Oral Genres in Distance Education According to Professors and Students at a Community University in the Interior of São Paulo

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Abstract:
This article aims to present the results of a study that purpose to raise elements to understand the work with oral genres in the modality of distance education (DE) of a community university in the interior of São Paulo. We justify the need for this study considering the importance of oral textual genres, linked to the fact that students of this type of education constitute 63% of students’ new entrants to higher education in 2021, as indicated by the 2021 Higher Education Census. As a theoretical referential for the research, we rely on the methodological and theoretical perspective of Sociodiscursive Interactionism (SDI), oral and written textual genres, and the work with the orality. The corpus of this research was built through a semi-structured questionnaire with questions related to oral textual genres in the distance modality. Participants were chosen under the criterion of being a professor or a student who acted in this modality. We obtained responses from 23 students and 11 professors, who evidenced the presence of oral genres, but who resent space for a more systematic exploration of these.

Keywords:

Signum: Estudos da Linguagem, Londrina, v. 26, i. 1, p. 80-92, Apr. 2023

Received on: 01/15/2023
Accepted on: 04/19/2023
INTRODUCTION

With the declaration of decrees on Distance Education (DE) being published in Brazil (Decree No. 5.622/2005 and Decree No. 9.057/2017), (BRASIL, 2005, 2017), this education modality has been becoming a possibility of access to higher education for many people since 2005. This fact can be seen when the Census of Higher Education (INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTUDOS E PESQUISAS EDUCACIONAIS ANÍSIO TEIXEIRA, 2022) points out that the distance learning modality has 63% of students entering higher education in 2021. We highlight the fact that, in the case of undergraduate degrees in Brazil, DE has become the primary source of teacher training, especially in pedagogy (79% of students enrolled in 2021 are in this modality), the course responsible for future teachers who will teach in the early years of Basic Education.

In this sense, it is necessary to invest in actions to understand this educational space better since most of our future teachers will be trained there. For Mill (2009), the current technological development provides new possibilities for interaction between subjects, profoundly influencing pedagogical practice. Thus, in the DE space, we can find opportunities to work with language, in which several semiotic systems can be articulated, training teachers who can provide their future students with a more robust and critical linguistic action.

Between the expectations of the becoming and the reality imposed by market interests, there still seem to be serious issues to be addressed in DE since there is a vast amount of students for a few professors, as Cabral (2020) points out in Tables 1 and 2:

### Table 1 - Number of enrollments in the DE modality.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publicas</td>
<td>54.515</td>
<td>42.061</td>
<td>94.209</td>
<td>278.988</td>
<td>172.696</td>
<td>181.602</td>
<td>177.924</td>
<td>181.624</td>
<td>154.553</td>
<td>139.373</td>
<td>128.393</td>
<td>122.601</td>
<td>167.837</td>
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### Table 2 - Number of professors in public and private institutions.

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<tr>
<td>Publicas</td>
<td>98.033</td>
<td>100.726</td>
<td>108.828</td>
<td>111.894</td>
<td>122.977</td>
<td>130.789</td>
<td>139.584</td>
<td>150.338</td>
<td>155.219</td>
<td>163.113</td>
<td>165.722</td>
<td>169.544</td>
<td>171.231</td>
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1 Tables 1 and 2 inform: **Types**, is private or public; and the **Years** accounted. The last rows inform the **Total** number of enrollments and professors.
In 2005, there were about 115,000 students for 290,000 professors; in 2017, almost two million for 380,000 professors. In short, the number of students has grown more than 15 times, and the number of professors has not even doubled in the same period.

Given this context, the work with oral genres calls our attention: if it is already difficult to guarantee its frequency in face-to-face courses, how to do it in an environment marked by asynchronous interactions, as is the case of DE? In order to raise elements to understand this situation and, if possible, to contribute to new directions through the actions of an Academic Literacy Laboratory, we surveyed students and professors of the pedagogy course in DE at a community college in the interior of São Paulo state. The results and our reflections will be presented in the following sections. First, we will present our theoretical basis and the methodology that guided our study.

**Theoretical Assumptions**

As primary theoretical support, we assume the framework of Sociodiscursive Interactionism, according to Bronckart (2006, 2019), who, relying on Vigotski (2007) and Volóchinov (2018), emphasizes the importance of semiotic appropriation in human development but highlighting the articulation with the socio-historical context in which the situations of language actions occur.

To define the characteristics of distance education, we are anchored by the research of Mill (2009), Veloso and Mill (2020), Ferreira, Costa, and Mill (2021), and Kenski, Medeiros, and Ordêas (2019). For Ferreira, Costa, and Mill (2021), distance education is a category of education mediated by Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) with different pedagogical and methodological configurations. The pedagogical mediation occurs through politeaching (professors, tutors, and multidisciplinary teams), with several professionals acting in consonance to ensure the teaching and learning process (VELOSO; MILL, 2020; FERREIRA; COSTA; MILL, 2021). The distance modality is also characterized by the geographical and temporal separation of the actors involved in this process (VELOSO; MILL, 2020), with virtual distance education being the possibility of the classroom and not the classroom itself (MILL, 2009). Finally, Kenski, Medeiros, and Ordêas (2019) contribute to the reflection on DE when they state that this modality enables multimodal teaching to explore speech, gesture, text, image, video, and sound, among others.

In this sense, in DE, the exploration of several textual genres would be possible since, through them, it is possible to perform the professors’ actions and the students’ formation. Considering, according to Bronckart (2006), that people, when participating in any communicative situation, adopt and adapt a textual genre to build an empirical, unique, concrete text, it is noted the importance of having the deliberate teaching of textual genres in a teacher’s education course.

Dolz, Gagnon, and Decândio (2010) state that textual genres are megainstruments that provide, through the development of language capacities, the possibility of mastery of psychic processes for any individual. However, this does not occur only with the written genres. The oral ones also interfere with and contribute to this human development.

Regarding this subject, Schneuwly and Dolz (2011) state that oral does not exist; what exists are only the orals in multiple forms, which can either approximate writing (for example, the script that is oralized in a video lesson) or distance (for example, in debates). These actions of orality are crystallized in oral textual genres (SCHNEUWLY; DOLZ, 2011, p. 140).

In order to teach oral genres focused on the production, comprehension, or analysis of their elements, we can resort to the proposals of Dolz and Schneuwly (1998) and Schneuwly and Dolz (2011), which consist of the elaboration of didactic models of genres to then build specific didactic sequences for each context with

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2 According to Dolz, Pasquier, and Bronckart (1993), language capacities are skills required to realize a text in a given interaction situation.

3 We can refer to Jacob and Bueno (2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b), who analyze how the oral textual genre “electoral debate” can be taught.
its needs. This work is part of didactic engineering (DOLZ, 2016) that has four phases: the first phase is the previous analysis of the teaching objects, the knowledge and abilities of students, as well as the knowledge and teaching practices employed by teachers and their working conditions; the second consists in building “a prototype of the didactic device by previously analyzing the tasks it can perform” (DOLZ, 2016, p. 243); then, in the third phase, there is the experimentation of the device; in the fourth and last phase, a “balance of the advantages and limits of the device created” (DOLZ, 2016, p. 244) is carried out.

This deliberate teaching of oral genres can lead people to develop language skills that will allow them to act more efficiently in the various communicative situations in which they participate. The table below, elaborated from a synthesis of Dolz, Pasquier, and Bronckart (1993) and (SEMINÁRIO…, 2015), Bueno, Zani, and Jacob (2022, p. 1509-1510), expose what these language skills are:

**Chart 1 - Summary of language capacities.**

<table>
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<th>Language capacities</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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| **Capacity for action** | Knowing how to: i. relate the genre to a given broader context (i.e., to the sphere of activity in which the text producer is acting); ii. recognize the value of the text in this sphere, what is at stake in this production; iii. adapt the genre to a more particular situation of communication; iv. mobilize relevant knowledge regarding the genre and the situation; v. mobilize the contents to be verbalized appropriate to the situation and the genre; vi. mobilize adequate representations about different elements of the production situation that influence the text:  
  - knowing how to construct a producer position;  
  - knowing how to adapt the text to a specific addressee;  
  - knowing how to achieve the effect one wants to produce on the addressee. |
| **Discursive** | Knowing how to: i. establish an overall plan for the text; ii. choose a particular enunciative position; iii. select types of organization appropriate to the communication situation; iv. choose the most appropriate connections; v. define the lexicon pertinent to the thematic content. |
| **Linguistic-discursive** | Master the psycholinguistic operations and the linguistic units appropriate to give coherence to the text, in other words, in the establishment and mastery of i. the cohesion to sustain a coherent enunciative positioning, with the use of different voices and modalizations, and ii. the mastery of syntactic mechanisms. |
| **Multisemiotic** | Knowing how to mobilize and implement non-verbal mechanisms in language action to produce meaning. In the case of oral genres: paralinguistic means (voice quality, melody, elocution and pauses, breathing, laughter, sighs), kinesthetic means (body attitudes, movements, gestures, eye exchanges, facial mimics), the position of speakers (seating arrangements, personal space, distances, physical contact), external appearance (clothing, disguises, hairstyle, glasses, cleanliness), and seating arrangements (seating, lighting arrangement, chair arrangement, order, ventilation, decoration). |

*Source: Bueno, Zani and Jacob (2022, p. 1509-1510).*

In Bueno and Costa-Hubes (2015) and Magalhães and Ferreira (2019), we find several studies resulting from analyses of the challenges and possibilities of working with oral genres at different levels of education. However, Magalhães, Bueno, Storto, and Costa-Maciel (2022) indicate an absence of discussion about orality in the courses of letters and pedagogy, followed by little interaction of undergraduates with oral genres in different academic and professional situations. With that in mind, our research proposes to perform one of the
activities of the first phase of didactic engineering, which is to understand the relationship of professors and students with oral genres in these distance learning courses so that in the future, we can propose interventions that contribute to improving the situation found.

**Methodology**

This research is part of the actions of the Academic Literacy Laboratory, coordinated by one of the authors and tutored by the other author. In this Laboratory, created in 2015, university extension actions are developed (mini-courses, lectures, conversation circles) to improve the literacy of students and professors at universities and students and teachers in Basic Education. Thus, teaching, research, and extension actions are articulated in this space. Therefore, the actions carried out are based on Dolz’s (2016) proposal for didactic engineering, following the four stages: object / student / teacher analysis; prototype elaboration; experimentation; final balance.

In this article, we aim to present the part related to the first stage, regarding the relations of students and professors of the pedagogy course in DE modality with oral genres, so that we can then select which oral genre(s) we will investigate and propose actions to contribute to its appropriation, either by students or professors. The demand for this investigation arose from questions posed by some DE students who participated in conversation groups and workshops about the Course Conclusion Paper and its oral presentation offered by us. According to these students, although they interacted through several textual genres, they had no space to improve their oral genres since most interactions were asynchronous. Thus, they asked us to propose more actions focused on oral genres for DE students, considering that these would always be articulated to some digital tool, unlike the reality of face-to-face course students.

The ED pedagogy course in focus is recognized with the highest grade by the Ministry of Education (MEC). It has 515 students enrolled in 2023, with 12 poles distributed in São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro. The course is composed of 8 semesters, each of them generally organized by five curricular components. There are strictly theoretical components, other theoretical-practical ones, and internships throughout the semesters. In the theoretical ones, the duration is one month, with four modules divided into one each week. In each module, the student has access to video classes (asynchronous), a meeting with the professor (synchronous via Google Meet), and an eBook with the content to be studied, in addition to interactions with a tutor responsible for monitoring and assessing the students during the component, by email and messages in the virtual classrooms. In all, four evaluations occur throughout each week, the first being a proposal for interaction on the forum in dialogue with the first module; the second is composed of objective questions about the first and second modules; the third evaluation is a proposal for a dissertation about module 3; and the last one is composed of 16 objective questions about all the modules. In the four theoretical-practical components that the course has called “professional practice,” the students, besides taking the four theoretical modules, do an intervention project in the professional practice of pedagogy for two months. In the three obligatory internships, the students have the whole semester to follow some of the areas of pedagogy (infant education, elementary education, and educational management) and then write a report about what they have seen. The course also makes available the participation of distance education pedagogy students in extension, research (scientific initiation), and teaching projects (Institutional Scholarship Program of Initiation to Teaching and Pedagogical Residency).

The research participants were professors who worked in distance education and students from the university’s pedagogy course (only in the distance modality).

A semi-structured questionnaire was created in Google Forms with questions regarding oral textual genres. We considered five questions in the professors’ questionnaire and six in the pedagogy students’ one. The questionnaires were sent to the professors’ WhatsApp groups, created by the course coordinator, and to the students’ WhatsApp groups of each semester, created by the students, with one of them being a representative and receiving information from the coordination. This system has worked as an important means of communication since not all students access institutional email. We received eleven answers from 15
professors and twenty-three answers from students out of the 515 in the course. Among the 23 participating students, ten were from the 6th semester; four were from the 5th semester; other four were from the 8th semester; three were from the 4th semester; finally, only one was from the 7th, and another from the 1st semester. The semesters in which the students were enrolled are indicated in the chart below:

![Chart 2 - Semesters in which the participating students are enrolled.](image)

The numbers for students are low, but they allow us to make some reflections and choices for the following actions since most of them (19) was already halfway through the course.

**RESULTS**

We will first present the questions and the professors’ answers, followed by the students’ answers and our reflections based on them.

For the question “What do you think is the role of oral textual genres in the student’s education? Why?”, all 11 professors stated that oral genres are important or necessary, using adjectives such as “important”, “fundamental”, “essential” or verbal locutions such as “need to be taught”, as exemplified by professor #7: “Oral textual genres are part of our daily communication, so they need to be addressed and developed in the teaching and learning contexts as much as written genres. Ignoring or not giving due value to oral genres may perpetuate prejudice of the superiority of the written, literate culture and compromise the education of the graduate, who may not be properly qualified to move through these genres, either in a professional context or in life in society more broadly”. Alternatively, professor #1 states: “I believe it is fundamental to enable the circulation of different genres to favor both learning and the involvement and bonding between students and professors. Oral genres enable the exercise of organizing ideas and expressing them in class time, favoring collective understanding and exchange among peers. It has the particularity of being more collective-oriented than teacher-oriented, which I also consider very productive in the educational process”.

The professors, in general, point out several reasons for the relevance of oral genres, such as knowing how to communicate, defend points of view, dissolve prejudices about writing superiority, and improve professional practice. However, only two professors emphasized the exchange among peers and knowing how to listen to the other. It is interesting to see how the emphasis is on production much more than on comprehension when we come across discussions on oral language (BUENO; ZANI; JACOB, 2022), differently from writing, in which both reading and writing texts are highlighted as necessary.

When we asked, “Do you work with oral textual genres with students in distance education? If so, in what way?”. The professors’ answers make it clear that this is a problematic point because although seven of them say that they work with oral genres, four emphasize that they either have not yet managed to do so or have not been successful with the proposed activities, as professor #1 states: “I try to propose that they orally formulate syntheses of their understandings at the end of an interactive class, or I give them the option to..."
record answers to study questions in audio form, but the proposals are not always welcomed”. Alternatively, as professor #6 reports: “Practically, I do not, because in virtual meetings attendance is low, students rarely open the camera and microphone to expose points of view”. As for what oral materials are employed, professors list: orientation via Google Meet, oral synthesis, video lessons, interviews, films, oral narratives of experiences, debates, podcasts, lesson plans with orality, oral presentation, and audio responses.

Regarding the genres found in DE, the 11 professors indicated expert interviews as the most present, followed by video lessons and documentaries:

Altogether, we see that there are several oral genres present in DE. However, they are not positioned as teaching objects (DOLZ; SCHNEUWLY, 1998), aiming at developing students’ language capacities; they appear as participants of the activities, ensuring the interaction or the evaluation of a task. We know that the pedagogy course forms a polyvalent teacher; therefore, there are several curricular components with much essential content to be taught. However, as Buin, Magalhães, and Silva (2022) pointed out, the work with language in pedagogy deserves greater emphasis since the teacher of this course will be responsible for the initial training of children.

When asked, “What is your perception about the student’s reactions to the videos you, as a professor, recorded?” we can list three aspects highlighted in the answers: (1) positive, (2) positive with reservations, and (3) negative. First, the positive aspects are that students prefer video to reading or that they respond positively to video. Then, we have the positives with reservations, as is the case of the professor who said that they are accepted when they significantly complement other learning objects or students prefer synchronous content (which excludes asynchronous video lessons); notwithstanding, there is also a statement that even if the students accepted, the professor was uncomfortable with recording the video lessons. Finally, the negatives show that students find a thread of thought that develops for more than a few minutes boring and usually have high aesthetic demands – expecting videos like they are used to, i.e., similar to those of the digital influencers. The professors also stated that only some students return with comments about their reactions as if they do not care about what was presented to them in the video. One of the answers refers to the lack of exploring the characteristics of the video lesson genre, with its multimodal and semiotic aspects in the academic training of these students, which could be hindering their understanding.

In summary, for the professors, the video classes would be positive for the students but not for the professors who are faced with a new genre and need proper training, according to Penteado and Costa (2021).

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4 Charts 3 and 4 show the following information: video lessons, expert interviews, documentary videos, film or movie excerpts, podcasts, conferences or lectures, round table presentations, paper presentations, orientation meetings.
Based on a review of dissertations and theses on the production of video lessons for DE, these authors raised a set of problems that teachers face when performing this task: “fear of speaking in front of the camera, clothing, makeup, time control, spatial and body awareness, and use of non-verbal language.” (p. 6), problems with the setting, difficulties in escaping from the more traditional classroom model, and transformation from the role of teacher to that of television presenter and that of the student to that of the viewer. Even though institutions have invested in technical support for video lessons, according to Penteado and Costa (2021), more articulation between technology and pedagogical issues is still missing in teachers training to conduct video lesson.

Considering the need for good work with oral textual genres in education, the professors were asked about their suggestions for possible improvement and advancement in this area. The answers can be divided into two groups: 1) actions the university could take to improve; 2) actions the professors could take. As for the actions the university could take to improve, they stated that there could be instruments that could make students interact with oral textual genres; there could also be a feedback instrument so that professors could know the students’ involvement with the materials; and, finally, a revision in the DE assessment process, which does not allow the insertion of assessment instruments in most curricular components, since there are standards to be followed, considering the asynchronous activities and the fact that there are students from different places in Brazil. As for the actions the professors could do to improve: inform the students of the importance of the genre and its contextualization; build specific workshops to teach the students the oral textual genres; relate the genres and students’ reality; carefully emphasize the defining characteristics of the oral textual genres; use podcasts with the students; diversify the possibilities of using the textual genres; and encourage the students to record their perceptions of films. Considering the professors’ actions, we notice that they perceive the need to work on oral as a teaching object (DOLZ; SCHNEUWLY, 1998), as previously discussed.

After the professors’ questionnaire, the students also answered similar questions but directed to their experiences and performance as pedagogy students in distance education. As shown in the graph below, we asked the students: “What oral textual genres can you find in distance education?”.

The answer was unanimous that the video lessons are found in distance education as an oral textual genre, representing the totality of the twenty-three answers of the students. Then, with fifteen answers about which oral textual genres they find at this level of education, we have round table presentations; thirteen documentary videos; expert interviews with ten answers; film videos or excerpts with nine; conferences or lectures with seven; oral communication presentations with six; and, finally, podcasts with four answers.

After this closed-ended question, they were also asked in an open-ended format the question: “Do professors work with oral textual genres in their distance education classes?” Nineteen out of twenty-three students answered yes. Three did not answer, and only one said no. This fact leads us to think that professors are concerned about oral textual genres in this university and consider them necessary because they use them, as shown in the questionnaire they answered before.
To complement the closed-ended question about which oral textual genres can be found in distance education, we asked another opened-ended question: “If professors work with these genres, how they do so?”. The answer that came up most often, even if written differently, was video lessons – with ten students stating it. Then, four students said that they use textual genres in online meetings with professors. Such responses made us think that students distinguish the video lesson (asynchronous) from the online meeting with the professor (synchronous). Three answers indicated that professors use oral genres in orientations about activities, and another three in lectures. Finally, explaining videos and texts orally, sharing experiences, eBooks, papers, round tables, forums, discussions, and scientific articles obtained the frequency of one student. It is interesting to reflect that although the answers for eBooks, forums, and scientific articles are not oral textual genres, they can undoubtedly contribute to working with these genres.

The students were also asked about their way of acting in front of video lessons since, considering the statement of the Brazilian Association of Distance Education (ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE EDUCAÇÃO A DISTÂNCIA, 2019) that video lesson is the leading educational resource used in teaching in distance education (92.6%), we already had the hypothesis of this oral textual genre as most used by students. Then, the questions pertinent to the theme were “How often do you watch the videos proposed by professors?” and “What is your reaction to the videos recorded or indicated by professors?”. The answers are shown in the graphs below:

**Chart 5** - Frequency in which students watch the videos proposed by the professors.

![Chart 5](chart5.png)

**Source**: elaborated by the authors (2023).

Although no student said they never watch the videos proposed by the professors, considering that there were twenty-three answers, the rate of students who always watch is twelve students (52%), nine of the students (39%) are the ones who watch regularly, and two rarely (8.7%).

**Chart 6** - Students’ reactions to the videos proposed by the professors.

![Chart 6](chart6.png)

**Source**: elaborated by the authors (2023).

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5 Chart 6 demonstrates the following information: Watches paying attention to the audio; Watches paying attention to the images; Takes notes of what the professors say while watching; Takes notes of doubts; Watches several times until well understood; Watches only once.
When asked about how they watch the videos recorded or recommended by the professors, fourteen (60.9%) pointed out that they watch it paying attention to the audio, thirteen (56.5%) take notes of what the professors say, ten (43.5%) watch it paying attention to the images, another ten watch it several times until they understand, four take notes of their doubts, and another four watch it only once (17.4%). We infer from this that there are several ways one can learn with the oral textual genre video lesson, with strategies that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, it is noteworthy that the way students watch these video lessons is still the most traditional way of acting as students: passive; only some take notes or question what is being presented. Could these methods have led to a good understanding of the video lessons? According to the professors, students do not show their reactions to what they have watched, or they demand videos that are more similar to those of YouTube influencers, which may indicate that there is a relationship to be more focused between students and the way they use the video lessons in their studies. To overcome this passive mode of reception of the contents in the video lessons, we can consider the creation of listening diaries, just like the reading diaries (MACHADO, 1998, 2005; MACHADO; LOUSADA; ABREU-TARDELLI, 2007) contribute for the student to actively formulate a reading and writing production, we assume as a hypothesis the possibility of similar work with listening and writing. However, considering the distinct focus of this article, we will present the relationship of video lessons with listening diaries in future research.

**Final Remarks**

In this article, we sought to raise elements to understand the work with oral genres in an EaD pedagogy course in a community university in the countryside of São Paulo from a survey with students and professors of this course in order to contribute to an improvement of the teacher and student's training concerning this teaching object. This investigation is the first stage of an investigation based on didactic engineering (DOLZ, 2016) being developed in the Laboratory of Literacy to define which genres to focus on and how to perform didactic interventions.

The results of the answers to the questionnaires lead us to realize that oral genres are seen as essential and are present in the DE course because, as pointed out by students and professors, there is guidance through the meet, oral synthesis, video lesson, interviews, oral narratives of experiences, movies, debates, podcasts, lesson plans with orality, audio answers, online meetings, guidance on activities, lectures, explaining videos and texts orally, sharing experiences, discussions, round tables, eBooks, through assignments, through the forum and scientific articles.

However, oral genres are not put as teaching objects that could lead students to develop language skills (BUENO, ZANI; JACOB, 2022; DOLZ; PASQUIER; BRONCKART, 1993; SEMINÁRIO…., 2015) so essential for a successful linguistic action in different communication situations. Consequently, there is also the risk of training teachers who perpetuate the existing primacy of writing over oral language in Brazilian education.

This situation could be reviewed with the collaboration of the actions of the Lab of Literacy, which, not having the limits of the contents of the curricular components, could propose mini-courses focusing on oral genres that have the potential to contribute to the education of students and teachers. One of these genres would be the video lesson, presented in most respondents’ answers. For professors, the focus would be on understanding its characteristics and the appropriation of its production. In the case of the students, the focus would be on the reception and the strategies to make the best use of it for their studies, as well as on the interactions with the professors.

These actions can undoubtedly contribute to teacher and student training since they will provide both with opportunities to access more repertoires that can be used as resources for their actions in DE, but also, in the case of students, in their later work in the early years, since, according to the Common National Curriculum Base (Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC), oral genres articulated to multi semiotics should be taught since the early years.
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