

# Academic literacy for deaf college students: reading evaluation

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## Abstract

This work presents considerations on academic literacy and reading abilities by Deaf Brazilian university students, based on a reading activity in Portuguese, and their learning history and use of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). It is part of a PhD thesis in Applied Linguistics (in progress).

The analysed data was taken from a course created for this specific research project. The course was developed in a virtual learning environment consisting of a set of workshops that intended to provide educational support for students to develop their proficiency in Portuguese in the written form, through activities related to reading, reading comprehension, textual production and grammar exercises.

For discussion proposed here, I present some concepts that show the importance of the reader's prior knowledge for the meaning construction in reading, according to Rojo (2004; 2010), Soares (2010) and Kleiman (1993). I also intend to connect these

concepts on Deaf literacy, regarding the teaching of reading to these subjects, with Karnopp and Pereira's (2010), Karnopp's (2005) and Lodi's (2004) work. We started from the concept of literacy as a plural, multiple concept (cf. Street, 1995 and Rojo, 2004); in this sense, we understand literacy as a social practice capable of changing social place, the way of living in society and the cultural insertion (cf. Smith, 2010). It is possible to conclude that there are still many gaps to be filled in Deaf education, especially in the subjects that contribute to the Deaf students' literacy. Unfortunately, these people have later acquisition of their natural language, the Sign Language, and therefore having missed many opportunities for interaction and information about their communities, their history, and their culture. This loss directly influences their world knowledge, which is an important strategy for the construction of meaning as readers, coupled with little knowledge in Portuguese that was not properly taught in school.

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