



## **Literacy Challenges: The Role of the Portuguese Language Teacher in Teaching Portuguese as a Second Language (L2) to Deaf Students**

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### **Summary**

This article investigates the pedagogical and methodological challenges faced by Portuguese Language (LP) teachers when teaching deaf students whose first language (L1) is Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). For this population, Portuguese is not a mother tongue, but a second language (L2), acquired primarily in written form and without oral-auditory *input*. The research stems from the problem that academic training in Portuguese Language and Literature is historically geared towards teaching native speakers, generating a significant methodological gap in the context of inclusive bilingual education (Libras/LP). We analyze how the visual-gestural nature of L1 (Libras) fundamentally redefines the acquisition of L2 (written Portuguese), requiring teachers to restructure their practice. The objective is to discuss the necessary didactic adaptations, focusing on the teaching of textual genres and the complex relationship between the Portuguese Language teacher and the Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) interpreter, which transcends mere translation and enters the sphere of pedagogical mediation. It is concluded that overcoming these challenges requires not only creativity in didactic activities from the Language teacher, but also a profound critical reflection on the foundations of bilingualism, literacy, and their own role as an intercultural mediator.

**Keywords:** Portuguese Language Teaching; Second Language (L2); Deaf Education; Brazilian Sign Language (Libras); Bilingual Literacy.

### **Abstract**

This article investigates the pedagogical and methodological challenges faced by the Portuguese Language (PL) teacher when teaching deaf students, whose first language (L1) is the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). For this audience, Portuguese is not configured as a mother tongue, but as a second language (L2), acquired primarily in the written modality and without oral-auditory input. The research stems from the problem that academic training in Portuguese Language degrees is historically aimed at teaching native hearing speakers, creating a significant

methodological gap in the context of inclusive bilingual education (Libras/PL). We analyze how the visual-gestural nature of L1 (Libras) fundamentally redefines the acquisition of L2 (written Portuguese), requiring the teacher to restructure their praxis. The objective is to discuss the necessary didactic adaptations, focusing on the teaching of textual genres and the complex relationship between the PL teacher and the Libras interpreter, which transcends mere translation and enters the sphere of pedagogical mediation. It is concluded that overcoming these challenges requires the Language teacher not only creativity in didactic activities but also a profound critical reflection on the foundations of bilingualism, literacy, and their own role as an intercultural mediator.

**Keywords:** Portuguese Teaching; Second Language (L2); Deaf Education; Pounds; Bilingual Literacy.

### 1. Introduction: The Methodological Vacuum in Teaching Portuguese to Deaf Students

The inclusion of deaf students in regular classrooms, supported by Brazilian legislation, presents Portuguese language teachers with one of the most complex challenges in contemporary pedagogy. This challenge lies not only in the presence of deafness itself, but also in the profound inadequacy of traditional paradigms of mother tongue teaching to a context that, by definition, is not a mother tongue context. For the deaf student, a user of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) as their first language (L1), Portuguese is not the language they acquire naturally through auditory immersion, but rather a second language (L2) to be learned consciously, metalinguistically, and, crucially, through a different modality: writing. This fundamental distinction transforms the Portuguese language teacher, trained to teach native hearing speakers, into an L2 teacher for a specific audience, a role for which their degree in Portuguese Language and Literature rarely adequately and thoroughly prepared them.

The central problem addressed in this article is the methodological vacuum faced by this teacher. Her academic background in Literature, like that of the author, focuses on improving the skills of native speakers, exploring the nuances of normative grammar, the richness of literature, and the analysis of discourses that are already largely internalized through orality. As argued by Skliar (1998), schools have historically treated deaf people from a clinical-therapeutic perspective, focused on what they "lack" (hearing) and attempting to "normalize" them through orality, rather than from a sociocultural and linguistic perspective. Even with the advancement of the bilingual perspective, teacher training has not kept pace with this paradigmatic shift, leaving language teachers without effective teaching strategies for teaching written Portuguese as a second language (L2) to those who use Libras, a visual-gestural language, as their first language (L1).

This methodological vacuum manifests itself acutely in classroom practice. The language arts teacher faces difficulties that go beyond simply adapting activities; they need to restructure their own conception of "language teaching." Questions such as "how to teach phonetics and spelling without sound reference?" or "how to explain textual cohesion based on prepositions?" arise.



And conjunctions, elements that do not exist in Libras?" become daily dilemmas. The teacher realizes that the difficulties of the deaf student in writing are not mere spelling or grammatical "errors," but rather indications of a process of acquiring a second language with a radically different structure, frequently marked by the interference of L1 (Libras), as Lacerda (2006) points out when discussing the mediation of the interpreter.

The objective of this investigation, therefore, is to analyze the nature of this challenge and propose paths for critical reflection for the Portuguese Language and Literature teacher. We start from the premise that teaching Portuguese to deaf students is not a "reinforcement" or "correction" activity, but a specific field of pedagogical knowledge, situated at the intersection between Applied Linguistics, Translation Studies (as the author's supplementary courses suggest), and Deaf Studies. The discussion will cover the definition of the bilingual paradigm, the specific nature of Portuguese as a second language for deaf students, and the challenges in teaching textual genres, culminating in an analysis of the role of the sign language interpreter as an essential pedagogical partner, and not just a translator.

This article is based on a literature review of key authors in the field of Deaf Education and L2 teaching, such as Quadros (1997), Fernandes (2005), and Lacerda (2006), as well as language theorists such as Bakhtin (1995) and Vygotsky (1993), to support the pedagogical discussion. The author's background, which combines a degree in Portuguese and English with studies in Translation and Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), provides the necessary multidisciplinary basis for this analysis. Critical thinking and the ability to adapt to different school contexts, listed as professional skills, are mobilized here as research tools to propose a more ethical and effective praxis.

The relevance of this discussion is justified by the pressing need to improve the literacy process for deaf students. Full access to the written form of the Portuguese language is an inalienable right, being key to civic participation, access to higher education, and integration into the job market. Without conscious and methodologically sound teaching practices, even well-intentioned language teachers risk perpetuating the exclusion that inclusion policies aim to combat, turning the classroom into a space of failure instead of a space for real knowledge acquisition and linguistic empowerment.

## **2. The Bilingual Paradigm in Deaf Education and its Implications**

The history of deaf education in Brazil and worldwide is marked by a long and conflict-ridden dispute between two main approaches: Oralism and Bilingualism. Oralism, which dominated pedagogical practices for over a century, especially after the Milan Congress in 1880, was based on the belief in the superiority of spoken language and the attempt to "correct" deafness by forcing deaf students to develop speech and lip reading, while actively prohibiting the use of sign languages. This approach, as criticized by Skliar (1998), not only proved largely ineffective for most deaf people, but also produced generations of individuals with low linguistic and cognitive development, deprived of a fully accessible language and



This was natural. The result was poor literacy in the Portuguese language and a silencing of deaf culture and identity.

Bilingualism, on the other hand, emerges as a sociolinguistic paradigm that recognizes deafness not as a deficiency to be corrected, but as a cultural and linguistic difference.

This approach argues that deaf students have the right to acquire Sign Language (Libras, in the Brazilian case) as their first language (L1) as early as possible. Libras, being a visual-gestural language, is the only one that a deaf child can acquire naturally, through immersion, guaranteeing their full cognitive, social, and identity development, in line with what Vygotsky (1993) describes regarding the importance of language in the development of thought. Portuguese, in turn, is introduced later and systematically as a second language (L2), primarily in its written form.

The official adoption of the bilingual paradigm by Brazilian legislation (Law No. 10.436/2002 and Decree No. 5.626/2005) represented a monumental achievement for the deaf community, but it also imposed a radical restructuring of the entire education system. Simply placing a sign language interpreter in the regular classroom, while necessary, does not guarantee the implementation of bilingualism. Effective bilingualism requires a school that values and uses sign language as the language of instruction in all subjects, while also offering a specific and robust methodology for teaching Portuguese as a second language (L2), which, unfortunately, is still a distant reality in most inclusive "school contexts".

The direct implication of this change for the Portuguese language teacher is profound: they cease to be the teacher of the "school language" and become the teacher of one of the two school languages. Their role shifts from the center of the student's linguistic universe to becoming the mediator of a "foreign" language, the L2. This demands a posture of pedagogical humility, recognizing the legitimacy and complexity of the student's L1 (Brazilian Sign Language - Libras), even if the teacher themselves does not master it. Without this understanding, the teacher risks practicing what is called "disguised oralism," where Libras is seen only as a temporary "scaffolding" to reach Portuguese, and not as a language of equivalent status.

Within the classroom, the bilingual paradigm redefines literacy expectations. According to Fernandes (2005), literacy for the deaf should be understood as *bilingual literacy*. The student is not only learning to read and write in Portuguese; they are learning to navigate between two languages of radically different modalities, which express the world in distinct ways. The Portuguese Language teacher, therefore, needs to understand that the texts produced by the deaf student in written Portuguese will inevitably be marked by this interlanguage, reflecting the structures of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). The evaluation of this text cannot be the same as that applied to the hearing student, otherwise only the "lack" in relation to the Portuguese norm will be evaluated, and not the "process" of L2 acquisition.

Finally, bilingualism requires an intense pedagogical partnership, especially with the Sign Language Interpreter (SLI). The Portuguese language teacher and the SLI form a pedagogical team that needs...



Planning lessons together involves discussing not only *what to* translate, but also *how to* translate complex grammatical concepts in Portuguese (such as prepositions, conjunctions, and verb tenses) that do not have direct equivalents in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). This cooperation, explored by Lacerda (2006), is fundamental so that the deaf student receives not only a literal translation, but a conceptual explanation of how the L2 (second language) works, transforming the Portuguese class into a true space for metalinguistic reflection and building bridges between worlds.

### 3. The Nature of Portuguese as a Second Language (L2) for Deaf People

The crucial point that Portuguese language teachers need to understand is that teaching Portuguese to deaf students is not similar to teaching Portuguese to hearing students, nor even to teaching English (L2) to hearing students. The uniqueness of this process lies in the difference in modality between L1 (visual-gestural) and L2 (oral-auditory in its origin, but accessed by the deaf student in a visual-written way). The hearing student who learns English (L2) starts from an L1 (Portuguese) that shares the same oral-auditory modality; they can use their phonological awareness of L1 to assist in acquiring the phonology of L2. The deaf student does not have this bridge. Their L1, Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), does not have a sound base, nor does it have a conventional written form (although there are notation systems, such as *SignWriting*, they are not in current use like the written form of Portuguese).

This absence of oral-auditory reference radically transforms the L2 acquisition process. For a deaf student, Portuguese is, in essence, an *exclusively* written language. They learn to read and write without ever having "heard" the sounds of words, without the phonological intuition that allows a hearing person to associate graphemes with phonemes. The challenge, therefore, is not only to learn new vocabulary and new grammatical rules, but to decode a writing system that represents a "phantom" language, a language they neither speak nor hear. Writing, for the deaf person, is not the "representation of speech," as in traditional literacy, but the direct representation of the concept, mediated by their L1 (Brazilian Sign Language).

This condition imposes immense pedagogical challenges, especially in the field of spelling and morphology. The language teacher, accustomed to correcting spelling "errors" based on phonetic confusion (e.g., "ch" vs. "x"), encounters a student whose "errors" are of a visual or conceptual nature. The deaf student may, for example, omit prepositions, conjunctions, or articles, not because they "speak incorrectly," but because their L1 (Brazilian Sign Language - Libras) does not use these word classes in the same way; Libras uses space, facial expression, and the order of signs to establish relationships that Portuguese establishes morphologically. Similarly, verbal (tenses, moods) and nominal (gender, number) inflection in Portuguese is extremely complex for the deaf, as Libras organizes time and space in a completely different way.

The L2 literacy process, in this context, must be deliberately metalinguistic and visual. The Literature teacher needs to abandon methodologies based on "phonological awareness" and adopt strategies that make sense to a visual learner. This implies, for example, using...

Extensively using visual resources, such as images, subtitled videos (in Libras and Portuguese), and focusing on reading the world before reading the word. Visual pedagogy, as advocated by some theorists of deaf education, becomes central. The teacher needs to "show" how the written language works, using, for example, the *visual dictionary* (Portuguese-Libras-Image) as a central tool, instead of the traditional dictionary.

Reference literature, such as the work of Ronice Müller de Quadros (1997), emphasizes that success in acquiring written Portuguese is directly linked to the solidity of the acquisition of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) as L1. The better the deaf student masters their first language, the more cognitive and metalinguistic resources they will have to transfer to learning L2. The Portuguese language teacher, therefore, should be the greatest promoter of the use and fluency of Libras in the classroom, since it is through Libras that the student will build the conceptual bridges to understand the structure of L2. Portuguese cannot be taught *despite* Libras, but *through* Libras.

Therefore, in this context, the Portuguese Language and Literature teacher assumes a role similar to that of an intercultural translator and an applied linguist. They need to be able to analyze the structure of Libras (even superficially) to understand the logic behind the student's "errors" and, from there, create teaching strategies (such as those discussed in section 7) that explicitly compare the two languages. The Portuguese class becomes a space for "Translation Studies," where the student is invited to think about *how* an idea expressed in Libras can (or cannot) be transposed into the linear and morphological structure of written Portuguese—a skill that directly relates to the author's supplementary courses.

#### 4. The Portuguese Language Teacher: Training and Challenges

Ironically, the central protagonist in the literacy challenges faced by deaf students is a professional frequently thrust into this scenario with little or no specific preparation: the Portuguese language teacher. The traditional academic training in Portuguese Language and Literature, offered by the vast majority of Brazilian universities, is designed under the premise of a model student: a hearing, native Portuguese speaker whose school journey consists of perfecting the use of a language that is already theirs. This curriculum focuses intensely on prescriptive grammar, the history of literature, philology, and textual linguistics—essential tools for teaching L1. However, this same training presents profound gaps when the classroom context is one of inclusion.

A teacher with a degree in Portuguese Language and Literature is not trained to be a teacher of Portuguese as a Second Language (L2). Their degree rarely includes mandatory courses on L2 acquisition, and even less so on the specificities of teaching deaf students. The course on Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), when mandatory, is often offered with reduced hours, focusing on basic aspects of the language and not on its methodological application in teaching *Portuguese*. The teacher leaves university with a robust "critical and reflective thinking" about literature, but with...



There is an instrumental vacuum regarding how to teach a verb to someone who communicates primarily through an unwritten language of a different modality, such as Libras (Brazilian Sign Language).

This initial lack of preparation generates a cycle of frustration for both the teacher and the student. The teacher, endowed with "ethics and professional commitment," tries to apply the methodologies they master (syntactic analysis, dictation, text production based on abstract themes), but realizes that they do not produce the desired effect. The deaf student, in turn, cannot connect those "loose" rules of Portuguese with their linguistic universe of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), feeling inadequate and often being wrongly diagnosed with "learning difficulties." What actually exists is not an intrinsic difficulty of the student, but a methodological inadequacy in teaching, which treats an L2 problem as if it were an L1 problem.

The "ability to adapt to different school contexts," a crucial skill listed in the author's profile, then becomes a survival tool. The teacher needs to seek out the knowledge that their undergraduate degree did not provide. They need to study the structure of Libras (the author's postgraduate studies are an example of this pursuit), Deaf Studies, and L2 teaching methodologies. They need to learn to "read" their deaf students' texts not as a judge of the standard norm, but as a linguist who identifies the processes of L1 (Libras) interference in L2 (Portuguese), such as the omission of prepositions or sentence structure based on the SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) order typical of Libras, and not on the flexibilities of Portuguese.

Pedagogical isolation is another real challenge. The Portuguese language teacher is often the only one in their "school context" with formal responsibility for the deaf student's Portuguese literacy.

"Leadership and cooperation within a teaching team" become essential, but difficult to implement.

The pedagogical coordination, also trained in the teaching model for hearing students, may not have the tools to support this teacher. The most obvious partnership, with the sign language interpreter, is complex and will be discussed in item 6, but it does not exempt the Portuguese language teacher from the responsibility of *planning* and *teaching* Portuguese, something the interpreter was not trained to do.

It can be concluded that the challenge for the Portuguese Language teacher in deaf education is, above all, a challenge of (self-)formation. They need to deconstruct their own vision of "language" and "teaching," abandoning the security of L1 pedagogy and venturing into the field of L2 teaching for an audience with unique specificities. This requires "critical and reflective thinking" not only about the literature but also about their own praxis, recognizing the limits of their initial training and actively seeking new knowledge, such as Translation Studies and the fundamentals of Applied Linguistics, to build a real bridge between the two linguistic worlds of the deaf student.

## 5. Textual Genres and Pedagogical Mediation in the Language Arts Classroom

One of the cornerstones of Portuguese language teaching in contemporary basic education, aligned with the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), is work focused on text genres.

The socio-interactionist approach, based on theorists such as Bakhtin (1995) and Marcuschi (2002), argues that language teaching should not be done through isolated grammatical rules.



but rather through the actual use of language in its various social contexts, materialized in genres. The Literature teacher is trained to explore the structure, function, and style of a vast range of genres, from culinary recipes to opinion articles. However, when the student is deaf and uses Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), this approach encounters specific and profound barriers that require highly creative pedagogical mediation.

The first challenge lies in the difference in modality and culture. Many textual genres in Portuguese are intrinsically linked to an oral-auditory and literate culture that has no direct parallel in the universe of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), a language that, although complex, is predominantly oral (in the sense of face-to-face) and unwritten. Let's take as an example the genre "lyric poetry," frequently analyzed in Portuguese classes. Much of the strength of this genre lies in its sound, rhythm, meter, and rhyme—phonological elements inaccessible to deaf students.

The sign language teacher then needs to redefine the objective of that class: instead of focusing on sound, they can focus on the construction of images and visual metaphors, seeking a parallel with "poetry in Libras" (Brazilian Sign Language), which uses spatiality and movement in an aesthetic way.

A second, even more complex challenge lies in argumentative genres, such as opinion articles or dissertations, which are crucial for "critical and reflective thinking" and access to higher education. The structure of these texts in Portuguese depends heavily on argumentative operators, conjunctions, and prepositions (e.g., "however," "although," "in order that," "despite") that establish complex logical relationships. Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), in turn, establishes these relationships in distinct ways, often using non-manual facial expressions or the order of signs. Deaf students, when writing, tend to omit these connectives or use them inappropriately, not due to a lack of logic, but due to interference from their first language (L1). Therefore, the Portuguese language teacher needs to make the teaching of these connectives an explicit metalinguistic activity, comparing the strategies of the two languages.

In this scenario, "organization and creativity in teaching activities" become essential skills for the teacher. Teaching genres to deaf students should be multimodal and visual. For example, when teaching the "news" genre, the teacher cannot start with the written text in isolation. They can begin with a video of a news program in Libras (from TV INES, for example), analyze the visual structure of the news (the "lead" in Libras), and *only then* compare this structure with the written text of the news in Portuguese, highlighting the specific vocabulary (e.g., "according to the police," "witnesses claim") and the grammatical structures (e.g., passive voice) typical of that genre in L2.

The pedagogical mediation of the Language Arts teacher also involves the curation and adaptation of materials. Most Portuguese textbooks are inaccessible to deaf students, not only due to their vocabulary level, but also because of their layout, which is excessively text-based and poor in visual resources. The teacher, in their "pedagogical teamwork" (ideally with the Special Educational Services teacher), needs to create their own materials, or visually "translate" existing materials. This may involve creating visual glossaries (Portuguese-Brazilian Sign Language-Image) for each text genre worked on, or the use of technology.

such as subtitling software or even translation tools (like "Trados," mentioned in the author's courses) to create translation memories of technical terms.

In short, working with text genres from a bilingual perspective requires that the language arts teacher transcend their original training. They need to become a didactic designer, an intercultural translator, and a contrastive language analyst. Their "clear and empathetic communication" manifests itself in the ability to understand the logic of the deaf student's text, valuing their communication effort in L2, while simultaneously offering, visually and explicitly, the tools of standard written Portuguese necessary for them to navigate autonomously through the various text genres that a literate society demands, thus fulfilling the true objective of literacy.

## 6. The Sign Language Interpreter: Challenges of Translation and Mediation

In the inclusive classroom, the figure that becomes the most visible (and sometimes the most problematic) bridge between the Portuguese language teacher and the deaf student is the Sign Language Interpreter (SLI). The presence of this professional is a right guaranteed by law (Decree No. 5.626/2005) and indispensable for the student's access to the curriculum. However, the pedagogical relationship between the Portuguese language teacher and the SLI is complex and full of nuances, often misunderstood by both parties. The author's training in "Translation and Interpretation Studies" and interest in the field are crucial for critically analyzing this role, which is far from being a simple mechanical "decoding" between two languages.

The first major misconception is viewing the sign language interpreter (ILS) as the "teacher" of the deaf student, or, conversely, as an "assistant" to the Portuguese language teacher. The ILS is a translation professional whose primary function is to translate content from the source language (Portuguese) to the target language (Libras) and vice versa, ensuring access to information. However, in a Portuguese language class, the *object of study itself* (the Portuguese language) is the source language. This creates a paradox: how to "translate" a lesson *about* Portuguese *into* Libras? How does the interpreter explain, in Libras, the concept of "implied subject," "preposition," or "mesoclisiss," if Libras has a completely different grammatical structure that does not operate with these categories?

This challenge, as Lacerda (2006) points out in her studies on the role of the interpreter, requires that the ILS (Brazilian Sign Language Interpreter) transcend translation and assume a role of mediation and metalinguistic explanation. The interpreter often needs to "stop" the translation of the content to explain, in Libras, the grammatical *concept* that the teacher is teaching. To do this, they need not only fluency in both languages, but also a deep knowledge of both grammars and specific translation strategies. This leads us directly to the author's background in English Literature and translation courses: the challenge is similar to explaining the "Present Perfect" (English) to a Portuguese speaker, a concept that has no direct equivalent, but is multiplied by the difference in modality.



The lack of "cooperation within the teaching team" between the Portuguese language teacher and the sign language interpreter is the main source of noise in this process. The Portuguese language teacher, often due to a lack of proficiency in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) or unfamiliarity with translation theory, plans their lesson in a linear and oral fashion, expecting the interpreter to provide a simultaneous and transparent translation. This is impractical. Portuguese lessons for deaf students should be planned collaboratively: the Portuguese language teacher (the *content specialist*) and the sign language interpreter (the linguistic *bridge specialist*) need to sit down before class, analyze the material (a poem, a grammar rule), and discuss *the* key terms and *how* they will be explained/translated/interpreted in Libras.

The Portuguese language teacher also needs to adapt their own teaching methods to make the interpreter's job *easier*. This includes "organization and creativity in teaching activities," such as avoiding excessive "dictation" (useless for the deaf), using more visual resources (which the interpreter can point to and use as a reference), speaking slowly (allowing time for translation, which takes longer from Libras to Portuguese), and, crucially, addressing *the deaf student visually and verbally*, and not the interpreter.

"Empathic communication" requires the teacher to establish *rapport* with the student, and not delegate this interaction to the interpreter.

The training of the sign language interpreter is also a critical factor. Many interpreters working in the education system do not have specific training in Translation Studies or Linguistics, which hinders the mediation of complex grammatical concepts. They may be fluent in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language), but they are not educators or linguists. The Literature teacher, with their training in linguistics (even if in L1) and their "appreciation for writing," is the most qualified professional in the school to *assist* the interpreter in this task, providing the clear conceptual definitions that the interpreter needs to find an appropriate equivalent (or explanation) in Libras.

In short, the relationship between the language teacher and the sign language interpreter should be a symbiotic partnership. The language teacher depends on the sign language interpreter to access the student, and the sign language interpreter depends on the language teacher to access the in-depth content of the subject. Without "leadership and cooperation," the deaf student is left in the middle of a pedagogical "telephone game," receiving fragmented information. Overcoming this challenge requires recognizing the sign language interpreter as a translation professional and the language teacher assuming their role as an L2 specialist, who should guide and support the translation and mediation process.

## 7. Teaching Strategies and Intervention Proposals

After diagnosing the challenges (methodological gap, nature of L2, teacher training, genre mediation, and the role of the interpreter), the central question becomes practical: what didactic strategies and pedagogical interventions can the Portuguese Language teacher, with their "critical thinking" and "creativity," implement to promote effective bilingual literacy? The goal is not to provide a closed recipe, but rather to outline methodological principles that respect the L1 of the deaf student and use the visual modality as the main learning channel, aligning with the author's multidisciplinary background.



The first and most fundamental strategy is **Visual and Multimodal Pedagogy**. The language arts teacher must abandon the centrality of isolated written text and oral explanation. Each grammatical concept, each text genre, each new vocabulary word should be introduced through multiple visual channels. This includes the intensive use of images, diagrams, mind maps, videos (subtitled in Portuguese and with a sign language window), and the use of the classroom space itself. For example, when teaching the structure of a narrative, the teacher can use visual *storyboards* before presenting the text. When teaching prepositions of place (e.g., "in," "on," "under"), they should use concrete objects and the interpreter themselves to visually demonstrate these spatial relationships, which are done differently in sign language.

The second strategy is **Explicit Contrastive Analysis (Portuguese-Brazilian Sign Language)**. The Portuguese language teacher, in partnership with the interpreter, should transform the classroom into a "Translation Studies" laboratory. Instead of simply correcting the student's "error" (e.g., "the boy kicks the ball"), the teacher should use this example as a starting point. They can write the sentence in Portuguese on the board, ask the interpreter to sign it in Brazilian Sign Language (where the SVO order can be more flexible or the verb comes at the end), and then visually compare the two structures, explaining that in L2 (Portuguese), the SVO order is the most common and that the verb needs inflection. This makes the student aware of the differences between languages, instead of just memorizing rules that don't make sense in their L1.

The third strategy involves the **Use of Technology as a Literacy Tool**, something that aligns with the "Trados" course and the interest in technology. The Portuguese Language teacher can create, together with the students, **digital Bilingual Visual Glossaries** for each unit of study, using simple tools (such as PowerPoint or glossary websites) to record the word in Portuguese, its translation into Libras (either by video or *SignWriting*), a representative image, and an example of its use in a Portuguese sentence. *Captioning* tools can be used so that students can create captions for short videos, practicing synthesis and translation. The "Translation Journey" mentioned in the author's curriculum gains a direct pedagogical application here.

The fourth strategy is to **focus on the text, not the isolated sentence**. Aligned with the work on genres (item 5), the teacher should prioritize reading and producing real texts, even short ones. It is more effective to work with a real text (a recipe, a blog post, a news article) and explore vocabulary and grammar *within that context* than to provide lists of decontextualized sentences to fill in gaps. "Appreciation for reading and writing" should be encouraged through texts that make sense to the deaf student, that engage with their culture and identity, and not just with literary classics that are difficult to access (at least not initially).

The fifth strategy is **Collaborative Text Revision**. The written production of the deaf student should be seen as a process. Instead of the teacher simply correcting with a red pen (which is frustrating), they can adopt dialogic revision. The teacher sits with the student and the interpreter and, together, they read the text. The teacher asks questions instead of giving answers: "What did you mean *here* in this sentence in Libras? Ah, I understand. In Portuguese, to say that, we use this structure."



(e.g., a conjunction)." This transforms correction into an L2 lesson and validates the student's communicative effort, aligning with "clear and empathetic communication."

Finally, the most important strategy is the **Effective Pedagogical Partnership (Portuguese Language Teacher + Interpreter + Special Education Teacher)**. "Leadership and cooperation" are vital. The Portuguese language teacher should lead the planning of the Portuguese *content*. The Special Education Teacher can help with strategies for adapting materials and knowledge about deafness. The sign language interpreter should be consulted on how *to* translate and mediate concepts in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). None of these professionals can work in isolation. The creation of an individualized education plan (IEP) for the deaf student, focused on Portuguese, should be a document built and executed by this trio, ensuring that the student is not "thrown" into the school context, but actively included in it.

## 8. Conclusion: Rethinking the Role of the Literature Professor

At the end of this investigative journey, which began with the methodological vacuum faced by the Portuguese Language teacher in teaching deaf students, it becomes evident that the challenge transcends the simple application of techniques or the adaptation of materials. What is at stake is the need for a profound revision of the role and identity of this professional. The classical training in Portuguese Language and Literature, although solid in its literary and grammatical analysis of the mother tongue, proves structurally insufficient for the reality of the inclusive bilingual classroom. The teacher, trained to be a specialist in L1, is demanded by the "school context" to act as a specialist in L2, in one of the most complex scenarios of linguistic acquisition that exist: the teaching of an oral-written language to someone who has a visual-gestural language as their L1.

The trajectory of this article has demonstrated that overcoming this challenge will not come from easy solutions or ready-made pedagogical packages. It requires, above all, a paradigm shift on the part of the teacher themselves. "Critical and reflective thinking," a skill so valued in Literature education, must be redirected: from the analysis of literary texts to the analysis of their own pedagogical practice. The teacher needs to constantly ask themselves: " *Who* am I teaching? *What* is my student's L1? *How* does the structure of this L1 (Brazilian Sign Language) impact the way they learn L2 (Portuguese)?"

This investigative approach, typical of scientific initiation, should become a professional habit.

We have verified that the bilingual paradigm, although a legal and social achievement, is not automatically implemented with the presence of an interpreter. Real bilingualism in the Portuguese language classroom only occurs when the teacher assumes responsibility for teaching the L2 (second language), using the L1 (Brazilian Sign Language - Libras) not as a crutch, but as the essential cognitive bridge for knowledge construction. This means studying Libras, respecting it as the language of instruction, and working in "pedagogical teamwork" with the interpreter, recognizing them as a translation partner, not a substitute teacher. The author's experience in translation workshops and the study of tools like "Trados" illuminate the path: teaching Portuguese to deaf students is, in itself, a continuous act of intercultural translation.



The teaching strategies discussed, such as visual pedagogy, explicit contrastive analysis, and the use of technology, are not mere "tips" for creativity, but rather logical consequences of understanding the nature of Portuguese as a second language for deaf people. They require "organization and creativity," but above all, they demand that the teacher abandon the centrality of orality and phonology and embrace visuality. The Portuguese language teacher needs to become, to a certain degree, a multimodal didactic designer, capable of "showing" the workings of the written language in ways that make sense to a learner who "thinks" visually in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language).

Working with text genres, a cornerstone of contemporary Portuguese language teaching, has proven viable, provided it is adapted. "Appreciation for reading and writing" cannot be imposed through inaccessible canons, but must be built through texts that engage with the reality and culture of the Deaf, and through pedagogical mediation that makes the complex structures of Portuguese (such as argumentative connectives) explicit and understandable, comparing them with the discursive strategies of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). The goal is not for the Deaf person to write *like* a hearing person, but for them to master written Portuguese as a second language in a functional and critical way.

"Clear and empathetic communication" and "adaptability," listed as skills by the author, are therefore revealed as the most crucial competencies. Empathy to understand the logic of the student's "error," seeing it as an interlanguage process. Adaptability to deconstruct an entire training and reconstruct it in service, in the face of a "different school context." The language arts teacher in deaf education is, in essence, a teacher in constant training, a researcher of their own classroom.

It can be concluded, therefore, that effective teaching of Portuguese as a second language (L2) to deaf students requires more than a traditional Portuguese Language degree offers. It demands interdisciplinarity (Portuguese, English, Libras), a foundation in Translation Studies, and a profound "ethic and professional commitment" to bilingual literacy. The Language Arts teacher who accepts this challenge is not merely teaching grammar; they are acting as a fundamental agent in ensuring that deaf students have full access to the written language that governs society, exercising their right to citizenship and a voice.

This article does not exhaust the topic, but seeks, from the intersection between training in Letters (Portuguese/English) and studies in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) and Translation, to illuminate the paths to a more reflective, critical, and, above all, efficient pedagogical practice. Overcoming the methodological vacuum begins with the teacher's awareness of the nature of their challenge and the need to reinvent themselves. The "appreciation for reading and writing" that shapes us as teachers of Letters should be the same that drives us to incessantly seek the best ways to share it with *all* our students.

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