

Libras as a bridge for relationships: the friendship between a hearing person and a deaf person in the academic environment^I

Jônatas Santos Galdino ^I  

Dinair Iolanda da Silva Natal^{II}  

Abstract

This theoretically reflective article discusses the importance of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) in fostering friendship between deaf and hearing students in higher education. The issue has intensified, highlighting language as a bridge for interaction within universities, which serve as spaces for coexistence, social exchange, and the strengthening of interpersonal bonds. The study aims to analyze, through the account of a hearing individual, the relationship between Libras, inclusion, and interpersonal interactions, situating the university within the framework of inclusive education and engaging with debates from the deaf community. Language is emphasized as a marker of belonging, given that both Libras and Portuguese are officially recognized in Brazil as means of communication. The theoretical framework draws on the works of Lodi, Quadros, Skliar, and Strobel. A qualitative and descriptive methodology is adopted, guided by Moita Lopes and Minayo. The text highlights friendship between deaf and hearing individuals as a key element for inclusion, belonging, and retention. It shows that language extends beyond its instrumental function, serving as a medium for socialization and knowledge production, despite challenges in learning through Portuguese and its mediation into Libras. The study concludes that strengthening Libras in everyday university life contributes to more equitable and respectful relationships.

Keywords: Sign language; inclusive education; higher education; friendship; deaf people.

I. Undergraduate Student in Pedagogy at the State University of Paraná, Brazil. E-mail: jonatascaldinosantos@gmail.com

II. PhD in Literary Theory from the Campos de Andrade University Center, Uniandrade. Professor and Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) Translator-Interpreter at the State University of Paraná, UNESPAR - Paranaguá Campus. Bilingual Teacher at the Municipal Department of Full-Time Education - SEMED and at the Municipal Educational Reference Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder - CMAE - Municipality of Paranaguá - PR, Brazil. E-mail: dinair.natal@unespar.edu.br

A Libras como ponte de relações: interação entre um ouvinte e um surdo na vivência acadêmica

Resumo

O presente artigo, de natureza teórico-reflexiva, propõe discutir a importância da Língua Brasileira de Sinais (Libras) na construção de relações de amizade entre estudantes surdos e ouvintes no ensino superior. A problemática tem se intensificado, evidenciando a língua como ponte nas interações universitárias, espaço de convivência, troca social e fortalecimento de vínculos. O estudo objetiva analisar, por meio do relato de um ouvinte, a relação entre Libras, inclusão e interações interpessoais, situando a universidade no âmbito da educação inclusiva e dialogando com debates da comunidade surda. Destaca-se a língua como marcador de pertencimento, considerando que Libras e português são línguas reconhecidas no país como meios de comunicação. A fundamentação teórica apoia-se em autores como Lodi, Quadros, Skliar e Strobel. Adota-se metodologia qualitativa e descritiva, orientada por Moita Lopes e Minayo. O texto evidencia a amizade entre surdos e ouvintes como elemento central para inclusão, pertencimento e permanência. Observa-se que a língua ultrapassa sua função instrumental, constituindo-se como meio de socialização e produção de conhecimento, apesar dos desafios na aprendizagem em português e sua mediação em Libras. Conclui-se que o fortalecimento da Libras no cotidiano universitário favorece relações mais equitativas e respeitadas.

Palavras-chave: Libras; educação inclusiva; ensino superior; amizade; surdos.



Libras como puente de relaciones: la amistad entre un oyente y un sordo en la vida académica

Resumen

El presente artículo, de carácter teórico-reflexivo, analiza la importancia de la Lengua Brasileña de Señas (Libras) en la construcción de relaciones de amistad entre estudiantes sordos y oyentes en la educación superior. Esta problemática se ha intensificado, evidenciando la lengua como un puente para la interacción en el ámbito universitario, entendido como un espacio de convivencia, intercambio social y fortalecimiento de vínculos. El estudio tiene como objetivo analizar, a partir del relato de una persona oyente, la relación entre Libras, inclusión e interacciones interpersonales, situando a la universidad en el marco de la educación inclusiva y dialogando con los debates de la comunidad sorda. Se destaca la lengua como marcador de pertenencia, dado que tanto Libras como el portugués son reconocidos oficialmente en Brasil como medios de comunicación. El marco teórico se apoya en autores como Lodi, Quadros, Skliar y Strobel. Se adopta una metodología cualitativa y descriptiva, orientada por Moita Lopes y Minayo. El texto resalta la amistad entre personas sordas y oyentes como un elemento central para la inclusión, el sentido de pertenencia y la permanencia. Asimismo, se observa que la lengua trasciende su función instrumental, constituyéndose en un medio de socialización y producción de conocimiento, a pesar de los desafíos en el aprendizaje en portugués y su mediación hacia Libras. Se concluye que el fortalecimiento de Libras en la vida cotidiana universitaria favorece relaciones más equitativas y respetuosas.

Palabras clave: Libras; educación inclusiva; educación superior; amistad; sordos.



Introduction

The inclusion of Deaf students in higher education has expanded in recent decades, driven by legal frameworks and inclusive public policies aimed at accessibility and guaranteeing the right to education. However, as academic life progresses within a predominantly oralist environment, it becomes necessary to look beyond formal access and reflect upon the conditions for retention and effective participation of Deaf students in daily university life. Within this context, the social relations established in the academic environment assume a central role in this article.

Despite communication barriers, prejudice, and difficulties, the university remains a space marked by constant interactions, where communication constitutes an essential element for the academic, social, and personal development of individuals. For Deaf students, Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) is their primary means of expression, interaction, and meaning-making. Thus, when Libras is integrated into daily university life, it fosters not only pedagogical communication but also a closer connection between Deaf and hearing individuals.

Nevertheless, throughout my academic journey, I have observed that Libras is often restricted to formal spaces such as the classroom, even when mediated by interpreters, and remains largely absent from everyday relationships between Deaf and hearing students. This limitation has contributed to the social isolation of Deaf students, hindering the development of bonds and a sense of belonging within the academic community.

Prompted by the cultural encouragement of the Deaf community and the courses offered by the State University of Paraná (UNESPAR)—which allowed me to complete my training and become a translator-interpreter even prior to my graduation—it became essential to reflect on the importance of Libras beyond its instrumental function, recognizing it as a resource that enables interpersonal connections and the construction of meaningful relationships.



Consequently, I was able to gradually perceive the frustrations, challenges, and successes of these Deaf individuals within the university environment.

Among the various forms of social interaction, friendship stood out as a relationship that contributes to a sense of belonging, the exchange of experiences, and the formation of affective bonds. In this regard, this article aims to analyze, through a hearing person's account, the relationship between Libras, inclusion, and interpersonal interactions, situating the university within the framework of inclusive education and engaging with debates from the Deaf community. It offers a theoretical reflection on the importance of Libras in building friendships between Deaf and hearing students in the academic experience, understanding it as a bridge for relationships that strengthens inclusion in higher education.

Libras and the Inclusion of Deaf Students in Higher Education

The teaching of Libras in higher education, as well as the offering of sign language courses, must contribute to the inclusive education of Deaf students. This process has reflected positively on the relationships established both inside and outside the university, especially in shared spaces of coexistence, thereby fostering the retention and inclusion of these students. This approach views the admission of Deaf students as a process that, besides involving them directly, demands the expansion of conditions for access and participation.

It is not merely a matter of formal enrollment or initial integration, but also of promoting relationships and considering social, cultural, and institutional factors that may hinder academic retention.

In this sense, inclusion must be understood as the actualization of educational opportunities, rather than just presence in the admissions process or within the university. Thus, it is fundamental to ensure real conditions for meaningful access to higher education, considering that language can represent a challenge in interactions and in the development of collective activities, such as group work where communicative adaptations are required.



Under Law 10,436/2002, Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) was legally recognized as a means of communication and expression for the Brazilian Deaf community, constituting a central element of their linguistic, cultural, and social identity. This recognition represents a significant advancement in the field of linguistic and educational rights, particularly regarding access and retention in higher education.

Within this context, Libras assumes a fundamental role by enabling Deaf students to participate more autonomously in academic activities and interactions within the university environment. Furthermore, the Brazilian State officially recognizes Libras as the distinct language of the Deaf community, ensuring its legitimacy across educational, institutional, and social spaces.

Article 1. The Brazilian Sign Language - Libras and other associated expression resources are recognized as a legal means of communication and expression. Sole paragraph. Brazilian Sign Language - Libras is understood as the form of communication and expression in which the linguistic system of a visual-motor nature, with its own grammatical structure, constitutes a linguistic system for transmitting ideas and facts originating from communities of Deaf people in Brazil. Article 2. Institutionalized forms of supporting the use and diffusion of the Brazilian Sign Language - Libras as an objective means of communication and current use by Deaf communities in Brazil must be guaranteed by the public authority in general and by public service concession companies” (Brasil, 2002, p. 1, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).

Within the scope of higher education, the primary communication option used by Deaf students in interpersonal interactions is Libras, which is considered their first language, while Portuguese occupies the place of a second language in its written modality. The data highlight the difficulties that hearing students face when interacting with Deaf individuals, as well as the insufficient qualification to serve them satisfactorily. For the Deaf community, Libras is directly related to guaranteeing the right to communication and constitutes a fundamental means for accessing education under conditions of equality.



Brazilian legislation, in ensuring the use of Libras and the provision of accessibility services—such as the performance of translators and interpreters—was strengthened by Decree No. 5,626/2005, which established the inclusion of Libras as a mandatory curricular component in teacher-training courses (*licenciatura*) and as an elective component in bachelor's degree courses (*bacharelado*).

Article 3. Libras must be included as a mandatory curricular subject in teacher-training courses for teaching positions, at both secondary and higher education levels, and in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology courses, across public and private educational institutions within the federal, state, federal district, and municipal educational systems.

Paragraph 1. All teacher-training degree courses (*licenciatura*) in different areas of knowledge, secondary-level normal school courses, higher normal school courses, Pedagogy courses, and Special Education courses are considered training courses for teachers and education professionals for teaching positions.

Paragraph 2. Libras shall constitute an elective curricular subject in other higher education and professional education courses, starting one year after the publication of this Decree” (Brasil, 2005, p. 1, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).

The decree sought to minimize the communication barriers historically imposed on Deaf students. However, authors in the fields of inclusive education and Deaf studies point out that inclusion is not achieved solely through legal mechanisms or technical resources; it requires a shift in the conceptualization of deafness and linguistic difference.

Understanding deafness from a sociocultural perspective allows for the recognition of the Deaf person as an individual with their own language, belonging to a community with specific values, practices, identities, and modes of interaction. According to Silva et al. (2012, p. 255-256), “[...] in the search for understanding the social practices of Deaf individuals, with a focus on the need for differentiated teaching strategies and materials in the literacy practices of this group, while respecting the bilingual status of the Deaf individual.”



From this sociocultural perspective, Libras should not be understood merely as an auxiliary teaching resource, but as a legitimate language that organizes thought and serves as communication for the social relations between Deaf and hearing students. Thus, its valorization in higher education contributes to the construction of academic environments that are more democratic and sensitive to diversity.

However, it is observed that in many higher education institutions, Libras is still restricted to formal teaching spaces, such as classes mediated by interpreters, remaining absent from daily interactions between Deaf and hearing students. This limitation can reinforce processes of symbolic exclusion, in which the Deaf student, although physically present, encounters difficulties in fully participating in university life.

Within the context of Libras as a bridge for relationships—especially in building friendship bonds between hearing and Deaf individuals in the academic experience—inclusion demands the expansion of the language’s use beyond the classroom.

It becomes essential that Libras is also present during informal moments of coexistence, dialogue, and the exchange of experiences, fostering more horizontal interactions, the strengthening of interpersonal bonds, and the effective participation of the Deaf student in the university dynamic. Regarding the process of inclusion, Article 3 of Law 13,146 of July 2015 enumerates the following definitions:

V-communication: a form of citizen interaction that encompasses, among other options, languages, including Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), the display of texts, Braille, tactile signaling or communication systems, large print, multimedia devices, as well as simple, written, and oral language, auditory systems, digitized voice means, and augmentative and alternative modes, means, and formats of communication, including information and communication technologies” (Brasil, 2015, p. 1, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).



Based on this law, attitudes or behaviors that limited or prevented participation and social interaction are confronted by the recognition of the rights to accessibility, expression, and communication, thereby ensuring access to information in Libras.

In daily academic life, Libras fosters not only access to knowledge but also the construction of more equitable interpersonal relationships. The learning and use of the language by hearing students, even at an introductory conversational level, represent a step toward connection and respect for difference, contributing to the reduction of attitudinal barriers and the promotion of an inclusive culture.

Even so, Libras consolidates itself as an essential element both for building friendship relations and for the inclusion of Deaf students in higher education, encompassing not only the pedagogical sphere but also the social dimensions of living in society. In this regard, it is pertinent to recall the work of Lemos and Chaguri (2023, p. 202, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI):

When a hearing student has the opportunity to learn Libras, they multiply or discover the existing power of communication; they understand that it is possible to communicate with their Deaf classmate or any other Deaf person living in society without utilizing the communication mechanisms known among Portuguese language users—namely, oral language

In light of the contributions of Lemos and Chaguri, it is understood that interaction mediated by Libras produces opportunities for social inclusion through a dialogic relationship, which is grounded in more sensitive and accessible forms of communication. In this manner, Libras enables the construction of utterances directed toward the other, strengthening bonds and expanding the possibilities of human interaction. “When an individual speaks/writes or reads/listens, they activate their preliminary knowledge of the model of discursive genres to which they had access in their relationships with language. For each social sphere, there will be a specific type of discursive genre” (Lemos & Chaguri, 2023, p. 204).



The learning of Libras by hearing individuals constitutes a fundamental element for the implementation of inclusive practices and for the promotion of equity in social relations, extending beyond educational spaces. Although legally recognized as the means of communication of the Deaf community, Libras should not be understood as exclusively for the use of this group, but rather as an instrument of interaction that enables dialogue among different individuals, respecting linguistic and cultural diversity.

By acquiring Libras, the hearing person expands their communicative possibilities and recognizes that communication is not restricted to oral speech, thereby breaking away from hegemonic conceptions that have historically marginalized sign languages.

Even at a basic level, proficiency in the language fosters direct communication with Deaf students, reduces exclusive dependence on the interpreter, and strengthens bonds of belonging, friendship, and collective participation. This practice contributes to a more democratic coexistence, in which the Deaf student ceases to occupy a position of isolation and comes to be recognized as an active participant in pedagogical and social relations.

Furthermore, learning Libras allows the hearing individual to come into contact with Deaf culture, fostering the understanding that deafness is not configured as a limitation, but rather as a linguistic and cultural difference. This closer connection contributes to the deconstruction of stigmas, prejudices, and ableist attitudes, promoting a shift toward an ethical and social stance regarding diversity.

Thus, teaching Libras to hearing individuals configures itself as an important tool for raising awareness, broadening the perspective on the multiple forms of human communication, and strengthening values such as respect, empathy, and the recognition of the other.

In this way, the learning of Libras by hearing individuals must be understood as a collective commitment to inclusion and to the linguistic rights of the Deaf population. It is an action that transcends the individual sphere and



inserts itself into the field of educational and social policies, contributing to the construction of a more just, accessible, and plural society, where communication is effectively guaranteed as a right for all.

Friendship as a dimension of university inclusion

Friendship can be understood as a social relationship built upon coexistence, mutual respect, trust, and the recognition of the other. In the fields of human sciences and education, friendship relations are understood as fundamental for the social, emotional, and identity development of individuals, especially within collective contexts such as the university.

As previously mentioned, beyond the learning of a distinct language, the relationships among individuals in higher education—especially within the context of deafness—demand an understanding of the specific communicative and cultural dynamics involved. In this regard, this study proposes to analyze the reality of Deaf students in higher education, outlining the methodological pathways adopted to achieve the research objectives.

To this end, readings of methodological frameworks of a theoretic-ethnographic nature were conducted within the scope of qualitative research. The adopted methodology is grounded in the contributions of Moita Lopes, which guide investigations aimed at understanding social and discursive practices in educational contexts.

It seems essential that, as researchers and trainers of researchers in AL, we reflect upon the ways of producing knowledge within our field. The constitution of a body of metaknowledge regarding an area of investigation is extremely important for its development (Moita Lopes, 1994, p. 329-330, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).

Within this context, as researchers, it is possible to reflect upon the academic journey as a process marked by challenges, personal transformations, and the construction of life projects, in which friendship assumes a relevant role in student adaptation and retention.



From the perspective of inclusive education, friendship configures itself as an essential dimension of inclusion, as it transcends the formal aspects of institutional access and retention, reaching everyday relationships that foster a sense of belonging.

In the methodological field, the study is grounded in a qualitative perspective. According to Minayo (1999, p. 16), methodology is understood as “the path of thought and the practice exercised in approaching reality.” Along these lines, investigating the experience of interpersonal relationships free from prejudices and barriers implies considering the concrete reality of social interactions, since, as the author states, “nothing can intellectually be a problem if it has not been, first and foremost, a problem of practical life” (Minayo, 1999, p. 17).

For authors who debate inclusion, it is not enough for the student to be enrolled in the institution; it is necessary for them to feel like an integral part of the academic community, actively participating in social and academic interactions. In this sense, friendship acts as a mediator of social inclusion, contributing to the construction of bonds and the reduction of isolation processes. This constitutes a social approach that operates within the field of inclusive education, playing a significant role in the construction and practices of knowledge; based on this:

We could say that scientific labor always moves in two directions: in one, it develops its theories, its methods, its principles, and establishes its results; in the other, it invents, ratifies its path, abandons certain pathways, and moves toward certain privileged directions (Minayo, 1999, p. 12, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).

In the case of Deaf students' knowledge, friendship relations with hearing peers can represent a central element for confronting the communication and attitudinal barriers present in higher education, fostering not only interaction but also full participation in university life.



Within this context, Libras plays a fundamental role in the constitution of these relationships, as it enables the construction of more horizontal interactions between Deaf and hearing individuals.

When hearing students willingly learn and use Libras, even at a basic level, they demonstrate an openness to intercultural dialogue and respect for the linguistic identity of their Deaf peer. This movement contributes to the deconstruction of welfare-based practices and to the establishment of relationships grounded in reciprocity.

From this perspective, authors such as Skliar highlight that the inclusion of the Deaf individual necessarily involves the recognition of their cultural and linguistic difference. According to the author, deafness must be understood beyond a clinical or deficit-oriented view, being conceived instead as a cultural difference constituted within social and linguistic relations: “deafness is not a disability to be corrected, but a difference that needs to be understood in its linguistic and cultural dimension” (Skliar, 1998, p. 26).

Based on the contributions of Strobel (2008), it is understood that Deaf culture is not built in isolation, but rather through social relations mediated by sign language and shared visual experiences. Deaf identity is the result of coexistence, exchange, and mutual recognition among individuals, and it is strengthened in environments that foster communication and meaningful interaction. In this sense, the university space can configure itself as a powerful environment for strengthening this identity, provided that it promotes accessible, inclusive, and socially meaningful relationships.

Within this context, friendship between Deaf and hearing students, mediated by Libras, contributes to the valorization of Deaf culture and to the expansion of the Deaf student’s social experiences. By enabling interactions based on respect for linguistic difference, these relationships foster a sense of belonging and active participation in academic life. Thereby, Libras serves as a bridge for relationships between Deaf and hearing individuals, encompassing



a research practice that accepts historicity, relational experiences, and the humility to recognize that everything is socially constructed.

In agreement with Minayo (1999), this qualitative study was aligned with reality, seeking to move away from quantitative approaches by dealing with moments of meaning and value. This approach allows greater space for exploring relationships, phenomena, and processes alongside the operationalization of variables.

Libras as a bridge for relationships in the academic experience

Libras, as a visual-gestural language, plays a central role in mediating an ethical-political reflection on the social relations between Deaf and hearing students within the university context. Beyond its communicational function, it configures itself as an element that enables the encounter between individuals with distinct linguistic experiences, fostering dialogue, empathy, and the construction of bonds. In this sense, the language acts as a bridge for relationships, connecting worlds that have been historically separated by communication barriers. After all:

[...] the path of lingua(ge), of words, of propositions, of the body that speaks for/as the Deaf subject. Recognizing sign language as a language destabilized linguistic science. It produced incessant questions. What is language after all? What is speech? Concepts shift. Language is not constituted solely as an oral-auditory code, but also within the three-dimensionality of space, in the hands. Speaking a language (the mouth that speaks) loses its meaning. It is re-signified. Language, therefore, is the body that speaks. The hearing person speaks an oral language. The Deaf person speaks a spatial-visual language. Language is body (Mascia & Silva Júnior, 2003, p. 88, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).

Authors of Deaf studies argue that sign language is constitutive of the thought, identity, and social relations of the Deaf individual. Quadros (2004, p. 35) states that Libras organizes the linguistic and cognitive experience of the spatial grammar of the Deaf person's language, making it fundamental for their social and educational participation. Thus, when Libras is recognized and



incorporated into daily academic life, it creates a more accessible environment in which the Deaf student can interact in a more autonomous and meaningful way.

The spatial grammar of spatial-visual languages terrified and instigated educators who did not know it. However, secretly, in hiding, far from the eyes of hearing people, they were always there, in the body, in the hands, and in the gaze of Deaf individuals who never fell silent—who did not close their hands (Mascia & Silva Júnior, 2003, p. 87, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).

In the academic experience, Libras assumes special relevance during informal moments of coexistence, such as group work, conversations in the hallways, extracurricular activities, and friendship relations. These spaces, which are often rendered invisible in institutional policies, are fundamental for constructing a sense of belonging.

When hearing students willingly learn Libras, even at introductory levels, a significant shift in communication responsibilities occurs, ceasing to fall exclusively upon the Deaf student. This movement contributes to the reduction of attitudinal barriers and to the construction of more horizontal relationships. Skliar (1998, p. 27) emphasizes that coexistence based on the recognition of difference enables more ethical and respectful relationships, in which the other is not viewed from the perspective of lack, but rather of difference.

From a linguistic point of view, obviously, it seems to be an advancement. However, the clashes remain, but in this case, regarding the status of these languages for the Deaf. Bearing in mind that, in the final analysis, the acquisition of LIBRAS by the Deaf person will always be an efficient path toward cognizing (and never knowing) the dominant language: Portuguese. All knowledge constituted in/by sign language (which is unwritten) by the Deaf individual, in order to remain historically recorded, must be imprisoned on paper through the language of the other. This is inevitable. Constitutive. It becomes evident that, even within this approach, when moving between both languages, a 'Deaf identification' will be possible only in the in-between (Mascia & Silva Júnior, 2003, p. 88, translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI).



In this manner, Libras, by mediating the relations between Deaf and hearing individuals, contributes to the humanization of the university space, strengthening inclusive practices that are built on a daily basis. Sign language ceases to be merely an accessibility resource and comes to be understood as an instrument for connection, dialogue, and the construction of social bonds.

In this direction, Quadros (2004, p. 35) states that “sign language is a natural language, with its own structure, which enables Deaf people to organize their thought, communication, and social interaction.” This conception allows for the understanding that Libras acts as a structuring element of the Deaf individual’s social experience, enabling their active participation in academic interactions. This contrasts with “[...] the violation of one language by another, the colonization of one subject over another, the molding of identities, penetrating the individual’s soul and culminating in the erasure of differences” (Mascia & Silva Júnior, 2003, p. 86).

Within the university context, recognizing Libras as a full language means creating conditions for Deaf students to express themselves, build bonds, and participate in collective dynamics in an autonomous and meaningful way.

Complementarily, Lodi (2006, p. 195) highlights that “due to language issues, because they have had restricted access to it as a result of an education and a clinical process focused on and developed through oral Portuguese language rather than LIBRAS.” Based on this reflection, it is understood that inclusion is not limited to formal pedagogical practices, but is materialized in the relationships established in daily university life.

In this sense, Libras, by mediating interactions between Deaf and hearing students, fosters the construction of social bonds—such as friendship—and strengthens the Deaf student’s sense of belonging to the academic space. Thus, it contributes to the consolidation of a more humane, accessible, and inclusive university.



Final considerations

The reflections presented in this article demonstrate that Libras plays a central role in building friendships between deaf and hearing students within the university context. Going beyond a merely instrumental function, the language establishes itself as a bridge for relationships, fostering dialogue, a sense of belonging, and inclusion by enabling deaf students to participate more fully in academic life. In this scenario, interaction becomes a daily practice of inclusion, directly contributing to student retention in higher education.

Interpersonal relationships mediated by Libras facilitate the overcoming of communication and attitudinal barriers, allowing for the formation of bonds based on mutual respect and the valuing of linguistic and cultural differences. Thus, inclusion ceases to be viewed merely as compliance with legal mandates and becomes something effectively experienced through daily interactions.

It is also important to view the university as a space for human development, where social relationships are just as significant as formal pedagogical processes. The presence of Libras in academic life contributes to the humanization of relationships, expanding opportunities for interaction, cooperation, and learning between deaf and hearing individuals, while also strengthening a university culture that is more democratic and sensitive to diversity.

In this regard, it is essential for higher education institutions to commit to promoting initiatives that encourage the learning and use of Libras among hearing students, faculty, and other members of the academic community. Such initiatives help reduce attitudinal barriers and create more accessible environments where communication serves to bring people closer together.

Ultimately, investing in Libras and interpersonal relationships within the university environment is an indispensable step toward strengthening an inclusive culture—one grounded in respect for differences, equal opportunities, and the creation of more humane social relationships. This study is expected



to contribute to advancing reflection and research on the inclusion of deaf students in higher education, particularly regarding the social and affective dimensions of the academic experience.

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Note

- 1 AI Disclosure: Gemini 3.5 Flash Artificial Intelligence was utilized as an auxiliary tool for the translation of the original text, followed by human review.





How to cite

GALDINO, J. S., NATAL, D. I. S. A Libras como ponte de relações: interação entre um ouvinte e um surdo na vivência acadêmica **Educação em Análise**, Londrina, v. 11, p. 1-20, 2026. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5433/1984-7939.2026.v11.54533>.

Submitted on: January 14, 2026

Accepted on: April 30, 2026

Published on: June 24, 2026

CRediT

Acknowledgments	Not applicable
Funding:	Not applicable
Conflict of Interest:	The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval:	Not applicable
Authors' Contribution:	GALDINO, J. S. declares to have participated in the writing of the article, and states that they were responsible for the conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, writing, and review of the text. NATAL, D. I. S. declares to have contributed to the writing – original draft; supervision, and validation.

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