in Pedagogy
- Degree in Languages/Libras
- Other. \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Where did you graduate? \*

- Public institution
- Private institution

## 12. What is your degree programme? \*

- Distance learning
- Face-to-face
- Semi-presential

13. Do you have a postgraduate qualification? Which programme?  
\*  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Do you tell stories in Libras to your deaf students? \*  
 Yes  
 No  
 Rarely
15. Explain the reason for your answer to the previous question\*
16. How often do you tell stories? \*  
 Daily  
 Weekly  
 Sporadically  
 On specific dates.
17. When do you tell stories in class? \*  
 At the beginning  
 During the lesson  
 At the end
18. What kind of story do you usually tell? (You can tick more than one option here) \*  
 Stories adapted from children's literature for the context of the deaf community  
 Stories produced by deaf people based on the reality of the deaf community  
 Stories available in books in the school library
19. Do you carry out any activities based on the story?  
 Conversation circle  
 Dramatisation  
 Written activities that address curriculum content  
 Retelling in Libras  
 Written retelling  
 Retelling through drawing  
 Play  
 Cut-outs, modelling, folding  
 Building models  
 No activity after the story  
 Other.
20. How do you choose the stories to tell?  
 From the message the text conveys  
 Based on the characters in the story  
 By the language  
 By the plot of the story  
 Because of the age group my students are interested in  
 The relationship the story establishes with the content I'm working on in class  
 Because of what the story brings out in me  
 From the books available in the school library  
 Others.
21. Have you taken any storytelling courses? \*  
 Yes  
 No

### Still on storytelling

22. Do you use any resources to tell the story (book, drawing, picture, object)? Which one and why?
23. Do you see any contribution that storytelling can make to the development of deaf students?
24. How do your students react when you tell stories? \*
25. You answered the questions based on your experience\*
- Before the pandemic (face-to-face teaching)
- In this pandemic period (remote teaching)
- In both periods (face-to-face and remote)
26. Explain whether storytelling in face-to-face and remote classes results in differences for you and the students
27. Would you be willing to take part in an interview via video conference? \*
- Yes
- No
28. If yes, please provide your e-mail address.

### **Non-mandatory questions**

The following questions are not compulsory. You can finish the questionnaire without answering them, but your answer will contribute to the development of the research.

29. If you like, tell us about an interesting experience you've had with your students using storytelling.
30. Would you like to share a video of you telling stories? If so, send it to us via Whatsapp (38) 9 9122 3085 or by e-mail [rodriguesbritolidiane@gmail.com](mailto:rodriguesbritolidiane@gmail.com).
31. Would you like to share an activity you've done based on a story you've told? If so, send it to us via *Whatsapp* (38) 9 9122 3085 or *email* [rodriguesbritolidiane@gmail.com](mailto:rodriguesbritolidiane@gmail.com)