



VOLUME - V.2

NÚMERO - N.1

DEZ. - 2024

ISSN: 2966-1439

P.147-167

REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETERS FOR CHILDREN ACQUIRING BRAZILIAN SIGN LANGUAGE (LIBRAS) AND PORTUGUESE:

A CASE STUDY

REFLEXÕES SOBRE O PAPEL DOS INTÉRPRETES EDUCACIONAIS PARA CRIANÇAS EM PROCESSO DE AQUISIÇÃO DE LÍNGUA BRASILEIRA DE SINAIS (LIBRAS) E PORTUGUÊS: UM RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA

Sirlara Donato Assunção Wandenkolk Alves¹

Letícia Campos Santana²

ABSTRACT:

This paper reflects upon the practices of an educational interpreter for Brazilian Sign Language (Libras)/Portuguese during a non-obligatory training placement at a non-bilingual school in the standard education system, located in a city in the Vale do Jiquiriçá region of Bahia, Brazil. The data analyzed consists of the intern's progress reports throughout the entire year of 2019. These reports present and discuss the role of the interpreter in training within the context of their work with a deaf child acquiring Libras and Portuguese. The findings highlight the practices undertaken by the interpreter in the classroom and discuss the discrepancies between their actual role and the standards outlined in regulatory documents, expanding perspectives and insights into the challenges faced by this professional in training.

Keywords: Educational Interpreter; Inclusive Education; Language Acquisition; Applied Linguistics; Non-Obligatory Sign Language Training Placement; Case Study

RESUMO:

Este trabalho propõe refletir sobre as práticas de uma tradutora intérprete

¹ Professor Assistente da Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia/Mestre em Letras para Universidade Federal de Viçosa.

² Graduada pela Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia.

educacional de Libras/Português em estágio escolar não obrigatório, em uma escola inclusiva situada em uma cidade no interior da região do Vale do Jiquiriçá, na Bahia, Brasil. Os dados analisados são os relatórios parciais da estagiária durante o ano de 2019. Nestes registros, apresentamos e discutimos o papel do profissional tradutor e intérprete em formação dentro do contexto de sua atuação com uma criança surda em processo de aquisição de Libras e de Português. Os resultados apresentam as práticas exercidas pelo tradutor intérprete em sala de aula e discutem o distanciamento entre o seu papel real e as normas previstas nos documentos regulatórios, ampliando as perspectivas e os olhares sobre os desafios enfrentados por este profissional em formação.

Palavras-chave: Tradutor Intérprete Educacional; Educação Inclusiva; Aquisição de Linguagem; Linguística Aplicada; Estágio Não Obrigatório; Relato de Experiência

INTRODUCTION

Deaf individuals have historically fought for their rights and for the ability to engage in meaningful dialogue with the hearing world. In this context, a mediator is needed. This mediator is necessary because not everyone knows sign language or understands the spaces occupied by deaf individuals. Since most of the public is hearing, the role of an interpreter is crucial for facilitating communication between different languages.

When it comes to sign language interpreters, they can choose their field of specialization, as different fields have different requirements. This paper focuses on the educational context. To understand the role of this professional in education, it is important to note that this situation is relatively recent. For universal access to education, a conference was held in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, where government representatives and international organizations, together with UNESCO, discussed creating inclusive education systems. This led to the adoption of the Salamanca Statement (Carvalho; Silva, 2014).

In 1996, Brazil's "Law No. 9.394" stipulated that children with special educational needs must be integrated into regular schools (Carvalho; Silva, 2014). This law led to the development of non-bilingual schools, which are expected to provide quality education to all students and to foster an environment where differences are embraced. According to "Article 59, Section III," teachers are

required to receive training to work with these students. However, inclusion often happens before teachers are adequately prepared, leaving many feeling unprepared (Silva, 2013, p. 26).

In educational settings where deafness is framed primarily as a clinical disability, non-bilingual schools typically focus on supporting deaf students in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Decree 5.626/05. One of these measures includes the presence of interpreters to facilitate communication between languages, bridging the gap for students in these environments.

This article examines the legal framework defining the role of interpreters, the practical realities of their work, and the challenges they encounter in early education. To achieve this, the study draws on discussions and data analysis based on reports from a student who served as an interpreter during a non-obligatory training placement at a non-bilingual school in the Jiquiriçá Valley region of Bahia, Brazil.

Grounded in qualitative research methods, this study adopts a theoretical lens to analyze data collected in a natural setting. As Pereira et al. (2018) emphasize, such an approach involves not only gathering information but also engaging the researcher as an active participant in the process.

This article is divided into two key sections, each addressing the role of Libras/Portuguese interpreters in educational settings that are not inherently bilingual. The first section traces the evolution of sign language interpreters in Brazil, from their early supportive roles to becoming formally recognized professionals after Libras was legally acknowledged as the language of the deaf community. The second section presents the challenges faced by an educational interpreter in training during a non-mandatory internship³. It explores the complexities of navigating between different communication modalities — spoken, written, and sign language — while highlighting the additional roles that the interpreter often assumes, such as adapting educational materials and developing

³ In Brazil, during undergraduate studies — specifically in teacher education programs — students are required to complete mandatory internships as part of their studies. These internships, which are often part of one or more courses, involve practical teaching experience and are compulsory. However, the work presented here refers to a non-mandatory internship, also provided through the university, which aims to further support the student's professional development.

strategies to ensure that deaf students can access and comprehend the content. This section also underscores the importance of collaboration between interpreters and educators to enhance the quality of a non-bilingual school.

1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ROLE OF LIBRAS/PORTUGUESE INTERPRETERS IN A NON-BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL SPACE

To outline the theoretical framework for this study, we divided our discussion into two parts: i) a brief overview of the emergence of sign language interpreters; and ii) the role of Libras/Portuguese interpreters in an inclusive educational context, reflecting on their work in the classroom, and the challenges they face, according to experts in the field.

As visual and spatial languages have been studied, analyzed, and understood through research and the advocacy of the deaf community, their language has gained official status. In Brazil, on April 24, 2002, Libras was officially recognized⁴ as the language of the Deaf community⁵ through Law 10.436 (Quadros, 2004).

This legal recognition has led to a unique movement for Libras/Portuguese interpreters, as linguistic acknowledgment has facilitated their integration into various social spheres and involvement in the deaf community. Beyond the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, including the deaf, they have been integrated into regular classrooms. This means that instructional content is delivered in

⁴ In the Brazilian context, when a language is officialized, as in the Libras's case, it does not mean that it is recognized as the official language of the country. Instead, it signifies that the language is legally recognized within a specific context, such as national legislation or institutional policy.

⁵ The Deaf community is a social and cultural group composed of individuals who share the experience of deafness and use Sign Language as their primary means of communication. This group is characterized not only by the degree of hearing loss but also by a cultural identity and a set of values and practices that reinforce their sense of belonging, which can also include hearing individuals. The Deaf community develops a rich, unique culture with traditions, social norms, and a sense of solidarity, promoting inclusion and valuing deafness as a cultural difference rather than a disability. Sign Language serves as a central element for cohesion and communication within this community, enabling the expression of experiences and the transmission of knowledge and culture among its members.

Portuguese, requiring translation and interpretation. Thus, the interpreter becomes a key player in this linguistic mediation (Alves, 2019).

To better understand the role of Libras interpreters, Quadros (2004) provides a helpful explanation. According to Quadros, interpreters are responsible for facilitating communication between languages, which includes interpreting between spoken and sign languages as well as translating written texts. Their role, therefore, is to act as mediators across different languages and modalities — whether spoken, written, or signed.

To explore the emergence of Libras/Portuguese sign language interpreters, Quadros (2004) observes that interpreting initially emerged in the 1980s within religious settings, framed from an assistive perspective. During this time, family members, friends, and others close to deaf individuals often took on the role of interpreters. In the Brazilian context, Quadros highlights significant changes brought about by the Federação Nacional de Educação e Integração dos Surdos (FENEIS) — the National Federation of Education and Integration of the Deaf. These changes included a shift in perception, recognizing interpreters as professionals rather than viewing their work as merely assistive. FENEIS played a pivotal role by organizing meetings to study and formalize the role of interpreters, fostering collaboration with the Brazilian deaf community.

Additionally, FENEIS organized meetings to discuss the role, ethics, and other relevant issues concerning interpreters in Brazil. Quadros (2004, p. 14-15, *translated by us*) recounts that “[...] in 1988, the first National Meeting of Sign Language Interpreters was held by FENEIS, which for the first time facilitated an exchange between some interpreters from Brazil and provided an evaluation of professional ethics”⁶. However, the role of Libras/Portuguese interpreters only became prominent once Libras was legally recognized. Since then, the formation and professionalization of these interpreters have been mandated by the articles of this law, and later by Decree No. 5.626 of December 22, 2005, which regulates and makes the presence of sign language interpreters mandatory in educational institutions

⁶ “[...] Em 1988, realizou-se o I Encontro Nacional de Intérpretes de Língua de Sinais organizado pela FENEIS que propiciou, pela primeira vez, o intercâmbio entre alguns intérpretes do Brasil e a avaliação sobre a ética do profissional intérprete”. (Quadros, 2004, p. 14-15)

regardless of grade level (Quadros, 2004).

Consequently, Sign Language Translator and Interpreter (SLTI) must have specialized training, as different sectors have specific requirements that need regulation. Therefore, “beyond mastering the languages involved in translation and interpretation, the professional must have specific qualifications. This means understanding the processes, models, strategies, and techniques of translation and interpretation.” (Quadros, 2004, p. 28, *translated by us*)⁷.

In this sense, the professional must be prepared for their area of expertise. These distinctions are even more significant in educational settings, particularly in early grades, where the interpreter’s role can go beyond the conventional scope of the profession.

Since users of sign languages are a linguistic minority, Albres (2018) emphasizes that interaction in the educational environment is crucial, even essential, for the deaf student’s development in inclusive education. Understanding the challenges faced by SLTI is relevant to this study. The profession requires extensive study and preparation, which can sometimes lead to the professionals being perceived as “teachers or caregivers” for the students. This leads us to examine the role of sign language interpreters in the school context.

It is essential to understand some of the challenges faced by sign language interpreters, such as working with unfamiliar concepts and the invisibility of the translator/interpreter, who has not previously accessed the concepts but is expected to serve as the channel for the transmission of language, languages, and sensations, raises questions about the implications for individuals and their ways of listening.” (Masuttis; Santos, 2008, p. 163, *translated by us*)⁸. It is also crucial for interpreters to have access to the content in advance, as this can prevent obstacles. The interpreter needs to research and understand the subject matter, and this work should be collaborative, as “the integration of deaf individuals and Sign Language

⁷ “[...] além do domínio das línguas envolvidas no processo de tradução e interpretação, o profissional precisa ter qualificação específica para atuar como tal. Isso significa ter domínio dos processos, dos modelos, das estratégias e técnicas de tradução e interpretação” (Quadros, 2004, p. 28).

⁸ “A invisibilidade do tradutor/intérprete, que não acessou previamente os conceitos, mas que deve assumir a função de ser o canal de passagem de língua, linguagens, sensações, abre perguntas em torno das implicações dos sujeitos e as suas formas de escuta”. (Masuttis; Santos, 2008, p. 163)

into institutions creates new types of relationships with knowledge, and this process of creation intersects with interpretation.” (Masuttis; Santos, 2008, p. 163, *translated by us*)⁹. Thus, the work must encompass not only a linguistic culture but also all languages and cultures involved in the process, requiring comprehensive participation.

Interpreting lectures, content, events, texts, videos, etc., should be done with the interpreter’s prior guidance or access to the material. Otherwise, it may lead to complications in the translation process. Therefore, the responsibility extends beyond the interpreters to all contexts involving their work (Masutti; Santos, 2008).

Given the necessity of collaboration in the translation and interpretation process, it is important for this study to reflect upon the work of interpreters in the educational context. Literacy is a critical phase as it establishes the initial connection between children and the school environment. In inclusive education, particularly for the deaf, this process is also “[...] quite complex, as the student, unlike hearing students, 'speaks' one language and learns to read and write in another [...]" (Silva; Costa; Lopes, 2014, p.6, *translated by us*)¹⁰. Often, deaf children may enter school without mastering their first language, which, in their case, is a signed language rather than a spoken one:

In contrast to hearing children, who typically arrive at school already proficient in their first language and begin learning to write in it, deaf children often encounter formal Portuguese instruction only after starting school. Thus, Portuguese is entirely new to them, requiring different teaching methodologies compared to those used for hearing students who are already familiar with the written form of their native language (Alves, 2019, p. 105-106, *translated by us*).¹¹

⁹ "A entrada do surdo e da Língua de Sinais nas instituições conforma novos tipos de relações com o saber, e isso é uma criação que atravessa a interpretação." (Masuttis; Santos, 2008, p. 163).

¹⁰ “[...] bastante complexo, pois o aluno, diferentemente dos alunos ouvintes, “fala” uma língua e aprende a ler e escrever em outra[...]”. (Silva, Costa; Lopes, 2014, p. 6).

¹¹ “[...]no caso das crianças surdas, por sua vez, elas terão contato com o ensino formal do Português após entrarem na escola. Isto é, em todos os sentidos, o Português é uma língua nova, a qual exigirá metodologias de ensino e aprendizado diferentes daquelas voltadas aos ouvintes que estudarão a modalidade escrita da língua que já dominam”. (Alves, 2019, p. 105-106).

In this challenging context, the interpreter must address questions, such as, “Do I need to interpret for the student from Portuguese (which does not hear or read) into Libras (which she does not know)? What is the role of the interpreter in this context of inclusion?” (Alves, 2019, p. 2, *translated by us*)¹². This highlights that deaf children require not only a Libras/Portuguese interpreter but also a deaf teacher or instructor to support their acquisition of Libras as their first language.

In addition to their linguistic skills, such as fluency in both the source and target languages, interpreters are required to develop a deep understanding of the cultural and contextual nuances of communication. The sign language interpreters must also be able to rapidly comprehend complex conceptual fields and acquire a working knowledge of specialized areas as if these were integral to their expertise (Masutti and Santos, 2005–2010, p. 163). This demands continuous study of the content and terminology specific to each subject area. Furthermore, the sign interpreters need to design strategies and adapt their approach to facilitate students' understanding, particularly by considering the student's proficiency in Libras. In the educational context, these professionals play a critical role in bridging communication gaps and supporting the teaching and learning process for deaf students. However, as noted by Itararé (2017), many educators report feeling linguistically unequipped to effectively include deaf students in their classrooms.

Another important point is that the interpreters may often be the only person in the school who understands Libras and deaf culture, while others communicate primarily in Portuguese. This situation compels the interpreter to seek alternatives and inform teachers and school administrators to align activities with the deaf student's linguistic and cultural reality. Contrary to common belief, translation and interpretation between languages do not ensure the deaf student's educational development.

This research acknowledges that “[...] when considering and advocating for the identity and educational role of the interpreter, the premise is that the work should be collaborative, that is, in partnership between the interpreter and

¹² "Preciso interpretar para a aluna do português (que ela não ouve nem lê) para a Libras (que ela não conhece)? Qual é o papel do intérprete nesse contexto de inclusão?" (Alves, 2019, p. 2).

teachers” (Gesser, 2015, p. 538, *translated by us*)¹³. Effective lesson planning requires discussion of methodologies and materials used in inclusive education. Additionally, the educational interpreter must have:

Skills to handle communicative and interactive events involved: understanding statements, discussing topics, acquiring vocabulary and concepts, reading and writing activities, exercises, explanations of formulas and problem-solving, content review, corrections, clarifications, etc. (Gesser, 2015, p. 540, *translated by us*)¹⁴

Thus, interpreters have different roles in various environments, and as noted above, they can be seen as “master” figures in educational settings, demonstrating active engagement in their role as educational interpreters, as described by Martins (2013).

2 GETTING TO KNOW THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

This study originates from our personal story as a pre-service teacher and interpreter. It also includes the story of João¹⁵, a deaf child whom we consider to be not a passive subject but an active participant in this study. In this context, Sibilía (2008, p. 59) suggests that “the life experience of each subject is a narrative that can only be thought of and structured as such [...] this narrative does not simply represent the history that has been lived, but it presents it”¹⁶. When I entered this context, where my role would take place, I anticipated, based on my studies as a

¹³ “[...] ao se pensar e defender a identidade e o fazer educacional do intérprete, a premissa é que o trabalho deve ser em equipe, isto é, em colaboração entre intérprete e professores” (Gesser, 2015, p. 538)

¹⁴ “[...] habilidades para lidar com eventos comunicacionais-interativos nele imbricados: compreensão de enunciados, discussão de temas, aquisição de vocabulário e de conceitos, atividades de leitura e escrita, exercícios de fixação, explicação de fórmulas e resolução de problemas, revisão de conteúdo, correção, tira-dúvidas, etc”. (Gesser, 2015, p. 540)

¹⁵ The name used in this text is fictitious and does not refer to any real individual.

¹⁶ “[...] a experiência vital de cada sujeito é um relato que só pode ser pensado e estruturado como tal [...] esse relato não representa simplesmente a história que se tem vivido, mas ela a apresenta”. (Sibilía, 2008, p. 59).

graduate student in Languages/Libras, that I might encounter situations that would challenge my designated role.

Everything new brings with it a sense of strangeness, and that's how it all began — not just for the school professionals, but also for me, as it was my first experience as a pre-service Libras/Portuguese interpreter. Even though I was aware of my responsibilities, I was guided by the school and believed that by developing a pedagogical approach beyond just translating and interpreting, I could achieve effective inclusion. In this regard, I realize that these doubts may arise from the fact that the professional identity of Libras/Portuguese interpreters in the country has not yet been fully established, as noted by Marcon (2012) and Alencar (2016). This may be because this profession was only legally recognized recently, in 2010, as previously mentioned.

The motivations and choices for the activities I developed were also based on the linguistic and educational profile of the deaf child. According to his mother's account, João's deafness was noticed between the ages of four and five, when she would call him from behind, and he would not respond to auditory stimuli.

As a result, she gradually realized that her son needed a specific approach. However, there was a delay in seeking a diagnosis for his deafness, which led to a late acquisition of Libras. His first contact with Libras occurred in 2019, when he was eight years old, after enrolling in school. It is also important to note that, despite João not being proficient in Libras, he has had many spoken stimuli, as he has moderate hearing loss and is supported by a speech therapist, uses a hearing aid, and receives linguistic input from his family in spoken Portuguese.

3 DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS: CHALLENGES AND PATHWAYS IN THE ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETER

Like most deaf children, João is one of the 95%¹⁷ of deaf individuals with hearing parents. This situation can make communication in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) challenging, as his family primarily speaks Portuguese and has limited exposure to Libras. The classroom teacher reported that the school had no prior experience with deaf students and therefore lacked the necessary resources to support them effectively. For the interpreter in training, the knowledge gained at university proved insufficient for handling this real-world situation. The perceived responsibility was to create a more inclusive environment. In response to the situation, pedagogical roles were assumed, which are not typically within the interpreter's scope of duties, as specified by the Ministry of Education (MEC) in the document by Quadros (2004, p. 28) titled "The Translator and Interpreter of Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese Language". The document outlines that the interpreter's role is to "perform the interpretation from the spoken language to the signed language and vice versa" (Quadros, 2004, p. 28), adhering to ethical principles of reliability, impartiality, discretion, professional distance, and fidelity. Despite the teacher's commitment to improving her work with the student, her lack of experience meant that the interpreter, with greater knowledge of deaf culture, assumed significant responsibility for supporting the student.

This challenge is also anticipated in the aforementioned document, as it states:

[...] The role of the interpreter in the classroom is often confused with that of the teacher. Students frequently direct questions to the interpreter, make comments, and engage in discussions about the topics with the interpreter rather than with the teacher. The teachers themselves often delegate the responsibility of teaching the content covered in class to the interpreter. Moreover, teachers frequently consult the interpreter regarding the deaf student's progress, assuming that the interpreter is the most qualified person to provide insight on the matter. (Quadros, 2004, p. 60, *translated by us*)¹⁸

¹⁷ According to Pizzio and Quadros (2011, p. 3), approximately 95% of deaf children are born into hearing families who are unfamiliar with sign language.

¹⁸ "[...] Muitas vezes, o papel do intérprete em sala de aula acaba sendo confundido com o papel do professor. Os alunos dirigem questões diretamente ao intérprete, comentam e travam discussões em relação aos tópicos abordados com o intérprete e não com o professor. O próprio professor delega ao intérprete a responsabilidade de assumir o ensino dos conteúdos desenvolvidos em aula ao intérprete. Muitas vezes, o professor consulta o intérprete a respeito do desenvolvimento do aluno surdo, como sendo ele a pessoa mais indicada a dar um parecer a respeito". (Quadros, 2004, p. 60)

In this context, Martins (2013) presents in his research a study involving a group of interpreters from São Paulo. Among the testimonies of these professionals, the following statement stands out: “I realized that I can't be an interpreter because I am incapable of hearing what someone says and simply reproducing it in another language” (Martins, 2013, p. 22, *translated by us*)¹⁹. In this account, the participant echoes one of the first feelings I experienced when I couldn't keep up with the teacher's speech in the classroom, as I had to teach the sign, its meaning, and its context. Beyond this scenario, insecurity arises, the feeling that I wasn't fulfilling my role well, as Quadros (2004, p. 28, *translated by us*) reports: “The interpreter, in turn, takes on all the roles delegated by teachers and students, ends up being overloaded, and also ends up confusing their role within the educational process, a role that is still being established”²⁰.

As a result of this feeling, I felt obligated to seek strategies to develop a closer relationship with the student so that he would start to show a reaction when I asked comprehension questions: Did you understand what the teacher explained? Do you want me to explain it again? And when he didn't respond, I would say, “I'll give you other examples so you can understand, since you don't want to say anything”. This is because “[...] someone who works in the classroom, with students, having a close, daily relationship with them, cannot make signs — interpreting — without caring whether they are being understood, or if the student is learning [...]” (Lacerda, 2006, p. 174, *translated by us*)²¹.

In this ongoing discussion, there was a very significant situation during my work, specifically during daily storytelling sessions. Since the student did not have a broad vocabulary in Libras, I noticed that he didn't want to pay attention. To avoid

¹⁹ “[...] eu percebi que não consigo ser intérprete porque sou incapaz de ouvir o que alguém diz e simplesmente reproduzir em outro idioma.” (Martins, 2013, p. 22).

²⁰ “O intérprete, por sua vez, se assumir todos os papéis delegados por parte dos professores e alunos, acaba sendo sobrecarregado e, também, acaba por confundir o seu papel dentro do processo educacional, um papel que está sendo constituído.” (Quadros, 2004, p. 28).

²¹ “[...] alguém que trabalhe em sala de aula, com alunos, tendo com eles uma relação estreita, cotidiana, não pode fazer sinais – interpretando – sem se importar se está sendo compreendido, ou se o aluno está aprendendo. [...]” (Lacerda, 2006 p. 174).

hindering his learning, I began using images during the storytelling to explain the signs visually.

Additionally, I asked the teacher to let me help choose the stories because I couldn't keep up with the story, given that, at a certain point, I was still signing while the rest of the class was discussing what they understood. Although this is natural, considering that different languages and modalities are involved, the fact is that the time taken in the interpretation process may result in it ending before or after the speech. This can have negative impacts on the student, as they do not yet understand the distinction between the languages involved.

As previously mentioned, the role played by the educational translator and interpreter goes beyond the rules contained in the code of ethics, because “[...] Even though the guiding documents from the Ministry of Education define them as interpreters, their daily practice defines them as teachers [...]” (Silva et al., 2017, p. 10, *translated by us*)²². Working in this context, it becomes clear that there is still a barrier between the deaf and hearing individuals and standing between them are the educational interpreters. For this reason, “[...] The educational interpreter creates with the deaf student a marginal space for teaching and learning, becomes a master, and thus inclusion happens [...]” (Martins, 2008, p. 18, *translated by us*)²³.

From this perspective, efforts were made to ensure that the entire space became inclusive. This included making the classroom visually accessible by creating a calendar in Libras, using poster board, office paper, and printed numbers with the corresponding handshape configurations. The written form of each number with handshape configurations was also utilized. Additionally, software was downloaded onto both a laptop and the school's computer to create the manual alphabet, and a Libras calendar was selected and placed alongside the existing classroom calendar. Below are some images that were documented:

Figure 1: Documentation of Visual Activities: Numbers, Alphabet, and Calendar

²² “[...] Mesmo que os documentos orientadores no Ministério da Educação o definam como intérprete, sua prática no dia a dia o define como professor [...]” (Silva et al., 2017, p. 10).

²³ “O intérprete educacional constrói com o aluno surdo um espaço marginal de ensino e aprendizagem, se faz mestre e, por assim ser, a inclusão[...]” (Martins, 2008, p. 18).



Source: Internship Activity Report

By promoting a space with mediation between Portuguese and Libras, the goal was to make the environment more comfortable for João. Just as the hearing students' classrooms had materials in Portuguese, it was desired that he also felt part of the space occupied by both him and Libras. This approach also aimed to demonstrate that the presence of the interpreter was intended to support his development and that the differences in understanding were solely due to linguistic and cultural issues.

This initiative provided new ideas for creating a more effective communicative bond with the student. In addition to the challenge of learning signs daily, there was a need to establish the interpreter-student relationship. In this context, Gesser (2015, p. 539-540, *translated by us*)²⁴ presents concepts in his article stating that “The act of translation itself must be transcended and come to exist as ‘a necessary teaching process’, and from ESLTP (Educational Sign Language Translator-Interpreter), it becomes a MISLE (master-educational sign language interpreter)”. Master because, unlike other roles within the school, this role goes beyond translation and interpretation and takes a pedagogical approach.

Thus, with a pedagogical stance, efforts were made to make the student's classroom more inclusive so that he would not reject Libras or feel different from others in terms of development. After discussions with the teacher, the classroom routine was implemented in both linguistic modalities. Through this arrangement,

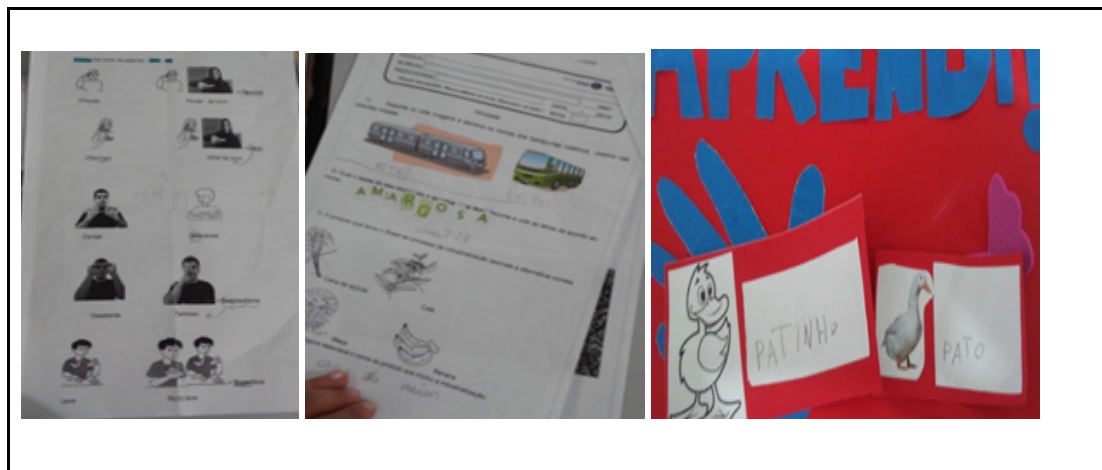
²⁴ “O ato tradutório em si tem que ser transgredido e passar a existir como ‘um necessário processo de ensinagem’ e, de TISLE (tradutor-intérprete de língua de sinais educacional), passa a ser um MISLE (mestre-intérprete de língua de sinais educacional²)” (Gesser, 2015, p. 539-540).

the alphabet was read daily by the interpreter both orally and in Libras with all the students, as were the numbers. After establishing a professional bond, the responsibility for the student's success or failure was felt to be significant if the goals were not achieved. On this issue, Martins (2013, p. 21, *translate by us*) describes:

Beyond functional knowledge or the responsibility for successful performance, which is the notion conveyed and announced by interpreters, there is a certain blame placed on the performance of the ESLI [Educational Sign Language Interpreter], with their actions having consequences for the success or failure of the deaf student (evident that the blame falls on the ESLI much more when the student does not achieve the expected academic knowledge).²⁵

Finding oneself in such a position, the feeling of professional inadequacy as an ESLI led to seeking methods that extended teaching beyond the school. Consequently, extra activities were created and carried out in the classroom or at the student's home with a guardian. In the classroom, efforts were made to adapt activities from the book with the aim of supporting understanding and developmental acquisition, such as:

Figure 2: Visual Adaptation of Educational Material



Source: Internship Activity Report

²⁵ “[...] para além do saber funcional, ou da responsabilidade do sucesso da atuação, que são a noção empalmada e anunciada pelos intérpretes de haver certa culpabilização na performance tradutória do ILSE, tendo do seu ato consequências para o sucesso ou o fracasso escolar do surdo (evidente que a culpa recai no ILSE muito mais quando o aluno não atinge o conhecimento escolar esperado)”. (Martins, 2013, p. 21).

These and other activities were designed to make the classroom dynamics more visually inclusive. However, as previously mentioned, according to Decree 5.626/2005, the interpreter cannot assume the role of teacher. Thus, their role is to provide accessibility through translation and interpretation. Nevertheless, Albres and Rodrigues (2018, p. 20 *apud* Albres, 2016, *translated by us*) explain about the Educational Interpreter (EI) that:

The higher the level of education and the maturity of the deaf person, the ESLI's activity will be more focused on interpretative aspects, and the younger the child, the more directed it will be towards their linguistic, social, or cognitive condition, which will require supplementary activities by the ESLI.²⁶

This is because translation alone, especially during the early stages of acquisition performed by the EI, would not suffice; in practice, there is a constant need to seek strategies that make the content visually closer to the linguistic reality of the deaf student.

In the daily work performed by an EI, there is a continual search for sign language that best fits the student's linguistic level. This strategy can facilitate content comprehension for students who, like João, are still learning the language:

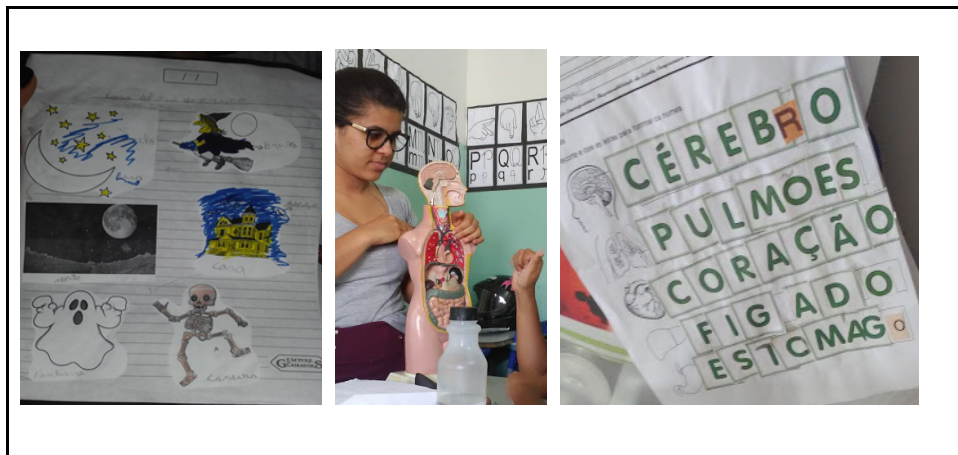
Learning and encounters with deaf students can, and in terms of content, occur in the teaching production that the TILSE sets out to build in the act of translation. Even if denied, or if neutrality is sought, the teacher's speech is reformulated by the interpreter and finds other paths in the process of seeking a more didactic translation, more familiar to the student whom the educational interpreter, through interaction, already knows and, as such, has established a certain bond (Martins, 2013, p. 32, *translated by us*).²⁷

²⁶ “[...] quanto maior o nível de ensino e a maturidade da pessoa surda, a atividade do IE estará mais focada em aspectos interpretativos, e quanto menor a criança mais direcionada à sua condição linguística, social ou cognitiva, a qual demandará atividades complementares por parte do IE”. (Rodrigues, 2018, p. 20 *apud* Albres, 2016).

²⁷ “O aprender e os encontros de alunos surdos podem e, em relação ao conteúdo, acontecem na produção de ensinagem que o TILSE se põe a construir no ato tradutório. Ainda que negue, ou que busque uma neutralidade discursiva, a fala do professor é reformulada por ele e encontra outros caminhos no processo de busca por uma tradução mais didática, mais familiarizada com o aluno que o intérprete educacional, pela convivência, já conhece e, por assim ser, já estabeleceu certo vínculo”. (Martins, 2013, p. 32).

To establish a connection, the interpreter needs to do more than just interpret; by being a communicative representative, the student needs to feel welcomed in the space they are in. Therefore, the EI in the classroom performs both teaching and interpreting tasks. This issue is mentioned here to introduce the daily practices carried out to provide better learning for the student through classroom activities, as over time, a more detailed understanding of the student's difficulties was developed. Consequently, efforts were made to find visual materials to enhance understanding.

Figure 3: Adapted Visual Activities



Source: Internship Activity Report

Interpreting and translating without using visual pedagogical materials for explanation would be ineffective for those in the acquisition phase of both languages: Libras and Portuguese. Although the code of ethics states in Article 2 that the translator and interpreter must maintain impartiality during their practice (Quadros, 2004, *translated by us*), this practice in the school environment does not align with that rule. This is because when the EI

[...] places themselves in the space of including the student and makes their presence a possibility for change in the daily routine of the class and the teacher's practices, they (the interpreter) alter what was intended and transform the class into something else; 'something' that can only be achieved

in the relationship with the deaf student (Martins, 2013, p. 50-51, *translated by us*).²⁸

In this passage, Martins (2013) highlights the transformative role of the interpreter in the classroom. By positioning themselves within the space of inclusion, the interpreter does more than just facilitate communication; they become a catalyst for change in both the classroom dynamic and the teacher's approach to teaching. The interpreter's presence reshapes the class, turning it into something new and unique, which is only possible through the relationship between the interpreter and the deaf student. This underscores the idea that the interpreter's role extends beyond translation, making them an active participant in creating a more inclusive and adaptive learning environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the challenges for an interpreter in the early years is that their role often extends beyond merely translating between two languages, as the job requires adapting materials for the child. This was the instance in which work was done with João. Initially, there were significant difficulties in adapting and making the class inclusive, in collaboration with the classroom teacher. This dynamic demanded more time as it was necessary to learn new signs according to the content of each subject and guide the teacher in the preparation of activities.

The discussion generated around the role of the educational interpreter in this work led to several reflections on their performance, the difficulties encountered in the school interpretative process, the functions and overload experienced in the classroom, and the discrepancies between their assigned duties and the practices carried out. There are still aspects related to educational

²⁸ “[...] coloca-se no espaço de incluir o aluno e faz de sua presença uma possibilidade de mudança no cotidiano da aula, nos fazeres do professor, ele (intérprete) altera o pensado e faz da aula outra coisa; ‘algo’ que só pode ser feito na relação com o surdo.” (Martins, 2013, p. 50-51).

interpreters that need to be investigated regarding their role in the classroom and their actual performance.

As the entry of these professionals into the school environment is relatively recent, they are still often seen as the providers of inclusion. However, this perception needs to be addressed within the school environment so that it is understood by all and the attitudes towards such situations. The presence of deaf students in schools also represents the introduction of a new linguistic culture, and thus, there should be a pursuit within the school for an environment that is favorable to this audience. The formation of educators needs to be reevaluated concerning learning about diversity.

REFERENCES

ALBRES, N. de A.; RODRIGUES, C. H. The functions of the educational interpreter: Between social practices and educational policies. *Revista de Estudos do Discurso/UFSC*, 16-41, 2018.

ALENCAR, A. da S. *A aquisição de linguagem/Libras e o aluno surdo: Um estudo sobre as formas de comunicação e interação na escola e na família* (Master's thesis). Faculdade de Educação, Universidade Federal de Grande Dourados, 2016. Available at: <http://files.ufgd.edu.br/arquivos/arquivos/78/MESTRADO-DOCTORADO-EDUCACAO/AUR%C3%89LIO%20DA%20SILVA%20ALENCAR.pdf>. Accessed July 24, 2018.

ALVES, S. D. A. W. *Elsa surda em uma aventura da linguagem: A trajetória linguística de uma criança surda em processo de aquisição tardia da Libras* (Master's thesis). Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Minas Gerais, 2019. Available at <http://www.ppgletras.ufv.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Disserta%C3%A7%C3%A3o-Final-Sirlara.pdf>. Accessed June 27, 2020.

BRAZIL. Law No. 9.394, of December 20, 1996. Establishes the guidelines and bases of national education. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, December 23, 1996.

CARVALHO, N. S. de A.; SILVA, C. A. F. da. Inclusive education for the deaf. *Revista Virtual de Cultura Surda*, 13, 1-25, 2014.

GESSER, A. Interpreting while teaching and teaching while interpreting: Positions assumed in the interpretive act in the context of inclusion for the deaf. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*, v. 35, n. 2, 534-556, 2015.

ITARARÉ, M. I. Brazilian Sign Language in early childhood education and the initial years of elementary education: The role of the Libras interpreter. In A. C. G. Silva et al. (Org.), *Reflexões relacionais, organizacionais e deliberativas dos saberes*. UTFPR and Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Pinhais, 2017.

LACERDA, C. B. F. The school inclusion of deaf students: What do students, teachers, and interpreters say about these experiences. *Caderno Cedes*, v. 69, n. 26, 163-184, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-32622006000100011>.

MASUTTI, M. L.; SANTOS, S. A. Intérpretes de Língua de Sinais: Uma política em construção. In R. M. de Quadros (Org.), *Estudos Surdos III*, Arara Azul, p. 148-167, 2008.

MARTINS, V. R. de. *Educação de surdos no paradoxo da inclusão com intérprete de língua de sinais: relações de poder e (re)criação do sujeito*. (Master's thesis). Faculdade de Educação, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, 2008.

MARTINS, V. R. de O. *Posição-mestre: Desdobramentos foucaultianos sobre a relação de ensino do intérprete de Língua de Sinais Educacional* (Doctoral thesis). Faculdade de Educação, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, 2013.

MARCON, A. M. The role of the Libras translator/interpreter in understanding concepts by the deaf. *Revel*, 2012. Available at <http://www.revel.inf.br/files/644681b81f2cb7f90f93b613729ef637.pdf>. Accessed April 1, 2019.

PEREIRA, S. A.; SHITSUKA, D. M.; FERREIRA, F. J.; SHITSUKA, R. Case study methodology. In: *Metodologia da pesquisa científica*. UFSM, 2018.

PIZZIO, A. L.; QUADROS, R. M. de. *Aquisição da Língua de Sinais*. UFSC, 2011. Available at http://www.libras.ufsc.br/colecaoLetrasLibras/eixoFormacaoEspecific/aquisicaoDeLinguaDeSinais/assets/748/Texto_Base_Aquisi_o_de_l_nguas_de_sinais_.pdf. Accessed July 28, 2020.

QUADROS, R. M. de. The Brazilian Sign Language and Portuguese interpreter. MEC SEESP, 2004. Available at <http://portal.mec.gov.br/seesp/arquivos/pdf/tradutorlibras.pdf>. Accessed June 27, 2020.

SIBILIA, P. ME, me, me... you and all of us. In: *O show do eu: A intimidade como espetáculo*. Nova Fronteira, 2008.

SKLIAR, C. B. *A surdez: Um olhar sobre as diferenças*, 5. ed. Mediação, 2011.

SILVA, A. de L. *Ensino de Língua Portuguesa para surdos: Das abordagens teóricas à prática pedagógica*. (Undergraduate thesis). Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, PB, 2013.