

LANGUAGE POLICIES FOR BRAZILIAN SIGN LANGUAGE (LIBRAS) AND FOR THE DEAF COMMUNITY(IES) IN BRAZIL

POLÍTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS PARA A LÍNGUA BRASILEIRA DE SINAIS (LIBRAS) E PARA A(S)
COMUNIDADE(S) SURDA(S) NO BRASIL

POLÍTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS PARA LA LENGUA DE SEÑAS BRASILEÑA (LIBRAS) Y PARA LA(S)
COMUNIDAD(ES) DE SORDOS EN BRASIL

Diego Barbosa da Silva*

National Archives of Brazil

ABSTRACT: In this paper, we propose to map, identify, and analyze the official language policies at the national level aimed at Libras and the Deaf population currently in force in Brazil. Through consultation with several federal public agencies, we classified the policies and actions mentioned in the following categories: status, corpus, acquisition, and language-structuring planning (Kloss, 1968; Cooper, 1997 [1989]; Barbosa da Silva, 2024). Subsequently, analyzing these policies, we observed that most of them are status and acquisition policies. Corpus and structuring policies are fewer in number and more recent. Based on this analysis, we conclude that Brazil still faces many challenges in guaranteeing linguistic rights for the Deaf Community(s), despite continuous advances, with resistance to setbacks, since the approval of Law No. 10.436/2002.

KEYWORDS: Language policy; Libras; Brazil; Deaf Community.

RESUMO: Nesta pesquisa nos dispusemos a levantar, identificar e analisar as políticas linguísticas oficiais a nível nacional voltadas para a Libras e para a população Surda vigentes atualmente no Brasil. Por meio da consulta de diversos órgãos públicos federais, foi possível classificar as políticas nas seguintes categorias: políticas linguísticas de status, de corpus, de aquisição e estruturantes (Kloss, 1968; Cooper, 1997 [1989]; Barbosa da Silva, 2024). Posteriormente, analisando essas políticas, percebemos que a maioria delas são de status e de aquisição. As políticas de corpus e as estruturantes são em menor número e mais recentes. Com isso, concluímos que o Brasil ainda enfrenta muitos desafios na garantia de direitos linguísticos para a(s) Comunidade(s) Surda(s), apesar dos avanços contínuos, com resistências e retrocessos, desde a aprovação da Lei nº 10.436/2002.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Política linguística; Libras; Brasil; Comunidade Surda.

RESUMEN: En esta investigación nos propusimos encuestar, identificar y analizar las políticas lingüísticas nacionales oficiales dirigidas a Libras y a la población Sorda actualmente vigentes en Brasil. A través de consultas con varios organismos públicos federales, fue posible clasificar las políticas en las siguientes categorías: políticas de status, corpus, adquisición y estructuración de la lengua (Kloss, 1968; Cooper, 1997 [1989]; Barbosa da Silva, 2024). Posteriormente, analizando estas políticas, nos dimos cuenta de que la mayoría son políticas de status y adquisición. Las políticas de corpus y estructuración son menores y más recientes. Con esto, concluimos que Brasil aún enfrenta muchos desafíos en la garantía de los derechos lingüísticos de la(s) comunidad(s) sorda(s), a pesar de continuos avances, con resistencias y retrocesos, desde la aprobación de la Ley n. 10.436/2002.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Política lingüística; Libras; Brasil; Comunidad Sorda.

* Doctor of Language Studies. Researcher at the National Archives of Brazil. E-mail: vsjd@uol.com.br.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the approval of Brazilian Law No. 10,436/2002, which regulates Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), we have seen an increase in government initiatives for this language in Brazil. These measures are aimed at its use, promotion, development of linguistic tools, and teaching. But after just over two decades, have sufficient policies been created and developed to guarantee linguistic rights for Deaf Brazilians? In this paper, we propose to survey, identify, and analyze the official national language policies currently in force in Brazil aimed at Libras and the Deaf population. But before that, it is necessary to present what we understand by language policies.

2 WHAT ARE LANGUAGE POLICIES?

Generally speaking, language policy is an action adopted to solve an issue related to a language or multiple languages. In the field of Language Studies, language policies began to be observed in the 1950s and 1960s with the independence of former European colonies in Asia and Africa. Although language policies had already been adopted by European countries centuries before, the possibility of holding a debate began based on a theory developing at that same time called Language Policy, capitalized here to distinguish it from its object of study. Thus, some researchers argued that to build a national identity that would unite diverse peoples within the same territory of the former colonies, it was necessary to develop a national language for these new countries.

From the moment a state becomes concerned with managing its language situation, the problem arises of knowing what means it has at its disposal to do so. How can we intervene in the form of languages? How can we modify the relationships between languages? What processes allow us to move from a general language policy stage to the implementation stage, language planning? (Calvet, 2007, p. 62).

Contributing to the construction of a theoretical perspective for the emerging field at that time, Kloss (1968) defined that language policies could be categorized in two ways, which he called language status planning and language corpus planning, a distinction with important repercussions to this day. The first category encompasses policies related to the social status of the language or variant and its relationship with other languages or variants, that is, policies that determine functions or uses for the language or variant, whether as an official, international, national, regional, literary, religious, touristic, educational, school subject, judicial, media language, or even those present in the linguistic landscape, on the streets, on urban signs and displays. It is precisely this status that leads us to consider a language as majority, minority, or minoritized. Such distinctions are not related, for example, to the number of speakers per se, but rather to the power relations that establish these meanings of language based on current language policies. Under the second concept, that of language corpus planning, those focused on the code, the structure of languages, would be classified, prescribing interventions in spelling, grammar or lexicon, such as “creating a vocabulary or fighting against borrowings” (Calvet, 2007, p. 29).

These policies would thus act internally and externally to promote language unity. Years later, in the late 1980s, Cooper (1997 [1989]) realized that there could be a third category for classifying language policies. He called language acquisition planning, those related to the dissemination of languages or variants, that is, policies to increase the number of speakers of native, foreign, or minority languages, which distinguished them from status planning, which, for him, were more restricted to expanding the use of languages. It is worth emphasizing, once again, the role of the school system in language standardization and the imposition of the imaginary national language, as a language policy in almost all nation states. This category was so accepted by the field that Johnson and Ricento (*apud* Sousa; Roca, 2015, p. 12) stated that “the inclusion of acquisition planning into the established status/corpus dichotomy gave educational language policy a sort of official status within the field, and since then, it has become an important area of research and scholarship.” These three categories, therefore, began to organize and direct various studies in the field of Language Policy.

However, more recently, on another occasion (Barbosa da Silva, 2024), when surveying and analyzing state language policies for Indigenous peoples in Brazil after the 1988 Federal Constitution, we identified a possible fourth category of language policies, which

¹ According to Auroux (2009), language instruments are language technologies, such as dictionaries and grammars, which are organized based on writing.

we call structuring. Language structuring policies would be those that provide guidelines and often create specific state institutions, agencies, or apparatuses for language policies, placing them in a hierarchically superior position to the other typologies, proposed by Kloss (1968) and Cooper (1997 [1989]).

These categories are important because they help researchers analyze a political situation and propose actions that can change the language environment under consideration. Therefore, we will use them to guide us and to identify and analyze the official language policies in force for Brazilian Sign Language and the Brazilian Deaf Community(s). Let us now examine how our research methodology was developed.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As mentioned, our objective with this research is to survey, identify, and analyze official language policies, those implemented by the Brazilian government at the national level and currently in force in the country. To better assess this, we submitted access to information requests to agencies and departments in the federal legislative, executive, and judicial branches, as well as the Public Prosecutor's Office. In these requests, we asked whether there was any language policy for the deaf population, especially involving Libras, within their sphere of activity. If so, we requested more information about the objectives of these policies, actions, programs, or ongoing projects. Thus, we submitted 48 access to information requests to the agencies listed below, completed in September 2024, as can be seen in Table 1.

Branch of government	Agencies and departments	Protocol	Date
Federal Legislative	Chamber of Deputies	2024092000000043	09/20/2024
	Federal Senate	24000630934	09/20/2024
Federal Executive	Presidency of the Republic	00137006732202443	09/20/2024
	Chief of Staff of the Presidency	00137006730202454	09/20/2024
	Institutional Security Bureau	00137006731202407	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	21210008735202461	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	01217009022202448	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Culture	01400001973202400	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Defense	60110003069202455	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Education	23546086905202482	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Finance	18800238083202433	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services	18002009784202462	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Racial Equality	21291000572202416	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Integration and Regional Development	59009002576202450	09/20/2024
	Ministry of Justice and Public Security	08198036233202478	09/20/2024

Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture	00380001914202446	09/20/2024
Ministry of Social Security	36777002530202434	09/20/2024
Ministry of Health	25072050946202480	09/20/2024
Ministry of Cities	80002002888202410	09/20/2024
Ministry of Communications	53125001374202488	09/20/2024
Ministry of Women	21260000644202492	09/20/2024
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	09002002168202490	09/20/2024
Ministry of Mines and Energy	48003007649202433	09/20/2024
Ministry of Ports and Airports	55001001015202452	09/20/2024
Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming	54800000628202402	09/20/2024
Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger	71003058503202478	09/20/2024
Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services	52016002330202440	09/20/2024
Ministry of Entrepreneurship, Microenterprise and Small Businesses	16100000953202465	09/20/2024
Ministry of Sports	58000000747202423	09/20/2024
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	02303017591202451	09/20/2024
Ministry of Planning and Budget	03002001154202472	09/20/2024
Ministry of Labor and Employment	19955041861202472	09/20/2024
Ministry of Tourism	72020002202202444	09/20/2024
Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship	00105004218202441	09/20/2024
Ministry of Indigenous Peoples	15001000430202474	09/20/2024
Ministry of Transport	50001082674202468	09/20/2024
Secretariat of Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic	00137006729202420	09/20/2024
Secretariat of Institutional Relations of the Presidency of the Republic	00137006734202432	09/20/2024
General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic	00137006733202498	09/20/2024
Attorney General's Office	01015002376202438	09/20/2024
National Council of Justice	445143	09/20/2024

Federal Judiciary	Supreme Federal Court	03746202403450348	09/20/2024
	Superior Court of Justice	62475	09/20/2024
	Superior Military Court	020815/24-00.019	09/20/2024
	Superior Electoral Court	66809620111935	09/20/2024
	Superior Labor Court	12155/2024	09/22/2024
Federal Public Prosecutor's Office	National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office	20240007167	09/22/2024
	Federal Public Prosecutor's Office	20240063149	09/22/2024

Table 1: Public bodies consulted through access to information requests for the survey of language policies for the Deaf population
Source: Prepared by the author

Since, according to the Access to Public Information Law (Law No. 12,527/2011), public institutions are required to respond to requests for information of this nature, all agencies responded within a maximum of 30 days and provided us with a total of approximately 80 information pages. Choosing this survey format is important because, in addition to demonstrating the awareness of public administrators at the agencies we consulted, it can act as a kind of provocation, prompting these same administrators to reflect on the need for their agencies to take action, in this case, for the Deaf Community(s). Of the 48 agencies we consulted, a minority (23) mentioned the existence of policies for the Deaf population. The majority (25) told us that they did not have language policies for the Deaf within their scope of action.

Based on this archive, composed of responses to our inquiries to public agencies and other documents they attached, we identified language policies aimed at Libras and the Deaf population. Accordingly, we present below, in Tables 2 to 5, each of these language policies we identified, organized by policy category, in alphabetical order of the agencies consulted from the Legislative, Executive, Judiciary, and Federal Public Prosecutor's Offices. The agencies not mentioned in the tables are those that reported having no language policy for the Deaf population within their scope of action or that reported other actions unrelated to this segment of the Brazilian population.

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate	Law No. 10,436/2002	It declares Libras as a legal means of communication and expression, with a linguistic system for transmitting ideas and facts, originating from communities of deaf people in Brazil. It recognizes that the State must support the use and dissemination of Brazilian Sign Language - Libras as a means of objective communication and current use by deaf communities in Brazil.
	Law No. 12,319/2010, amended by Law No. 14,704/2023	It establishes criteria for professionals to work as translators and interpreters of Libras/Portuguese/Libras, ensuring quality for the activity.
	Law No. 13,055/2014	It establishes a national commemorative day for Libras: April 24th.
	Law No. 13,146/2015	It establishes criteria for professionals to work as translators and interpreters of Libras/Portuguese Language/Libras, ensuring quality for the activity.

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
		<p>It declares that notices for selection processes for higher education and professional and technological education institutions must be translated into Libras.</p> <p>It declares that websites of public agencies and companies in Brazil must be accessible using Libras.</p> <p>It declares that sound and image broadcasting services must allow the use of the Libras.</p> <p>It declares that the government must encourage the production of books in Libras through financing and purchasing books for public libraries and schools.</p> <p>It declares that the government must encourage and support the adaptation and production of scientific articles in Libras.</p> <p>It ensures that the material used for deaf people in driving license classes is in Libras.</p>
	Law No. 9,394/1996 amended by Law No. 14,191/2021	It recognizes as a teaching principle respect for the human, language, cultural and identity diversity of deaf, deaf-blind and hearing-impaired people.
Chamber of Deputies	Accessibility Services Charter	<p>It declares the possibility of service in Libras, available since 2009, upon request.</p> <p>Is declares that access to the Chamber's Portal on the internet can be done through VLibras, a translation tool for Libras.</p> <p>It declares that TV Câmara programming, since 2009, must be broadcast in Libras.</p> <p>It declares that in-person, blended, and virtual legislative events must have simultaneous interpretation into Libras.</p>
Federal Senate	Not informed	It declares that TV Senado programming, since 2021, must be broadcast in Libras.
	Accessibility Plan 2024-2025	<p>It allows you to submit a Legislative Idea in Libras and if the Idea receives 20,000 supporters in 4 months on the Senate portal, it can be transformed into a Bill in the Senate.</p> <p>It provides interpretation services in Libras for events and Libras/Portuguese translation services for videos.</p> <p>It offers visits with mediators fluent in Libras – or accompanied by Libras interpreters – for groups of people.</p> <p>It provides for the translation and availability on the Senate Digital Library Portal of 20 pieces of legislation in Libras.</p>

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
Presidency of the Republic	Decree No. 5,626/2005 amended by Decree No. 9,656/2018	It declares that notices for selection processes for higher education and professional and technological education institutions must be translated into Libras.
		It establishes service in federal public bodies and services in Libras.
		It promotes service in state, municipal and district public bodies and services in Libras.
		It establishes that websites and service letters from federal public agencies be made available in Libras.
	Decree No. 9,508/2018	It promotes that websites and service letters from state, municipal and district public agencies are made available in Libras.
		It ensures candidates for public exams and selection processes have access to the test in Libras.
		It encourages the promotion of inclusion and accessibility practices such as the interpretation of Brazilian Sign Language – Libras.
	Not informed	It promotes communication accessibility in institutional events and publications.
Chief of Staff of the Presidency	Not informed	It promotes communication accessibility in institutional events and publications.
Ministry of Culture	Not informed	It promotes communication accessibility in institutional events and publications.
Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services	Not informed	It establishes that access to Federal Government websites can be done through VLibras, a translation tool for Libras.
	Multi-year Plan 2024-2027	It foresees an increase in the number of services that use VLibras, prioritizing those with the highest demand.
Ministry of Social Security	Not informed	It establishes service in Libras at the National Social Security Institute (INSS) via video call by appointment by a listener through the Libras Service Center (CAL).
		It produces public service videos in Libras on the National Social Security Institute (INSS) YouTube channel.
		It establishes access to the Meu INSS (National Social Security Institute app) through VLibras, a translation tool for Libras.
Ministry of Communications	MCom Consolidation Ordinance No. 1/2023	It establishes that political-party and electoral propaganda, institutional and public utility campaigns broadcast by TV and radio concessionaires must contain a space with a Libras interpreter.

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
		It is recommended that digital TV in Brazil allow the optional activation of the space with a Libras interpreter, in order to enable its broadcasting throughout the programming.
Ministry of Integration and Regional Development	Not informed	It produces institutional and public service videos with a Libras space for dissemination on social media.
Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Not informed	It creates the National Libras Interpretation Center (Conecte Libras Brasil), in partnership with Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, with free provision of a technological platform that promotes communication between deaf and hearing people, through video calls.
Ministry of Women	Not informed	It establishes service in Libras via video call at the Women's Service Center - Call 180.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Not informed	It offers visits with mediators fluent in Libras for groups of Deaf people.
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Not informed	It establishes that meetings of the National Environmental Council (CONAMA) be held with Libras interpreters and made available on YouTube.
Ministry of Transport	Not informed	It promotes communication accessibility in institutional events and publications.
Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship	Decentralized Execution Agreement with Federal University of Paraíba	It develops VLibras, a translation tool for Libras.
	National Rights Plan of People with Disabilities — New Living Without Limits	It creates the National Libras Interpretation Center (Conecte Libras Brasil) with free provision of a technological platform that promotes communication between deaf and hearing people, through video calls.
Secretariat of Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic	SECOM Normative Instruction No. 03/2023	It promotes communication accessibility in institutional events and publications.
	Not informed	It promotes the translation of materials on the G20 website into Libras, in VBook format.
National Council of Justice	CNJ Resolution No. 401/2021	<p>It promotes and implements the use of Libras in the Judiciary.</p> <p>It declares the mandatory appointment of a Libras translator and interpreter, whenever a person with a hearing impairment appears in the process.</p> <p>It declares the mandatory appointment or permission to use a guide-interpreter, whenever a Deafblind person appears in the process.</p>

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
		It declares that the service can be provided in Libras.
Superior Court of Justice	Not informed	<p>It declares that access to the STJ Superior Court of Justice website on the internet can be done through VLibras, a translation tool for Libras.</p> <p>It declares that service at the Ombudsman's Office can be provided in Libras.</p> <p>It declares that Superior Court of Justice sessions must be broadcast with a Libras space.</p>
Supreme Federal Court	Not informed	<p>It declares that service can be provided in Libras, upon request.</p> <p>It declares that Supreme Federal Court sessions must be broadcast with a Libras space.</p> <p>It declares that events may have simultaneous interpretation into Libras, upon request.</p>
Superior Electoral Court	Not informed	<p>It determines the availability of electronic voting machines in Libras.</p> <p>It determines service on election days in Libras.</p> <p>It declares that access to electoral justice websites on the internet can be carried out using Libras translation technologies.</p> <p>It declares that Superior Electoral Court sessions must be broadcast with a Libras space.</p>
Superior Labor Court	CSJT Resolution No. 386/2024.	<p>It declares that service can be provided in Libras, upon request.</p> <p>It declares that Superior Labor Court sessions must be broadcast with a Libras space.</p> <p>It declares that events may have simultaneous interpretation into Libras, upon request.</p> <p>It ensures that candidates for public examinations and selection processes in the labor court system have access to the test in Libras.</p>

Table 2: Language status policies identified for the Deaf population

Source: Prepared by the author

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
Chamber of Deputies	Not informed	It created a dictionary with more than 1,200 political-legislative terms in Libras.
Ministry of Education	Not informed	It establishes the National Textbook Plan (PNLD) - Bilingual Education for the Deaf Modality, aimed at the distribution of didactic, pedagogical and literary works.
Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship	Decentralized Execution Agreement with Federal University of Paraíba	It promotes the expansion of the Portuguese-Libras bilingual reference corpus, the evolution and improvement of the quality of the automatic translation of the VLibras.
Supreme Federal Court	Not informed	It establishes the "Law in Libras Project", available on YouTube, in which a glossary of legal terms in Libras was created.

Table 3: Language corpus policies identified for the Deaf population

Source: Prepared by the author

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate	Law No. 10,436/2002	It determines that the teaching of Libras must be included in the curriculum of training courses in Special Education, Speech Therapy and Teaching.
	Law No. 13,146/2015	It declares the responsibility of the public authorities to ensure, create, develop, implement, encourage, monitor and evaluate the provision of bilingual education, in Libras as the first language and in the written form of Portuguese as the second language, in bilingual schools and classes and in inclusive schools. It declares the responsibility of the public authorities to ensure, encourage and evaluate the training and provision of teachers for specialized educational services, Libras translators and interpreters, interpreter guides and support professionals.
	Law No. 9,394/1996 amended by Law No. 14,191/2021	It determines the provision of bilingual and intercultural education, in Libras as the first language and in the written form of Portuguese as the second language, in bilingual schools and classes.
Federal Senate	Accessibility Plan 2024-2025	It declares that a Libras course must be offered to Senate employees.
Presidency of the Republic	Decree No. 5,626/2005 amended by Decree No. 9,656/2018	It guarantees the teaching of Libras in federal educational institutions. It promotes the teaching of Libras in private and public institutions of the federal, state, municipal and Federal District education systems. It determines that the teaching of Libras must be included in the curriculum of training courses in Special Education, Speech Therapy and Teaching.

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
		<p>It determines that Libras constitutes an optional curricular subject in other higher education courses and in professional education.</p> <p>It promotes the creation of undergraduate courses in Bilingual Pedagogy; a degree in Libras Literature; and Translation and Interpretation of Libras - Portuguese Language.</p> <p>It promotes the creation of postgraduate courses in Special Education and Libras for teachers in education systems.</p>
Ministry of Education	Not informed	<p>It trains teachers in continuing education courses, in partnership with 10 Education Institutions.</p> <p>It encourages Education Institutions to train teachers in degrees in Bilingual Education for the Deaf.</p> <p>It transfers financial resources to schools to create resource rooms for Bilingual Education for the Deaf.</p>
	Multi-year Plan 2024-2027	<p>It increases the number of enrollments of deaf, hearing impaired and deaf-blind students in bilingual education.</p> <p>It expands the number of places on continuing education courses for teachers and basic education professionals in bilingual education for the deaf.</p> <p>It supports schools in the field of Bilingual Education for the Deaf, with the creation of a Bilingual Toy Library and Audiovisual Laboratory.</p>
Ministry of Mines and Energy	Not informed	It declares that a Libras course must be offered to Ministry employees.
Ministry of Tourism	Not informed	It declares that it offers a Libras course for tourism professionals.
Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship	Funding Agreement - "Two Languages and One Story" Project, with the Association of Parents and Friends of the Hearing Impaired - APADA/CE	It promotes a basic course in Libras, lectures and workshops on human rights and combating ableism.
	Decentralized Execution Agreement with the Federal University of Tocantins	It promotes the training of education professionals and local deaf leaders in Tocantins in human rights, for the implementation of basic bilingual education for the deaf in 13 cities and towns in Tocantins.
	National Rights Plan	It promotes the training of 3,500 professionals in bilingual education for the deaf by 2024, in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
	of People with Disabilities — New Living Without Limits	<p>It promotes the creation of 80 videos with bilingual material, in partnership with the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>It allocates resources for actions at the National Institute for the Deaf (INES), in partnership with the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>It promotes training for 6,000 public safety professionals in Libras, in partnership with Ministry of Justice and Public Security.</p>
National Council of Justice	CNJ Resolution No. 401/2021	It determines that each department of the Judiciary must have at least 5% (five percent) of its employees with basic training in Libras.
Superior Court of Justice	Not informed	<p>It establishes the “Brigada em Libras Program”, signed in 2017, which requires a Libras course certificate to occupy positions of Civil Firefighter Leader and for one of the Civil Firefighter positions of the Superior Court of Justice.</p> <p>It declares that a Libras course must be offered to Superior Court of Justice employees and collaborators.</p>
Superior Labor Court	CSJT Resolution No. 386/2024.	It declares that a Libras course must be offered to Superior Labor Court employees.
National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office	National Public Service Policy	It declares that a Libras course must be offered to Public Prosecutor's Office employees.

Table 4: Language acquisition policies identified for the Deaf population

Source: Prepared by the author

Agencies and departments	Laws and regulations	Policy identified by the author from the responses
Ministry of Education	Decree No. 11,691/2023	It creates the Directorate of Bilingual Education Policies for the Deaf within the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Youth and Adult Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion within the Ministry of Education with the responsibility of coordinating language policies for the acquisition of Libras.

Table 5: Language structuring policies identified for the Deaf population

Source: Prepared by the author

After surveying and identifying language policies, we realized that some of them are common to several federal government agencies mapped, generally those established by law or decree. Two examples of these policies are the possibility of providing services in Libras, mentioned by 14 agencies and departments, and the provision of Libras translation on the agency's website or portal through a technological tool, mentioned by 9 agencies and departments, as can be seen in the tables above.

Therefore, to aid our analysis, we grouped similar policies, totaling 35 language policies identified by us from the documents provided, as can be seen in Table 6 below.

Language policy type	Language policy identified	Number of agencies and departments adopting the policy
Status	It declares Libras as a legal means of communication and expression, with a linguistic system for transmitting ideas and facts, originating from communities of deaf people in Brazil.	1
	It recognizes that the State must support the use and dissemination of Brazilian Sign Language - Libras as a means of objective communication and current use by deaf communities in Brazil.	1
	It recognizes as a teaching principle respect for the human, language, cultural and identity diversity of deaf, deafblind and hearing-impaired people.	1
	It establishes a national commemorative day for Libras: April 24th.	1
	It establishes criteria for professionals to work as translators and interpreters of Libras/Portuguese/Libras, ensuring quality for the activity.	2
	It declares that the government must encourage the production of books in Libras through financing and purchasing books for public libraries and schools.	1
	It declares that the government must encourage and support the adaptation and production of scientific articles in Libras.	1
	It ensures that the material used for deaf people in driving license classes is in Libras.	1
	It establishes and promotes services in Libras, upon request or otherwise.	15
	It provides Libras/Portuguese interpretation services for events.	9
	It provides for the translation and availability on the Senate Digital Library Portal of 20 laws in Libras.	1
	It ensures and promotes the teaching of Libras in educational institutions.	2
	It develops VLibras, a translation tool for Libras to be used on websites.	1
	It establishes and promotes that websites and services of public agencies are made available in Libras.	11
	It ensures that candidates for public examinations and selection processes for educational institutions have access to notices and tests in Libras.	4
	It encourages the promotion of inclusion and accessibility practices through the use of Brazilian Sign Language – Libras.	2
	It declares that sound and image broadcasting services must allow the use of the Libras space.	1

	It establishes that political-party and electoral propaganda, institutional and public utility campaigns broadcast by TV and radio concessionaires must contain a space with a Libras interpreter.	1
	It recommends that digital TV in Brazil allow the optional activation of the space with a Libras interpreter, in order to enable its broadcasting throughout the programming.	1
	It produces institutional and public service videos with a Libras space for dissemination on social media.	2
	It creates the National Libras Interpretation Center (Conecte Libras Brasil) with free provision of a technological platform that promotes communication between deaf and hearing people, through video calls.	1
	It ensures the presence of a translator and sign language interpreter or a guide-interpreter when a person with a hearing impairment appears in the process.	2
	It declares that sessions of the Legislative and Judicial Branches must be broadcast with a Libras space.	6
Corpus	It established institutional glossaries of terms in Libras or tools for expanding the language corpus.	3
	It establishes the National Textbook Plan (PNLD) Bilingual Education for the Deaf Modality, aimed at the distribution of didactic, pedagogical and literary works.	1
Acquisition	It determines the inclusion of Libras in the curriculum of Special Education, Speech Therapy and Teaching training courses.	2
	It determines the provision and expansion of bilingual education, in Libras as the first language and in the written form of Portuguese as the second language, in bilingual schools and classes.	5
	It offers training in Bilingual Pedagogy; a degree in Libras Literature; and Translation and Interpretation of Libras - Portuguese Language.	3
	It promotes the production of bilingual material for the Deaf.	1
	It transfers financial resources to schools to create or improve infrastructure for Bilingual Education for the Deaf.	2
	It promotes and expands teacher training in Libras and Bilingual Education for the Deaf.	5
	It promotes training of citizens in Libras.	2
Structuring	It allocates resources for actions at the National Institute for the Deaf (INES), in partnership with the Ministry of Education.	1
	It declares that a Libras course must be offered to its employees.	7
	It creates an agency responsible for language education policy.	1

Table 6: Language policies identified by typology with the number of agencies and departments that adopt them

Source: Prepared by the author

With the preparation and organization of Table 6, based on the information provided through access to information requests to the listed federal agencies and departments, it was possible to begin our analysis of the official language policies at the national level aimed at Libras and the Deaf population currently in force in Brazil.

3 ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE POLICIES FOR THE DEAF IN BRAZIL

Looking at the tables compiled from the collected data, we immediately notice the vast number of proposed language policies focused on Libras. However, the very need to present so many actions may indicate that the country is still far from having effective language policies for the Deaf population.

We draw attention to this issue because if the country had a decisive policy, there would be no need for so many scattered initiatives that precariously and residually attempt to guarantee, above all, access to public services. And we say precariously because we are still far from ensuring bilingual spaces for the Deaf Community(ies) within federal government agencies and departments. The websites of these agencies, for example, rely on automatic translation technologies, rather than guaranteeing the publication of content in Libras,² and the number of bilingual staff is still below that stipulated by Decree No. 5,626/2005. Furthermore, we still lack simultaneous interpretation at all public events and across all public television programming; and many services in Libras must be scheduled, unlike those for hearing citizens.

Another indication of the low implementation of language policies for the Deaf was the significant number of agencies and departments that indicated no initiatives involving Libras for this population. From the 48 agencies and departments mapped, only 23 mentioned the existence of policies for the Deaf. Considering language policies by category in the agencies surveyed, we see Chart 1.

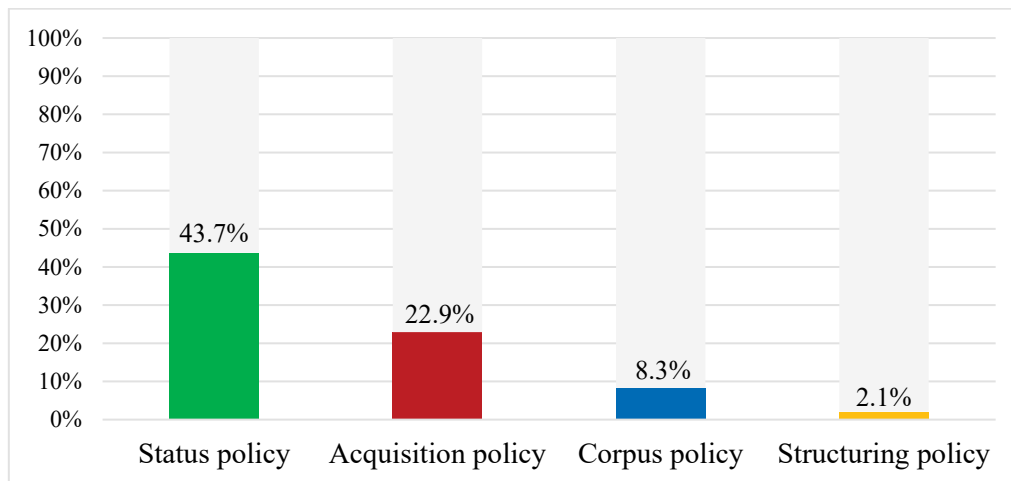


Chart 1: Percentage of agencies with language policies for Libras by category

Source: Prepared by the author

Looking at Chart 1, we identified language status policies in 43.7% of the 48 agencies and departments consulted; language acquisition policies in almost 23%; language corpus policies in 8.3%; and language structuring policies in approximately 2% of the agencies and departments.

The remaining 25 agencies and departments, which did not mention language policies for the Deaf, some such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Employment and the Ministry of Racial Equality, pointed to other actions aimed at people with disabilities, as if they did not recognize the Deaf Community(s) as a linguistic minority that faces specific and distinct barriers from people with disabilities.

²Analyzing the websites of federal government agencies and departments, we found that only the National Institute of Education for the Deaf (INES) publishes all its content in Libras. All others use translation technologies such as VLibras.

This view is old and not restricted to Brazil. Ladd (2003) shows that the categorization of Deaf people as people with disabilities is based on historical and social processes and practices that consider Deafness as a pathology that could be cured. Coura (2023, p. 48), citing several authors, affirms

[...] that this duality (sign language communities seen as people with disabilities versus linguistic and cultural minorities) will not always present a problem. The concern [...] is when deaf people are only identified within groups of people with disabilities. If this is the case, the perspective adopted will be that of language as a problem [...], impacting the creation of more relevant language policies. [...] even if there is official recognition of a country's sign language, this does not mean that the rights of sign language communities will be guaranteed, as the policy may be based on a view that insists on highlighting only disability.

The existence of policies based on the view of the Deaf as individuals with a disability can thus also be observed in Brazil due to these historical and social processes and practices that consider Deafness a pathology. For example, even with the approval of Law No. 10,436/2002, which recognized Libras as the form of communication and expression of Deaf communities in Brazil, only twenty years later, with Law No. 14,191/2021, these communities received the legal guarantee of education that respected their status as a linguistic minority. This latter law amended the current Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996), creating a specific educational modality for the Deaf, distinct from Special Education, a modality for people with disabilities. Furthermore, it seemed to us that many of the agencies and departments consulted for our research, despite their own legislation, consider policies for the Deaf restricted to departments such as the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Communications, which are traditionally responsible for actions for people with disabilities, by directing or referring us to the actions of these agencies. Another indication of this view is the response of the Ministry of Culture itself, which, despite its mission to promote policies focused on literature, art, and culture, failed to present policies for Deaf Literature, Art, and Culture.

That said, let's move on to analyzing the actions by language policy category. It's clear that the number of status and acquisition policies stands out from the rest, as can be seen in Chart 2 below.

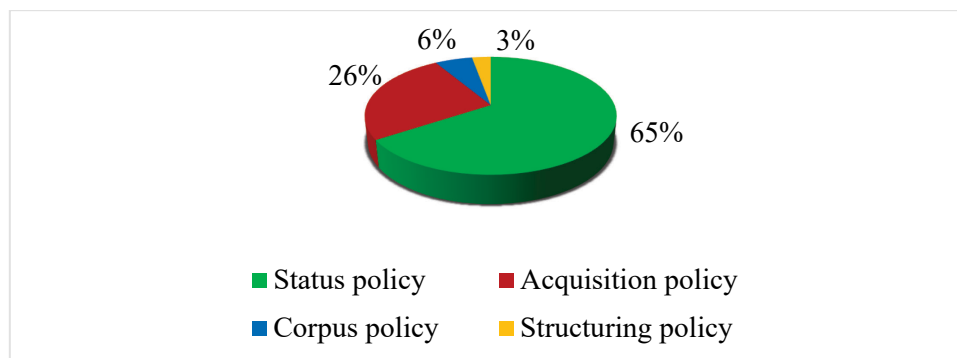


Chart 2: Language policies for Libras by category

Source: Prepared by the author

Of the 35 types of language policies, we identified based on responses to access to information requests, 23 are language status policies; 9 are language acquisition policies; 2 are language corpus policies; and only one is language structuring policy. Thus, almost all policies can be considered either status or acquisition policies. Among the main status language policies are those that establish services and information in Libras. Regarding language acquisition policies, those aimed at learning Libras by public servants and those for bilingual education and teacher training stand out. All of these actions are supported by Law No. 10,436/2002 and/or Decree No. 5,626/2005 and appear to be the most recognized by agencies and departments, although, as we have seen, they are not yet declared by most of them. Thus, we can affirm the importance of these two legal instruments in offering, over the last two decades, some services and information in Libras and in the creation of undergraduate programs in Literature and Translation to train teachers, translators, and interpreters for the Deaf population. Despite the encouragement of these status and acquisition policies, Stumpf and Quadros (2021, p. 109-110) highlight tensions between Libras language policies and educational policies based

on inclusion over the years. Among these tensions would be precisely those caused by the view of the Deaf as people with disabilities and not as linguistic minorities in need of specific bilingual education. Quadros (2024, p. 22), more recently, states that:

There seems to be a disconnect between the advances and the actual implementation of bilingual education. In the name of inclusion policies, the Ministry of Education has moved toward recognizing Libras, but has simplified bilingual education to the inclusion of Libras in regular schools through the presence of sign language interpreters. Bilingual education needs to be established within a bilingual environment in which Deaf children grow up with references from Deaf adults and Deaf peers – that is, surrounded by Deaf classmates. Grouping Deaf children is essential for the acquisition of Libras as a first language and for the social and cultural development of Deaf children.

In other words, Deaf people still face resistance from Brazilian society in considering them a linguistic minority. Continuing our analysis, let us turn to language corpus policies, which are rarely mentioned. The agencies we consulted pointed out, among policies and actions that we identified as corpus policies, the development of thematic glossaries to enable the provision of services, especially in the legislative and judicial branches, as well as the National Textbook Plan (PNLD), which aims to distribute didactic, pedagogical, and literary works in Libras, a policy still in its initial phase. However, the federal public agencies and departments we consulted did not mention other corpus policies already implemented in Brazil at the federal level, such as the National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (INDL) and the development of linguistic instruments for Libras by agencies linked to the Ministry of Education.

The INDL was established by Decree No. 7,387/2010. Its main objective was to document existing languages in Brazil through a linguistic and sociolinguistic survey and, subsequently, to recognize them as “Brazilian Cultural References,” ensuring that initiatives to promote and preserve these languages would receive public funding. Libras was one of the first Brazilian languages documented within the scope of the INDL. According to Quadros (2024, p. 23), because of this,

A sociolinguistic study was conducted to map the uses of Libras in Brazil, resulting in the book “Brazilian Sign Language: Brazilian Linguistic Heritage” [...]. The linguistic survey includes works by leading Deaf individuals, recognized by their respective communities as representatives of their language, and also by a group of 36 Deaf individuals from each region of the country. It currently includes five Brazilian cities: Florianópolis, Maceió, Fortaleza, Palmas, and Rio Branco.

Corpus initiatives not mentioned include the Dictionary of Brazilian Sign Language, published by INES in 2011, and two recent grammars in Libras: one published in V-Book format in 2022 by the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), and the other in Portuguese, published by INES in 2023, in two volumes. Both grammars were written by several researchers under the leadership of Ronice Quadros (UFSC) and used reference materials available on the *Corpus de Libras*, a website developed and maintained by UFSC within the scope of INDL, with a vast record of Libras in several states of the country.

Finally, as for the language structuring policies, we identified only one³, the one that creates the Directorate of Policies for Bilingual Education for the Deaf in the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Youth and Adult Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion in the Ministry of Education with the authority to coordinate the language policies for the acquisition of Libras. Costa-Silva et al. (2023, p. 188) states that

[...] before the creation of the Directorate [...], educational policies aimed at teaching Portuguese as a second language for the Deaf were not linked to specific language policies for this public and did not represent adequate, concrete, systematized and satisfactory curricular proposals, at a national level, in a way that could adequately guide the planning of teachers, in basic education and higher education, who work directly and indirectly with the teaching of Portuguese for Deaf students.

³The Directorate of Bilingual Education Policies for the Deaf was created within the scope of the Ministry of Education by Decree No. 10,195/2019 and maintained by Decree No. 11,691/2023 of the subsequent government.

With the creation of a specific agency to develop language policies, such as the Directorate of Policies for Bilingual Education for the Deaf at the Ministry of Education (MEC), we realized that this agency's language policies for the Deaf are more structured and organized. This ministry has therefore recommended several initiatives, such as the transfer of financial resources to schools to create resource rooms for Deaf Bilingual Education; the increase in enrollment of Deaf and Deafblind students in bilingual education; the expansion of vacancies in continuing education courses for teachers and basic education professionals in Deaf Bilingual Education; and the establishment of the National Textbook Plan (PNLD) – Deaf Bilingual Education Modality, aimed at distributing didactic, pedagogical, and literary works for the Deaf.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this research, we set out to map, identify, and analyze the official national language policies aimed at Libras and the Deaf population currently in Brazil. Through consultation with various federal government agencies and departments, we were able to classify these policies into the following categories: language status, corpus, acquisition, and structuring planning (Kloss, 1968; Cooper, 1997 [1989]; Barbosa da Silva, 2024). Thus, we observed that, in Brazil, language status and acquisition policies still prevail – those aimed, respectively, at expanding the uses and number of speakers of Libras. These policies aim to promote Libras in spaces such as television, events, in public services, and in schools and universities, in an attempt to implement bilingual education for the Deaf. Language corpus policies, those aimed at language structure, have been fewer and more recent. These language policies are mostly aimed at creating glossaries and registering Libras as a way to support the development of linguistic instruments. As for language structuring policies, we identified only one, restricted to the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, the Brazilian government still lacks parity between the categories of language policies analyzed. This imbalance, which prioritizes language status and acquisition policies, demonstrates little public interest in ensuring that Libras can effectively reach the spaces already provided for by law. This could be achieved, for example, through an agency that develops and implements the necessary language policies, or through government support in the registration and dissemination of new Libras signs created daily by the Brazilian Deaf Community(s).

Coura (2023, p. 35) citing De Meulder *et al.* (2019), affirms that

There can be three stages in a political process aimed at achieving cultural and linguistic autonomy for deaf people: the first, called symbolic recognition, is when there is legal confirmation that sign languages are *de facto* languages and that they hold significant values for deaf communities. The second occurs when there is instrumentalization of some language-related services, such as access to some services with the presence of interpreters. The third refers to the promotion or protection of linguistic rights and language acquisition at home and in formal learning environments. According to the authors, many laws stagnate only at symbolic recognition, while others reach the second stage. However, they also mention that the third stage is rarely reached by most countries.

Analyzing the information gathered from federal government agencies and departments, we can see that Brazil is still at the beginning of this second stage. The approval of Law No. 14.191/2021 seems to have concluded the first phase, related to the process of recognizing Libras – which began with Law No. 10.436/2002 – as a *de facto* language, by considering, at least legally, that Deaf people, as a linguistic minority, have the right to differentiated education, like Indigenous peoples. We would thus be in the second stage, as there is still a long way to go in guaranteeing linguistic rights for the Deaf Community(s) in Brazil. Public agencies must become truly bilingual spaces, for bilingual education to develop, for linguistic tools to be expanded, and the Brazilian government must recognize the need for specific bodies for language policies, as is the case in other countries such as Paraguay and Canada. Monitoring is also necessary to ensure that rights already achieved are guaranteed in practice. Otherwise, current legislation becomes merely declaratory. Without state oversight, oversight ends up being carried out solely by the Deaf Community(s), compromising their own linguistic rights.

Therefore, thanks to the struggle, resistance, and ongoing vigilance of these communities to prevent possible setbacks, we have seen continued, albeit slow, progress in these language policies in recent years. In the coming years, we will see progress in the National

Congress on Bill No. 5.961/2019, which proposes mandatory teaching of Libras for hearing people in schools, and Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 12/2021, which makes Libras an official language of Brazil alongside Portuguese. Such actions would be essential for transforming Brazil into a bilingual country, effectively ensuring linguistic rights for Deaf people. Therefore, the fight for language policies for these communities remains necessary and urgent.

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