

## SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: THE STATE OF THE ART OF LIBRAS

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- **ABSTRACT:** This paper presents a synthesis of the academic production in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and that deal with the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). First, a temporal cut from the years of 2008 to 2018 is proposed. Then, we summarize the quantity of productions and briefly present the content of the studies that are available in virtual catalogs. In the section dealing with the quantitative expression, we organize the productions taking into account the years and the academic genres, as well as the distribution of subjects that are debated in the field of SLA regarding Libras. Finally, we conclude that 2016 and 2018 presented the largest number of publications on the topic, with studies on language policies. In the next section, we summarize the studies and present them in five main categories: language policies, pedagogical practice for the teaching of Libras as a second language (L2), learning of Libras as L2, the presence of Libras in the scenario of basic education, and the teacher of Libras as L2
- **KEYWORDS:** Second Language acquisition. Brazilian Sign Language. State of the art of Libras.

### Introduction

The field of second language acquisition (hereinafter SLA) is broad and encompasses basic and applied knowledge on the *language acquisition* of adults and children, in natural or educational environments, as well as including several methodological approaches involving researchers from various disciplines (MOTA, 2008).

The vast majority of SLA research is composed by international studies. However, according to Mota (2008, p.4), the SLA research has “become quite fruitful in Brazil”<sup>1</sup> in the last few decades.

This field of knowledge is also characterized by encompassing a considerable amount of studies related to oral languages. In Brazil, Leite (2004) and Gesser (2006) shifted this pattern by introducing research on Libras in the SLA academic field. In

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<sup>1</sup> Original: “*se tornado bastante frutíferas no Brasil.*” (MOTA, 2008, p.4).

his master's dissertation, Leite (2004) discussed the improvement of the teaching of Libras as L2 for hearing students and collected oral stories from teachers in order to analyze pedagogical concepts. In this sense, the author analyzed the social, political and academic implications of the system involving knowledge, beliefs and assumptions that deaf teachers carry about language teaching. Gesser (2006), in his doctoral thesis, described the actions and meanings of face-to-face social interaction between a deaf teacher and his hearing students in a context of Libras classes. More specifically, the author studied the relationships between Portuguese and Libras established by the participants, and between deaf and hearing cultures and identities in and through the use of language.

The studies of Leite (2004) and Gesser (2006) were both produced in a historical context in which language policies related to Libras were being managed by legislation. This is due to the fact that, in 2002, Libras was recognized by Law 10.436 as the language of the Brazilian deaf community, which later developed into the Decree 5.626/05 (BRASIL, 2005), regulating the Law and establishing several guidelines, such as the incentive to the diffusion of Libras to hearing people. Thus, the decree is an important legal and political support for this minority language, and Leite (2004) and Gesser (2006) published their studies one year before and one year after the approval of the document, becoming well established authors in the field of SLA.

In this context, this paper aims to demonstrate the state of the art of studies on Libras in the field of SLA through a bibliographical study. This study considers a period of 11 years, from 2008 to 2018, starting three years after the publication of the Decree 5.626/05, aiming to map how the academic literature deals with Libras as L2 for hearing people.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, this article covers which aspects and dimensions have been highlighted and privileged in master's dissertations, doctoral theses, journal publications and other texts available on the Internet. Knowing what has already been researched in the area makes it possible to reflect on what still needs to be done in order to effectively contribute to the practical reality of using, teaching and learning Libras as L2 in Brazil.

### **The catalogues of documentary sources**

The databases used in this study were: Scielo, DOAJ, worldcat, Capes Journals, Capes Thesis and Dissertations Bank, and Google Scholar. Only online catalogues were used, which, according to Ferreira (2002, p.261):

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<sup>2</sup> These studies are important due to the possibility that some deaf people learn Libras as a L2.

[...] create conditions for the establishment of contact between more researchers interested in similar themes, and for them to find a certain work, allowing the circulation and exchange between the production built and that to be built. The catalogues allow the tracking of the research already developed and guide the reader in the bibliographical research of production of a certain area.<sup>3</sup>

The initial terms sought in the databases were ‘*Libras*’, ‘*segunda língua*’, and ‘*ouvintes*’,<sup>4</sup> Since these terms were not restrictive, many studies were found. This result may be explained by the associations made by the systems in relation to macro study areas. Thus, most of the studies that mentioned the word *Libras* in the text were collected by the catalogues.

After this preliminary survey, the abstracts that matched the area of SLA and *Libras* hearing users were selected. The approach used in the studies was not an exclusion criterion, since SLA is an area that encompasses researchers from different theoretical orientations besides applied linguists. Then, the studies which had only their titles available on online platforms, but not their abstracts, were discarded, which happened with some digital libraries that mention the title but restrict texts to full view.

After the data were selected, they were first analyzed quantitatively and then organized by subject similarity. It is relevant to mention that the selection/exclusion of texts and their grouping were based on the reading of abstracts, which are texts presenting very diverse typographic and textual structures, that is, they are characterized as a genre with malleable form. In this sense, although some studies affirm to be in a certain area, they could also — from the perspective of the author and/or other readers — belong to another. Thus, the next section present the publications used, organized by year and academic genre.

## Quantitative expressions of sla publications involving libras

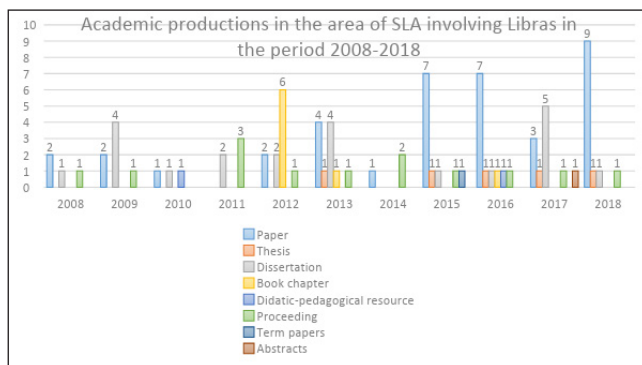
The 90 manuscripts found were distributed according to the graph below:

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<sup>3</sup> Original: “[...] se instalam criando condições para que maior número de pesquisadores interessados em temas afins estabeleçam um primeiro contato, recuperem determinado trabalho, possibilitando a circulação e intercâmbio entre a produção construída e aquela a construir. Os catálogos permitem o rastreamento do já construído, orientam o leitor na pesquisa bibliográfica de produção de uma certa área.” (FERREIRA, 2002, p.261).

<sup>4</sup> ‘*Libras*’, ‘*second language*’, and ‘*hearing persons*’, respectively. According to Gesser (2006), a hearing person is the one who has the sense of hearing preserved and who establishes various relationships with the deaf. In this research, hearing people who have *Libras* as a second language are called *users* instead of *speakers*.

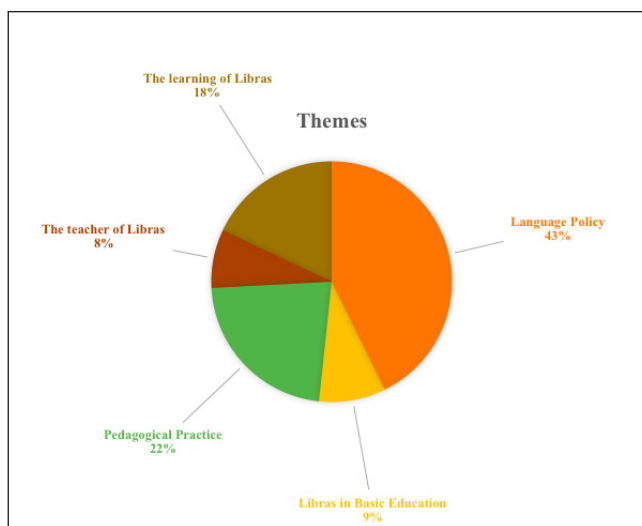
**Graph 1 – Academic productions in the area of SLA involving Libras in the period 2008-2018**



Source: Author's elaboration

According to the graph, the years 2016 and 2018 concentrated the greatest number of studies, while 2014 was the year with the lowest number of publications. From the total number, the most expressive genres are articles (38) and dissertations (22). It is also worth mentioning that, out of this amount, the average number of papers published per year is 8 — which is reasonable when considering that there are few authors who publish more than one study on the topic. Hereby, more than 80 researchers addressed the subject of SLA involving Libras. Among the studies selected the following thematic approaches were found:

**Graph 2 – Themes of the studies consulted**



Source: Author's elaboration

Most studies (43%) are on the topic of language policy and the ones that presented legal regulations and provisions as background were grouped, i.e., studies that were developed about Law 10.436/02 and Decree 5.626/05, which deal, among other issues, with the inclusion of Libras as a compulsory curricular subject in licentiate degree courses.

The second most explored subject in SLA publications on Libras refers to pedagogical practice (22%) and, more specifically, to discussions regarding teaching methodologies, strategies, materials, and resources.

Approaches of learning Libras as L2 constituted 18%, with studies based on interactionist perspectives with emphasis on the hearing student as the agent in learning and developing linguistic performance.

Regarding the presence of Libras in the basic education scenario (9%), there are publications discussing teaching processes for hearing children with methodological propositions involving the ludic and socio-cultural value of this initiative.

Finally, on the topic of teachers of Libras as L2 (8%), there are discussions involving their identity, their linguistic competence, their education, and the various challenges of their teaching careers.

## **The themes discussed in the field of sla about libras**

In this section, we discuss what are the issues expressed in the SLA field about Libras and, to this end, present the topics organized by similarity of themes.

### **Language policies: regulations and legal provisions**

Many studies deal with the implementation of the subject of Libras as a compulsory curricular component in licentiate degree courses (pedagogy and others) and in phonoaudiology courses of Brazilian universities. The studies are divided between those that present a global contextualization followed by assertions about the bureaucratic and institutional bias that cover the initiative, and those that evaluate the implementation, highlighting its positive and negative points. The positive ones, to a large extent, refer to the discursive turnaround developed by the implementation, while the negative ones refer to the insufficient course load of the subject, for example.

Lázara Cristina da Silva (2015) is among the studies that contextualize the topic, presenting the case of the implementation of the subject at the Federal University of Sergipe. His study demonstrates the bureaucratic and organizational history of meeting legal demands. Feltrin (2013) and Giordani (2014) state that, in addition to addressing language and culture, the subject must transmit knowledge that allows academics to deconstruct the concept of deaf abnormality. Among the studies that contextualize the topic, it is noteworthy that due to the urgency of the implementation, its characterization varies among higher education institutions (PEREIRA, T., 2008; PAIVA; FARIAS; CHAVEIRO, 2018).

Still regarding the contextualization of the implementation of Libras in university courses, some analyses consider the distance learning modality, which was a solution found by some institutions to meet the urgency of the legal requirement. On this topic, Sell and Neves (2014) describe the implementation of Libras classes in the pedagogy course focused on distance education at the State University of Santa Catarina. The authors discuss specific situations related to the subject that challenged its offer based on the methodologies already established for the course, and indicate the participation of deaf teachers and tutors in the teaching team as one of the aspects found.

Lebedeff *et al.* (2011) discuss the same theme, and report the technological adaptations needed to meet the visual characteristic of this language. In this sense, the authors present an innovative proposal of didactic material for the distance teaching of Libras, based on visuality, through the use of videos and with the support of written instructions, created in Adobe Flash software to be used in *Moodle*.

Santos *et al.* (2015) debate the inclusion of the subject in the distance learning modality, and discuss some teaching approaches. In their article, they focus on the quality and accessibility aspects of the offer of the discipline, addressing the main technological challenges and implications for the teaching and learning of Libras to hearing students.

In her doctoral thesis, Campos (2015) presents an investigation on the aspects of the distance teaching and learning of Libras as L2, through Virtual Learning Environment (VLA), via *Moodle*. Based on Bakhtin's theoretical contribution and on a mixed method, the author investigates the considerations of 103 students, 9 tutors, and 3 professors from the Federal University of São Carlos regarding the tool, and concludes that, in general, the subject seems to have achieved its goals.

This study is followed by Dalzico's (2016), which, dealing with data from the graduation course of the Federal University of Mato Grosso, generated by *Moodle*, highlights that, although the course load is negligible for the development of communication skills in Libras, the subject develops the awareness of the future educator regarding the specificities of deaf children.

Frasca (2017), in his dissertation, also discusses the development of the discipline of Libras in the distance learning modality in the context of higher education, and, based on an interview with 178 undergraduates, indicates some possibilities, such as content, practical activities, and videoconferences.

As for the evaluation of the implementation of Libras classes in universities, the studies present important considerations. Silva, Bruno and Tartuci (2015) consider that many incentives, such as the Living Without Limits Program, which enabled the creation of degree courses in Libras, the Bilingual Pedagogy Program, and the implementation of the compulsory subject of Libras in Brazilian universities, also generated vacancies for deaf teachers, which, in turn, generated the demand for hiring Libras interpreters. Regarding the investment in the education of professionals who work in the area of Libras, Lodi and Lacerda (2015) recognize the need for greater dedication to the education of bilingual educators (through bilingual pedagogy) than

in the education of teachers to act in the final years of elementary, middle and higher education (through degree in Libras).

In relation to the evaluation of the subject of Libras, the Brazilian scientific production points to very positive analyzes by academics (KLIMSA, 2013; WEIRICH, 2013; GUARINELLO *et al*, 2013; NASCIMENTO, L.; SOFIATO, 2016), since they consider the discipline necessary, and understand its obligation and importance to their professions.

According to Érica Alves Fernandes de Andrade (2013) and Rodrigues and Vieira-Machado (2015), despite the low course load of the subject and regardless of the content explored in the discipline, the presence of Libras in higher education can initiate a consistent process of social, political, cultural, and academic transformation. Despite this development, according to Lopes (2013), the academics still feel a discrepancy in relation to the knowledge they receive and what, in fact, they need to teach deaf students. The study of Veras and Brayner (2018) is opposed to Érica Alves Fernandes de Andrade's (2013) and Rodrigues and Vieira-Machado's (2015) because they found resistance from students in learning the language.

Another important point, raised by Klein and Santos (2015) and Costa and Lacerda (2015), is that the discursive effervescence around the implementation of the subject of Libras has produced different meanings about the deaf, their language, and their education. Carniel (2018) agrees and states that this has resulted in deafness being not seen as a disability, but to be debated based on its ethnic-linguistic particularity. Calixto (2018) also discusses the perception of undergraduate students about the deaf and Libras before and after taking the course. By analyzing the data, the author was faced with the great importance of this content in the teacher education curriculum, since students had a perception strongly based in clinical therapeutic parameters of deafness and, consequently, a derogatory understanding of Libras before the subject. After the experience, however, the academic students presented a vision of the deaf and Libras that privileged the socio-anthropological aspect of language and subject.

Both the studies that describe the context and those that present an evaluation of the process that lists conflicting points and issues that have been already overcome, emphasize the importance of adding this curricular component in teacher education, and indicate that such implementation corroborates the effectiveness of this inclusion (SOARES, L., 2015; ROSSI, 2010; SOUZA, M.; PORROZZI, 2009).

However, the assessment presented in the studies also points out some negative aspects in relation to the process of implementing Libras as a compulsory subject. One of them concerns the problems with the education of teachers of this discipline (PEREIRA, T., 2008). These issues range from pointing out their precarious training to its total absence. Moreover, Rebouças (2009), for example, defends the priority of the occupation of these teaching vacancies by deaf people.

The insufficient course load for the subject and the absence of specific methodologies for undergraduate courses also appear as challenges in deepening the contents explored. Mercado (2012) addresses the current training offered to pedagogy students regarding

the subject of Libras in five private higher education institutions of São Paulo, and concludes that the content needs to be deepened and, in order to do that, it is necessary to extend the course load of the subject. This low course load results in another problem: how to properly divide these class hours between practical and theoretical activities (ALMEIDA; ROMANHOL, 2017), and in defining methodological approaches to the context of higher education (CUSTÓDIO; VILLAS BOAS; OLIVEIRA, 2012).

Finally, Martins (2012, 2008) argues that the implementation of the subject can represent a “masking” of the situation, since the presence of the deaf and their language was perceived as hostile at the time. These questions suggest, according to the author, a “cheapening” of Libras.

In addition, beyond the teaching of Libras to university students, research such as Bastos (2009), Mourão (2009), Maria Helena Soares e Pereira (2015), and Bressan (2013), have also been interested in reflecting on the teaching of this language to communities outside the academic space, such as: public education teachers, public servants in general, and technical school students. Such initiative occurs through university extension projects.

Bastos (2009) describes and analyzes the implementation of the subject of Libras for teachers in the public education of São Paulo who work with deaf students. The study shows that, although there is an increase in the interaction between teacher and deaf students, teachers still bear some inadequate conceptions about deafness and Libras.

In his master’s dissertation, Mourão (2009) investigates and analyzes the contributions of the Librasnet course (a distance learning platform) to public school teachers in 17 cities of Brazil. This resource presents a thousand signs through animations that are also contextualized and followed by discussions about the education of deaf students. According to the evaluation data, the author concluded that 100% of the participants were satisfied with the course.

A similar conclusion is found in the experience report of Maria Helena Soares and Pereira (2015), which shows the results of the extension project entitled “Initial and Continued Education Course - Basic Libras”, designed to train municipal, state and federal public servants who worked in cultural institutions, so that they could work in welcoming the deaf public in these establishments.

In addition, Bressan (2013) presents data on the learning of Libras by hearing students in the context of the National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI) technical school. Through data analysis, the author states that, despite some difficulties, it is possible for hearing students to learn with deaf teachers without the mediation of interpreters.

Considering the synthesis presented, it can be inferred that, according to the assertions of the authors selected, there is a consonance between policy and linguistic planning with regard to those actions of diffusion of Libras to hearing people who are outside of the academic context. This may be explained by the fact that the political proposals concerning the dissemination of Libras in legislation are made possible by extensionist practices. However, this cannot be affirmed in relation to the implementation



of the mandatory subject of Libras in undergraduate courses for education professionals. This is due to the fact that, despite its social, cultural, and humanitarian importance being unquestionable (as well as its significant gains to academic students), its effectiveness in academic environments was (and still is) marked by legal imposition, added to the inexperience of the agents involved in this issue. Therefore, this situation resulted in bewildered practices that urgently need to be collectively evaluated in order to improve the process.

## **Pedagogical practices for the teaching of libras as L2**

Undoubtedly, Gesser's text (2010) is an important material that addresses issues regarding teaching methodologies for Libras as L2, since it was created for a specific audience, i.e., deaf students of the first undergraduate degree course created in Libras in Brazil, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. In the material, Gesser (2010) discusses what language teaching methodology is, the history and principles of language teaching methodologies, learning and teaching languages, the variables in teaching contexts, the receptive and productive language skills, teaching materials, courses, units and classes. Based on Gesser (2010) and others, Pena and Moura (2016) developed a book chapter in which they state that the didactic choices are still being discovered, but that "teaching through practice" has been predominantly used. Neigrames and Timbane (2018) agree with this position and show that Libras teachers do not use a single methodology, but instead need to seek creative ways to prepare their classes.

Lima (2017) was also interested in the pedagogical practice of teaching in a Basic Libras Course and, in his master's dissertation, indicates that the communicative method has been predominantly used. Bernardino, Pereira and Passos (2018) present a text that, in addition to be based in the literature, is also filled with examples from the authors' experiences. They present a brief history on the teaching of Libras, portray the theoretical perspectives related to the teaching of L2 in general, and emphasize the post-method pedagogy, which is an approach that enables the reintegration between theory and practice. Finally, they clarify that such pedagogy can contribute to the efficiency of the pedagogical practice of Libras teachers.

In addition to assessments of the approaches that support pedagogical practices, the studies have also presented analyses of procedures applied in classrooms for the teaching of Libras as L2, as well as of didactic resources and didactic materials used for teaching the language.

Among the studies that address didactic procedures, Figueira (2012) has analyzed the strategies to teach technical vocabularies used by a professor of legal terminology of a Libras course. The author describes the introduction of the class, the activities, the use of vocabulary, and the speaking time of both the teacher and the students. Based on the description, the researcher concluded that the class had many positive aspects

but argues that time of speech is centered on the teacher and is longer than that of the students.

Nogueira and Cabello (2016) report their experience in the teaching of Libras as L2 to hearing students of several courses, having as a pedagogical proposal the elaboration of two audiovisual narratives produced by students. In the first narrative, academics spoke of themselves, and in the second they should reflect on the possible relations between the discipline of Libras and their education in the most diverse areas. The authors noted that the use of such didactic resource, in addition to favoring a communicative approach to language teaching, mobilized the linguistic, political and social knowledge developed during the classes. Neves (2011) proposes the analysis of some resources developed for Libras classes for hearing students from the College of Medical Sciences of Santa Casa de São Paulo, with the purpose of dealing with three of the grammatical characteristics of Libras: iconicity, simultaneity, and the use of facial expressions. By comparing the performances at the beginning and at the end of the course, the author attests that the use of resources was effective in promoting an effective increase in fluency in Libras.

There are two main types of discussion regarding teaching materials and their relationship with pedagogical practices in the teaching of Libras: the one that analyzes teaching materials and the one that proposes materials and then analyzes them. In the first group, Maria Cristina Pires Pereira (2009) presents a critical analysis of the first book published in Brazil for the teaching of Libras to hearing students, *Libras em Contexto*,<sup>5</sup> which the author considers inconsistent regarding the proposal of the interactional approach. Also, in the first group, Roseli Reis da Silva (2012) conducted a comparative analysis of three teaching materials aimed at the teaching of Libras to hearing students. Therefore, it is based on the criteria of structural and content analysis. As a result, the author notes that the materials still give much relevance to the deductive teaching of grammar, following a traditional approach, to the detriment of the inductive method, which is configured as the guiding element of the communicative approach.

Regarding the second group, there is Duarte (2011) who proposes a didactic material for the teaching of Libras (basic level) for hearing students, and Franco, Bessa and Camargo (2011) that report the experience of producing didactic materials for the teaching of Libras, and demonstrate the process of developing audiovisual resources for distance learning at Puc Minas. The authors describe the details of the pre-production, production and evaluation of twenty-four videos of about five minutes each and demonstrate the expectations for the future release of the materials. In addition, a teaching sequence material for the teaching of Libras as a L2 was made available in 2016 — the study of Romão (2016). Also in relation to reports on the production of didactic material, there is a summary prepared by the students of the Brazilian Sign Language undergraduate degree program (Letras-Libras) of the Federal University of

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<sup>5</sup> “Libras in Context”.

Ceará and presented at the I Exposição de Artefatos Didáticos para o ensino de Libras,<sup>6</sup> in which they report their experiences with the elaboration and application of a game called “caminhos da Libras”<sup>7</sup> (BRITO; LOPES, 2017).

In relation to the studies that cover the analysis of teaching resources<sup>8</sup> for the teaching of Libras as a L2, is Gargalaka (2012), which analyzed the use of blogs as a teaching resource in teaching Libras to adult hearing students in basic and intermediate courses. Through the analysis of the constituent parts of a blog (layout, posts, comments, illustrations, use of media resources) and also through interviews with teachers/producers, the author concludes that this is an attractive pedagogical resource, capable of reaching students and facilitating their learning. Araújo, Junqueira and Sobreira (2016) published a paper in which they present a study on the development of digital educational games for a distance learning course in Libras for teachers from the state education network. The authors contextualize the scarcity of materials for Libras teaching, and comment that those available on the internet do not present an adequate pedagogical proposal. Thus, they propose resources that collaborate with learning, explain their pedagogical purposes, and evaluate their positive and negative points. Oliveira, Guimarães e Silva (2016), in turn, analyze the design and use of dictionaries for the teaching of Libras to hearing students of elective courses offered at the Instituto Federal Goiano.<sup>9</sup> The authors point out that the students are dissatisfied with the material adopted and that there is a shortage of dictionaries available.

Also dealing with didactic resources used in the teaching of Libras as L2 for hearing students, the study conducted by Lebedeff and Santos (2014) addresses an analysis of the use of 4 short films as Learning Objects for the teaching of Languages within a communicative approach. The authors conclude that this resource enables immersion in social practices of language, that is, in historically and culturally marked contexts, and present interactions in Libras in real communicational situations.

Music is another educational resource that is analyzed in research on Libras teaching to hearing students. In his dissertation, Fátima Cristina Andrade (2016) points out that music is an expression of language and thought and that, for this very reason, its use is recommended in the teaching of Libras. In the study, the author works with two private universities in the city of Rio de Janeiro, for which she developed a material entitled “Canções populares interpretadas em Língua Brasileira de Sinais”,<sup>10</sup> to serve as a pedagogical resource in language teaching. After the application, the author

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<sup>6</sup> “I Exhibition of Didactic Artifacts for the teaching of Libras”.

<sup>7</sup> “Libras paths”.

<sup>8</sup> Lebedeff (2017) analyzes videos used by British sign language teachers and, among the three materials analyzed, explains that two of them meet the criteria for language learning objects: granularity, reusability, accessibility and interoperability. The study was excluded because it was not based on the SLA-Libras relationship proposed in this paper.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Institute of Goiania.

<sup>10</sup> “Popular songs interpreted in Brazilian Sign Language”.

concludes that the use of music presents many benefits for the learning of Libras, such as: motivation, concentration and memorization.

In a doctoral thesis, Tsukamoto (2017) analyzes the contribution of OER (open educational resources) as a subsidy for Libras teaching to hearing students and notes the numerous benefits of this technology.

Ferraz (2017) presents a proposal for a dictionary of handshapes to be used in the teaching of Libras as L2. The author notes that this resource facilitates the vocabulary expansion of Libras learners.

From the conclusions presented by the authors, it is possible to affirm that discussing pedagogical practices for Libras teaching — which is a minority language that until recently had its social use banned from discursive practices — implies in understanding that it is the expression of a limiting content in terms of accumulation of expertise, that is, the subject is absolutely new. In Brazil, prior to 2006, the Libras teaching movement was based much more on the ideological premise, which aimed to defend the linguistic status of Libras, than on its pedagogical structure. It was only after the creation of the first undergraduate degree course in Libras (Letras Libras), which took place at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in 2006, that more systematic discussions on the subject began to appear. However, there was still certain fragility given the very incipience of the process.

In this sense, the state of the art of pedagogical practices for Libras teaching as L2 differs, substantially, from the state of the art of pedagogical practices for the teaching of oral languages as L2, since while it has numerous subjects that can be discussed (didactic material, resources, publications), the theoretical framework is still being constructed, often derived from the practices that are simultaneously developed. In this dialectic movement of production there is still much to be sustained on methodological foundations, didactic procedures and materials, resources and techniques.

## **The learning of libras as l2**

The studies that focus on describing the learning process of Libras by hearing people are based on interactionist and/or socio-cultural theories. For scientists of this area, interaction is considered a learning condition, that is, they understand that the influence of mediation is a major factor for the acquisition of a L2. The idea that staying in the niche where Libras is naturally used is decisive for the evolution of the language acquisition is arguable. (PUHL; BORGES, 2016<sup>11</sup>; VALADÃO; ALVES, 2017). Besides, there are no studies following approaches such as the connectionism, cognitivism, generativism and many others that cover the area of SLA.

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<sup>11</sup> The authors adopt the hypothesis that *affordance* is a facilitating element in the process of acquiring Libras. *Affordance* is a property of the environment that enables psychologically possible actions — and it can be exemplified by iconic signs. It can help the cycle of perception, interpretation and action of hearing students acquiring Libras as L2.

Regarding interactions in the classroom, there is the study of Marcus Vinícius Batista Nascimento and Bezerra (2012), who conduct a descriptive analysis of the interaction between deaf teachers, hearing teachers and hearing students in the teaching of Libras. They note that the interaction between hearing students and deaf teachers is mediated by the hearing teacher, who alternates his enunciative place assuming the role of either teacher or interpreter, but that there is also direct interaction between the deaf teacher and the hearing students. Albres (2012a), based on the sociocultural perspective, analyzes two episodes of classroom interactions of an intermediate Libras course. The author examines the dialogic and discursive functioning of social interactions, paying specific attention to the strategies involved in teaching-learning.

According to these studies, it is from this perspective of interaction that hearing learners build their relationship with the world of deafness and with the conflicting strangeness of Libras. In Freitas (2008) this relationship is observed from the researcher's experience — as a student — during a Libras course, taught by a deaf teacher. In this process, beliefs can be deconstructed instead of simply building new statements, and the self-assessment of their own signaled production can be reviewed, as Socorro Claudia Tavares de Sousa and Afonso (2016) and Lídia da Silva and Stumpft (2016), respectively, did in their studies.

As for the discussions about interaction and learning of Libras as L2 developed in an extra-class space, the research of Witchs (2015) dealt with an open social context, called *Clube de Libras*.<sup>12</sup> In this Club, teachers, employees and people from the external community of the university located in the Vale do Rio dos Sinos region met to talk and to learn Libras. The author observed the weekly meetings, and found that the discursive interactions took place according to the need and interest of the group. With this, the gains were not only linguistic, but also social.

In this same viewpoint, Prieto (2017), through a participative research, describes the interactions between deaf intern teachers, hearing teachers and hearing children in a context of teaching Libras as L2, proposed by an extension project developed at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, and applied as a pilot/experimental project in a daycare center in Florianópolis. The author observes the ways in which relationships are built in teaching and learning spaces shared by both Libras and Portuguese speakers. In a case study, José Afonso Tavares Silva, Cruz and Conceição (2017) shed light on the process of learning Libras as L2 by mothers of deaf children, and conclude that such a process favors efficient communication in the family environment. The result shows that deaf children need adult models to develop in Libras, and these, indispensably, need to be their parents.

## **The linguistic performance of the hearing user of Libras as L2**

The few descriptive studies on the production of hearing users present two levels of analysis: phonological and discursive. On the phonological level of linguistic

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<sup>12</sup> “Libras Club”.

performance, there are the studies by Diego Teixeira de Souza Souza (2008) and by Zancanaro Júnior (2013). On the discursive level, there is Lídia da Silva (2018).

Diego Teixeira de Souza (2008) discusses the difficulties of basic level users of Libras as L2. The author observes the great difficulty in the execution of non-manual markings, especially with regard to eye direction, facial expressions and body movement. The study also points out that due to this difficulty, users may change meanings, especially in interrogative, exclamatory and negative sentences. In 2011, the author presented the same study in *Anais da Loja virtual EdiPUC*.

Zancanaro Júnior (2013) presents a research paper on the performance of eleven lexicons during the signaling of two groups of subjects (one fluent and one non-fluent group) from the analysis of the internal structure of the signals and identifies the phonological distortions produced. The researcher observed that in the group of fluent users, the occurrence of errors, at the time of production, is lower. In 2015, Zancanaro Junior and Stumpf (2015) dealt with the changes in phonological parameters during the production of signals by hearing adult students of Libras as L2 in the initial period of language learning. In the study, the authors found that the greatest number of phonological changes occur in the handshape parameter, with rare changes in the other parameters. Later, in 2017, Zancanaro Júnior delimited his study and published the book<sup>13</sup> *Avaliação da produção em Libras como segunda língua por ouvintes: uma análise dos parâmetros fonológico*.

Lídia da Silva (2018), in his doctoral thesis, deals with the fluency of hearing users of Libras as L2, emphasizing the elements of spatialization. In her study, the author investigates the relationship between the phenomenon of fluency and the use of the elements that compose the spatialization in Libras during the signaling of a narrative, and also seeks to level it based on the qualification of this use.

From the above, it is noted that the state of the art regarding the learning of Libras as L2 by hearing people is strongly marked by interactionist assumptions, which are in accordance with the current SLA discussions. The development of such a framework, presumably, may have occurred due to the strong influence of Deaf Studies and Cultural Studies on the research discussing the learning of Libras by hearing people.

## **The presence of libras in the basic education scenery**

Studies that address the teaching of Libras as L2 for children deal with the theme based on 2 different contexts. The first is the teaching environment with both deaf and hearing children and the second one is the teaching environment with the presence of hearing children only. The importance of such teaching, in both contexts, is to spread the language as to ensure that the hearing children, besides

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<sup>13</sup> This text is not computed in the section “quantitative expressions of SLA publications involving Libras” because it is not virtually available. ZANCANARO JUNIOR, L. A. *Avaliação da produção em Libras como segunda língua por ouvintes: uma análise dos parâmetros fonológicos*. Novas edições acadêmicas, 2017.

being considered bilingual, can relate to deaf people and do so without prejudice. In all the studies presented in this theme, the results show that children always respond satisfactorily to the proposal of learning Libras as L2. (ROA, 2012; MARQUES, 2012; DAXENBERGER; SILVA, 2018).

In general, studies agree with this idea, that is, that although the course loads are often negligible, thus making it impossible to develop linguistic fluency (considering the fact that the language modality is different from the hearing's first language), the real gains are in the field of interpersonal relationships, the education to an awareness and respect for linguistic diversity and harmonious coexistence with the different. Examples of these studies are Valadão *et al.* (2016) and Tondinelli (2016). The first analyzed the application of Libras classes for hearing children, from the 1st to the 5th year of an educational institution in Viçosa, Minas Gerais, and the second analyzed the teaching of Libras to 6th-year hearing students from a State High School of Santa Mariana, Paraná. According to both, positive attitudes of hearing students towards Libras and the deaf can be seen after these initiatives.

The studies that worked with the basic education scenario, because they approach the teaching of Libras to children, also discuss the question of methodology and didactics, agreeing that the pedagogical practice of the teacher must be based on playfulness in order to meet the specificity of childhood. Lacerda and Morais (2013), for example, describe a Libras teaching project for children (of ages ranging from 3 to 4 years), in the municipal education network of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, in which the pedagogical work was developed in a thematic way, taking a poem written by Dulce Rangel, entitled "Um amor de confusão"<sup>14</sup>, adapted for the deaf culture. Thus, by creating a deaf character that was inserted in the daily life of the group, the teaching of Libras as L2 involved the presentation of stories of deaf culture, music, conversation circles and games. Similarly, Carvalho *et al.* (2013) propose the use of playful resources to teach Libras for children. The authors discuss the elaboration of a bingo involving the semantic group of animals, and a bowling game with the theme of numbers and mathematics. Danielle Vanessa Costa Sousa (2017) applied recreational activities to early childhood students and explored the characteristics of the participation of the class teacher, the deaf assistant granted with a scholarship, the children and the researcher/interpreter in an activity that involved storytelling in Libras.

The state of the art explained demonstrates a certain obvious result, which is often present in scientific studies. However, this does not mean that these outcomes are unimportant. No one would say that it is not important to teach Libras to hearing children and that such teaching must not be conducted in a playful way. Therefore, the reflection on the need to develop political projects to structure actions for the dissemination of Libras in the scenario of basic education and the production of knowledge about the subject is perceived as the greatest contribution that this synthesis gives to the field of SLA.

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<sup>14</sup> "A love of confusion".

## **The teacher of libras as L2 for hearing learners**

In the studies discussed, the teachers of Libras as L2 presented as their main characteristic the fact that they are deaf. That is, it is rare to find research discussing the hearing who acquired Libras as L2 acting as a language teacher. The studies that deal with the deaf teacher can be categorized into three groups: a) deaf without teaching education acting as a teacher of Libras as L2 to hearing learners; b) deaf in pedagogical education, and c) deaf with pedagogical education acting as teachers.

The fact that there is research reporting the existence of deaf people without teacher education acting as teachers of Libras as L2 to hearing learners reflects a reality that was common in Brazil before the implementation of the undergraduate degree course in Libras that took place in 2006. Until that time, there was a distinction between instructors and teachers, the former being those who had no pedagogical training at a higher level. In other words, the teaching performance was conditioned to deafness and not to their pedagogical education because being deaf guaranteed them the position as a teacher of Libras. This is not enough for teachers to contribute not only to second language learners, but also to deaf children who end up being their students, as discussed by Gianini, Lima and Porto (2016). In addition to demonstrating the lack of didactic competence on the part of deaf people without pedagogical education that are working as teachers, there are authors, such as Bueres (2010), that point the low signaling performance of deaf instructors working in Palmas, Tocantins.

Research related to the ongoing education of Libras teachers is also scarce. In our survey, we found only the publication by Constâncio (2018) discussing the performance of fourteen students of a Libras undergraduate degree course, who, through a teaching initiation program, ministered classes in two public schools in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul.

Regarding active teachers with formal education, research on their discourse and beliefs has been done. Romanhol (2018), through discourse analysis, investigated the production of nine Libras teachers from five public higher education institutions in the state of Goiás. The teachers participated in this study through a self-assessment, evaluating themselves as good professionals that show interest in improving their methodology. Farias (2016) describes the profile of Libras teachers at the Federal University of Amazonas, considering their views about language as a constituent of deaf culture.

Still regarding these teachers who are in service, it is necessary to highlight that their performance, in general, is isolated and takes place in an environment composed mainly of hearing students. That is to say, their teaching identity is constituted in the course of their work at the same time that these professionals climb spaces to affirm their language and culture. In this scope, there is the study of Bianca Gonçalves da Silva and Klein (2009) in which the authors analyze the presence of deaf culture and identity in social relations established in a Rio Grande do Sul institution.



That said, we must agree with Albres (2013, 2012b), an author who points out the political character of pedagogical practice and education since it includes several aspects such as personal experiences, organizational aspects, social, cultural, linguistic, technical knowledge, scientific knowledge, and others.

Considering the Brazilian context, and more specifically the fact that there are less than a decade of tradition regarding teachers with a Libras degree, it is possible to understand the scarcity of academic production debating this subject. It is estimated that the increase in publications will occur in the same proportion as the tradition of educating Libras teachers as L2 for hearing learners is solidified. Inevitably, in this development of the state of the art, studies highlighting the performance of hearing teachers will need to be conducted, given the exponential increase of these professionals occupying positions in Libras degree courses.

## **Final remarks**

This paper aimed to demonstrate the state of the art of the SLA area in relation to the studies that contemplate Libras. In order to fulfill this objective, virtual sources were consulted and the abstracts of studies conducted between 2008 and 2018 were analyzed.

Throughout the paper, one can notice that the area includes a significant number of publications treating Libras as L2 for hearing students, and that, despite the temporal oscillation, the studies are divided among a large number of scientists. However, the topics to which the ninety studies listed have been devoted appear to be limited. In other words, the number of academic publications, so far, has failed to consolidate SLA studies involving Libras.

Language policies, which is the most explored topic in the publications analyzed, addresses the implementation of Libras in universities, raising difficulties and challenges, emphasizing the role of the subject in undergraduate courses, and highlighting its importance in pedagogy. In addition, some of the studies promote important debates regarding distance and extension education. However, in this scope, there is no discussion about other important issues, such as: institutional actions in the propagation of a minority language as a possibility of second language acquisition to hearing students; individual motivations and power relations involved in the contact of hearing students of Libras as L2, the role of the hearing in the vitalization of the language, and others.

Pedagogical practice, which is the second theme in the ranking of studies involving Libras affiliated to the field of SLA, converges to the conclusion that there is no methodological solidity in relation to the teaching of the language, and points to possibilities of materials and resources that can be applied in the classroom as facilitators of the process, including dictionaries, music and blogs. In this sense, it is observed that the main gap in the area is the register of pedagogical principles based on the visual-space nature of Libras and not anchored in the same procedures used in oral language teaching.

The learning processes of L2 are extensively discussed in applied linguistics for oral languages, and with theoretical depths of the most diverse orders, taking approaches that privilege the behaviorist perspective, cognitivism, and the socio-cultural approach. In relation to the acquisition of Libras by hearing learners, however, there is a shortage of publications in this regard. This may be due to, among other reasons, the difficulty of using the same theoretical constructs concerning oral languages to analyze a language of space-visual modality.

Research on the teaching of Libras to children is of particular importance given its social relevance and contribution to the political and cultural education of this audience. They are presented in a small number, and agree that there must be a methodological guidance specific to the age group that attends the basic education levels.

The discussion about the teacher of Libras as L2 is important and has little expressiveness in SLA studies. It is encouraged, therefore, that new investigations are developed based on themes such as: identity processes, belief systems, skills building, teacher proficiency, teacher roles in the classroom, and others.

Finally, it can be said that, as far as Libras is concerned, SLA is booming with the presence of experienced authors dedicating themselves to understanding the process of acquisition of this L2 by hearing students. Thus, the proposal of a future mapping, as complete as possible, of new publications is still relevant in order to ascertain the contributions they will bring to the field of applied linguistics.

SILVA, L. Aquisição de segunda língua: o estado da arte da Libras. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.64, 2020.

- *RESUMO: O presente trabalho tem o objetivo de apresentar uma síntese dos produtos acadêmicos que se acomodam no campo aquisição de segunda língua (ASL) e que tratam da Língua Brasileira de Sinais (Libras). Para tanto, faz um recorte temporal dos anos de 2008 até 2018, sumariza o quantitativo de produções, e apresenta brevemente o conteúdo das obras que estão disponibilizadas em catálogos virtuais. Na parte que aborda a expressão quantitativa, organiza as produções levando em conta o ano e os gêneros acadêmicos, bem como a distribuição de temas que são debatidos no campo da ASL em estudos envolvendo a Libras. Constata, enfim, que em 2016 e em 2018 houve o maior número de publicações, e essas tratam sobre políticas linguísticas. Na seção seguinte, os trabalhos estão sintetizados e são apresentados em cinco principais categorias, a saber: políticas linguísticas, a prática pedagógica para o ensino de Libras como segunda língua (L2), a aprendizagem da Libras como L2, a presença da Libras no cenário da educação básica e o professor de Libras como L2.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Aquisição de segunda língua. Libras. Estado da arte.*

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