

A formação do instrutor de Libras: um relato autoetnográfico

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Resumo

A formação docente, no Brasil, norteia-se por documentos oficiais que fazem a separação entre profissionais de níveis médio e superior. Especificamente, sobre a comunidade surda, a legislação que ampara a formação do instrutor de Libras (Língua Brasileira de Sinais) é o Decreto 5.626/2005, o qual traz a possibilidade de formação em níveis médio e superior. O objetivo geral foi investigar sobre o processo formativo de instrutores de Libras no interior do estado de Pernambuco até a sua certificação profissional. A pesquisa tem abordagem qualitativa, caracterizando-se como autoetnográfica, para a qual utilizaram-se a observação e a escrita de um memorial. A partir dos dados, foi constatado que a formação inicial até se tornar um instrutor de Libras demandou uma jornada longa, que perpassou da proficiência em Libras até aspectos formativos profissionais.

Palavras-chave: Proficiência em Libras; Magistério; Ensino de Libras; Formação Profissional.

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The training of the Brazilian Sign Language instructor: an autoethnographic report

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Abstract

Teacher educational background in Brazil is guided by official documents which separate high school professionals and higher education ones. Specifically, regarding the deaf community, the legislation that supports the Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) instructor qualification is Decree 5,626/2005 which provides for the possibility of training at high school and higher education levels. The general aim was to investigate the qualification process of Libras instructors from Pernambuco State heartland until their professional certification. The research has a qualitative approach, characterized as autoethnographic one, for which observation and writing of a memorial were used. From data collected, it was established that since the initial qualification until to become a Libras instructor has been demanded a long journey that went from proficiency in Libras to professional qualification aspects.

Keywords: Proficiency in Libras; Mastership; Libras teaching; Professional qualification.

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Resumen

La formación docente en Brasil está guiada por documentos oficiales que separan a los profesionales de la enseñanza media y universitaria. Específicamente, en lo que respecta a la comunidad sorda, la legislación que apoya la formación del instructor de Libras (Lengua de Signos Brasileña) es el Decreto 5.626/2005, que prevé la posibilidad de formación en niveles secundarios y superiores. El objetivo general fue investigar el proceso de formación de los instructores de Libras en el interior del estado de Pernambuco hasta su certificación profesional. La investigación tiene abordaje cualitativo, caracterizado como autoetnográfico, para lo cual se utilizó la observación y redacción de un memorial. A partir de los datos, se constató que la formación inicial para convertirse en instructor de Libras es un largo camino, que va desde la competencia en Libras hasta los aspectos de formación profesional.

Palabras-clave: Magisterio. Prolibras. Formación profesional.

Introduction

The present article emerges from the formative and professional experiences of the first author, who began his journey in learning Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in 2010 when he entered the Licentiate in Pedagogy program at the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE). This process was initiated due to contact with a deaf student who was admitted to the university in 2009, during the second semester. As there were no interpreters available to assist this student, the professor of the Didactics courses, who also taught Libras and Assessment courses, suggested that the class advance the Libras course to the second semester. This was done with the intention of establishing at least a basic level of communication with the deaf student alongside the other students in most subjects. Upon accepting the proposal, the class took its first steps into the world of deafness, deaf culture, and the deaf community.

After four years of study in the Pedagogy program and also in Libras courses and monitoring activities, the first researcher took the proficiency exam for Libras/Portuguese translation and interpretation. He also had the opportunity to take the proficiency exam for teaching Libras (an exam that qualifies one to be a Libras instructor). Both exams were taken at CAS-PE (Center for Deaf Support of Pernambuco), where he passed both exams (Libras/Portuguese course and Instructor) for proficiency, thus becoming a Libras instructor and interpreter at the intermediate level. However, it is important to understand how the role of Libras instructor emerged in the historical context of the Deaf Community.

The history of deaf education, both in Brazil and worldwide, presents a series of events that connect the deaf individual to the language, the hearing individual to the language, and both to the deaf community. However, the teaching process was initially focused solely on communication, as noted by Soares.

(1999, p. 115).

[...] The education of the deaf was historically reserved for those who would not attend regular school but required a type of instruction aimed at compensating for what they lacked in the case of the deaf, their muteness. Hence, all the methodologies employed, whether through gestures, writing, or speech, were fundamentally concerned with muteness, that is, with the possibility of establishing simple forms of communication.

Even with an education that was based on the "needs" of the deaf (communicative needs), this education did not truly reflect a deep learning process. Only the level of communication was considered, causing deaf individuals to fall behind in their academic intellectual development.

Deaf people, like those with various disabilities, have been relegated to substandard jobs due to various factors. The most common is their low level of education (SACHS, 2004). However, deaf individuals have had the opportunity to engage with sign language education as a pathway to the workforce, taking on roles as Libras Instructors sign language "teachers" with only a high school education. Even so, Basso, Strobel, and Masutti (2009) discuss the need for specific training for these deaf teachers, emphasizing that being more than just a user of the language is necessary to teach it effectively. It is important to consider that in Brazil, there are already policies in place for teacher training, which are regulated by the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) No. 9.394/96³.

The Teacher Training Course, which was previously known as the Pedagogical Course and has been discontinued in most states, served as the primary support for teacher education at the high school level for many years. Over time, and with updates to the current legislation, the courses that assumed primacy and autonomy in teacher education have been the undergraduate licensure programs. For example, the licensure in pedagogy for teaching in early childhood and elementary education. However, the Normal Course at the high school level is still accepted as the minimum qualification for working in early childhood education and the early years of elementary education, as stipulated by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education 9.394/1996 in its article 62.

Teacher training in Brazil follows a series of curricular guidelines and regulations, with the primary one being the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) No. 9.394, which has required that teacher education be at the higher education level since 1996. However, at the high school level, there are still places that offer Normal courses at the secondary level. For example, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul⁴, these courses are offered through the state education network, targeting the municipalities of Campo Grande, Chapadão do Sul, Dourados, Naviraí, and São Gabriel do Oeste. In the state of Minas Gerais, specifically in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, there is the Municipal School Tristão da Cunha⁵. This last course is currently active, and it is referenced by the INEP Code: 31003808,

³ Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/19394.htm

⁴ Available at <https://www.sed.ms.gov.br/inscricoes-para-curso-normal-medio-encerram-nesta-quarta-feira/> Accessed on 04/15/2022.

⁵ Available at https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Flookaside.fbsbx.com%2Flookaside%2Fcrawler%2Fmedia%2F%3Fmedia_id%3D720108861930005&imgrefurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fcursonormaleetc%2F&tbnid=NCZxATvau4XEeM&vet=12ahUKEwj08tDMtuH2AhVxIJUCHezPCmkQMvgFegQIARBU..i&docid=NdpA

The training of the Brazilian Sign Language instructor: an autoethnographic report registered in the 2020 School Census. In Rio Grande do Sul, there is the Instituto Osmar Poppe⁶, where registrations are open for the Post-Secondary Normal Course, which serves as a qualification for teaching for those who have completed high school, with the INEP Code: 43141544.

Nevertheless, when considering teacher training and the deaf community, we cannot overlook the specific characteristics of this group, which requires a focused approach to their development, whether it be linguistic, cultural, or in the areas of literacy and learning in both Portuguese and sign language. In this sense, the more opportunities there are for the training of professionals who can teach Libras, which is the first language of the deaf according to Law 10.436 of 2002, in educational and social environments, the greater the possibility of including these social actors. Therefore, even while recognizing the importance of higher education for teacher training, when we identify that there are still licensure programs for training Libras instructors at the secondary level, we highlight the need to better understand how this process occurs.

In seeking legal support on this matter, we refer to Decree 5.626/2005 (BRASIL, 2005), which addresses the training of Libras instructors, explaining that it can occur at three levels as follows:

Art. 6º The training of Libras instructors at the secondary level should be conducted through: I - professional training courses; II - continuing education courses offered by higher education institutions; III - continuing education courses offered by institutions accredited by education departments.

This is connected to our efforts to understand the formative processes of the deaf community, which involve Libras instructors. In this context, several questions arise: (i) How is the training of Libras instructors conducted today? (ii) What does the legislation say about this? (iii) Can hearing individuals become Libras instructors? (iv) How does this training take place in the interior of the state of Pernambuco, where training policies intertwine with the absence of a strong deaf community?

In seeking answers to these questions, our general objective was to investigate the formative process of Libras instructors in the interior of the state of Pernambuco. Our specific objectives were: (i) To scrutinize legal and theoretical documents regarding the initial and continuing education of

[JHmODewAnM&w=960&h=960&q=cursos%20de%20normal%20medio%20funcionando&ved=2ahUKEwj08tDMtuH2AhVxIJUCHezPCmkQMygFegQIARBU](https://www.radiomissioneira.com/abertas-as-inscricoes-para-o-curso-normal-pos-medio-no-instituto-osmar-poppe/). Accessed on 05/04/2022.

⁶ Available at:

<https://www.radiomissioneira.com/abertas-as-inscricoes-para-o-curso-normal-pos-medio-no-instituto-osmar-poppe/>
Accessed on 05/22/2022.

Libras instructors in Brazil. (ii) To understand how a Libras instructor becomes certified through an autoethnographic writing approach.

These objectives helped address the questions outlined in this text's scope, while also providing a macro perspective on how both deaf and hearing instructors develop in the interior of the state of Pernambuco, based on an autoethnographic account.

This work is organized into four sections, in addition to the introduction: in the first section, we present the legal and theoretical framework that discusses the formative process of instructors; in the second section, we describe the research methodology, including the research typology, the instruments used, and the data treatment; in the third section, we provide the autoethnographic writing, where we reflect on the formative process of Libras instructors; and finally, in the concluding section, we revisit the results and offer some considerations for improving the training of the professionals under analysis.

Theoretical Review

When it comes to legislation, Brazil has some of the best in the world. In addressing various differentiated themes, specifically concerning Libras instructors, it is essential to consider the education of the deaf in Brazil. Law 10.098 of March 23, 1994, includes a chapter that focuses on Sign Language and, in turn, highlights the need for special educational aspects regarding inclusion as outlined in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN) 9.394/1996, as well as in the National Guidelines for Special Education – Resolution No. 02 of the CNE/CEB of September 11, 2001.

Subsequently, in 2002, Law 10.436/2002 was enacted, officially recognizing Libras as the language of the Deaf Community in Brazil. Later, in 2005, Decree 5.626/2005 was approved, regulating both Law 10.436 and Law 10.098. The teaching of Libras is outlined in these legal frameworks, specifically in Law 10.436/2002 and Decree 5.626/2005, respectively:

Art. 4º The federal education system, along with state, municipal, and Federal District education systems, must ensure the inclusion of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) instruction in Special Education, Speech Therapy, and Teacher Training programs at both secondary and higher education levels. This inclusion should be an integral part of the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs), in accordance with current legislation. (BRASIL, 2002)

§ 1º The minimum qualification for teachers of Libras in early childhood education and the early years of elementary education is the training provided at the secondary

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level in the normal modality, which enables bilingual education, as referred to in the main clause (BRASIL, art. 5, 2005)

Nevertheless, we must also mention Law 13.146/2015 - the Brazilian Inclusion Law for People with Disabilities, also known as the Statute of the Person with Disabilities. This law addresses the need to create policies for eliminating communication, architectural, pedagogical, instructional, and attitudinal barriers. This document legitimizes the importance of teaching Libras to both deaf and hearing individuals to broaden everyone's right to fully exercise citizenship in a predominantly hearing society.

The aforementioned laws have a national scope, but federative units also had the opportunity to regulate their own legislation. In the case of the state of Pernambuco, the law that creates the position of Libras Instructor also gives it a broader designation: Libras Instructor Teacher, which is governed by Law 12.757/2005 and further established by Complementary Law No. 49 of January 31, 2003, which officially recreates the position.

This entire body of legislation represents a milestone in the educational process for the deaf in Brazil and marks the beginning of the professionalization of Libras Instructors, officially recognized within educational institutions. It is worth noting that this professionalization had existed long before in churches, deaf associations, and federations, although without the legal or normative requirements to officially validate the training of students.

In addition to the legal framework, theoretical support also began to develop. Authors such as Quadros (2009), Lacerda (2017), Gesse (2009), Strobel (1991), among others, began the work of promoting Libras and the need to expand teacher training and specialized education to meet the real needs of the deaf. In this context, the role of the Libras Instructor is guaranteed both legally and theoretically.

According to Vitalliano *et. al.*, (2010)

The process of including students with special educational needs in regular education requires a comprehensive reform in the organization of education systems. Specifically, for meeting the needs of deaf students, it becomes essential for teachers to have at least a basic proficiency in Libras. (VITALIANO *et. al.*, 2010, p.7).

Vitalliano (2010) emphasizes the importance of reorganizing education systems to ensure that deaf students receive effective support. To achieve this, it is necessary to have bilingual teachers.

For this to happen, Decree 5.626 (2005) requires secondary-level education as one of the possible ways to meet the need for professionals proficient in Sign Language who can serve as teachers, referred to as instructors.

According to Chapter III, Article 5, paragraph 1, and onward, of Decree 5.626/2005, we have the following:

Art. 5º The training of teachers for the instruction of Libras in early childhood education and the early years of elementary education must be conducted in a Pedagogy course or a higher normal course, where Libras and written Portuguese are the languages of instruction, enabling bilingual education.

§ 1º The minimum qualification for teachers of Libras in early childhood education and the early years of elementary education is the training provided at the secondary level in the normal modality, which enables bilingual education as referred to in the main clause. [...]

Art. 6º The training of Libras instructors at the secondary level should be conducted through:

- I - professional education courses;
- II - continuing education courses offered by higher education institutions; and
- III - continuing education courses offered by institutions accredited by education departments.

§ 1º The training of Libras instructors can also be conducted by civil society organizations representing the deaf community, provided that the certificate is validated by at least one of the institutions referred to in items II and III.

Article 5 and onward presents a series of formative processes that ensure the professional practice of Libras Instructors. Initially, it outlines higher education training, with a focus on Early Childhood Education, but in the first paragraph, it addresses the minimum qualification for this role, specifically the secondary-level education in the normal modality.

In Article 6, the scope of training is expanded by introducing the possibility of courses being offered in three categories: *“I - professional training courses at the secondary level; II - courses offered by higher education institutions; III - courses offered by institutions accredited by education departments.”* But what happens if these anticipated possibilities are not ensured? How can there still be Libras Instructors? Article 7 of the Decree explains that:

Art. 7º Within the next ten years from the publication of this Decree, if there are no teachers with a postgraduate or undergraduate degree in Libras available to teach this subject in higher education courses, it may be taught by professionals who meet at least one of the following profiles:

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I - Libras teacher who is a user of the language, with a postgraduate degree or higher education and a proficiency certificate in Libras obtained through an exam conducted by the Ministry of Education;

II - Libras instructor who is a user of the language, with secondary-level education and a proficiency certificate in Libras obtained through an exam conducted by the Ministry of Education;

III - Bilingual hearing teacher: Libras - Portuguese, with a postgraduate degree or higher education and a proficiency certificate in Libras obtained through an exam conducted by the Ministry of Education [...];

Art. 8º The proficiency exam in Libras, referred to in Article 7, must assess fluency in the use of the language, knowledge of it, and competence in teaching it.

§ 1º The proficiency exam in Libras must be conducted annually by the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions accredited by it for this purpose.

§ 2º The certification of proficiency in Libras will qualify the instructor or teacher for the teaching role.

§ 3º The proficiency exam in Libras must be administered by an examining board with extensive knowledge of Libras, consisting of deaf educators and linguists from higher education institutions.

It is evident, then, that in Article 8, paragraph 2, the proficiency exam, PROLIBRAS, or the exams offered by accredited institutions qualify the Libras Instructor with secondary-level education for the teaching role, specifically highlighting that the qualification is for teaching Libras/Portuguese.

It is important to reflect on the fact that access to education and training has long been concentrated in major centers, whether in capitals or metropolitan regions, when compared to access in rural areas. For years, access to education for Deaf individuals was inadequate, particularly in terms of acquiring Libras from the literacy process onward, as was the case in the interior cities of Pernambuco.

Considering this entire theoretical and historical framework of social exclusion regarding access to specific training for learning Libras, the first author, as a researcher and participant in the study, experienced this type of training when it became available near his place of residence. From that moment on, and with the completion of the proficiency course, a new professional and social chapter began.

Methodology

The relationship between the research object and the researcher is often very close, always requiring careful attention to maintain neutrality and distance concerning the research object. However, in autoethnographic research, the author breaks this distance, attempting to maintain neutrality while presenting themselves in two roles: one as the researcher and the other as the research object, since the autoethnographic account is a fundamental part of this research.

Autoethnography allows the researcher to also be the subject of the research (SANTOS, 2017), using personal narratives that are integrated into the text and research results, thereby reducing the distance between the research object and the researcher.

In this work, specifically, autoethnography plays the role of organizing the personal narrative of the training of a hearing Libras instructor in the interior of the state of Pernambuco, where there were no training courses for either deaf or hearing instructors. Consequently, at certain points in this text, the writing will be in the first-person singular, especially when discussing the formative process of the first author of this article; at other times, the writing will be in the first-person plural, acknowledging that the writing and reflections are constructed with others.

But what exactly is autoethnography? "In broad terms, we can say that autoethnography is a method that stands and balances on a 'triadic model'" (CHANG, 2008, p.10). According to the author Chang (2008, p.15), the triadic model is:

[...] based on three orientations: the first is a methodological orientation, which is ethnographic and analytical in nature; the second is a cultural orientation, grounded in the interpretation of: a) lived experiences (from memory), b) the relational aspect between the researcher and the subjects (and objects) of the research, and c) the social phenomena being investigated; and finally, the content orientation, which is rooted in autobiography combined with a reflective character.

Regarding the research approach, there are numerous types of research and multiple approaches that reflect various contexts and needs. For this work, the qualitative approach was chosen, which, according to Creswell (2007), is a set of techniques and practices that, by using certain instruments, transforms the social and visible world into representative data, aiming to understand specific phenomena in their natural environment, explaining and qualifying them. This occurs because the researcher is led to reflection through the process of evaluation and reevaluation, presenting their own experience/contribution/influence on the results of their investigation in an intersubjective manner (SANTOS, 2007).

The events that will be recounted here began in 2010, with the first data collection instrument being observation, in this case, in loco, which in this work translates to the lived experience of the first researcher, who is a certified Libras instructor by CAS in 2016 and a Libras interpreter also certified by CAS in 2015. This experience becomes highly significant. Details are crucial in the process of interpreting data and phenomena (BOSSLE, 2008). The second research instrument is the autoethnographic writing, which is based on a meticulously written and considered memoir, aiming to achieve the highest possible fidelity (SEGUNDA, 2011).

Professional Training: The Autoethnographic Account

As I begin this account, it is important to note that it originates from a memoir—written memories that span the researcher's timeline. This specific excerpt focuses exclusively on the training process leading up to the point of becoming a Libras instructor. From this moment on, the text may be presented in the first person, as previously mentioned, which is characteristic of autoethnographic research.

In 2010, through the ENEM (National High School Exam), I began my journey at the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE), in the Academic Unit of Garanhuns (UAG), in the Licentiate in Pedagogy program. This Academic Unit was the first university expansion under the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (Reuni I), implemented during the federal government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

REUNI, established by Decree No. 6.096 of April 24, 2007, had as one of its objectives to equip federal universities with the necessary conditions to expand access to and retention in higher education, to be achieved within a five-year period (2008 a 2012). (TORRES, 2014, p.13)

As a result of the expansion, access to higher education was democratized, but the conditions for student retention were not equally addressed. This led to situations where students' lives were significantly impacted by gaining access to public universities, but they were unable to continue because the university did not provide the necessary conditions to keep them in their courses. Often, these situations were exacerbated by the economic conditions of the students or educational issues, such as those faced by individuals with disabilities whose needs were not met due to a lack of pedagogical adaptations for curriculum access.

Thus, I met a deaf student in the Licenciature in Pedagogy program. To protect his identity, I will call him Felipe. He was disconnected from his original cohort and was taking courses in the first semester, but there was no Libras interpreter. This means that the university was not providing the minimum requirements mandated by Laws 10.436/2002 and the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI) of 2015. As a result, there was no effective communication with Felipe.

The instructor of the Libras courses, concerned about the lack of inclusion for Felipe, decided to advance the elective course "Language and Society," which addresses the use of Sign Language as a strategy for the inclusion of deaf individuals. This sparked my interest in learning to communicate in Libras. Subsequently, the instructor also offered the Libras course, in which I enrolled. As stated in Decree 5.626/2005, this course is mandatory for licensure programs:

Article 3. Libras must be included as a mandatory curricular subject in teacher training courses for teaching at the secondary and higher education levels, as well as in Speech Therapy courses, in public and private educational institutions within the federal education system and the education systems of the States, the Federal District, and Municipalities.

§ 1. All licensure programs, across different areas of knowledge, the secondary-level normal course, the higher normal course, the Pedagogy course, and the Special Education course are considered teacher and education professional training courses for teaching.

§ 2. Libras will be offered as an elective curricular subject in other higher education courses and in professional education, starting one year after the publication of this Decree.

Even though it is mandatory, the law does not specify in which semester the course must be offered, and advancing it to the earlier semesters was indeed an inclusive choice. After taking the Libras course, I went through a selection process and became a teaching assistant in the Libras course, despite not having prior experience with the language, for the same program and for first-semester classes. This required me to dedicate more time to my studies. Initially, I focused on the theory and the course texts, but soon these were not enough, and I needed to practice signing and improve my communication in Libras.

In order to achieve better fluency, I began spending more time with my colleague Felipe. He offered to help teach me and, whenever possible, would teach in the classroom. I would try to explain concepts as best I could, and he would patiently observe and correct me when I misunderstood a concept or explanation. This learning process was built not only on deepening my technical knowledge of sign language but also through my interactions with Felipe, who provided me with insights into deaf culture.

According to Müller and Kist (2020, p.65) and Strobel (2009, p.27), respectively, they point out:

Thus, learning Libras and understanding deaf culture enable students to communicate and interact with deaf individuals in educational settings and social contexts, promoting accessibility to knowledge and cultural practices (MÜLLER; KIST, 2020, p.65).

And furthermore,

[...] the deaf way of understanding and modifying the world, in order to make it accessible and livable, aligns it with visual perceptions that contribute to defining deaf identities and the essence of deaf communities. This encompasses the language, ideas, beliefs, customs, and habits of the deaf community (STROBEL, 2009, p. 27).

Even though I had contact with Felipe and other deaf individuals, I felt the need to take a basic Libras course. In this course, I received my personal sign name and realized that if I truly wanted to contribute to the deaf community, I would need to study diligently. It was through various experiences that I had the opportunity to immerse myself in Deaf culture. As Ribas (2000) states, teacher training courses have sought to develop new competencies so that educators are equipped to overcome the difficulties and challenges typically encountered in the field. Among these challenges, we can highlight not only the learning of a second language for a hearing person but also the process of integrating into the culture where the language was developed, as noted by Gesse (2009), Strobel (2009), and Quadros, Stumpf (2009).

I completed the intermediate Libras course in 2011 and the advanced level in 2012, both of which significantly expanded my knowledge. Nonetheless, in August 2012, I was invited by the Department of Education of the municipality of Garanhuns to work as a Libras interpreter for a 4-year-old deaf student.

However, the reality was that the student did not know sign language, not even the basics. In order for the work to be effective, it was first necessary to teach him the language. There was no Libras instructor, and this role was combined with that of the interpreter, which was also me, thus assuming two roles: acting as the communication intermediary between the student and others at school, and teaching him Libras, as no one else at the school knew the language. This is one of the many challenges that deaf individuals have faced during the inclusion process, as demonstrated by researchers Moura (2021), Diniz and Daxenberger (2021), and Lacerda (2013).

The aforementioned issue was reported to the Municipal Department of Education, but no action was taken, such as hiring a Libras teacher or referring the student to an AEE (Specialized

Educational Assistance) room, as required by law. Instead, I was instructed to continue performing both the translation and Libras instruction tasks.

From my experience and interaction with the deaf student, having to split my time between assisting with communication and teaching, I realized the growing need to formalize what I was doing. Therefore, in 2013, I took the 6th PROLIBRAS exam, but I was not successful, which only fueled my desire to study even more.

The 6th PROLIBRAS exams were conducted on March 3, 2013 – 1st stage (written exam), and from March 5, 2013 – 2nd stage (practical exam); the final results were published on April 8, 2013. (PROLIBRAS, 2015).

I studied for another two years, and in 2015, I took the Proficiency Exam at the Center for Deaf Support of Pernambuco (CAS-PE) in Recife-PE, 200 km away from my hometown of Garanhuns, in the state of Pernambuco, to become a Libras Translator-Interpreter. Proficiency for Libras Translator-Interpreter is one of two types of assessments, the other being for instructor (teaching). In the same year, I attempted the PROLIBRAS exam for teaching to become an instructor. The evaluation was held in the city of Maceió, in the state of Alagoas, 158 km from Garanhuns/PE. This time, I passed the proficiency exam for Translator-Interpreter at CAS-PE, but in the PROLIBRAS teaching exam, I only succeeded in the first stage.

In 2016, I took the CAS-PE exam again, but this time for Proficiency in Libras Teaching, and I was approved, becoming the first hearing Libras Instructor in this modality in the city of Garanhuns, in the interior of Pernambuco.

The CAS-PE Proficiency Exams follow the guidelines of Decree 5.626/2005, “§ 3º The Libras proficiency exam must be conducted by an examining board with extensive knowledge of Libras, consisting of deaf educators and linguists from higher education institutions.” (BRAZIL, 2005).

In addition to offering basic, intermediate, advanced I and II courses, and Libras Translator-Interpreter certification, the board that organizes the Libras Instructor evaluation requires the preparation of a lesson plan to be taught exclusively in Libras. The board presents three possible reference texts, from which one must be chosen to be included in the lesson plan and teaching strategies. After the lesson presentation, a questioning session is conducted. At the end, the score and the status of approval or disapproval as a Libras Instructor are announced.

To better understand the process, we have organized a table outlining all the steps that a candidate who wishes to become a Libras Instructor must follow according to federal and state legal regulations in the state of Pernambuco (TABLE 1):

TABLE 1 - STRUCTURE OF THE PROFICIENCY ACQUISITION PROCESS

Type	Legislation	Evaluation	Description	Certification
PROLIBRAS Interpreter	Decree No. 5,626 MEC Normative Ordinance 20/2010	National-level Evaluation	Established in 2010, initiated in 2011, with the latest edition in 2015. Conducted in two stages: a general knowledge test in LIBRAS video and a practical test signed for hearing individuals and signed or written for deaf individuals.	Proficient at intermediate level and/or Proficient at higher level
PROLIBRAS Instructor	Decree No. 5,626 MEC Normative Ordinance 20/2010	National-level Evaluation	Established in 2010, initiated in 2011, with the latest edition in 2015. Conducted in two stages: a general knowledge test in LIBRAS video and a practical test signed for hearing individuals and signed or written for deaf individuals.	Proficient at intermediate level and/or Proficient at higher level
CAS Proficiency Interpreter	Decree No. 5,626 Resolution CEE/PE No. 01/2000, February 16, 2000	State/local-level Evaluation – National Validity	CAS established in 2000, but proficiency assessments began in 2012, with the latest edition in 2020. Evaluation conducted in a single stage, divided into: translation of written text into LIBRAS, questioning in LIBRAS, and translation/interpretation test LIBRAS/Voice. Participants: Hearing and Deaf.	Proficient at intermediate level and/or Proficient at higher level
CAS Proficiency Instructor	Decree No. 5,626 Resolution CEE/PE No. 01/2000, February 16, 2000	State/local-level Evaluation - National Validity	CAS established in 2000, but proficiency assessments began in 2012, with the latest edition in 2020. Evaluation conducted in two stages: the first stage involves creating a lesson plan based on a text selected by the committee members, and in the second stage, presenting the plan	Proficient at intermediate level and/or Proficient at higher level

			and delivering the lesson, followed by questioning in LIBRAS about the structures of the lesson, Language, Deaf Culture, and Literature.	
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Source: Elaborated by the authors

For informational purposes, the first author successfully completed all the steps mentioned above to become a Libras Instructor and continued his pursuit of education in the field of Libras teaching. In 2017, he completed a postgraduate degree in Libras from Faculdade de Educação da Lapa – FAEL. In 2019, he enrolled in the Licentiate in Letras Libras program at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), in partnership with the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB), at the Campina Grande-PB campus, with the goal of becoming a Libras teacher, in addition to already holding a degree in Pedagogy. This marked the completion of his initial formative journey as a Libras teacher.

Final considerations

This work aimed to present the training process of a hearing Libras Instructor at the secondary level, from the first contact with Libras to passing the Proficiency exam. It was a six-year journey, beginning in 2010, completed in 2016, and further refined with higher education in 2022, consolidated through this research.

It is essential to reflect on the fact that the initial training of instructors and teachers involves a long journey, one that does not come simply from knowing the language, but requires specific study. These instructors and teachers remain focused and committed with the goal of truly becoming bilingual, in the social sense, which is when the community you are part of recognizes you as such.

Returning to the initial questions of this work, and now synthesizing what has been highlighted in this research, we emphasize that the data from the autoethnographic account allows us to affirm that:

✓ The training of a Libras Instructor is achieved through courses offered by public higher education institutions, institutions affiliated with education departments, deaf community organizations also linked to education departments, and through Proficiency Exams.

✓ Law 10.436/2002 and Decree 5.626/2005 establish the necessary conditions for a secondary-level Libras Instructor to be recognized and able to work throughout the national territory.

✓ Hearing individuals can indeed be Libras instructors, but the priority for this role is given to deaf individuals, as indicated by the legislation. However, the same legislation does not present any barriers to a hearing person becoming a Libras Instructor.

✓ Regarding how this training occurs in the interior of the State of Pernambuco, where training policies intersect with the absence of a strong deaf community, we cannot claim that this research provides comprehensive answers to the initial question. Therefore, we suggest that there is still room for further research to delve deeper into this topic.

This last point is perhaps related to the most complex question of this work, as generalization can be risky. However, the training path presented in this study can be considered the most common, which can be initially summarized as follows: an interest in the language arising from a personal need; completion of communication courses at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels; and finally, taking proficiency exams. All of this occurs over a long period, often outside one's city of origin.

In conclusion, this work aimed to present the autoethnographic account of a hearing Libras Instructor at the secondary level, with the hope of contributing to other research by professionals working in the same field. It is understood that this study did not exhaust all the issues related to the training of Libras Instructors. Therefore, we suggest that more research is needed, particularly as the level of instruction advances to the academic level. New and more challenging research could open up a new field of investigation for others.

One certainty we can point out: education is one of the most concrete paths to building an inclusive society that can promote the exercise of citizenship.

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