

BRAZILIAN SIGN LANGUAGE AND TEACHER TRAINING: FROM OBSERVATION TO OVERCOMING HIERARCHIES¹

LIBRAS E FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE: DA CONSTATAÇÃO À SUPERACÃO DE HIERARQUIAS

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the space occupied by the Brazilian Sign Language discipline in the curriculum of a teaching undergraduate course and what its formative competence for the future teacher is. With a qualitative approach, it brings the non-directive interview as an instrument for investigation, linked to the theoretical framework in which Bourdieusian studies assume a central role in the methodological path. The participating agents were the professors of the Brazilian Sign Language discipline and the professors of the Department of Pedagogy of a State University, in the hinterlands of the state of Paraná, Brazil. It was possible to ascertain that the Pedagogy course focuses on teaching for Early Childhood Education and early grades of Elementary School. There is a recurring idea among professors that the disciplines of Fundamentals occupy more space in the curriculum and the hierarchies of knowledge are imperative in the context of curricular organization. The Brazilian Sign Language discipline, and its implementation in the course, is of legal order with little or no mobility within the curriculum, and it has been assigned the role of educator of the pedagogy for deaf education, in the perspective of educational inclusion.

KEYWORDS: Brazilian Sign Language. Teacher Training. Special Education.

RESUMO: Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar o espaço ocupado pela disciplina de Libras no currículo de um curso de licenciatura e qual sua competência formativa para o futuro professor. Com abordagem qualitativa, traz a entrevista não-diretiva como instrumento para a investigação, atrelado ao referencial teórico em que os estudos bourdieusianos assumem papel central no percurso metodológico. Os agentes participantes foram os docentes da disciplina de Libras e os docentes do Departamento de Pedagogia de uma Universidade Estadual, no interior do Paraná. Foi possível averiguar que o curso de Pedagogia tem por centralidade, na formação, a docência para Educação Infantil e anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental. Há uma ideia recorrente entre os docentes de que as disciplinas de Fundamentos ocupam mais espaço no currículo e as hierarquias dos saberes se mostram imperativas no contexto da organização curricular. A disciplina de Libras, e sua implementação, no curso é de ordem legal, com pouca ou nenhuma mobilidade dentro do currículo, e a ela se tem atribuído um papel de formadora do pedagogo para o ensino de surdos, na perspectiva da inclusão educacional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Libras. Formação docente. Educação Especial.

1 INTRODUCTION

The discipline of Brazilian Sign Language (known in Brazil as *Libras*)⁴, in the undergraduate teaching course, is characterized by dealing with a very specific demand of Special and Inclusive Education, the education of the deaf. It is more specific because it has, at the heart of this discipline, the linguistic issue, peculiar to the deaf people. The legal obligation imposed by Federal Decree no. 5,626/2005 does not allow teacher training courses the option

¹ <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-54702020v26e0095>

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⁴ The Brazilian Sign Language was legally recognized by Law no. 10,436, of April 24, 2002. Subsequently, Decree no. 5,626, of December 22, 2005, regulates it and provides for it.



of not offering Brazilian Sign Language in their curricular matrices. From a legal point of view, the condition of the Brazilian Sign Language in teacher education as a mandatory subject is non-negotiable. However, several issues arise from this reality, such as, to what extent the Brazilian Sign Language discipline occupies space in the curriculum and what its formative competence for the future teacher is.

In this context, we understand the education of the deaf as a field. According to Bourdieu (2004), the field is configured as a space of dispute, governed by its own rules, being a historic product. The existing struggles in the field stem from the need to maintain the *status quo* or to change the power relations within it. The agents involved in the field, with their objective and symbolic capital, are key elements for mobility within it. Thus, the field of the education of the deaf, with its internal controversies, has appeared, at first sight, polarized in two historically constructed aspects, namely: clinical-therapeutic perspective and socio-anthropological perspective. There are not two different points of view on the same object. They are configured as structural parts of the education of the deaf, so it is essential that we make a more epistemological reading of these perspectives, since the relationships between them are often intertwined with each other, as the education of the deaf is a field of representations that are difficult to delimit (Skliar, 1997).

In this way, we can have linguistic policies that guarantee the deaf the right to be taught through sign language, but we find pedagogical actions in the school space rooted in the clinical-therapeutic perspective. However, when we take one perspective, we must put the other at a disadvantage; and it is in this power relationship of the agents involved that the field of deaf education has been constituted. After all,

we know that in any field we will discover a struggle, whose specific forms will have to be investigated in each case, between the new that enters and tries to break the locks of the right to enter and the dominant that tries to defend the monopoly and exclude competition. (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 119-120).

This clash is illustrated when we observe the discussions about the schooling space for the deaf, held between the Deaf Movement, represented by the National Federation of Education and Integration of the Deaf (*Federação Nacional de Educação e Integração de Surdos* - FENEIS), and the former Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion of the Ministry of Education (*Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização, Diversidade e Inclusão do Ministério da Educação* - SECADI), in relation to the National Education Plan 2014-2024. In 2010, the National Education Conference (*Conferência Nacional de Educação* - CONAE), in assuming in its final document assumptions that excluded the struggle of the deaf for bilingual schools⁵ and affirming the Federal Government's position for unrestricted inclusion in regular schools, in an imposing and arbitrary way, disregarded the deaf leaders and their demands in the process of formulating the text of the Conference, which would later give rise to the National Education Plan 2014-2024 (Law no. 13,005, of 25 June 2014). However,

⁵ Bilingual schools are those where the language of instruction is Brazilian Sign Language, and Portuguese language is taught as a second language, after the acquisition of the first language; these schools are installed in their own architectural spaces and bilingual teachers must work there, without mediation by interpreters in the teacher - student relationship and without the use of signed Portuguese. (Brasil, 2014, p. 3).

the deaf movement, engaged so that the proposal of bilingual schools and bilingual classes were included within the goals of the Plan, was successful. In the final wording of Goal 4, Strategy 4.7 was expanded (Law no. 13,005, 2014). Thus, bilingual education for the deaf can occur in the inclusive school, in bilingual schools and bilingual classes.

We emphasize that the achievement of the Goal in this decade has proved to be a Herculean task (Albres, 2017; Stürmer & Thoma, 2015; Thoma, 2016). Bilingual schools and bilingual classes have been shown to be unfeasible for the Education Departments since the “grouping of a small number of students is not configured as something viable in the current capitalist situation that enters education”; and, thus, “the blind discourse of being ‘politically correct’ of inclusion in mixed rooms has prevailed” (Albres, 2017, p. 19). Such an assertion cannot be taken for granted. On the contrary, the search for the implementation of bilingual schools and classes is still a latent issue on the agenda of the demands of the deaf movement.

In the context of the struggle for bilingual educational spaces, the inclusive school, permeated by the equality discourse briefly mentioned above, presents itself as a possible locus of action for teachers who, during their academic training, had contact with sign language. The discipline brings with it the possibility of presenting the characteristics of deaf education and offering basic linguistic notions.

To Quadros and Paterno (2006), the discipline in teacher education seeks to contribute to overcoming the methodological and attitudinal mistakes evidenced in the schooling process of deaf students and who are repeatedly unveiled in academic research (Lacerda, 2006, 2007; Lorenzetti, 2003; Padilha, 2014). Sign language is a key part of the deaf’s teaching and learning processes, as it makes up their identity. This is, therefore, a premise of the deaf community, to have sign language not simply as a means of accessing the curriculum and school instruction, but as a legitimate linguistic right that allows him/her to reach knowledge from it, as L1. Therefore, there is a very firm position of the deaf on their inclusion in the school environment. Even with laws (Law no. 10,436, of April 24, 2002; Decree no. 5,626, of December 22, 2005; Law no. 13,005, of June 25, 2014; Law no. 13,146, of July 6, 2015) that value school space for the deaf as a bilingual environment, inclusive practices have shown to be insufficient and monolingual in reality, disregarding the specificities of the learning of these agents, which goes, objectively, through sign language (Nascimento, 2017).

Thus, the responsibility attributed to the discipline of Brazilian Sign Language in the training of teachers is observed in the search to try to equalize structural inequalities historically constructed in the field of the education of the deaf. Hence, when considering Brazilian Sign Language as a curricular discipline and its formative responsibility, we cannot disregard other forces involved, such as the existing relationships in the academic field, which will also be punctual in its constitution as a discipline, in its formative contribution to the future teacher and in the occupied or granted space in the curriculum. In this sense, this text aims to present the analysis carried out in a Pedagogy course on the space occupied by the Brazilian Sign Language discipline in the curriculum and what its formative competence for the future teacher is.

2 METHOD

Having the discipline of Brazilian Sign Language as an object of investigation, we agree with Bourdieu, Passeron and Chamboredon (2015) that the object always emerges on issues that require scientific investigation. Therefore, the theoretical and methodological framework is irremediably necessary for the epistemological study to be carried out, as they define the paths and strategies for the investigation. Having in Bourdieu the theoretical resource and methodological inspiration to carry out the research, we assume that: “‘It is forbidden to forbid’ or ‘watch out for methodological watchdogs’” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 26). Bourdieu’s warning urges us to observe the object and choose how to theorize and investigate it. The field in which it is researched, the conditions and familiarity with the object contribute to the freedom of the methodological and theoretical choices made. However, this freedom of methodology does not characterize a situation in which everything is valid, without criteria. Research is done through practice, rather than a methodological manual.

That being said, we built the research from the qualitative approach. Qualitative research was shown to be relevant to the object investigated, as it “defines the constructive character of knowledge, which in fact implies understanding as production and not an appropriation of a reality that presents us” (González Rey, 2005, p. 5). By approaching, through investigative practices and innumerable interrelational fields that make up reality, we create a reality permeated by practices. Thus, the instrument used was the non-directive interview (Severino, 2007), which proved to be rich in data production, with pre-formulated questions. In addition, it was possible to explore the topics addressed from the interviewees’ speech with other questions, in a more informal way, which constituted interesting and voluminous material.

The investigated space was the Pedagogy course at a public university in the State of Paraná, Brazil. The definition of this space was relevant to the object because in this course, the implementation of the Brazilian Sign Language discipline took place in 2006, one year after the legal obligation imposed by Decree no. 5,626/2005. Therefore, it is one of the first Pedagogy courses in Paraná to have Brazilian Sign Language in its curriculum. We must contextualize that this course started in 1976 and, in the region, for many years, it was the only place to undergraduate in Pedagogy. During the research period, the Department of Pedagogy was in discussion for the construction of the new Curricular Matrix of the course, which was extremely relevant for the investigation, especially for the debate on the hierarchy of knowledge.

The course had 55 professors. They were all contacted, via e-mail, to participate in the research and to grant an interview. However, some facts changed the final number of participants: four were on retirement leave; and two, in post-doctoral studies, abroad. Then, 49 professors who could be interviewed were added. Three contacts were made with professors via e-mail, inviting them to contribute. We obtained 25 professors who agreed to participate, a significant number, more than 50% of the teaching staff in activity. Right at the beginning of the interviews, there was a standstill by the institution’s professors in order to claim the maintenance of some rights that were being withdrawn by the State Government. The Department of Pedagogy, with the entire faculty, joined the strike and academic activities stopped. We had to cancel the scheduled interviews and wait for the classes to return. The waiting period was tense, we did not know for how long the standstill would continue.

When the Universities resumed their activities, the organization of replacements for classes and other academic activities that had been stopped began, especially since it was the end of the second semester, when there was an accumulation of some activities that needed attention in order for the calendar to be fulfilled in its entirety, such as the completion of internships for academics and course completion examining board. This reflected on the availability of the professors to participate in the research. In this case, there was a need for a new contact, via email, asking them to collaborate and reschedule dates for the interviews. Contact was made again with all professors, even those who had not previously signaled participation.

At the end of the process, we were unable to obtain consent from the 25 professors previously willing to participate. Many apologized and claimed that they were unavailable due to the numerous commitments, such as replacement classes. There is no doubt that it was the urgency of post-strike activities that prevented many professors from participating. Soon, we ended the interviews with 15 Department of Pedagogy professors, 24% of which are active professors and all three professors of the Institution's Brazilian Sign Language discipline, who are allocated in the Department of Language and Literature, totaling 18 professors. Thus, it is essential to present the agents involved in the research, which we highlight in Table 1, preserving anonymity, naming them as "P1, P2, P3 ..." and, thus, successively, when dealing with professors in the Department of Pedagogy. Brazilian Sign Language professors are called "PL1, PL2 and PL3".

Prof.	Degree	Graduated in the Institution	Graduated in Pedagogy	Institutional bond	Working time in the Institution	Discipline/s performed*	Number of disciplines taught
P1	PhD	Yes	Yes	Full professor	29 years	2	1
P2	Master's	Yes	Yes	Collaborating professor	4 years	1/2/3	4
P3	PhD	No	No	Full professor	10 years	2	1
P4	PhD	No	Yes	Full professor	27 years	3	1
P5	Master's	No	Yes	Collaborating professor	10 years	2/3	3
P6	PhD	No	Yes	Full professor	10 years	3	2
P7	Master's	No	Yes	Collaborating professor	5 years	3	3
P8	PhD	No	Yes	Full professor	10 years	1	1
P9	Master's	Yes	Yes	Full professor	16 years	1	1
P10	Master's	No	Yes	Full professor	18 years	1	1

Prof.	Degree	Graduated in the Institution	Graduated in Pedagogy	Institutional bond	Working time in the Institution	Discipline/s performed*	Number of disciplines taught
P11	PhD	Yes	No	Full professor	27 years	1/2	3
P12	Specialization	Yes	Yes	Collaborating professor	2 years	2/3	4
P13	Master's	Yes	Yes	Collaborating professor	1 year	2	1
P14	Master's	Yes	Yes	Collaborating professor	5 years	1/3	2
P15	PhD	No	Yes	Full professor	10 years	1	1
PL1	Specialization	No	No	Collaborating professor	1 year	2	1 - Brazilian Sign Language
PL2	Specialization	No	Yes	Full professor	6 years	2	1 - Brazilian Sign Language
PL3	Specialization	Yes	Yes	Full professor	10 years	2	1 - Brazilian Sign Language

Table 1. Presentation of agents participating in the research.

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Research data.

* 1. Compulsory basic training disciplines; 2. Complementary compulsory disciplines; 3. Mandatory professional disciplines.

The information presented in Table 1 is necessary in order to get to know the agents, their education, their degrees, their bond with the institution, length of experience in the course, disciplines they work in and the number of disciplines they dedicate themselves to. It is preliminary information that contributes to thinking about the reality that each agent builds their professorial identity and where their voice comes from in the interviews.

At the time of the interview, the professors were asked to authorize in writing the recording of the audio for registration, which was not an obstacle nor was it refused. All interviews conducted in spoken Portuguese were later transcribed to make contact with the information produced and the readings that followed later more accessible. For the registration of interviews with deaf professors, the journey was a little longer. There was no possibility of recording the audio, as the language of use between the interviewer and the interviewees was Brazilian Sign Language - visual-spatial language that needs another form of recording, filming. Professors were asked for written authorization to record on video, and, as what had occurred with the others, there was no refusal.

After the filmed interviews, it was necessary to transfer them to audio, which seemed easier for the later transcription. The researcher watched the videos and translated the interviews, recording them in audio, with the translation process being tiring, repetitive, in addition to demanding a lot of attention in order to be able to translate all the nuances of

speech from sign language and expressiveness of the speaker to Portuguese. Even the language additions that the deaf may have need to be passed on during translation.

With this work completed, we started transcribing the interviews of deaf professors from the audio. All interviews totaled 6 hours and 40 minutes of recordings. When they were transcribed, we chose - in addition to recording what was being said - to also mark the way the respondent answered the questions, highlighting the certainties, doubts and hesitations. The number of pages of the transcripts at the end of the process was 93. It should be noted that the research went through the Ethics Committee, as expected, and was approved.

In the analysis of the interviews, there was a necessary sequence to explore the data, always in the light of the theoretical framework adopted: I. Preliminary reading of all interviews; II. Resuming of the readings, looking for words and expressions with greater semantic strength and with greater recurrence between the speeches; III. New reading, focusing on the expressions and words previously marked, in the search to categorize them by inference and interpretation; IV. Organization of categories and subcategories; V. Definition of categories based on the proposed objectives. The whole process took time, due to the extensive material, full of information and with great potential for exploration.

3 DATA AND DISCUSSION

Initially, it is necessary to highlight the investigated space. The Pedagogy course has its quarrels, clashes and disputes at the national level, which have repercussions on and from public policies for the education of the pedagogue, with no consensus among scholars on the most appropriate formative structure for him/her. However, the centrality of the course, at the national level, points to teaching as a formative focus (Franco, Libâneo, & Pimenta, 2007; Kuenzer & Rodrigues, 2006). This assertion proved to be punctual in the speeches of the professors of the course, as there is a dispute between which kind of knowledge is the most appropriate to compose the curriculum, which starts from the training principles that revolve around teaching and management.

[...] the main focus is teaching, what we have been discussing recently and whenever we propose or evaluate or restructure the pedagogical project of the pedagogy course, what is our centrality? We have chosen to direct the course towards teaching and the public school, as we understand that most of them, the great majority, would be the most expressive field of action. So, in the latest revisions of the project, this has been the direction. (P1).

The focus of the course is on teaching, there are different perspectives of the professors about the course, which are the result of their experiences within it, the space they occupy, where their voices emanate from, their symbolic, social and cultural capitals have repercussions on the organization of the Curriculum and in the formative focus. Covering different perspectives of training in a course, linked to the official documents that direct training at the national level, in a space of debate and dialogue, certainly demands time to carry out.

The course was undergoing a new restructuring in the Curriculum Matrix. We understand curriculum construction as a time of dispute for space (Bourdieu, 2016). The choice of the proposal is neither impartial nor autonomous; follows national rules and regulations.

Saviani (2012) reminds us that the referrals given to the Pedagogy course are rooted in the demands of the world of work that subordinates education and governs society, this in an aspect of the national educational structure. A Higher Education course has a strong link with the world of work. How does the professional need to be trained to meet the social need, in this historical moment, in this configuration of society that we have? It is a strong issue, which comes as a normative through official documents that will prioritize training in a way that meets the needs of the labor world (Kuenzer, 1999). It is in this relationship with porous borders between the political and economic fields that we have the academic field; in it, autonomy is relativized, as it is influenced by other fields. In the Federal Constitution of 1988, art. 207, the didactic-scientific autonomy of the Universities is recommended, but it is not possible to ignore the Guidelines for the formation of courses, as they seek a “model” of national formation and need to be adopted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In what terms is autonomy really possible?

In the production of data, it was recurrent in the speech of the professors the certainty that there is a hierarchy of knowledge and that it also influences the construction and disposition of subjects in the curriculum. When designing a curriculum, we cannot discard the relationships, veiled or explicit, that influence it. For Bourdieu (2015), as the disciplines demand certain skills, which are distributed with inequality, the selection of the hierarchy of disciplines is placed. The theoretical disciplines that are at the top of the hierarchy were called by Bourdieu (2015) “canonical disciplines”. Disciplines of a more practical and technical nature are lowered in the hierarchy of knowledge. According to the author, practical disciplines do not necessarily need accumulated cultural capital.

We give a reminder that we pay attention to the reality in which Bourdieu (2008, 2016) arrived at these findings, the characteristics of France, its academic and school fields to which he dedicated himself to investigate, which keep specific social, economic and cultural contexts that differ from our reality. However, in the light of his considerations, we analyzed this category in a teacher training course, Pedagogy, which does not enjoy great social prestige, which makes it even more peculiar to realize that, even in these conditions, there are relations of silent disputes over spaces and that individual or group capital can make a difference in the hierarchy of knowledge.

The professors were asked if they believed that there is a hierarchy between the knowledge within the course and how it would present itself in the construction of the curriculum, in its organization and organicity.

I think, unfortunately, it does. But that is the reductionist look of that professor, he has a myopic vision of what education is, reductionist of the process because education permeates all segments, it is the object of plural study. There is no way to say what I need most in education. I think it would be unfortunate if there is someone here who thinks: “my discipline is more important”. (P10).

Even though bothered by the question and reticent, P10 points out that there is a difference in the relationships that encompass the construction of the curriculum. The other professors were objective in stating that there is a hierarchy between knowledge. Fundamental

subjects that occupy a larger space within the course, practical and management subjects have less space, according to the professors.

There is. This is due, in the composition of the last matrix, for example, to the corporatism of some professors. In the discussion of the matrix, the interests of groups were most important. (P6).

It is very important to try to protect what we believe, that is essential for the training of the educator; thus, I think this movement of self-protection of a space is normal. Therefore, there are many discussions, we also try to understand other areas and see how to allocate them, there are many demands that the course has to form. Perhaps this is the main worrying factor. (P15).

I even saw, on WhatsApp, that they would send me: "We will have to defend the discipline because they are willing to take it off the course". (P11).

Corporatism, marked self-protection, characterizes what Bourdieu (2016) points out in the power struggle. Alliances are created as a means to strengthen the permanence of what is set, legitimizing it. In another pole, we will have other groups that are organized to fight, to change the situation, but if there are no representatives with good capital pertinent to the imposed need, they cannot change the situation, this is like a game on a field.

So, look, it all depends, right? That everything has a game of interests behind it, the largest number of effective professors is of the area of fundamentals and then everyone defends their own side! (P7).

Disciplines of fundamentals have been presented with greater concern in the course. The disciplines of methodology are not discarded, but they certainly have a smaller space. (P9).

It is observed that the idea that the disciplines of fundamentals have a higher workload and have more space in the course curriculum is recurrent among professors, because they would be responsible for the theoretical basis of training. Taking as a criterion the Categorization of Disciplines in the Full Curriculum of the course, it appears that, in the sum of the workloads of the *compulsory basic training disciplines*: 1258 hours; *complementary mandatory subjects*: 476 hours and *mandatory professional subjects*: 1462 hours, the workload of fundamentals that is allocated to *mandatory basic training subjects* is lower than the professional subjects, which are the methodologies and internships. Why, then, is there a strong idea among professors that Fundamentals have more space in the curriculum? One possible answer is related to the symbolic capital of professors who work in these disciplines.

Let us return to part of the data in Table 1, which presents the agents participating in the research. Of the nine permanent professors, six work in disciplines of fundamentals. Of the six collaborating professors, two work in disciplines of fundamentals. There is, due to the condition of effective bond, less seasonality of professors in the disciplines of fundamentals, which contributed to creating a discipline/professor identification within the institution. Linked to this, there is the reality that the disciplines of fundamentals are responsible for the theoretical bases of training. The legacy of the tradition of fundamentals as an indispensable basis for training can help us to understand the statements of the interviewees.

By having subjects that appear with higher priority in the curriculum - in this case, highlighted by the professors, the disciplines of fundamentals - the model of subjects that do not "talk to each other", a curriculum fragmented into areas, remains. One of the greatest difficulties reported by the interviewees was the struggle for space within the curriculum. Which disciplines continue, which can be joined, withdrawn, added. The space of the curriculum

became small for so many arguments and speeches. Without losing sight of what the legislation provides for the course, the struggle for space in the curriculum is real. It is worth mentioning that, considering that Brazilian Sign Language professors are linked to the Department of Language and Literature, there was no approach with them to debate the discipline within the curriculum matrix. It is known, for sure, that the discipline will be part of the curriculum, as there is an asterisk that recalls its legal obligation within the course.

It is in this context that the Brazilian Sign Language discipline is included in the Pedagogy course, it is part of the complementary mandatory subjects, it is entitled Notions of the Brazilian Sign Language, an annual discipline with a 68-hour workload (minimum workload), two classes per week for the 1st year. The workload is a controversial point, as studies have shown the impossibility of teaching the Brazilian Sign Language in a short period (Almeida, 2012; Costa, 2015; Mercado, 2012; Pereira, 2008). In this sense, it is necessary to regain what Santos (2016) points out in her conclusions about Brazilian Sign Language and its teaching in the university campus:

The Brazilian Sign Language discipline teaches about language and the deaf. It teaches that Brazilian Sign Language contains all linguistic and grammatical elements like other languages; that it is one of the languages of bilingual education for the deaf; that deaf people belong to a different social/cultural/linguistic group; and that they are students who have linguistic singularities. However, it does not necessarily teach the language. What it teaches are “minimal skills” or “basic communication” in Brazilian Sign Language, usually through the teaching of vocabulary. (p. 228).

What the author asserts is important to think about the “function” of the discipline within the teacher training courses, highlighted in Pedagogy, due to the peculiarity of working with Early Childhood Education and the early grades of Elementary School. There is a practically mythological idea that the Brazilian Sign Language discipline will be able to offer scholars a mastery of the language. This mythologization of Brazilian Sign Language applies because, still, there is no clarity that Brazilian Sign Language is a language, and that language, with fluency, is not learned in a year.

In this context, there is the understanding of Brazilian Sign Language as a strictly iconic, concrete language, without the possibility of abstract relations, nor arbitrariness. The professors explained how they perceive the discipline in the course and the question of its mandatory nature. Both professors of the discipline and those of the Department of Pedagogy are unanimous in considering the discipline of importance for the education of Pedagogues, not explaining in detail how it is important. In general terms, Department of Pedagogy professors understand the importance as a need for Special Education and its subjects - people with disabilities - in an inclusive education proposal over which the pedagogue has the task of understanding how to act in the education of students who make up Special Education.

I think that only the force of the law does not guarantee the learning of Brazilian Sign Language by education professionals; as a professor for 10 years of the course, until today I have not observed any link between this discipline and the disciplines that I have taught in the course, which does not mean that I do not consider the discipline important, but if the objective of the Brazilian Sign Language discipline is to instruct pedagogues for the

inclusion of deaf students in Basic Education, the course workload in the course is insufficient. (P5).

Having 68 hours seems like a lot, but it's not enough. I needed at least 102 hours a year, if the discipline is annual or break up the discipline in Brazilian Sign Language I, Brazilian Sign Language II, in two years. It would be cool, it would be interesting. (PL1).

I would say that there is no point in having a multiplicity of teachings, but none with depth, it is the case of sign language, we have 68 hours, let's take the Pedagogy course with 68 hours, you cannot train a bilingual student, even if you work with Elementary School up to the fifth grade or Early Childhood Education by taking the 68-hour discipline. (...) So, I think that suddenly, expanding the workload would be an option, or in the third and fourth year an unfolding of the discipline, because in the modality that is configured today... today, we do not train our graduate, our student, to work with deaf students; today, we are playing hide and seek, we pretend that we teach and they pretend that they learn sign language, because, you see, you have to work on history, you have to work on identity and you work on the parameters, that means – let's say - 10 class hours already, if you give a good class and without going any further! A very superficial thing, for you to start giving sign language classes. (PL2).

We work only one year, the ideal would be to work two years with the discipline. There had to be more than 100 hours of discipline. We can also think of Brazilian Sign Language I, Brazilian Sign Language II, everyone wants to [refers to the academics]. (PL3).

The workload of the discipline presents itself as a significant limit to the discipline and expresses its strength, or rather, the lack of strength within the course. In the professors' statements, there is a need to understand whether there is a real adequacy of the discipline within the course. However, other issues are unveiled in the professors' statements. This is the internal discussion about the discipline within the new curricular matrix.

I have heard from professors that Brazilian Sign Language is not important, that Brazilian Sign Language should not be in the first year, that Brazilian Sign Language could be six months, a semester course. I've heard people say that it should be left for the fourth year, because the fourth year has a course final paper, has an internship, has two internships, so it gets heavy, better to have a more relaxed discipline, you know. So the opinions, they are quite divergent. (P12).

The lack of knowledge of the Department of Pedagogy professors about the education of the deaf and the deaf compromises the process. In the department, there are no professors who can “defend” Brazilian Sign Language, since the professors of this discipline are in another space, which leads to a weak, inexpressive dialogue between these professors and the Department of Pedagogy. It results in accepting the imposed situation and being content to occupy a space, even minimal, as a way of demarcating territory - which is a risk. The discipline can be understood as an instrumental, uncritical manual, which plays a role in offering tools to the graduates of the course to operationalize the process of including deaf students in regular education, which holds and produces all the knowledge necessary for this purpose. In this sense,

something that should be mentioned with caution and that I would like to emphasize is the care not to make the teaching of sign language superficial, turning it into a single semester course, as a manual for the inclusion of the deaf in school and in society. We know that learning a language transcends the classroom, requiring context and contact with the culture in question, and moreover, a bilingual education requires a teacher with fluency in the language and a fair circulation of the languages involved in the school so that both have the same prestige and rigor. (Martins, 2008, p. 195).

The statement causes us to think of Brazilian Sign Language as a discipline, but not in an isolated way in the curriculum, necessary as a space for the profusion of Brazilian Sign Language and the subjects that surround the deaf, their ways of learning and their culture. In this process, it requires greater visibility and integration within the course and the Institution. Teaching in Brazilian Sign Language is not just about linguistic and lexical issues; it has been configured as a much broader overview of the deaf and the education of the deaf, the conceptions built on them historically, the educational peculiarity in their instructional process, their culture and their relations constituted especially in the school space.

The myths and the simplification of common sense that are given to Brazilian Sign Language as a force of expression, a means of communication that is easy to learn, are the first barriers to be overcome by professors when teaching the discipline. In this regard, the Brazilian Sign Language professors of this research highlight their teaching approaches:

Students need to learn about the culture of the deaf, about family problems, about social problems that affect deaf people, about the lives of deaf people. For example, you go to a bank, what happens if there is no communication? If you know a little bit of Sign Language, the deaf already has a chance to talk to the listener. So, you need to understand about the identity, the history of the deaf and see these things in a more positive way, to improve. If we don't think about the deaf within society, we will have many barriers. (PL1).

I don't think you can work on signs without working a little bit on the historical context, because they have to... our students need to know where the sign language came from, what was the movement behind the recognition of sign language. (PL2).

First, I need to attract the students so that they have an interest in learning Brazilian Sign Language. But, also, I need to raise awareness so that they understand who the deaf are, so that they have a vision, so that they are interested in learning and communicating, then we will work with signs. If the student knows the deaf, it is easier to learn. It is a methodology itself, a different methodology, a visual methodology, I teach a little of each, a little of signs, a little of theory, deaf culture, sign language grammar, identity of the deaf, how it is built, I think that the main thing is to know the deaf, how to work with the deaf. (PL3).

The discipline challenges itself in the search to contribute so that the academics would constitute their identity as professors, which is permeated by common sense knowledge about deafness, socially constructed knowledge, which is guided by the medical concept of deafness, whose technical discourse is respected in society. It is against this technical discourse based on logic and on knowledge established as legitimate that the professor's performance arises, with a different perspective on deafness and the deaf.

Thus, the construction of a new *habitus* takes time, requires persistence for its constitution. We remember that the *habitus* is not closed, nor a destination (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2008). Brazilian Sign Language professors have the perception that it is not just a language to teach - which would already represent a lot to be worked on - but also to bring academics closer to "being deaf", their experiences, their struggles, their barriers, their history, their educational trajectory. This brings us to remember the difficulty in deepening the themes with a limited number of hours. The professors believe that sensitization is an important factor in "bringing supporters together" to the issues of the deaf. However, does awareness as an external factor really mobilize students to the cause?

The fact that the Brazilian Sign Language discipline does not necessarily teach Brazilian Sign Language, but rather about sign language with instrumental vocabulary and about the deaf, is configured in this way because it is immersed in the discursive field of inclusion. In effect, what the Brazilian Sign Language discipline does is to familiarize the teacher to remove the deaf from the field of the unknown, to bring them closer to the known, and to include them. Thus, the risks of exclusion are reduced. To know to include. Include to govern. (Santos, 2016, p. 228).

The author provokes us to reflect. The discipline is built thinking about the deaf in the space of school inclusion, in the inclusive discourse that we have in official documents and that, in the great majority, are questioned by the deaf community, as they do not always consider the demands of bilingual linguistic policies in this space. In the inclusive context, the deaf is perceived as a subject of Special Education - disabled - and not as a linguistically and culturally different subject (Jesus, 2016; Lodi, 2013).

Thus, the way the discipline is organized and the large amount of knowledge treated makes its depth difficult. In addition, the discipline has taken on the responsibility of meeting the complex mission of training the pedagogue to work with the deaf included in regular education, in the scenario described above. Thinking of the discipline only as language teaching makes it fragile, as it is evident from the studies presented in this text and in our observation, that it is not possible to learn Brazilian Sign Language fluently in an academic year, and this can frustrate both students and professors of the discipline. Thus, there is an urgent need to rethink the discipline, the knowledge organized in it for the desired purposes, and what these purposes are, in addition to thinking and elaborating the spread of Brazilian Sign Language in the academic space beyond the discipline.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, based on the objective of analyzing the space occupied by the Brazilian Sign Language discipline in the curriculum of an undergraduate course and what its formative competence for the future teacher is, the investigative path highlighted the Brazilian Sign Language recognition movement and the contextualization of social, political and historical transformations that allowed us to reach the moment that Brazilian Sign Language becomes a curricular component in Higher Education. More specifically, the Pedagogy course at a public state university in Paraná was analyzed, as well as how it is possible to include the Brazilian Sign Language discipline in this context.

Undeniably, the hierarchical relations of knowledge, that is, the value that knowledge from one area has over the other, were revealing and preponderant to understand that legal imposition is not enough to modify or create a space for the recognition of the value of a particular discipline in the curriculum. There are relations of power, capital and fields involved, which will influence and determine the curriculum construction and the value of this knowledge in the academic field. The value that is given to this or that discipline also indicates which characteristics are expected to form the student. There are provisions in the official documents that give indications about the curriculum, but there is university autonomy that allows the configuration of the course linked to the local reality. Thinking about curriculum implies

assuming that there is a silent struggle, fought for space and prestige within the academic field, which will have an impact on its constitution.

In this context, the Brazilian Sign Language discipline occupies a space that was obtained by the Deaf Movement, which seeks, among other things, policies for linguistic-cultural recognition. This discipline has been assigned as a teacher training role, enabling them to teach the deaf student that may “eventually have” in their common classroom. The responsibility attributed to Brazilian Sign Language is too big for the conditions it has within the course. And other studies have pointed out that these conditions are replicated in many other Brazilian universities.

Thinking about the discipline and the knowledge it deals with was presented as a priority, as the discipline is linked to the inclusion discourse, which historically has been insufficient for deaf people, as a monolingual instructional environment. Such a finding does not alter the Brazilian reality of having inclusion as a flag since the 1990s, but we need to question what the best suitability of this process is. This requires constantly being reviewed and claimed. The Deaf Movement has been doing it fiercely. In this context, the Brazilian Sign Language discipline has the task of bringing the pedagogue closer to the deaf; how this deaf student in regular education learns and how to teach them goes through the language, but needs specific methodologies. So, with what workload would all these elements be better contemplated during initial training? This question was recurrent in the research and needs to be debated in the course. It is not expected that the discussion will be raised by agents other than the professors of the discipline, and the articulation between them seems as a possible strategy to occupy spaces. We observed that the role of the Brazilian Sign Language professor has unique nuances, but the fact that they feel little valued, coupled with the negligence or little interest of other University agents about Brazilian Sign Language and the deaf, was a prominent item in the analysis of the data produced.

The difficulty, especially of deaf professors, in continuing their *stricto sensu* training, and with this, the little existence of institutionalized capital that provides them with greater participation and mobility in the academic field in the construction of symbolic capital, is a real situation and it may be one of the factors that would explain the situation and the devaluation of these professors in the academic environment. Linked to this, we have internal confrontations within the deaf community, the tension between deaf and listeners fluent in Brazilian Sign Language and the specificity to be a professor of Brazilian Sign Language in Higher Education.

On the one hand, if the merit for taking up the discipline lies in the question of being a native speaker, the deaf have priority. On the other hand, if merit is based on academic achievements, productions and degrees, listeners have a greater chance of taking on the discipline. These internal issues of the group have repercussions with its weakening to advance with proposals and initiatives within the University. Playing the game in the academic field requires a group strategy for its creation and consolidation as a way to strengthen the group and its struggles.

It should be noted that, probably, the greatest contribution of this research is to unveil the intricacies that involve the discipline of Brazilian Sign Language within the Pedagogy

course and how, from this context, we think of the discipline in other teacher training courses. However, in addition to this, we propose to think of horizons that make it possible to rethink issues that present themselves as barriers to the greater contribution of the Brazilian Sign Language discipline in the training of the future teacher, not in a prescriptive way.

The space of the Brazilian Sign Language discipline in Higher Education, conquered by the Deaf Movement, is important and valuable and we need to optimize it to become a useful space for debate and knowledge about bilingual education for the deaf. The academic space is the *locus* for the production and dissemination of knowledge with a view to teacher training articulated to the socio-educational demands of its surroundings. For that, one cannot lose sight of the inseparability of their main activities: teaching, extension and research. Thus, aware that, in the Brazilian Sign Language discipline, it is not possible to acquire fluency in the language, it is necessary to think of Brazilian Sign Language as it is: language.

Thereby, it is required that we develop other action fronts within the academic space. The University could conceive the regular offer of Brazilian Sign Language courses, in modules that advance in the learning and fluency of the language, as occurs in any language course. In this space, the academics themselves would have the opportunity to deepen the basic notions learned in the classroom, being, therefore, a permanent institutional program.

Bringing Brazilian Sign Language to the center of the discussion imposes the need to turn it into an agenda in the Institution's internal activities and discussions, as an initial task of deaf education professionals who work at the University, but which is not restricted to them, because the voice needs to be institutional. To this end, professionals in the field, generating forces and joint actions, can contribute to changing the situation that recurs in the statements of Brazilian Sign Language professors: the devaluation of Brazilian Sign Language and its professors.

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Received on: 17/05/2020

Reformulated on: 15/07/2020

Approved on: 24/07/2020

