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ARTICLES

Linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of the performance of teachers as storytellers in brazilian sign language

Aspectos linguísticos e extralinguísticos da performance de professores contadores de histórias em Libras

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Abstract
This article aims to analyze both linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of the performance of teachers who tell stories in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) that are considered capable of making storytelling more engaging and beneficial for deaf students. Grounded in Costa (2015) and Sutton-Spence (2021), the study draws on data from an online questionnaire, an interview conducted with a teacher at a bilingual school, and an analysis of a video in which a teacher tells a story in Libras. The results indicate that fluency (a linguistic aspect) and the organization of the setting (an extralinguistic aspect) are non-negotiable elements for storytelling to be both engaging and meaningful for deaf students. Other elements may vary in relevance depending on the storytelling modality chosen by the teacher.
Keywords: Storyteller, Brazilian Sign Language (BSL), Teacher.

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Resumo

Este artigo objetiva analisar aspectos linguísticos e extralinguísticos da performance do professor contador de histórias em Língua Brasileira de Sinais que são considerados capazes de tornar a prática da contação mais atrativa e contributiva para alunos surdos. Fundamentado em Costa (2015) e Sutton-Spence (2021), o estudo analisa dados derivados da aplicação de questionário on-line, de entrevista realizada com uma professora de escola bilíngue e analisa um vídeo de contação de história em Libras realizada por uma docente. Os resultados apontam que a fluência (aspecto linguístico) e a organização do ambiente (aspecto extralinguístico) são elementos inegociáveis para que a prática da contação de histórias ocorra de forma atrativa e contributiva para os alunos surdos. Os demais elementos podem ganhar mais ou menos destaque, a depender da modalidade de contação escolhida pelo professor.

Palavras-chave: *Contador de histórias, Língua Brasileira de Sinais, Professor.*

And so, the article begins...

> *A tale serves every purpose — and none at all! To me, a tale serves every purpose when we are open to receiving it, and none at all if we do not let it arrive with the truth it carries! verdade que o acompanha!*
>
> (Ordones, 2022. p. 32).

The epigraph that opens this article invites us to reflect, in some way, on the possible uses of stories. When stories are told, the aim is typically to engage the audience and offer a moment of entertainment, enjoyment, and imagination. When stories are told to deaf individuals within a school setting, it is further expected that this practice marks the beginning of a pedagogical process with the potential to support cognitive, linguistic, and cultural-identity development — regardless of whether the teacher's intentions are explicitly stated.

It is important to highlight that, when discussing the contributions of storytelling to the education of deaf students, we are always referring to *potential* and *possibilities* — to how stories may foster overall development. This perspective is discussed in the article *Contribuições da contação de histórias em Libras para a educação de surdos* [*Contributions of Storytelling in Libras to Deaf Education*] (Brito & Ribeiro, 2022), in which the authors examine the potential cognitive, linguistic, and cultural-identity development made possible through storytelling. They argue

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that, by engaging with narratives told in sign language, deaf children gain access to elements that promote their overall development — even when the teacher's intentions, as a storyteller, are not explicitly defined (Brito & Ribeiro, 2022).

We consider that this development can also be fostered — among other factors — *in* and *through* the storyteller's performance, since the perceptual experience may vary significantly for the audience depending on how the story is delivered. There is a set of linguistic and extralinguistic elements involved in storytelling that make up what we refer to as *performance*, and these elements can affect the audience before, during, and after the story is told.

Building on this preamble, this article aims to analyze the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of the performance of teachers who tell stories in *Língua Brasileira de Sinais* [Brazilian Sign Language — Libras] that have the potential to make the practice of storytelling more engaging and meaningful for deaf students. It is important to emphasize that the goal is not to prescribe how storytelling in Brazilian Sign Language should be done, nor to establish a preferred model or a "correct" way of telling stories — let alone suggest that one model is inherently better than another. That said, we do not shy away from identifying what proves effective and what characterizes a performance as capable of fostering engagement, emotional connection, and learning. Believing that "a tale can serve many purposes" and that it is *performance* that opens the door for the audience to receive the tale and "the truth it carries," our aim is to understand how teachers who tell stories in Libras go about this practice, and what aspects make up this performance — aspects that, when recognized, can transform the experience into something meaningful with the potential to impact the formation of deaf subjects.

In order to achieve the proposed objective, we present three theoretical sections that are essential for understanding the performance of the storyteller: *"Storytellers and Their Performances", "Storytelling Modalities",* and *"Performance and Its Linguistic and Extralinguistic Elements"*. These theoretical sections, together with the analysis of a video of a story told in Libras, the questionnaire responses, and the interview, will provide the reader with an understanding of the main aspects of a performance and how these elements can be used in a more engaging and meaningful way in educational processes. Finally, we present our concluding remarks based on the discussions developed throughout the article.

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Methodological Pathways Taken

In this section, we present the methodological pathways taken, detailing the research instruments used — namely, the questionnaire and the interview — and describing the selection of the video chosen for analysis. We also briefly point to the theoretical frameworks mobilized to support our understanding of the performance of the teacher-storyteller in Libras.

In order to understand how teachers of deaf students have been telling stories in schools, a semi-structured questionnaire was created and administered via the Google platform. It was divided into six sections titled *Perfil do professor participante* [Participant Teacher Profile], *Sobre o contar histórias* [About Storytelling], *Ainda sobre o contar histórias* [More on Storytelling], *Geral* [General], and *Perguntas não obrigatórias* [Non-mandatory Questions], comprising twenty multiple-choice questions and ten open-ended questions in total. For this study, we focused primarily on Question 22: *Do you use any resources to tell stories (book, drawing, illustration, object)? If so, which and why?*; and Question 18 from the *Non-mandatory Questions* section, in which respondents were invited to share experiences related to storytelling and to provide videos of themselves telling stories.

The questionnaire was distributed via email and WhatsApp between November 25, 2021, and April 6, 2022, yielding a total of 18 (eighteen) responses. However, we chose to include only 16 (sixteen) completed questionnaires in the analysis, as one respondent had never worked with deaf students and another, although having taught deaf students, stated that she did not engage in storytelling. The 16 teachers of deaf students considered in this study are, therefore, storytellers. They come from various regions of the country and work in inclusive schools, inclusive schools with bilingual classes, special education schools, or bilingual schools. To protect the identities of the participating teachers, they are identified by the letter P (for *Professor*, Portuguese for "teacher"), followed by a number (P1, P2, P3, etc.). In this article, quotes from P4 (who completed the questionnaire and was interviewed) and P6 (who only completed the questionnaire) are included. The responses of the other participants appear in other articles that, along with this one, comprise the master's thesis entitled *Da tradição oral para a língua de sinais: contação de histórias na educação de surdos no Ensino Fundamental* [*From Oral Tradition to Sign Language: Storytelling in Deaf Education at the Elementary Level*].[1]

[1] Master's Thesis – Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros – Unimontes, Graduate Program in Education (PPGE), 2023. https://repositorio.unimontes.br/handle/1/855

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Among the participants who completed the questionnaire, 10 expressed willingness to participate in an interview. From this group, we selected 5, including 2 deaf teachers (working in bilingual schools) and 3 hearing teachers (1 working in a bilingual school, 1 in an inclusive regular school, and 1 in a special education school). Despite our efforts to contact all of them, only one teacher responded positively and made herself available for the semi-structured interview.

To select a story for analysis, we searched Google and YouTube using the expression *"contação de histórias em Libras"* ["storytelling in Libras"]. Although we encountered difficulties in locating videos specifically featuring teachers of deaf students, we found several online platforms that offer videos which may be used by teachers either as inspiration or as content to be directly shared with children.

We selected a story available on the YouTube channel *Professora Adriana Libras*[2], which was recommended by a questionnaire respondent and interview participant in this study — a colleague of Professor Adriana. Professor Adriana works at the *Escola Bilíngue de Taguatinga* [Taguatinga Bilingual School][3]. According to her colleague, the teacher began posting her lessons on the channel during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are sixty-two videos available, covering content in Mathematics, History, Geography, Science, Portuguese as a second language (L2), music in Libras, poems, and seven storytelling videos. The video selected for this study is titled *Escola Feliz: História em Libras para o retorno às aulas presenciais* [*Happy School: A Story in Libras for the Return to In-Person Classes*][4].

The video was chosen because it features a story told by a teacher at a bilingual school, and there is evidence suggesting that the same story was also told in person, in the same way it appears in the video. Thus, we are working with a real bilingual school context, which makes our analysis especially relevant for inspiring teachers who wish to engage in storytelling.

To frame the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of the teacher's performance as a storyteller, we draw on the studies of Costa (2015) and Sutton-Spence (2021). Costa (2015) seeks to understand the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of storytelling in Libras — as produced

[2] https://www.youtube.com/@AdrianaReis1973/videos; accessed on October 26, 2022.

[3] The Escola Bilíngue de Taguatinga is the first bilingual school for the deaf in the public education system of Brasília, Federal District (DF). It serves deaf students from Early Language Stimulation through High School and also offers Youth and Adult Education across its three stages.

[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLJSuPo3-Q4; accessed on October 26, 2022.

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by a group of students enrolled in an advanced training course — that influence the audience's comprehension of the message, whether positively or negatively. To this end, the author focuses specifically on the inadequacies and errors committed by students that hinder understanding. Notably, Costa does not explicitly discuss *performance* in the storytelling process, but she does present elements we consider relevant to performance and offers insights into how to use them more effectively to capture the viewer's attention and promote comprehension.

Sutton-Spence (2021), in contrast, focuses specifically on performance, referring to it as *literary performance* — of which storytelling is a part. In her book *Literatura em Libras* [*Literature in Libras*], Sutton-Spence (2021) aims to highlight the resources of sign language that can be used to create powerful visual imagery within artistic performance contexts. In this regard, she identifies elements of Libras' aesthetic language that are essential for crafting visually rich narratives and eliciting emotion from the audience.

Given the lack of theoretical frameworks addressing the performance of teachers as storytellers in Libras within school settings, this study draws on the contributions of the two aforementioned authors.

The analytical categories were defined based on these two theoretical references — Costa (2015) and Sutton-Spence (2021) — and organized into two macro-categories: linguistic aspects and extralinguistic aspects, each of which is further subdivided into specific categories. The linguistic aspects considered in the analysis include classifiers, incorporation, and rhythm. The extralinguistic aspects analyzed are the organization of the environment, clothing, and accessories.

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Storytellers and their performances

> *This is a very old story, which my grandmother used to tell me when I was little. She had heard it from her grandfather, who in turn had heard it from his mother when he was a child. Where she heard it from, I do not know. I will tell it as my grandmother used to*
>
> (Garcia *et al*, 2003, p. 62).

The decision to begin this section with this "magic formula"[5] for starting a story stems, first of all, from our understanding that such formulas are part of the storyteller's performance — they are what open the door for the listener to receive the tale and enter the world of imagination. Secondly, this formula evokes the figure of a storyteller who learned to tell stories from earlier generations within the family, in an unassuming and organic way, without any concern for technique.

Busatto (2013) identifies two types of storytellers: the traditional and the contemporary. For the author, the *traditional* storyteller is someone who belongs to a social group and emerges from within their own community. Their storytelling practice is shaped by memory, passed down across time through the act of recollection — understood as "[…] bringing to the heart what was stored in memory, and turning memory into a heart […]" (p. 13). Regarding the performance of this type of storyteller, the author notes that some prefer to let the narrative unfold naturally in the midst of other everyday activities, such as while cooking, sewing, embroidering, or knitting, for example.

The author also notes the traditional storyteller's need to legitimize their stories through introductory expressions such as the one that opens this section. Storytelling unfolds in a relaxed manner, unshaken by any noise or interruptions that may occur in the surroundings. The narrative often takes shape by blending different versions of traditional tales — and perhaps by incorporating the storyteller's own life story in an act of recalling their childhood imagination. Upon ending a story, the storyteller often leaves a sense of suspension in the air, as if to suggest that the tale continues — that something more is about to happen, and that "something more" is left to the audience's imagination. According to Café (2015), traditional storytellers

[5] Magic formula or magic password is the term used by Garcia (2003, p. 61) to refer to the way of beginning to tell a story. Other magic formulas suggested by the author include: "Once upon a time… It happened once… A long, long time ago… Back when stones were not hard…"

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> [...] are those whose popular knowledge originates from everyday observation, unlike [contemporary storytellers], who have already attended academic institutions and blended their lived experiences with scientific studies and systematized experiments. I observe that even among traditional storytellers, there are significant differences depending on the locality — in form, content, and objectives. Just as researchers who study storytelling bring different perspectives to the role of the storyteller (p. 84).

We observe that the ideas of Busatto (2013) and Café (2015) are closely aligned and complementary. Busatto (2013) engages in dialogue with Café (2015) when she emphasizes that each era and culture holds different perceptions and, consequently, may choose different paths for storytelling. Regarding the contemporary storyteller, Busatto (2013, p. 9) defines them as "that storyteller-subject of today, who has chosen the expression 'storyteller' to designate a profession [...]." According to Busatto (2013), the contemporary storyteller has a more elaborate performance than the traditional one: they prepare for their presentation; organize the storytelling space; wear costumes and accessories, and bring along objects. They organize gatherings, study, seek out techniques, and adopt criteria for selecting the stories to be told and for how to present them. They can be found in various settings: schools, libraries, hospitals, parks, public squares, and in the digital realm.

For Busatto (2013), "addressing the storyteller's performance in the digital age […] implies a shift in focus, understanding, and acceptance of other perspectives and paradigms of learning and experiencing this art form (p. 97)." The author challenges us to think about how to evoke emotions, generate visual perceptions, and convey facial and bodily expressions within the limited space available. And it is indeed necessary to reflect on these aspects, as storytelling in nontraditional settings — particularly digital environments — has expanded significantly in recent years, especially in 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When we bring these figures of the storyteller into the lived experience of a deaf child, the traditional storyteller is an exception — particularly in families where the deaf child is born to hearing parents, since most hearing families do not know sign language. In such cases, the deaf child may come into contact with this traditional figure within the Deaf community or through associations for the deaf. However, for deaf children of hearing parents, such contact — both with the Deaf community and with sign language — often occurs only at a later stage.

In contrast, the figure of the *contemporary* storyteller for deaf children can be identified, albeit still infrequently, in some major urban centers in the country and on YouTube channels.

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Considering what was previously stated regarding deaf individuals born into hearing families, this growth in the digital sphere proves to be decisively positive for the deaf community, as it enables access to storytelling in Libras for those who do not have the opportunity to experience it within their families or the Deaf community. Before closing this section, we recall the words of Café (2015):

> more important than trying to classify who belongs to one group or another is understanding the scope and meaning of these types of storytellers, in order to find one's own path — which does not need to mirror anyone else's. Traditional or not, all types of storytellers have their place in the present day (p. 83).

We share the author's view and understand that finding one's own path means constructing one's own performance — a performance "understood not merely as the act of speaking or transmitting knowledge, but as embodied and complex" (Duarte & Canda, 2022, p. 146). A performance grounded in "diverse elements (word, scene, body, space, and all shared senses) rather than fragmented ones; it does not require order or direction, because the process finds its course through being with the children [...]" (Duarte & Canda, 2022, p. 146). A performance that "[…] requires a type of understanding regarding its complexity, and cannot be viewed or interpreted solely through mechanisms of technical rationality, but must be grasped through all the senses, perceived in its wholeness, context, and potential [...]" (Duarte & Canda, 2022, p. 147). A performance understood in this way becomes a unique one — capable of bringing meaning to the stories being told.

Since this article considers the perspective of storytelling in Libras within the school setting, what matters is to think of performance as serving educational processes (and let us not forget that *enjoyment* is one of them). To this end, performance must be understood as an action that mobilizes didactic and pedagogical resources beyond language and the body — and that, as Duarte and Canda (2022) argue, must be grasped in its wholeness. Given that performance is shaped by the resources the storyteller chooses to employ, as well as by the type of storytelling adopted, it is necessary to consider the forms of storytelling present in schools for the deaf and the elements that constitute performance within each of these modalities. That is what we will address in the next section.

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Storytelling modalities

Drawing from the questionnaire answered by teachers of deaf students who are storytellers, from the author's own empirical knowledge[6], and from the literature on storytelling for hearing audiences — particularly Coelho (1999) and Garcia et al. (2003) — we were able to identify five storytelling modalities most frequently used by teachers of deaf students: **(i) simple narration, (ii) storytelling with a literary book, (iii) storytelling using illustrations, images, and drawings, (iv) storytelling with recycled materials, objects, and props, and (v) storytelling using theatrical language and resources.**

According to Coelho (1999, p. 31), **simple narration** "does not require any props and takes place through the narrator's voice and posture. The narrator, with free hands, concentrates all their expressive power in bodily expression." In storytelling in Libras, **simple narration** unfolds through the storyteller's signing, as well as through their bodily and facial expressions. In this case, only linguistic resources are used..

Regarding **storytelling with a literary book**, Coelho (1999) states that "some texts necessarily require the presentation of the book, as the illustrations complement them." Even when that is not the case, books are widely used by teachers during storytelling. As Coelho (p. 33) notes, "[…] due to the beauty of the theme and the graphic integration, [books] should be shown during the narrative. This presentation, in addition to encouraging a love of reading (even in children who are not yet literate), helps to develop the logical sequence of children's thinking". We agree with Coelho (1999) and emphasize that, when storytelling is done using a physical book, the book becomes part of the deaf child's world. The child sees the book as a vessel for stories — and this awakens their interest in seeking out that same book, other books, and other stories carried within books.

The "Referencial para o Ensino de Libras como L1 da Educação Infantil" [Guidelines for Teaching Libras as a First Language in Early Childhood Education] (Stumpf & Linhares, 2021) suggests a specific positioning for the teacher when telling a story to a deaf baby[7] who is

[6] The authors' empirical knowledge stems from observing storytelling performances by other storytellers, as well as from one author's own experience as a storyteller throughout her academic and professional journey, across various social and educational settings — including schools, hospitals, children's birthday parties, and teacher training programs. In this way, the authors have engaged with a wide range of storytelling modalities in inclusive and multicultural contexts, involving both deaf and hearing audiences.

[7] The "Reference for Teaching Libras as L1 in Early Childhood Education" (Stumpf & Linhares, 2021) considers a baby to be a child aged between 0 and 1 year and 6 months.

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able to sit up, using the book as a storytelling support. According to the position recommended in the *Referencial* (Stumpf & Linhares, 2021), the teacher must maintain direct eye contact, while respecting the child's height: "[…] if the baby is sitting on the floor, the teacher should also sit on the floor; if the baby is sitting in a chair, the teacher should sit in a way that aligns with the baby's eye level" (Stumpf & Linhares, 2021, pp. 59–60). The authors remind us that

> the storytelling moment, however, presents specific characteristics. As it is a distinct genre, the style of signing may involve signs that occupy a larger signing space, frequent use of classifiers, and specific facial and bodily expressions. Depending on the situation, the teacher may choose not to sit on the floor in front of the babies and may prefer to stand while telling the story. Facial and bodily expressions are widely used by teachers when interacting with babies. The babies perceive that the teacher's facial expression carries meaning, and also that teachers often make a facial expression and then immediately follow it with a sign. This sequence of actions functions as a message to the baby, who observes and imitates the adult. At this early stage of communication, visuality plays a central role in the interaction between teachers and babies" (Stumpf & Linhares, 2021, pp. 60–61 (Stumpf; Linhares, 2021, pp. 60-61).

The observations made in the citation above should also be taken into account by teachers in the early years of elementary education. The interviewee confirmed the use of a seated position for storytelling. She described conducting storytelling sessions using a book, seated, with the students sitting in front of her. She shows the illustrations to all students, props the book up in front of her (resting it against her torso), places it on her lap, and signs. According to the teacher, it is possible in this case to prepare a "cheat sheet" (*cola*) of the gloss[8] and attach it to the book's cover for reference during the storytelling. The teacher's mention of placing the *cola* on the cover is particularly interesting, as it reinforces the idea that the book should always face the students, keeping the visual focus on the story itself. This way, the teacher does not need to turn the book around to read what is written inside. However, with regard to the *cola* used for glosses, it is worth noting that the teacher should avoid constantly shifting her gaze toward it. It is also important to emphasize that we are referring to *storytelling*, not *reading* a story[9].

[8] The *gloss* corresponds to a draft of the story or text to be translated, without resorting to literal translation or making it resemble signed Portuguese. It is a written text composed of capitalized words and symbols that follow the grammar of sign language. Preparing a *gloss* prior to translating or telling a story is important, as the organization of sentences in sign language is what gives meaning to the message for deaf individuals.

[9] When one tells a story, one puts something of oneself into it — one uses their own words. When one reads a story, one needs to follow the text and remain faithful to the author's writing..

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The teacher further commented that storytelling with the support of a book feels "easygoing," since she has a small group of students.

One possibility for larger groups of students — and one that has been observed in storytelling videos available on YouTube channels — is the digitization and projection of the book. However, Flávia Scherner, from the channel *Fafá Conta Histórias*, in her course *O Maravilhoso Curso de Contação de Histórias da Fafá* [*Fafá's Marvelous Storytelling Course*] (2022), cautions storytellers about the use of such resources and the risks involved in "sharing 'harmless' PDFs," due to copyright and publishing rights. While the use of this material in the classroom is likely unproblematic, the full dissemination of these works on social media requires prior authorization from the author and/or the publisher.

Often, when it is not feasible to use a book — or due to specific pedagogical intentions — the teacher chooses to tell the story using illustrations, images, and drawings. The teacher interviewed in this study reported frequently using illustrations during storytelling, stating that as the story progresses, the images are gradually affixed to the wall. Coelho (1999) recommends that, prior to a storytelling session using illustrations,

> [...] the images should be stacked in order, facing down. As the story is told, the narrator reveals them one by one […]. This movement should occur naturally, with one image replacing the other at just the right moment, without rushing, so that the narrativa(p.39).

It is important to emphasize that not just any illustration, image, or drawing will suffice. A close reading of the text provides the teacher with guidance for selecting appropriate visual materials. In the case of stories told through drawing, for example, some books already suggest the drawings to be made — and it is these drawings that structure the narrative, as in the book *Contos Desenhados* [*Drawn Tales*], by Per Gustavsson, published by Editora Callis. P6 (a questionnaire respondent), a teacher who participated in this study, reported using drawings in her storytelling practice because she considers herself an excellent illustrator. The drawings can be made on the board or on paper affixed to the wall or floor, depending on the number of spectators.

In other cases, it is possible to search for images on the internet or generate them using artificial intelligence — always paying close attention to the possible meanings conveyed by the images and, whenever possible, to the artistic quality of what is being presented to the students.

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The images can also be organized in a PowerPoint presentation and shown with the help of a projector. Many teachers who responded to the questionnaire in this study reported using PowerPoint slides in their storytelling sessions.

According to Garcia et al. (2003), in **storytelling that uses recycled materials, objects, and props**, "[…] the recycled material undergoes no artistic modification. You can use it exactly as it is, without decorating or altering it" (p. 97). The authors give the example: "A bottle cap can be used to represent a turtle"(p.97). They also point out that "[…] telling stories with recycled materials is different from telling them using puppets made from recycled materials". Puppets made from recycled materials are a theatrical resource, with their own specific features in storytelling, and fall under a different storytelling modality, which we will discuss in the following section.

Regarding the use of objects and props, the interviewed teacher reported that she sometimes uses them — but never anything that would cover her face or hinder her facial expressions and hand movements: "If I'm going to wear gloves,[10], they must be white, and I need to be dressed in dark clothing" (P4, Interviewed Teacher). It is relevant to address the use of gloves in storytelling in Libras. In formal interpreting contexts, gloves are not recommended; however, in storytelling, they can be considered an artistic license that helps in constructing visual imagery and supporting the audience's comprehension of the narrative, making the story unique. If we watch the story "Casal Feliz" [Happy Couple], told by Cleber Couto[11], and available on Renata Garcia's YouTube channel, we will notice that the use of gloves enhances both the comprehension of the story and the visual construction of its elements. We would say that, in the case of "Casal Feliz", gloves are essential — although that does not mean they will be in every story.

Another story that may benefit from the use of gloves as a storytelling resource is the story "As luvas mágicas do Papai Noel" ["Santa Claus's Magic Gloves"], by Alessandra Klein

[10] The white glove was used for a long time in artistic performances, especially in musical presentations in Libras. However, part of the deaf community opposes the use of white gloves, as they distort the interpretation of Libras and can come across as mockery or as a form of devaluing the language. According to this segment of the deaf community, gloves may be used in storytelling performances only if they are an integral part of the costume.

[11] Cleber Couto is deaf, and both the author and illustrator of the book Casal Feliz ("Happy Couple"). He is part of the group "Palhaços Surdos" ["Deaf Clowns"], performing under the stage name "Clown Without a Voice". The group stages theatrical performances entirely through mime — there is no speech or Libras interpretation. Both hearing and deaf audiences are able to understand the shows, as everything is visual. In the video referenced here, Cleber Couto tells the story using theatrical resources, but there is also signing in Libras and spoken narration.

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and Cláudio Mourão. In the storytelling video produced by the Instituto Nacional de Educação dos Surdos – INES [National Institute for the Education of the Deaf], the story is interspersed with dramatized scenes featuring Santa Claus, who wears the magical gloves.

It is worth noting that in none of the stories mentioned here are *white* gloves used; rather, colored gloves are employed. Even in the story "As luvas mágicas do Papai Noel" ["Santa Claus's Magic Gloves"], the legendary old man — who traditionally wears white gloves as part of his costume — uses blue gloves in the story. Based on this, we emphasize that each resource can be effective, provided its specific characteristics, the context in which it is used, and the story being told are taken into account; it is up to the storyteller to evaluate when and how to make use of it.

Although storytelling is a different art form from theater, theatrical language and resources are sometimes employed by teachers during storytelling sessions. One of the participants in this study reported working with shadow boxes, rod puppetry, and hand puppets, although she noted that this modality can be difficult because it requires keeping both hands occupied to manipulate the puppets.

P4 explained that it is always necessary to have assistance — whether from a student, a colleague, or even her own children. She emphasized: "it's always possible to find strategies — after all, just because a child is deaf doesn't mean they shouldn't experience that sense of enchantment". If the teacher does not provide this opportunity at school, it becomes much more difficult for deaf children to access it elsewhere — unlike hearing children, who are more likely to encounter it in other environments.

Regarding character characterization in storytelling, the teacher (P4) points out that this is more common in theater. When character portrayal involves costumes and multiple people performing roles, the activity becomes more theatrical in nature — and according to her, this is something she typically does during reading projects in the school library. In everyday classroom settings, however, the participant believes it is preferable for storytelling to rely solely on theatrical *resources*, rather than becoming a full performance. To better understand the teacher's perspective, we turn to Sisto (2020):

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> When someone tells a story, they're telling a story — not doing theater! People often confuse storytelling with theatrical performance! Just because the storyteller uses emotion to deliver their text, expresses themselves through the body, works with intentions, moods, rhythms, and even stage directions — that doesn't turn what they do into a theatrical performance. Of course, all these elements are dramatic elements, but they are not enough to characterize the storyteller's work as staging. What often happens is that parts of the storytelling are dramatized, experienced as if the story being told were happening in that very moment. But the storyteller knows that all of this has already happened, and the act of dramatizing certain parts is merely a device to make the story more vivid. This device must be used in moderation throughout the storytelling, so that it does not become staging. If the story is dramatized from beginning to end, then it is theater — not storytelling!! (Sisto, 2020, pp. 65-66).

What Sisto (2020) emphasizes in the quotation above is that the teacher's use of theatrical elements — when applied in moderation — does not turn their storytelling practice into a theatrical performance.

Still within this modality, we refer to a technique that has recently gained visibility and relevance among deaf individuals: Vernáculo Visual [Visual Vernacular] (VV). In this technique, deaf artists use cinematic techniques, mime, and theater to tell stories without using signs from Libras. Thus, the technique is not strictly mime, nor is it Libras (Sutton-Spence, 2021). It could potentially fit into other storytelling modalities, but it is most often observed within **the modality of theatrical language and resources**, due to its appropriation of theatrical techniques.

Now that the storytelling modalities currently used by teachers of deaf students have been presented, it is important to stress that storytelling practice is not constrained by fixed classifications. Hybrid forms of storytelling are frequently encountered. The categorization presented here serves theoretical and methodological purposes, and it is not expected that actual storytelling practices mirror theoretical descriptions — in fact, the opposite is true: theory is born from observing the world, which is dynamic and ever-changing.

In what follows, we present the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects that make up the storyteller's performance.

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Performance and its linguistic and extralinguistic elements

In this section, we examine the linguistic and extralinguistic elements that can make the practice of storytelling more engaging and more effective in supporting the audience's comprehension and enjoyment of the narrative. To do so, we draw on Costa (2015) and Sutton-Spence (2021).

We reiterate that although Costa (2015) focuses on inadequacies and errors in storytelling in Libras, and Sutton-Spence bases her observations on the performances of deaf artists, we invoke both authors in this study because we believe the aspects they consider help us reflect on the performance of teachers who tell stories in school settings.

Costa (2015) divides the aspects observed in signing into two groups: linguistic (manual expressions and non-manual expressions) and extralinguistic (lighting/background and the storyteller's position — standing or seated). Among the manual expressions, she highlights issues related to signing (sign variation, phonological aspects, and sign structure), use of space, fingerspelling, redundancy (fluency in signing and enactment of characters or objects), as well as meaning construction during the utterance, detail, and conclusion of the story. In terms of non-manual expressions, facial expressions and eye gaze direction are emphasized.

Sutton-Spence (2021) contributes to this discussion by investigating how deaf artists can use the aesthetic resources of sign language to create visual imagery and evoke emotions in the audience. In her book Literatura em Libras [Literature in Libras], the author states that there are three main ways of achieving an illustrative effect: "**Telling** – talking about things through vocabulary [...]. **Showing** – showing the shape and movement of things using classifiers [...]. **Becoming** – showing the shape and behavior of things through enactment" (Sutton-Spence, 2021, pp. 47–48, emphasis in original).

But, as the author herself reiterates, literature goes beyond the vocabulary of the language — and to create visual literature, it is also necessary to mobilize other aesthetic elements, such as:

- Speed
- Space and symmetry
- Repeated handshapes (when repeated across signs, they produce a sense of rhyme, an aesthetic and metaphorical effect)

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- Morphing (modifying the handshape so that one sign fluidly transforms into another)
- Enactment (describing human characters through incorporation)
- Anthropomorphism (representing non-human characters — animals, plants, or inanimate objects — through incorporation)
- Classifiers (both conventional and novel ones)
- Non-manual elements (mouth movements, head position, eye gaze)
- Shifting perspectives

Sutton-Spence's (2021) contributions extend beyond the elements previously discussed. In other parts of the aforementioned work, the author carefully examines a list of key elements for telling stories and creating visual imagery in narratives, drawing on the framework proposed by Stephen Ryan (1993). Below, we present the items outlined by Sutton-Spence (2021, pp. 68–70 e pp. 95–100):

- Use eye contact and greet the audience
- Take into account the age and interests of the audience
- Create strong visual images
- Use gestures with signs, but vary them
- Use pauses to allow for moments of realization ("aha" moments)
- Celebrate Deaf heritage
- Create characters by describing their appearance and behavior
- Avoid excessive fingerspelling
- Characters may be amplified, dramatized, or exaggerated
- Use the body as much as the hands
- Use space clearly, showing the spatial world of the characters
- Use plenty of repetition

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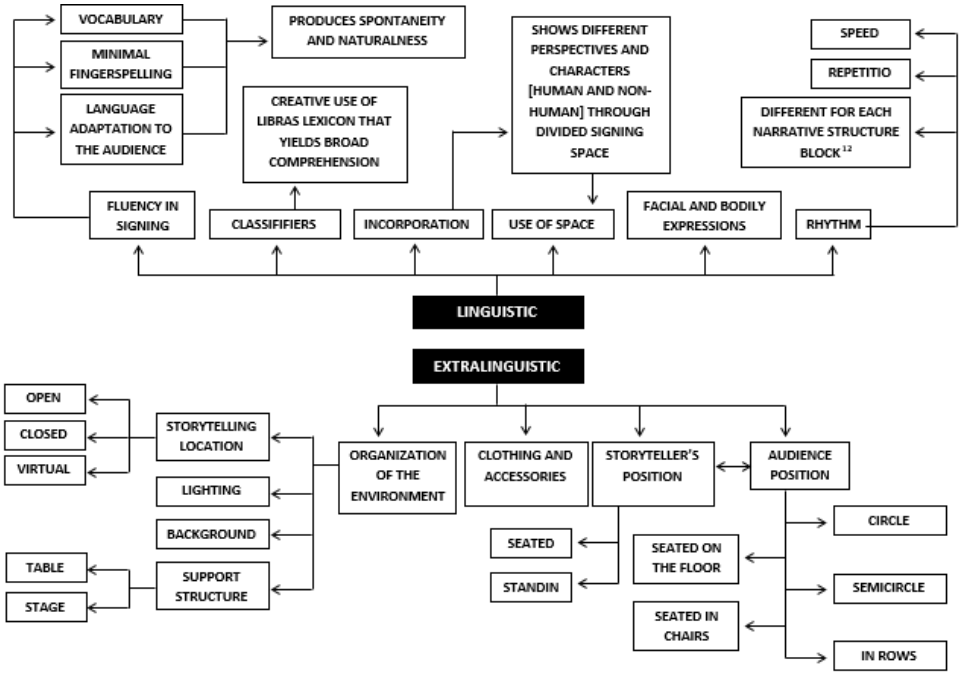
It is evident that some elements — such as incorporation and classifiers — appear more than once in Sutton-Spence's (2021) framework. However, we believe it is worth reiterating them, as this repetition may highlight their importance in a storytelling performance.

The contributions of Costa (2015) and Sutton-Spence (2021) are fundamental for understanding the key aspects of storytelling in school contexts. As previously mentioned, Costa (2015) addresses linguistic and extralinguistic aspects, while Sutton-Spence (2021) focuses on aesthetic appeal. We have chosen to adopt the terms *"linguistic"* and *"extralinguistic"*, as used by Costa (2015), because these terms encompass the aesthetic elements emphasized by Sutton-Spence while avoiding the stronger artistic connotation of her terminology — since our focus lies in the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects relevant to the performance of storytelling by elementary school teachers, which implicitly includes aesthetic considerations.

The figure below presents these aspects, based on the discussions of Costa (2015), Sutton-Spence (2021), and our own perspective, which considers both what is important in signing and the elements deemed significant in studies on storytelling for hearing audiences.

Figure 1

Linguistic and Extralinguistic Aspects of the Storyteller-Teacher's Performance



Source: own work.

[12] According to Sutton-Spence (2021, pp. 113–120), the structure of a story in Libras can be divided into three basic parts: the beginning, the complicating action, and the end. However, there are other structures similar to this

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Based on the framework presented in Figure 1, we prioritized, in the video analysis, the following linguistic aspects: the use of classifiers, incorporation, and rhythm — considering that these elements activate or depend on other features, such as spatial use and facial and bodily expressions. Among the extralinguistic aspects, our analysis focused on the organization of the environment, clothing, and accessories, since we understand that while all elements are present in every performance, some of them become indispensable for ensuring a fluid and comprehensible storytelling experience.

It is important to note that the aspect of "fluency in signing" was intentionally excluded from our analysis. Fluency was a baseline criterion (an inclusion requirement) for selecting the video to be analyzed, and therefore, the teacher in question was unquestionably fluent in Libras. Furthermore, fluency in signing is a sine qua non condition for telling any story in Libras. Without fluency, the storytelling becomes fragmented; the storyteller fails to convey a number of elements in the narrative and is unable to explore the full potential of the story — ultimately failing to be understood. In this sense, we found it more appropriate to analyze the remaining aspects of performance that contribute to a pleasurable and meaningful experience for deaf students.

Recognizing Performative Elements in the Story *Escola Feliz* [*Happy School*]

In this study, we focus on the performance of teachers as storytellers and selected a YouTube video recommended by our interviewee. The storyteller is a teacher at a bilingual school and, according to our interviewee, began posting her lessons on the channel during the COVID-19 pandemic. The channel features 62 videos on various topics, including 7 storytelling videos. The video chosen for our analysis is *Escola Feliz: História em Libras para o retorno às aulas*

one, but with more subdivisions, such as the structure known as Freytag's Pyramid, which includes: beginning, introduction, initiating event, rising action, climax and resolution, and conclusion – coda (here, *coda* refers to the final part of the story that brings closure, and not CODA – child of deaf adults). Another model is the structure of personal narratives described by Labov (1972), which includes: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda. For Sutton-Spence (2021), the paratext (story title, book cover, illustrations/images, greetings and farewells) is also part of the work's structure. Therefore, it should also be considered part of the structure of narratives in Libras.

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presenciais [*Happy School: A Story in Libras for the Return to In-Person Classes*]. We selected this video because it offers a real context of a bilingual institution, in a situation of in-person storytelling recorded on school premises — making it an authentic storytelling performance.

The teacher begins the story by introducing herself, using fingerspelling to state her name and to present the title of the story. She then immediately indicates the sign that will represent the fingerspelled title. The author of the story is not introduced, leaving it unclear whether it is an original[13] story or an adaptation of someone else's work..

We consider that in the storytelling performance of *Escola Feliz*, the teacher primarily draws on modality **(iv) — storytelling with recycled materials, objects, and props** — while also incorporating elements of modality **(iii) — storytelling with illustrations, images, and drawings** — thus presenting a mixed modality. The teacher positions herself as a contemporary storyteller by using more elaborate storytelling resources, such as a box designed to resemble a school, plastic bottles with drawings representing children, miniature masks placed over the drawings of the children, a drawing of the virus, a clock, and images projected in the corners of the screen, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 2

Sequence of signing that showcases the different resources used by the storyteller teacher

1. Use of the Box Designed as a School and of the Clock	2. The Virus	3. Other Resources Used
		

Source: Professora Adriana Libras YouTube channel; "Escola Feliz" (2021)

Given that Libras is a visual-spatial language, deaf education strongly values teaching processes that are grounded in visuality. Therefore, the use of images in storytelling is considered fundamental for constructing the story's setting and characters — and, consequently, for enabling the audience to build meaning. However, in relation to the video production, it is

[13] The teacher was contacted on one of her social networks so that we could obtain some information about the telling of this story, but until the end of this analysis we had not received a response.

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noticeable that at certain points in the story — such as in Figure 2 (Scene 3) — the simultaneous use of two images at opposite ends of the screen, while the physical objects remain arranged on the central structure, may result in divided visual attention, which can be challenging for deaf children.

Focusing on linguistic aspects

Use of Classifiers

In the story Escola Feliz, classifiers are used sparingly. Upon observing the signs employed by the storyteller-teacher, we find that most of them come from the standard Libras lexicon.

According to Carine de Oliveira (2021, online), "many classifiers are used so frequently that they become a 'standard'." Oliveira (2021) emphasizes that, in most cases, it is nevertheless necessary to visualize the object, scene, or character, and to use imagination in order to represent it through a classifier. Creativity must be exercised to develop new handshapes that are more visually expressive..

According to Sutton-Spence (2021), "classifiers are the primary way to show information [...]"(p. 53). From this perspective, one could argue that the teacher could have made greater use of classifiers to convey information and enhance the fluency of the story. However, we consider that the decision to tell this story using visual resources relieved the teacher of the need to use many classifiers, as the materials themselves supported the visual construction of the narrative.

Incorporation

This is one of the elements that appears repeatedly in Sutton-Spence's (2021) work and is also included in the framework proposed by Costa (2015), as it contributes to making storytelling more fluid and engaging by creating more clearly defined visual images, especially when used alongside classifiers.

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According to Sutton-Spence (2021), "sometimes the body incorporates a character who is watching what another character — shown with the hand — is doing". In the story analyzed, we can observe incorporation at various points through the use of divided signing space, as well as facial and bodily expressions. The teacher begins the story with her body centered and her gaze directed at the camera — that is, as if she were looking directly at the viewer. According to Costa (2015), maintaining this direct gaze toward the camera can help establish a narrator–audience connection, but it should not be sustained throughout the narrative, since eye gaze conveys grammatical information, signals character incorporation, and gives life to the story and the actions taking place within it. And this is exactly what happens as the story unfolds.

When, during the storytelling, we see the teacher looking upward and to the sides — as if wondering why the children are absent — or gazing into the distance while signing that the school is waiting for the children to arrive, we interpret this as the gaze of the school itself, waiting for the students. We thus understand this as a moment of incorporation and personification of the character School. As Sutton-Spence (2021) explains, eye gaze "[…] conveys the emotions through the incorporation of characters, and the narrator can use this part of the body to suggest the emotions they want to evoke in the audience" (p. 98). Moreover, gaze creates a sense of space and movement, contributing to the overall harmony of the story..

According to Busatto (2013), "Storytelling calls for eye contact, intimacy, and complicity with the listener […]" (p. 32) — and elsewhere the author adds: "In the live performance of the narrator, there is a present time in a present body, made up of intention, attention, and tension, which is renewed at every moment and lives on in the memory of the participants" (Busatto, 2013, pp. 96–97). In the story analyzed, eye direction is always clearly marked, and even without a physical audience, the storyteller succeeds in maintaining this connection by directing her gaze precisely at the camera. She shifts her gaze to refer to the children in the story and to the school, yet without breaking the link between the story, the storyteller, and the viewer. This is what Sisto (2020, p. 48) calls a diagnostic gaze — a multiple gaze, directed inward, toward the mental imagery of the story being told, toward the audience, and in the specific case of Libras, toward the spatial plane where the events take place. It is this well-distributed gaze that keeps the viewer engaged in the narrative. We observed that the use of space, as a linguistic element in the storyteller's performance, is well conceived and does not extend beyond the visual field of the story's viewer.

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In addition to incorporation through eye gaze, the teacher also shifts her torso and body to the right or left to indicate a change in character. According to Sutton-Spence (2021), "Showing the characters is something that is visually very satisfying for the audience, who sometimes feel as if they are watching characters in a movie" (p. 59). It creates a visual effect of realism — as if we were experiencing the story ourselves.

Rhythm

Referring to Cynthia Peters (2000), Sutton-Spence (2021, p. 87) observes that "[…] sign languages have visual rhythms and a visual musicality that have always been associated with the body." Elsewhere in her work, the author explains:

> Rhythm is the effect we perceive when patterns of repetition are organized in space or time. In Libras, rhythm comes from the visual flow of signs, and we observe patterns in timing (e.g., organized variation in the speed or duration of sign movements and the pauses between them), or in the emphasis of movement (alternating between sharp and smooth movements, for example). Any kind of pattern in the signs and variations of that pattern can create a visual and temporal rhythm. For instance, increasing or decreasing the number of fingers used in a handshape, changing the size of an image, or using different joints (finger, wrist, elbow, or shoulder) (Sutton-Spence, 2021, p. 189 - 190).

Building on the author's contribution, we can observe in the story analyzed a temporal rhythm when the storyteller marks the passing of the months by increasing the number of fingers used on one hand. The teacher's facial expressions and the repetition in the execution of signs establish the visual rhythm of the story. Up to approximately 3 minutes and 37 seconds into the story, her expressions give it a lively and joyful rhythm. From that point onward, the story shifts into a new rhythm: joy gives way to sadness, doubt, concern, and questioning over the students' absence.

Before the story ends, the rhythm changes once again, and joyful expressions return. This observation aligns with the ideas of Sisto (2020, p. 52), who states that "the rhythm used to introduce the elements to be developed in a story cannot be the same as the one used when the story approaches its climax or moment of tension". Likewise,

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> no story maintains the same mood from beginning to end. […] The manipulation of a story's moods is part of the storyteller's skill — anticipating the effects they want to produce in their audience at a given moment, so that the enjoyment of the story becomes greater and greater. (Sisto, 2020, p.52).

As can be observed, the storyteller's astuteness in modulating the pace and tone of the narrative is one of the key performance elements that determine the success of the story.

In Escola Feliz, we notice this astuteness in the teacher-storyteller. There is a well-defined narrative structure with a distinct rhythm for each section. The beginning is marked by a greeting to the audience and the storyteller's introduction, followed by the sentence: "hoje vou contar uma história: Escola Feliz" ["today I'm going to tell a story: Happy School"]. The storyteller fingerspells the title and then immediately signs it. This is the only moment in the story where fingerspelling is used. It is reasonable to use fingerspelling for short titles, author names, or words for which there is no known or established sign. However, as pointed out by Costa (2015) and Sutton-Spence (2021), repeated use of fingerspelling ends up breaking the story's rhythm and making it less engaging.

The story's introduction is done by showing who *Escola Feliz* is and explaining why it is happy. The children are introduced, and there is a brief description of how they arrive at school — nothing too lengthy, since, at times, too much detail can cause the story's rhythm to falter (Sutton-Spence, 2021). Soon after the introduction, the complication begins, when the problem is presented: the children stop attending school. Reflections and information follow about what happened and why, until the problem is resolved, which is the children's return under all the safety measures. It is in this narrative section that a significant change in the story's rhythm occurs.

In this complication section, the resource of slow signing is employed to intensify the actions and evoke suspense and emotion in the viewers. The storyteller's facial expression becomes introspective.

We know that, in reality, the day unfolded at a normal pace, but the teacher signed with a slow-motion effect to convey the school's waiting for the students and, in a way, to reflect the feeling experienced by everyone who stayed at home during the period of social isolation, hoping to be able to go out again. In some way, portraying this situation moves the audience emotionally.

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The repeated signing of the school's act of thinking (once again the storyteller embodies the school and angles her gaze upward, as if the school were looking up and pondering the situation) functions as a brief pause in the story, prompting the viewer to also reflect on this period of waiting and what was happening — and encouraging them to continue watching the story to find out what happens next.

At the end of the narrative, the storyteller establishes contact with the audience, even if virtually. She asks: "So, have you already learned the new rules?" After an imaginary reply, she says: "Ok. Then you may enter the school." The story ends on a positive note with an explanation and a warning: "The school is happy because the students can return to their studies, as long as they follow the new rules. Life hasn't gone back to how it used to be, but if everyone follows the rules, in the future everything will return to normal. Bye!"

In this section, we observed how the use of linguistic aspects contributes to the storyteller teacher's performance being spontaneous and natural. By employing Libras vocabulary, classifiers, incorporation — along with facial and bodily expressions and the use of space — the teacher signs and handles the objects without breaking the rhythm of the story. This fosters both understanding of the narrative and the acquisition of grammatical aspects of the language, even if these are not explicitly explained to the child. Thus, in addition to all the benefits of a good storytelling session for educational processes involving deaf students, when the child later tells a true or fictional story, they may recall these elements and incorporate them into their own signing.

Focusing on extralinguistic aspects

Organization of the setting

Regarding the organization of the setting, we observed that the camera framing was well executed. However, the base structure used to place and move the bottles representing the children in the story was somewhat limited. It is worth mentioning that the story was also told in person at the school, and based on photos shared on the institution's Instagram page, the structure used there was more spacious, allowing for better distribution of the characters — particularly relevant when emphasizing the importance of maintaining distance from classmates. This helps make the concept of distancing more understandable.

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As for the physical setting where the story was told in person, it is not possible to determine whether it was an open or closed space, nor what the flow of people was like. Nonetheless, it is important to note that a location with minimal foot traffic and few interruptions helps sustain children's attention during the story.

When a child is already familiar with the story being told, even if they become distracted, upon returning their attention to the story, they are likely able to refocus and understand the sequence of events. However, if the story is new to them, this continuity is lost, and comprehension and interest may be compromised.

From the video and the images shared on the institution's Instagram page, it is possible to observe that in both the virtual and in-person storytelling sessions, the environment was well lit and the background was neutral. In both settings, a blue cloth backdrop was used, which provided better visibility of the signing and improved understanding of the story.

Clothing and accessories

Regarding the attire worn by the storyteller teacher, the neutral color of her blouse facilitates the visibility of the signing—except when she presents the drawing of the virus on a green sheet of paper, which matches the color of the blouse. The multicolored skirt, with vertical stripes, introduces an excess of visual information at the moment when the characters are placed on the setup structure, as can be seen in the previously shown Figure 2. The skirt ends up becoming a background for the characters. Had the structure supporting the characters been positioned slightly higher, so that the skirt would only become visible when the storyteller moved beyond the structure, the effect would have been different.

According to Garcia *et al.* (2003), "whenever [...] one is going to tell a story, it is good to use some accessory that marks the change of roles—in other words, to transform yourself into a storyteller. That way, [...] [the spectator] will have one more reason to enter this world of imagination" (p. 52). This quote aligns with our view, as we believe that using an item of clothing or accessory — such as a skirt, a hat, or a suitcase, depending on the story and its characters — marks the shift from the teacher figure to the storyteller teacher, setting the storytelling moment apart from just another regular class. In this particular case, the use of the skirt did not hinder

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the understanding of the story, but it is important that the storyteller teacher pays attention to these details and ensures visual clarity during storytelling in Libras.

In this final section, we prioritized the organization of the environment, clothing, and accessories, but we are aware that the position of the storyteller and the audience is also important. In our view, the audience's positioning is directly related to that of the storyteller, in order to allow for better visual access. Although Araújo, Tavares, and Nascimento (2021) state that telling a story in Libras while seated establishes a unique connection and creates a feeling of closeness with the audience, in the story *Escola Feliz* ["Happy School"], where the storyteller remains standing throughout the narrative, that same closeness was achieved through the well-distributed gaze of the storyteller and the questions she poses during the story. Moreover, the fact that she stands while telling the story allowed for greater flexibility in handling the resources.

As for the audience's position, it is noticeable — in the photos posted on Instagram — that, during the in-person session, the children were seated on chairs arranged in rows. This certainly placed the children's field of vision at the height of the props and the signing space. Ideally, the audience should be arranged in a semicircle to facilitate visibility, placing younger children at the front, closer to the storyteller. However, in this case, we understand that the row arrangement did not hinder visibility, given the limited number of spectators. Furthermore, the storyteller teacher's performance and the materials used contribute to the comprehension of the content and to achieving the intended goals. The story also supports the linguistic and cognitive development of the children.

And so the article comes to an end...

> *[...]With bare feet, the many rules of what can and cannot be done — rules that act more like tight shoes that imprison us and restrict artistic creation — no longer make sense on the path. What matters is the constant search for ways to tell each story in the way that our feet on the ground allow us to… [...]*
>
> (Geroldi, 2021, p. 103).

We opened this article by addressing precisely what Geroldi (2021) evokes in this quote. We emphasized that our aim was not to prescribe a model or a "correct" way of storytelling and, to paraphrase Geroldi (2021), it is also not our intention to place "tight shoes" on any

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storytelling teacher — for each storyteller shapes their own path "in the way their feet on the ground allow", barefoot and free from the "tight shoes that imprison and limit artistic creation".

We have found that there are various possibilities and strategies for storytelling. The storytelling modality chosen by the teacher-storyteller is what defines their performance. It is essential that the teacher be aware that storytelling in the school context serves a broader process of cognitive, linguistic, and cultural-identity development — and that certain aspects of performance, such as fluency in signing, are non-negotiable and fundamental for the practice to be effective and conducive to development. Signing fluency is a common and essential element in all storytelling practices and is a core component of the teacher-storyteller's performance.

As for extralinguistic aspects, we consider the organization of the environment and the use of clothing and accessories to be of particular importance, insofar as they enhance the visual quality of what is being signed. Other linguistic and extralinguistic elements will be present in the performance, but they will gain more or less prominence — and be more or less decisive — depending on the storytelling modality chosen by the teacher.

In the video *Escola Feliz* [*Happy School*], we observed that the use of classifiers was limited by the choice of resources employed — which did not present itself as a problem. The manipulation of objects to create the story's scenes; the presentation of the school, adorned with eyes, a mouth, eyebrows, and a nose that conveyed expressions; the gates that opened; and the children represented by drawings glued onto plastic bottles, all helped relieve the teacher from the need to classify the characters and the situations they experienced. In this storytelling modality, the extralinguistic aspect of "setting organization" is, to some extent, constrained in a virtual setting, since the physical space of the structure used to display the characters was small relative to the number of objects presented. This, however, does not mean the storytelling experience was negatively impacted.

In this article, by discussing storytelling in Libras within the school context and reflecting on the performance of the teacher-storyteller, we encountered various storytelling modalities in use, each highlighting different performative aspects. In our view, this reveals the creative engagement of teachers in supporting the educational process of deaf students. We believe it is important to navigate across these different modalities when telling stories at school, in order to offer deaf students a variety of experiences — since each student experiences and interacts with the world in a unique and personal way.

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At the end of this article, our hope is that teachers — supported by the school as a space of multiple forms of learning — do not allow this practice of embracing multiple storytelling modalities, performances, and possibilities to fade away. And to conclude, let us draw once more from a magical formula, just as we did at the beginning of one of this article's sections and as we like to do at the end of our storytelling sessions: "I have told my story, and now I place it in your hands". In other words, we have presented the key elements for telling a story in Libras, and now we place them in the hands of our readers — so that they may build their own performance.

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