

Between sound and image: how people with hearing or visual impairments access television journalism

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Abstract: This article stems from a research project that examines the reception dynamics of individuals with hearing or visual impairments in relation to television newscasts, focusing on the strategies they employ and the impact on communicative citizenship. Adopting a qualitative approach,

Resumo: Este artigo é resultado de uma pesquisa que analisa as dinâmicas de recepção de pessoas com deficiências auditivas ou visuais diante dos telejornais, com ênfase nas estratégias adotadas e no impacto na cidadania comunicativa. A pesquisa, de caráter qualitativo, envolveu

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the study involved ten participants and drew on in-depth interviews and participant observation. The findings indicate that, despite television's long-standing centrality in news dissemination, it largely overlooks the unique needs of those who cannot see or hear, resulting in symbolic exclusion and reliance on provisional solutions—such as family support or shifting to other media platforms. We conclude, therefore, that television newscasts require inclusive policies and practices, including the systematic adoption of audio description and sign-language windows, to fully realize every citizen's right to information.

Keywords: television news; visual impairment; hearing impairment; communicative accessibility; communicative citizenship.

dez participantes e recorreu a entrevistas em profundidade e observação participante. Os resultados mostram que a televisão, mesmo sendo historicamente central na difusão de notícias, ignora em grande medida as singularidades de quem não enxerga ou não ouve, resultando em exclusão simbólica e dependência de soluções paliativas — como auxílio familiar ou migração para outros meios. Conclui-se, portanto, que o telejornalismo precisa de políticas e práticas inclusivas, como a implementação sistemática de audiodescrição e janelas de Libras, para efetivar o direito à informação de todos os cidadãos.

Palavras-chave: telejornalismo; deficiência visual; deficiência auditiva; acessibilidade comunicativa; cidadania comunicativa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over several decades, television has established itself as one of the main mass communication media, bearing responsibility for the daily dissemination of journalistic content at both national and local levels. Among these contents, the television news program has historically occupied a prominent position, positioning itself as a reliable source of information that keeps the public informed about the most relevant events of the day. In countries with large territories and significant socio-economic contrasts, such as Brazil, free-to-air television reaches broad segments of the population, including regions where internet access remains limited. For this reason, television news holds a symbolic status as the official transmitter of events, performing functions of political legitimation, cultural socialization, and opinion formation; in other words, “it is through what is being reported that people come into contact with the world around them.”¹

Although television presents itself as a universal medium, its language—based on an audiovisual logic—runs the risk of systematically overlooking the specific needs of audiences with hearing or visual impairments. Historically, most television productions have not incorporated accessibility resources such as audio description or Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) interpreters. Consequently, while television news broadcasts reports and interviews, many deaf sign language users, lacking adequate translation, remain excluded from the spoken content. Similarly, individuals with visual impairments face challenges in understanding relevant images that are not described.

¹ VIZEU, Alfredo. **Telejornalismo, audiência e ética**. 2002. Available at: <https://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/vizeu-alfredo-telejornalismo-audiencia-etica.pdf>. Accessed in: 8 Feb. 2024.

This article, resulting from a reception study, addresses this issue by investigating how people with hearing or visual impairments interact with television news, analyzing the extent to which they feel included (or excluded) and the strategies they adopt to avoid remaining entirely uninformed. The discussion is grounded in the social model of disability, which posits that barriers to participation arise from obstacles created by social and communicational organization rather than merely from individual limitations². The study also draws on the concept of communicative citizenship, emphasizing that full social inclusion requires ensuring the right to information and communication for all social groups, without distinction³.

To observe these experiences concretely, a qualitative study was conducted with ten participants. Methodologically, in-depth interviews and participant observation were employed, allowing the observation of television reception in real-life situations. The study focused on two major groups: individuals who are blind or have low vision, and deaf sign language users for whom Libras is the primary language. The results reveal persistent structural shortcomings, such as inadequate captioning, the absence of Libras interpretation windows, and the lack of audio description. These barriers lead participants to adopt coping strategies, such as relying on family members, turning to radio or the internet, and using visual memory (in the case of those who lost vision over the course of their lives, for instance). The study concludes by discussing the negative impact of these barriers on communicative citizenship, as exclusion from television news deprives these individuals of mediated public debate, thereby reinforcing informational inequalities.

The following sections present the theoretical framework, focusing on mass communication, television, and the social model of disability. The methodology, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and the research design, is then described. Finally, the study presents analyzed results and proposes reflections on the need for inclusive practices, along with recommendations for editorial policies.

2. SOCIAL IMPACT OF TELEVISION NEWS

Mass communication, defined as “a specific form of communication that occurs through the mediation of a technical (or multiplicative) medium, allowing the message to reach an anonymous, heterogeneous, and physically dispersed audience,”⁴ according to classical functional models, fulfills roles of integration, information, and entertainment by leveraging technologies capable of reaching extensive audiences. In this regard, television emerges as one of the most influential media, as it combines sound and image to create a persuasive audiovisual narrative, conferring credibility and immediacy to the news. Since the introduction of television in Brazil in 1950, and through the consolidation of national networks in subsequent decades, television journalism has emerged

2 DINIZ, Débora. **O que é deficiência**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2007.

3 MATA, Maria Cristina. Comunicación y ciudadanía: problemas teórico-políticos de su articulación. **Fronteiras: Estudos Midiáticos**, São Leopoldo, v. 8, n. 1, p. 5-15, 2006.

4 TEMER, Ana Carolina; NERY, Vanda. **Para entender as teorias da comunicação**. Uberlândia: Aspectus, 2004. p. 11.

as a fundamental genre for the daily updating of citizens, contributing not only to the formation of a collective identity but also to the legitimation of political and economic sources⁵.

However, criticisms arise when it is noted that television news does not adequately reflect audience heterogeneity. Broadcasters adopt production routines and content formats that, in most cases, assume a viewer who hears perfectly and sees without restrictions. This marginalizes groups with sensory impairments and contradicts principles of public service and universality. The issue becomes even more critical when considering the sociopolitical relevance of journalistic information for citizen participation.

3. COMMUNICATIVE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Disability is most often addressed from a biomedical perspective, which associates “incapacity” with the biological condition of the individual, seen as the “natural consequence of a bodily injury.”⁶ In contrast, the social model of disability, developed by activists and scholars, asserts that exclusion stems from a social organization that does not anticipate adaptations in its environments, technologies, and interactions. Therefore, the focus is not on “correcting” the person with a disability, but on removing barriers erected in physical and symbolic spaces, thereby promoting genuine inclusion.

Bonito⁷ proposes the term “communicative accessibility” as “the set of processes aimed at unblocking and promoting barrier-free communication as a fundamental human right.” In the media field, communicative accessibility entails providing resources such as Libras interpretation windows for deaf sign language users, audio description for blind or low-vision individuals, appropriate captions for those with deafness or partial hearing loss, and materials that facilitate comprehension for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This practice should not be seen as an “extra aid” but as the implementation of rights enshrined in national and international laws and conventions. In Brazil, Decree No. 5,296/2004 already established the obligation for broadcasters to progressively provide captions across all programming, as well as Libras interpretation and audio description. The limited implementation of these measures reveals a disparity between legal provisions and their practical application.

4. COMMUNICATIVE CITIZENSHIP AND THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

The concept of citizenship, in its classical formulation based on Marshall⁸, refers to civil, political, and social rights that ensure an individual’s participation in the political community. However, contemporary societies have increasingly

5 MATTOS, Sérgio. **História da televisão brasileira**: uma visão econômica, social e política. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2010.

6 DINIZ, op. cit. p. 15.

7 BONITO, Marco. A Problemática da Acessibilidade Comunicativa como Característica Conceitual do Jornalismo Digital. **Âncora**: Revista Latino-americana de Jornalismo, João Pessoa, v. 3, n. 1, p.175-193, jan./jun. 2016.

8 MARSHALL, Thomas Humphrey. Cidadania e classe social. In: **Cidadania, classe social e status**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1967. p.57-114.

emphasized the right to communication as indispensable, given the centrality of media in shaping public spheres. Mata⁹ proposes that communicative citizenship reflects the need for individuals to be not only recipients but also agents capable of questioning, producing, and circulating information. When a particular group is unable to access news, the exercise of citizenship itself is denied, as the capacity to understand laws, elections, and socially relevant events is obstructed.

According to Signates and Moraes¹⁰, communication is a “right to the expression of rights.” If individuals are unable to access journalistic information, they cannot fully claim other social or political rights. This is why the lack of accessibility in television journalism affects not only the individual media experience but also the democratic process itself. The persistence of communicational barriers in such a widely consumed and symbolically significant medium tends to reinforce stigmas and maintain people with sensory disabilities in a state of “communicative sub-citizenship,” as highlighted by Signates and Moraes, drawing on the sociologist Jessé Souza, in which individuals depend on third parties or alternative media to stay informed.

5. CULTURAL MEDIATIONS AND ACTIVE RECEPTION

Jesús Martín-Barbero’s¹¹ theory of mediations shifts the analytical focus from media themselves to the contexts and reception practices, understanding that the circulation of media messages is intertwined with historical, social, and cultural variables. The audience is not passive; rather, viewers reinterpret content based on their concrete life conditions, networks of belonging, and cognitive resources. For people with sensory disabilities, such mediations include the degree of familiarity with assistive technology, support from family and friends, and access to alternative channels (radio, internet, etc.).

Thus, even when television news does not offer full accessibility, individuals requiring such accessibility seek solutions, negotiate meanings, and attempt to circumvent communicational barriers. However, this does not absolve broadcasters of the responsibility to promote inclusive practices. Cultural mediation should not serve as a pretext to transfer the entire burden onto minorities; rather, it serves to understand how audience resistance and agency unfold. This study, through in-depth interviews and participant observation, demonstrates, on one hand, strategies of meaning-making and, on the other, the limitations imposed on those who rely entirely on these coping mechanisms.

9 MATA, *op. cit.*

10 SIGNATES, Luiz; MORAES, Ângela. A cidadania como comunicação: estudo sobre a especificidade comunicacional do conceito de cidadania. In: *Cidadania Comunicacional: teoria, epistemologia e pesquisa*. Goiânia: Gráfica UFG, 2019.

11 MARTÍN-BARBERO, Jesus. *Dos meios às mediações: comunicação, cultura e hegemonia*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 1997.

6. METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

6.1. Qualitative nature and objectives

A qualitative approach was chosen to explore in depth the perceptions, narratives, and reception practices of television news by people with hearing or visual impairments. The aim was not to measure how many people watch television news, but rather to understand how and under what conditions they interact with informative content, which barriers they encounter, and what solutions they develop. This approach relied on in-depth interviews and participant observation, producing contextualized knowledge sensitive to participants' experiences¹².

6.2. Participant profile

Ten participants were selected: five with visual impairments (total blindness or low vision) and five with hearing impairments (all congenitally deaf and sign language users, i.e., they communicate primarily in Libras). The intentional sampling sought to capture diversity in age, gender, and educational background; willingness to share everyday experiences; and a minimum level of contact with television news, even if occasional. All participants reside in Goiás, in the cities of Goiânia and Rio Verde, which facilitated fieldwork. All procedures were conducted in accordance with the informed consent protocol of the Ethics Committee, and participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms (Table 1).

Table 1: Profiles of Interviewees

Name	Age	City	Education	Profession	Disability
Antônio	30	Goiânia (GO)	High School (preparing for university entrance)	In transition/ student	Visual (optic neuropathy acquired at 26), perceives blurs and contrast.
José	57	Rio Verde (GO)	Higher Education (Social Work)	Social worker and administrative manager (Associação Beneficente Auta de Sousa – Abas)	Visual (congenital degenerative), perceives shapes and sees better in dim light or with contrast.
Laura	55	Rio Verde (GO)	Higher Education (Pedagogy) + Postgraduate in Special Education	Teacher of individuals with visual impairments	Visual (congenital retinitis pigmentosa), sees about 5% in the center of the left eye.
Luís	58	Goiânia (GO)	Higher Education (Medicine)	Physician (inactive due to vision loss)	Visual (acquired), only light perception in the right eye.

12 GODOY, Arilda Schmidt. Introdução à pesquisa qualitativa e suas possibilidades. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, São Paulo, v. 35, n. 2, p. 57-63, 1995.

13 Taken from the Master's thesis "Estratégias comunicativas de pessoas com deficiências auditivas ou visuais perante os telejornais: um estudo de recepção," by Sabryna Moreno da Silva, supervised by Ana Carolina Rocha Pessoa Temer.

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Silvio	48	Goiânia (GO)	High School	Civil servant (Comurg)	Visual (congenital), total blindness since birth.
Ana	47	Rio Verde (GO)	High School	Homemaker	Congenital deafness
Carlos	40	Rio Verde (GO)	High School	Forklift operator	Congenital deafness
Ingrid	27	Rio Verde (GO)	High School	Unemployed	Congenital deafness (cochlear implant, not adapted)
Jessica	24	Rio Verde (GO)	Higher Education (Administration)	Administrative assistant (HR)	Congenital deafness (cochlear implant, not adapted)
Lucas	29	Rio Verde (GO)	High School	Loading/unloading assistant	Congenital deafness

Source: prepared by the authors (2024)¹³.

6.3. Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, addressing topics such as: personal trajectory, education, and life history with the disability; relationship with television, especially news programs, including consumption habits and recollections; perceptions of accessibility barriers in television news; strategies or adaptations employed; and suggestions or expectations regarding inclusive television journalism. Participant observation was conducted alongside the interviews. This involved visiting each participant's residence while they were watching a news program (local or national). Observations focused on how participants attempted to follow the report, whether they needed assistance from others, whether they changed channels, and whether they made spontaneous comments.

This strategy allowed for the observation of nuances, such as reactions to fast-paced captions or visual elements without narration, and for these observations to be compared with statements from the interviews. Field notes included descriptions of the environment, verbal or signed comments, facial expressions, and occasional interactions with family members. Subsequently, these records were incorporated into the analysis corpus, triangulated with the interview transcriptions.

7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RECEPTION DYNAMICS

The content analysis, based on Bardin, followed steps of pre-analysis, including organization of the transcriptions and field notes, floating reading to identify recurring themes, and material exploration through segmentation and categorization. In investigating how individuals with visual or hearing impairments interact with television news content, it was observed that television, despite being recognized as a central informative and symbolic axis in Brazilian culture, fails to adapt to the needs of an audience whose sensory experience differs from what has been conventionally considered the “standard.” It is important to emphasize that, although the study identifies obstacles, these receivers are not passive; they actively seek strategies and demand changes that ensure communicative citizenship for people with disabilities as both consumers and communicators.

For individuals with hearing or visual impairments, television often plays a paradoxical role: while it appears as an important source of information about societal events, it does not guarantee the necessary conditions for full comprehension of news content. Nevertheless, the symbolic importance of television journalism is confirmed by the majority of interviewees, who report affective memories of their first encounters with TV and routines built around news broadcasts, whether during meals or family gatherings.

Among interviewees with visual impairments, it is common to refer to childhood moments when they still had greater vision or relied on family members to decode visual aspects. Luís, for instance, emphasizes the convergence of media in his youth: he read printed newspapers, listened to the radio, and watched television news alongside his father. A particularly striking memory is of the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s, which he followed through *Jornal Nacional*. Silvio, blind since birth, describes how television accompanied historical events that had significant societal impact and, to some extent, influenced his own formation of opinion: “I have followed television news since I was young. When I was 12, I remember clearly—that was when the Césio accident happened, in 1987. And also when Tancredo Neves died.”

Laura exemplifies another facet of engagement with television. She, who gradually lost her sight due to retinitis pigmentosa, fondly recalls the day she appeared on a local news broadcast alongside students with visual impairments. This significant moment highlights how television can validate experiences and educational projects related to inclusion. At the same time, Laura emphasizes that when the news program does not adequately describe scenes or fails to verbalize information presented solely in text, she feels frustrated, as she cannot follow content she considers interesting.

Antônio’s case illustrates the relationship between individual trajectories and the progressive change of media habits. He watched traditional television news until the age of 26, when he began losing his vision and simultaneously

discovered a universe of alternative channels on the internet. “The internet opened many paths for me, and I started seeking other forms of information,” he explains, linking this not only to his disability but also to a desire for more in-depth political and social content. Television thus began to compete with platforms Antônio considers more accessible, as he can adjust screen readers and, in many cases, find more detailed descriptions in online broadcasts.

José reports that although he consumed television news regularly for a long period, he gradually distanced himself for two reasons: the emphasis on police and sensationalist news, and the absence of descriptive resources. He noticed “a lot of negative news,” which discouraged him from staying in front of the screen. This disenchantment, however, does not diminish his recognition of television’s value but indicates that personal preferences, combined with accessibility barriers, may lead part of this audience to migrate to other media, such as radio or the internet.

Among deaf interviewees, television has also been part of domestic routines since childhood, although linguistic barriers create even greater distancing. Carlos and Ana, a deaf couple, report that television has always been present in their home, but because they do not master Portuguese, they frequently change channels when they do not understand the spoken content. It is a ritual: they attempt to “read” the scenes, but when they realize that comprehension depends on oral understanding, they give up. They rely on their hearing daughter to explain segments they consider essential, but this situation fosters dependence and undermines autonomy.

Ingrid experiences a similar situation. Her hearing parents enjoy watching television and leave it on in multiple rooms. Ingrid, born deaf, received a cochlear implant in an attempt to improve auditory perception, but did not adapt to it. She searches for visual clues about the content: “I watch TV. But people talk a lot. I see accidents happening [...]” Nonetheless, she reports always feeling “behind” regarding important events, as there are no Libras interpretation resources in the news program.

For Jessica, the constant presence of television does not translate into comprehension either. Although she has learned lip reading and understands part of the captions, she considers “watching news on TV inaccessible because it’s all in Portuguese and very fast.” Consequently, she combines image observation with lip reading to capture, in a fragmented way, the gist of the news.

Lucas mentions feeling marginalized during family discussions about television news. He observes visual resources, but when the report is complex and depends on oral explanations, he cannot follow. He states with frustration: “Being deaf is very complicated,” emphasizing that there are no adequate captions or Libras interpreters to assist him. Television thus becomes an element that reinforces the separation between him and his family members, who all comment on the content except him.

In summary, the experiences of deaf individuals, as well as those with visual impairments, reveal strong recognition of television’s cultural and social value.

However, they also highlight the lack of concrete measures for the inclusion of those who communicate in Libras. The burden falls on individual strategies: lip reading, careful observation of scenes, and asking family members for assistance. These routines indicate not only adaptation strategies but also the extent to which the television system maintains a model centered on hearing and sighted audiences, neglecting the diversity of its public.

7.1. Communication Barriers in Television Journalism

The testimonies above position television as a source of meaning-making in daily life. At the same time, they reveal the disappointment of recognizing the importance of television news while perceiving that it does not address the specific needs of those who cannot hear or see. This contradiction generates, in some participants, a certain nostalgia for a period when vision was better or when expectations of accessibility were less present. However, it also demonstrates that the agency of the viewer does not disappear: even in the absence of resources in television news, most participants seek “external” solutions, as will be described further when discussing migration to the internet or radio.

Based on Martín-Barbero’s theory, television news does not hold exclusive power to shape perceptions of events; the cultural and social mediations of the audience are present, allowing each individual to reinterpret and, when necessary, seek complementary sources. Nevertheless, such strategies of “displacement” do not exempt television journalism from its responsibility. After all, a medium that claims universality cannot be universal only for those who hear and see without difficulty.

Although the interviewees acknowledge the historical centrality of television, they all highlight the gap between the discourse of television news’ “reach” and the concrete reality of individuals with visual or hearing impairments. Their statements illuminate the various obstacles—technical, cultural, or related to the economic logic of broadcasters—that prevent news from being understood autonomously.

For participants with visual impairments, the absence of audio description and more detailed narration of images constitutes the primary factor of exclusion. Laura emphasizes the importance of verbalizing everything displayed on the screen, illustrating it with her experience of audio description at a live event and how it drastically enhanced her understanding: “It feels like you are seeing. You pay more attention to the details. You start imagining it, giving more emotion than just listening.”

Regarding television news, she regrets that such resources rarely appear, and the recurring feeling is that many scenes, maps, statistics, and phone numbers remain accessible only to sighted audiences: “Stop saying things like, ‘the phone number is on the screen.’ [...] And what about those who cannot see the screen? What if someone needs that number?”

Silvio reinforces that, without audio description or even minimal verbal description, there is a gap during news segments, as reporters assume the images speak for themselves. He reports being forced to “change channels” or “try to imagine” what is happening when the broadcast pauses to display supporting images: “I keep switching, seeing what’s on, fiddling with the remote, but sometimes I have no idea what they are showing.”

Similarly, Antônio laments that television news does not describe essential elements. He considers that even a minimal effort in narration would make a difference, but observes that broadcasters prefer to rely on the “power of images,” ignoring those who cannot see them: “There is a severe lack of audio description. Sometimes they say, ‘check the image,’ but they don’t describe it. That makes me furious.”

From a methodological perspective, the recurrence of statements such as these indicates that visual impairment is not an isolated or “individual” factor but a social construct that manifests in interaction with media that prioritize visual perception. By failing to incorporate descriptive resources, television news amplifies communicational inequality, supporting the argument that the problem lies in the structure of the media itself rather than in the individual limitations of each person.

Among the deaf interviewees, the fundamental problem lies in the absence of Libras windows, the inadequacy of closed captions (often automatic and excessively fast), and the linguistic disparity, as Libras follows a visual-spatial grammar distinct from Portuguese. Carlos explains why he and Ana eventually give up on television news: “I don’t like it much because of Portuguese. Since I don’t understand it well, I give up. [...] The words in Portuguese are phonetic, the meaning is completely different.”

Lucas corroborates that conventional captions do not help him, as reading in Portuguese is not only complex but also rarely synchronized with the spoken pace. “I really need the images and a Libras interpreter. Without that, I cannot understand what is being said.” Ingrid emphasizes that, although she can read some words, nothing replaces a qualified Libras interpreter. She misses having an interpreter window on the screen that would allow her to follow the news independently: “because it is in Portuguese, I prefer a Libras interpreter; it’s better. With captions, I cannot understand the words or the context.”

Jessica provides a more detailed account, highlighting the quality of the Libras interpreter. She stresses that it is not enough to have “any person” sign mechanically. Effective translation requires linguistic proficiency and a deep knowledge of Libras, which is rarely found in television environments.

By reporting these barriers, deaf participants demonstrate a lack of technical resources and highlight a media culture centered on the spoken Portuguese language. Television news presumes that the viewer fully masters spoken and written Portuguese, disregarding the linguistic and cultural specificities of Libras users. For them, this scenario undermines the social function of television news, as they are excluded from public interest debates.

7.2 Signification Strategies

Although confronted with institutional barriers, participants do not remain passive recipients. Each account highlights tactics and resources that people with disabilities mobilize to circumvent, at least partially, the inaccessibility of television news. These strategies may be individual (using memory, imagination, or lip reading) or collective (seeking assistance from family and friends). They also involve the adoption of technological aids, such as voice devices, screen readers, and alternative platforms (radio, internet, podcasts).

Luís, who gradually lost his sight, emphasizes the difference between “visualizing” and “making visible.” Even without being able to see images directly, he can “visualize” a scene mentally based on past experiences. This has become a fundamental part of how he follows television news or even entertainment programs. He explains: “I would be forming an image in my mind; I would be imagining the scene.”

Similarly, Silvio reports using his imagination to fill in information that is not narrated, constructing a mental version of the news story. He also recognizes the importance of voice commands and digital television, which enhances audio quality by reducing noise and static. For him, the absence of audio interference is already a significant gain: “with the implementation of digital TV, wow, it was very good.”

Laura, in turn, emphasizes that she needs to sit close to the television and rely on the support of family members to capture details of settings or captions. Nevertheless, she feels freer when listening to the radio, as radio narratives inherently assume the absence of images, resulting in a more self-explanatory and verbally rich discourse. “It even stimulates your imagination more,” she notes, comparing radio to television news. In this sense, the partial “abandonment” of TV in favor of other media represents a strategy of autonomy, although it entails forfeiting some of the content the television news aims to provide.

In Antônio’s case, the internet emerges as a central solution. He frequently follows political content channels and live streams on YouTube, where he can activate accessibility features such as zoom or screen readers, and select sources that provide more detailed explanations, even without depending on undescribed images. This migration to digital platforms also reflects a desire for autonomy and a break from the passive reception model.

Among the deaf participants, the effort to “read” the situation through images is highly present. Lucas, for example, relies on scenes depicting accidents or objects to decipher the news. At the same time, he identifies significant gaps when the content is more abstract or complex, as images do not convey the verbal information. Ingrid attempts the same strategy but frequently becomes confused.

Jessica reports that, despite mastering some lip-reading, she feels disadvantaged when the journalist speaks quickly or when captions are unsynchronized. Even when closed captions are enabled, they can hinder comprehension,

appearing late and disappearing before she fully understands the content. Consequently, Jessica adopts a hybrid method: she lip-reads, observes the images, and occasionally asks someone in her household for assistance.

Several accounts mention reliance on family members—parents, siblings, or spouses. However, constantly depending on others for translation or description generates discomfort, as it reinforces a lack of independence. Moreover, family members do not always know Libras or are able to describe visual events effectively. This scenario highlights how, in the absence of institutional and editorial solutions, accessibility falls to improvised arrangements, which, according to the participants, fail to ensure full access.

Another notable dimension is the redistribution of time. Several participants report that, upon realizing the inaccessibility of television news, they turn off the TV or change channels, dedicating more hours to digital platforms, social media, or specialized groups. Laura, for instance, mentions that when she cannot follow local coverage, she “switches to the radio,” whereas Antônio opts for “alternative media, primarily on the internet.” Ingrid, who is deaf, resorts to Libras content available on interpreter profiles to at least obtain a simplified version of the news.

These narratives indicate active reception, in the sense that there is no mere resignation in the face of difficulties. Participants undertake remediation initiatives, albeit incompletely. This finding demonstrates that sensory-impaired audiences are not marginalized due to a lack of interest, but because of the “absence of open doors” in traditional television news.

7.3 Experience with Television News

Participant observation complemented the interviews by allowing the researcher to follow, *in situ*, the interaction of respondents with television news in their homes, during their usual viewing times. This procedure provided empirical evidence of how barriers manifest in practice, as well as participants’ spontaneous reactions and comments when attempting to comprehend or ultimately abandoning the news segments.

In the case of Silvio, blind since birth, the observation took place during *Bom Dia Goiás* on TV Anhanguera, a Globo affiliate in Goiás. He listened attentively as the reporter narrated an alleged crime staged by a rural producer; however, at no point did the journalist describe the objects displayed on the screen (cell phones, money, checks). In the end, Silvio understood only that it involved an insurance scam, without realizing that the police had collected material evidence. When asked, he replied: “No, I don’t remember the checks. They only said there was a problem [...]” This illustrates how a crucial detail—the materiality of the crime—remained restricted to sighted audiences, with no verbalization provided.

In a similar situation during the observation with Laura, she could vaguely perceive text on a banner on CNN, but could not distinguish what it said. Shortly after, when switching to *Jornal Anhanguera*, she encountered article headlines presented enigmatically, presupposing the viewer could see a panettone or some “Christmas treat” without verbal identification. She reacted by saying: “Well, ‘I’ll tell you soon.’ No one knows what treat appeared there,” highlighting the frustration of relying on insufficient auditory cues.

For Lucas, the observation occurred while watching *Jornal Anhanguera* 2^a edição. He activated the closed caption in hopes of following the report. However, the text ran too quickly and appeared misaligned with the spoken narration. Lucas partially understood that it involved an accident with a drunk driver, but lost track of the reporting, saying: “Then the journalist started talking, and I didn’t understand anything anymore. I feel very uncomfortable.” This discomfort intensified when the broadcast shifted topics without clear notice, generating confusion in interpretation.

On another occasion, Ingrid watched a segment about a cultural fair in Brasília, featuring food and other items. She saw images of people eating ice cream and asked the researcher to “translate” or explain, as there were no clear captions or an interpreter. The result was a fragmented understanding: Ingrid inferred it related to a “gas station” and a “people gathering,” but not the actual fair. “There were many things that went unnoticed, many people talking, so I couldn’t understand,” she said.

Jessica, watching a midday news broadcast about a fraud committed by a dentist, attempted to use captions, but the text overlapped with colored banners and other on-screen elements, making reading difficult. She described the attempt as frustrating: “I read the caption, but it is very fast. I couldn’t understand because it was too quick and confusing to read.” Because the report dealt with a medical topic, Jessica interpreted it as merely “health problems,” failing to recognize it as a fraud case. The absence of a Libras interpreter and disorganized captions further hindered her comprehension.

A recurring observation is that, when participants struggle to follow a report, they often switch channels, seek immediate assistance from family members, or search online. These behaviors reinforce the presence of active reception, yet it remains limited, given the need to take additional measures that would be unnecessary if accessibility were integrated into television news.

It was also observed that, while participants with visual impairments emphasize the importance of explicitly conveying key visual elements, deaf participants stress the need for faithful translation of spoken content, avoiding generic captions or Portuguese-only translations of Libras. Thus, accessibility is not a single adaptation but a combination of measures, including image description, Libras interpreters, and enhanced captioning (with attention to timing, font size, and textual structure adjustments).

Finally, in situ observation provided a glimpse into how television news reinforces, in each segment, its visual and oral logic while neglecting the fact

that some viewers rely on other modes of comprehension. The absence of clear identification of the anchor or even minimal contextualization of a scene shown for only a few seconds is enough to disadvantage those who depend on auditory cues or visual signs with translation.

Drawing from the full set of data analyzed—testimonies, interviews, and field observations—it becomes evident that although broadcasters present newscasts with the ambition of reaching broad segments of the population, audiences composed of deaf and blind individuals remain marginalized. This exclusion does not stem from any supposed “lack of interest” in following the news but rather from the mismatch between the audiovisual structure and the sensory conditions of each group.

Historical and affective importance of television: Even the most critical interviewees acknowledge the symbolic relevance of television as a locus of social and cultural legitimacy. Many recalled family memories, early childhood impressions, and shared experiences with parents and friends gathered around the news. The rupture arises when they realize that the format of the newscast was never designed to include them.

Widespread barriers: For people with visual impairments, the absence of audio description, narration of on-screen text, and minimal verbal care leaves gaps that undermine full comprehension of content. For deaf signers, the lack of Libras windows and the inadequacy of closed captioning prevent effective access to oral discourse. These points were highlighted in virtually all interviews and participant observations.

8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the trajectories and strategies adopted by interviewees with hearing or visual impairments when consuming television news reveals a chronic tension: television, while consolidating itself as the primary source of information, excludes those who do not fit its audiovisual model centered on sight and speech. The study shows that, although TV has become both an identity marker and a means of socialization, it remains deficient in communicative accessibility. In response, people with disabilities mobilize compensatory actions—such as the use of technologies, family support, memory, imagination, lip reading, and migration to other media—that, while demonstrating their agency, simultaneously highlight the precariousness of existing solutions.

The testimonies of the interviewees, together with the participant observation, underscore the urgent need to implement audio description, permanent Libras windows, and more effective captioning. These resources would not only benefit people with disabilities but could also enhance the experience of any viewer who, for various reasons, may not be able to hear or see what is broadcast. Moreover, they highlight how inclusive practices strengthen communicative

citizenship, broadening access to information and ensuring effective participation of all in public debates mediated by television.

In other words, the conclusions indicate that this is not an individual problem of those who cannot see or hear, but rather of a media system that has yet to fully embrace the diversity of its audience. The concrete experiences of Luís, Silvio, Laura, Antônio, José, Carlos, Ana, Ingrid, Jessica, and Lucas serve as case studies of a structural phenomenon: the failure of Brazilian television news to uphold the communicational rights of sensory minorities. While the legal field already includes frameworks mandating accessibility, in practice, much remains to be done so that television-based trajectories may be less marked by exclusion and more by inclusion.

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