

The Work of the Brazilian Sign Language Interpreter at School: a case study

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ABSTRACT – The Work of the Brazilian Sign Language Interpreter at School: a case study. This paper analyzes the work of an educational Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) interpreter in a 7th grade classroom, in an inclusive school belonging to the Municipal School System from Vitória, Espírito Santo. Some results can be highlighted from the discussion carried out: first of all, it is emphasized that, although the Libras interpreter is not the teacher, it is necessary to be somehow involved with the educative work regarding interpretative acting; the work must be collaboratively planned with the sponsor teacher; the training for the interpreters who choose to work in the education field must deal with, besides being fluent sign language communicators, aspects concerning the school function, as well as the pedagogical mediation role in the knowledge appropriation process of the deaf student. Finally, the research indicates the need to enhance the discussion on the interpretation work specific features in the educational space.

Keywords: Brazilian Sign Language Interpreter. Deaf Student. Libras (Brazilian Sign Language).

RESUMO – O Trabalho do Intérprete de Libras na Escola: um estudo de caso. Este artigo analisa o trabalho do intérprete de Libras em uma sala de aula do sétimo ano do ensino fundamental de uma escola da Rede Municipal de Ensino de Vitória, Espírito Santo, com proposta inclusiva. A partir da discussão realizada, alguns resultados podem ser destacados: em primeiro lugar, ressalta-se que, embora o intérprete de Libras não seja o professor do aluno, faz-se necessário que ele tenha um envolvimento com o trabalho educativo em sua atuação interpretativa; seu trabalho deve ser traçado colaborativamente com o professor regente; a formação para intérpretes que optam em atuar na área educacional deve tratar, além das questões da fluência da língua de sinais, de aspectos que dizem respeito à função da escola, bem como ao papel da mediação pedagógica no processo de apropriação de conhecimentos do aluno surdo. Finalmente, o estudo indica a necessidade de se ampliar a discussão sobre as especificidades do trabalho de interpretação no espaço educacional.

Palavras-chave: Intérprete de Libras. Aluno Surdo. Libras.

Introduction

This paper discusses the work of the Brazilian Sign Language (hereinafter Libras) interpreter who operates in a school called inclusive by the municipal education system where the study was conducted. The school is considered inclusive because it receives students with special needs along with others, enabling all of them appropriate knowledge and experiences collectively. This work also focuses on the performance of the Libras interpreter, his/her mediating role in the educational work as well as the conditions under which he/she performs his/her professional activity.

Over the years, a series of acts and documents made possible the consolidation and specification of this professional. First, we highlight the Act No. 10098, of December 19, 2000 (Brasil, 2000), which establishes general rules and basic criteria for the promotion of accessibility for people with disabilities or reduced mobility. Much more than just indicating the importance of access to communication, this act mentions the training of Libras interpreters for the first time. Thus, people who until then worked, in most cases, in religious and family environment in an informal way, began to constitute themselves as professionals, due to the specific knowledge they possessed.

Even though it is not necessarily addressed to the Libras interpreter, it is important to mention the CNE/CEB Resolution No. 2, of September, 11, 2001, which establishes National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education, informing specifically, in its art. 8, how schools should be organized to include people with diverse educational needs. In order to achieve this organization, it determines the “[...] acting of teachers-interpreters of languages and applicable codes”¹ (Brasil, 2001). Then, on April 24, 2002, it was enacted in Brazil the Act No. 10436, which deals with the Brazilian Sign Language, Libras (Brasil, 2002). This law recognizes Libras as language and legal means of communication of the deaf people in Brazil, which was crucial for a greater recognition of the Libras professional interpreter. In turn, the Decree No. 5626, of December 22, 2005, which regulates Act No. 10436/2002 already discusses directly about the Libras interpreters and their educational training, devoting an entire chapter to these professionals.

Although the Brazilian Code of Occupations (BCO) already foresaw in the item “Philologists, translators, interpreters and suchlike”, under the Code No. 2614-25 (Brasil, 2010, p 385.), the jobs of sign language interpreter – guide-interpreter; Libras interpreter; Libras translator and Libras translator-interpreter –, it was only with the Act No. 12319, of September 1, 2010, that Libras interpreter as a profession was regulated. It is from this provision that selection processes and civil service exams to the specific position of interpreter started happening all over Brazil, especially in education, in its most distinguished educational levels.

All these documents, and many others, are immersed in a larger context, which is delineated by the struggle of social movements that represent minorities. Among these movements, considering the approach of this study, we highlight one that has been called *Special Education* from the perspective of *Inclusion*, and the *Bilingual Education for the Deaf*.

Kassar (2011), when presenting the routes that the *Special Inclusive Education* has come through in Brazil, states that the notion of a segregated education for people with disabilities, initially related to the conception of Special Education, has been reset considering the several international agreements and legal instruments signed by the Brazilian government. While in the past people with disabilities were allocated, primarily, to specific schools and essentially specialized teachers, after such documents, the inclusive perspective became stronger, requiring all educational institutions and education professionals – and not only those specialized – to receive and attend the student with disabilities. The author also points out that, currently, with all this transformation, we experience a scenario where educational policies go towards the emptying and subsequent closure of special educational institutions, though some sectors of civil society demand the maintenance of these schools.

Outlined in the complexity of this discussion between *Special Education* and *Inclusive Education*, there is another debate; the *Bilingual Education for the deaf* people. With the displacement from the clinical-therapeutic view to the cultural perspective view of deafness, wherein the deaf subject is designed as a linguistic minority (Skliar, 1998; Lopes, 2007), the claim that the education of deaf people should be based on the principles of Bilingual Education as it happens with other linguistic minorities – as in the case of Indigenous Education – gains strength among social movements that fight for the rights of the deaf people. In other words, the struggle for schools or specific classes where the students are taught from the sign language is increasing.

Thus, it is possible to distinguish two different conceptions of what *Bilingual Education for Deaf* would be (Lodi, 2013): one supported on the Special Education from the perspective of Inclusion, in which the Bilingual Education is reduced to the presence of two languages inside the school – Portuguese and the Sign Language – articulated through the Libras interpreter; and the other founded on the notion of deafness by cultural bias, which argues that the educational processes would be developed from the sign language, in this case, Libras, valuing the intrinsic cultural aspects to the deaf community as a linguistic minority. It is important to highlight that the Libras interpreter, in the educational sector, receives greater centrality in the first conception presented.

Considering all stated above, and bearing in mind that the conception of Bilingual Education that has been spread nationally is the one that supports itself on the Special Education from the perspective

of Inclusion due to established policies, this paper aims to analyze the work of the Libras interpreter in a school with an inclusive proposal.

The Translation Work and the School Context

As it is highlighted by Lacerda and Góes (2000), the functions to be performed by the Libras interpreters have been re-signified since their knowledge and their doing are intertwined by certain peculiarities of the educational area, and not only by accuracy and fluency in Libras.

When addressing the specificities of the performance of this professional, Lacerda and Góes (2002), Quadros (2003), Tuxi (2009), Martins (2008) and Albres (2015) point out that the primary function of the educational Libras interpreter is to mediate the relationships established between the deaf students and other individuals present in this context. Seeking elements to discuss the inclusion of Libras interpreter in education, we gathered the studies of the authors mentioned in two approaches: the first deals with educational issues and the second covers aspects about language competence.

Referring to the first approach, Lacerda and Garcia (2002), Martins (2008) and Albres (2015) discuss, among other things, the distortion of the didactic and pedagogical relations between Libras interpreter and deaf student and Libras interpreter and classroom teacher. According to the authors, in many cases, the responsibility of teaching the deaf student is transferred to the Libras interpreter, who, in the desire to present results of his/her work, assumes this function. Faced with such situation, the deaf student ends up not understanding the Libras interpreter's work, placing him/her as the responsible for their learning process, reporting to him/her in order to answer any doubts and treating him/her as a kind of learning *tutor*.

Turning to the second approach, Quadros (2003) and Tuxi (2009) discuss the linguistic competence issue, since, to occur intermediation of knowledge in the school environment, it is very important that Libras interpreters have language skills not only in Libras as well as in Portuguese. They also indicate the need of valorizing, in public notices when hiring, the professionals who have educational background in the area of interpreting sign language.

When working with deaf students at school, the Libras interpreter is committed to the development of the knowledge of these students, interposing him or herself as a mediator in this process, which brings new ramifications to the professional action. In this sense, since the interpreter is inserted in the school, the work of translation, interpretation and teaching, in a certain way, articulate themselves in the role of this professional, producing new configurations.

Speaking about the school's role in human formation, Saviani (2003) highlights its function of transmitting knowledge that was historically accumulated by society. For the author, "[...] the educational

work is the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each single individual, the humanity that is produced historically and collectively by all men” (Saviani, 2003, p. 13). At school, the educational work is organized from the action of different professionals and, more recently, the Libras interpreter has been part of this organization, taking part in the processes of teaching and learning of the deaf students and, consequently, in the task of the constitution of the deaf subject as part of a collectivity.

In a similar direction, Vygotsky (1983) states that human development occurs in the social sphere, in the concrete situations of life. It is through social mediation that individuals understand the world and constitute themselves as part of mankind. In the process of social mediation, language has a prominent role, which has both a communicative function as well as the constitution of higher psychological functions. The language, placing itself between the child and the objective reality, enables him/her to interact with this reality in the symbolic level.

Still considering Vygotsky's postulates, another important concept to analyze the appropriation of knowledge in school is: the pedagogical mediation, which refers to the intentional and planned educational work carried out by the school in order to facilitate the transition of “[...] the thought adhered to sensitive, empirical and concrete levels, particularized from reality to levels increasingly widespread, abstract, of increasing scope and inserted in the growing complexity of systems” (Rocha, 2000, p. 44). Therefore, the school should be organized as a space that enables mediations “qualitatively different” among those who are part of it. The teacher, in his/her role as mediator, must come between the student and the knowledge, developing teaching strategies to produce psychological changes and appropriation of knowledge by the student. In this perspective, it is essential to discuss the performance of the Libras interpreter, a professional who stands between the teacher, the deaf student and the knowledge.

The interpretation materializes at the interface between two languages. Considering the ideological dimension of the word and its role in the construction of the senses (Bakhtin, 2006), we understand that interpretation is not a code that stands on a sequential combination of hand configurations made in enclosed places, with positioning (orientation) already established, following movements that are harmonized and potentiated by facial and / or body language. The interpretation goes beyond the encoding and decoding of information, it permeates the subjects involved and the historical and social context in which they are immersed.

According to Tuxi (2008, p 13), the interpretation is divided into consecutive and simultaneous:

Simultaneous interpretation is when the source message is in progress and the interpreter follows this speech (or

signaling). That is, while the interlocutor is talking, the interpreter interprets simultaneously, with no cuts. In the consecutive interpreting the interpreter hears (or sees) the message and as soon as he or she ends a sentence there is a pause.

The simultaneity in the interpretation demands professional skills that go beyond the linguistic knowledge, relating it with the ability of managing the information from one language to another, and still the professional needs to pay attention to the flow of information that continues to be transmitted. In addition, the interpreter has access to information and texts that are in another language in real time. All this movement requires the interpreter dexterity and interpretive ability.

In view of the considerations on the mediator's work of the Libras interpreter at school, we will discuss below the specificities of the educational practice of interpretation of this professional, based on data from a larger study that aimed to understand how the Libras interpreter insertion happens in the final years of elementary school. This research is an ethnographic case study (André, 2005) and had as its *locus* one municipal elementary school from Vitória, Espírito Santo, which is considered inclusive and where there were deaf students enrolled. As procedures to collect empirical data, we used: observation, interviews and document analysis. The research analyzed data that discuss about the municipal bilingual policy, the Libras interpreter's performance in the classroom and the power relations that underlie the interactions established between the interpreter, the school teachers, the management team of the school and the other members of the bilingual staff. For this work, we focused this investigation on the performance of the Libras interpreter in the classroom.

The School, The Interpreter, The Classroom and The Deaf Student

The school which is the *locus* of this study is, among the schools in Vitória city (ES), the one that has the longest tradition in the insertion of the interpreter in the classroom space. Records point out that, initially, this school counted on the volunteer work of fluent people in Libras for interpreting for deaf students in the Youth and Adult Education program², a situation that has changed especially after the sanction of the Decree 5626, of 2005, because this made possible to have selection processes for teachers who were fluent in Libras and subsequently for Libras interpreter.

The research was conducted in a school where 1,057 students were enrolled in classes in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening; among these students, 38 were deaf and most of them were in the Youth and Adult Education, in the evening. Considering the interest of monitoring the Libras interpreter's performance in the education of students

in the final grades of elementary school and without significant distortions in the age/grade relationship, the research was conducted in the afternoon classes, in which six deaf students were enrolled and, among these, two in the final grades of elementary school. The study was conducted between July and November 2010.

At the time of the study, the school had two interpreters for the afternoon classes: João³, who was working 30 hours a week at the institution and initially worked primarily with students from the final grades of elementary school; and Lúcio, who worked only 12 hours in the school, that is, two days a week, with particular regard to the interpretation needs of students in the early grades of elementary school. Both performers had completed high school and were certified with PROLIBRAS in translation and interpretation, they also had extensive experience in interpreting in the religious context, and João had already done this work for nearly 4 years in school environment.

Faced with the aim of talking about the interpreter's work in the final grades of elementary school, the interpreter Lúcio was not a focus of the study. But, three weeks after the beginning of the study, due to personal reasons, Lúcio asked to cancel his workload extension and the interpreter who remained in school had to be responsible for the interpretation of various groups that had deaf students enrolled.

To do the field research, we had two options: to follow the Libras interpreter in every class where he worked or to set on a single group. Although we considered that the first alternative would provide more elements for the discussion of this professional, the school disagreed with that possibility, explaining that the presence of a stranger in several classes could interfere with the smooth-running of classes. So, we chose the 7th grade⁴ due to the fact that the student of this grade is more assiduous than the student who attended the sixth grade.

The observed group had 34 students, who were between 12 and 16 years old. In this class, there was a deaf student enrolled who, in this study, was named Guilherme. He was 16 years old and was the oldest of the group, although he did not look like. There were two hearing classmates who were closer to the deaf student. One of them, from time to time, tried to talk in sign language, using, in many instances, the dactylology. The other was limited to communicate with his deaf classmate through oral articulation of words.

The rapport between the students was good. In the development of educational activities, the relationship between them was based on collaboration. When the interpreter was not in the classroom, the hearing colleagues established a support network, informing Guilherme about the tasks to be done. The deaf student was seen by teachers as very hardworking, shy and polite. In math classes, he was considered, among all students, the one who knew the most.

Considering this context, we will look at Libras interpreter's work. We will discuss the possibilities of planning of this professional, the

boundaries between interpretation and education in Libras interpreter's work as well as the mediating interpreter's action in the relationship among the teacher, the student and knowledge. Although we observed classes in different courses while the research was being conducted, considering the limits of this article when discussing about the work of interpretation and mediating action of Libras interpreter, we selected observed situations during the follow-up of three distinct classes.

The Interpreter's Planning Possibilities for Classes

According to Saviani (2003), every work, including the one held in the school, has intentionality. The educational work aims at the acquisition of knowledge by students and requires organization, systematization and planning of activities in school. In schools where there are deaf students, the organization mobilizes the activities developed by the Libras interpreter.

However, in the studied school, we found out that the conditions for João to perform this planning were not satisfactory for two reasons: the first concerns the own municipal policy that hires the interpreter as an administrative assistant, not allowing him/her time for planning; and the second is related to the lack of professionals in contrast to the high demand for interpretation in school.

In the afternoon, there were six deaf students enrolled in different grades of elementary school and the interpreter moved from one room to another, trying to meet the interpretation needs, prioritizing classes where some sort of evaluation were happening.

Despite this high demand, João tried to organize himself for the interpretation, taking advantage of some breaks between classes for the planning. He had a notebook in which he made notes about subjects taught in classes that he interpreted and also orientations occasionally given by some teachers. Also, he had a *Pitanguá*⁵ project CD-ROM – which was used as a source to find some signs, lexicons that he did not know; moreover, he consulted printed and virtual dictionaries. The strategy to study the class content to be interpreted with the aid of the book is unusual and demonstrates an interpreter's try of organization and work planning.

Regarding the importance of planning for the Libras interpreter, Lacerda (2009) and Albres (2015) point out that by ensuring this plan, the processes of teaching and learning focused on deaf students are potentiated. The access to the objectives and content covered in class, previously in planning, enables answering questions and provides guidance, as well as allows the dialogue among the class teacher, the pedagogical coordination and the Libras interpreter about the deaf student's development.

The Fine Line Between Interpretation and Education in Libras Interpreter's Work

Referring to Lev Semiónovich Vygotsky's ideas about social and historical constitution of the human psyche, the study by Côrtes (2012) indicates the crucial role of mediation in the students' knowledge appropriation process. In the classroom, through certain social practices, both teacher and students actively participate in the learning of the class as a whole. In the case of deaf students requiring the performance of the interpreter, this process acquires certain peculiarities, as in the study pointed out by Lacerda (2000).

The study found out that the interpreter's work in the final years of elementary school needs to be analyzed considering the specificities of basic education stage. Initially, it is important to mention the still very precarious conditions of this professional work, considering the great demand and the shortage of professionals, the lack of organization at the school to consider the role of the interpreter and his/her effective insertion in the educational dynamics in progress. These challenging conditions were also observed in the works of Leite (2005), Souza (2007), Costa (2008) and Albres and Santiago (2014).

Thus, the first aspect to be highlighted in this study is the restricted attention to deaf students of the school and the commitment of the interpretation work, which can be illustrated with the situation presented below.

In a History class, whose theme was the 'Royal Family Escape to colonial Brazil,' the established dynamics was: each designated student would read a few paragraphs of text and the reading would be interspersed by comments from the teacher about the content. While the teacher was organizing the students to do the reading, the interpreter came in the room and greeted everyone. He talked quickly with the deaf student, got some information about what was going to be dealt in class, made notes in the notebook he carried, took a chair and sat with his back to the board on the back side to the desk where the deaf student was. Once a student has been assigned to read, he began to perform a simultaneous interpretation: while students were reading or the teacher was providing explanations, João was making the interpretation to Guilherme. João remained in class until the end of the reading and the teacher's explanation. Completed this activity, the teacher asked the students to copy in the notebook some questions that were in the textbook and answer them. As soon as Guilherme began to do the task, the interpreter went away to continue the work of interpretation in another classroom (Field Notes, Oct. 21, 2010).

In the described situation, we can see that the interpreter enters the room after the beginning of class and leaves before it ends to attend to deaf students from other classes. He is absent, but the lesson continues and the students have tasks to do. Although we might think that João's leaving from the class at that time does not causes so much

damage to Guilherme, once the activity to be performed then required only reading and writing, we should discuss this situation because the proposed activity was still an important part of the content approach. Thus, the deaf student could demand greater attention from the teacher and this could only occur, without the interpreter, as far as teacher and deaf student would share the same language, which was not the case.

During the field research, we realized that such situations as described above occurred frequently, especially from the moment the interpreter Lúcio stopped working at school and João became responsible for interpreting for all deaf students of afternoon classes.

Analyzing the city document concerning the education proposal for the deaf, we found that the Municipal Bilingual Proposal (Vitória, 2008) has the inclusion as guiding principle. However, we question about what is understood, in this document, as *Bilingual* and *Inclusion*. Although we consider the bilingual proposal in classrooms just as a *transposition* from sign language to Portuguese and vice versa, which for us is questionable, we understand that in this school, the municipality meets the bilingual policy in an extremely precarious way. Taking as parameter the different conceptions of *Bilingual Education* we mentioned earlier, this policy has closer links to the conception of *Bilingual Education* in the context of *Special Education* in the perspective of inclusion, since the educational processes are not designed and implemented taking Libras as a starting point. In the *Bilingual Education* guided by the vision of the deaf as a linguistic minority, sign language should not be seen as a kind of support, or adaptation, which makes possible the deaf's access to school content; moreover, it is the language of instruction of the deaf student, through which all knowledge, values and habits should be conveyed.

Referring to Saviani (2003), we understand that this knowledge, values and habits compose the school curriculum and, in a bilingual perspective of deaf education, this curriculum should go beyond the notion of *adaptation*, considering also the respect to the deaf subject singularities. By featuring these singularities, we are not referring to the notion of *special* or *disabled* still very present in special education, but to the mark of the cultural production of the deaf subject. The limited understanding of what Bilingual Education is, observed in this school, affects directly the way the interpreter is inserted in the educational context. It becomes clear that in this situation, João works in a little efficient way, moving from one room to another without being able to keep up with the deaf students in all classes all the time.

Dealing specifically with the interpretation activity, we realize that João's work was developed according to the discipline, objectives and teaching strategies used by the teacher, as it can be exemplified from a Science class. In a Science class in which the developed theme was the reproductive system, the teacher used pictures. They were in a kind of banner and represented the male and female reproductive

system. In this extremely busy class, where students showed a certain *frisson* concerning the topic, the work of interpretation was happening, but differently from the situation described in the History class. João was standing positioned next to the banner, and facing the deaf student, performing a simultaneous interpretation and pointing, whenever necessary, aspects of the print.

Interestingly, due to the fact that class relies on visual aids, essential for teaching deaf students, the interpreter's position was changed, leaving the sitting position to stand in front of the class. Lacerda and Góes (2002) emphasize the importance of adjusting the interpreter's position in class, considering the location and the teaching strategy used, so the student can follow both the dynamics of the class as a whole as the interpretation.

According to the content taught by the teacher, we noticed that João opted, sometimes, for the consecutive interpretation.

During a math class, when the worked content was first-degree equation with one variable, the interpreter decided for this type of interpretation. Only in the end of the teacher's explanation, he transmitted to the student what had been said, since, in this case, the strategy adopted by the classroom teacher was to explain the content solving the equation on the board at the same time. Thus, the realization of the simultaneous interpretation would not be effective because the student either looked at the interpretation or paid attention to what was being written on the board.

This way of interpreting, many times, resembled an individual explanation, because the interpreter sat beside the deaf student, resuming what had been explained by the teacher, step by step, in sign language. The boundaries between interpretation and teaching become very tenuous at this time. When interpreting, João also provided explanations about the first-degree equation.

The analyzed situation allows us to discuss some concepts that comprise the interpreter's work from a passive perspective, looking at him merely as a device that passes on information provided in the classroom, while *swinging* his arms. His performance is not just transposing the communication barrier, acting as a *telephone wire*.

Understanding language as (inter) action, as an activity that produces senses, we consider that, in the process of interpretation, the senses are formed in a multidetermined context and in the same way that the word, the sign, in the sign language, acquires sense in this multidetermined universe where signs and senses are produced. Bakhtin (1992, 2006) calls attention to the situation of enunciation and speech genres as components that compose the meaning. In the case of the educational environment, for example, the production of meaning in the interpretation process involves the teacher, the interpreter, the deaf student and the content, in the classroom.

Therefore, when discussing the interpretation at school it is important to take into account the enunciation context: a classroom, which historically is a place of teaching and learning, where educational practices should be developed considering certain conceptions and didactic procedures that promote the appropriation of specific content by students. Beyond the enunciation context, we emphasize the interlocutors – students, teacher and interpreter – each one with an institutionally marked social place, an outlined history of life and expectations sometimes differentiated from the enunciation context.

Thus, the interpretation process does not occur in a dissociated way in this context. In the classroom, the interpretation is permeated by the social place that the interpreter occupies, but also by the image and knowledge that he/she has of the teacher, the students, the contents to be taught and of himself/herself in relation to these components (Smolka, 1991). In this perspective, the work of interpretation is not, therefore, to transfer messages, but to produce meanings about and from the knowledge taught in the classroom, establishing a movement of *understanding*, as Bakhtin points out (2006). A movement that involves the interpreter, the teacher, the deaf student and also the other students.

On the other hand, the situation reported in the math class indicates that the Libras interpreter's performance has a fundamental role in the educational work, since, by interpreting and from it, he/she has the responsibility to mediate, together with the teacher, the relationship between the deaf student and the knowledge, skills and values that form the school's curriculum. This fact leads us to further discussions about the interpreter's mediating role in the relationship between the student and the knowledge.

The Interpreter's Mediator Work in Knowledge Relationships

The research data analysis pointed out that, at times, João's performance exceeded what is commonly understood as interpretation. One of the situations in which it could be observed occurred in a 6th grade class.

In a day that Guilherme did not go to class, we followed the interpreter's performance in a 6th grade class, where there was a 17 years old deaf student. It was a Science class about microorganisms. Through an expository methodology, the teacher talked about the theme: following the textbook topics, she made brief explanations orally. The tone of her speech suggested that this was a taken up subject covered in the previous class. While the teacher was exposing the content, João was sat facing the deaf student and back to the board, passing simultaneously the explanations given by the teacher. After the explanation, the teacher asked the students to produce an essay about self-medication and its risks. In this situation, we noticed that the interpreter not only

took place in the learning and teaching process of the deaf student but also showed some control over him.

Like the other hearing students, Guilherme tried in all ways not to do the activity, but the insistence of the interpreter led him to concentrate on the text production. Guilherme had difficulties in producing the text, since his level of proficiency in Portuguese was very low. Thus, the interpreter proposed the following dynamics: the student talked in Libras what he wanted to write and the interpreter gave to him, by dactylogy, the words in Portuguese and Guilherme wrote them in the notebook. Thus, the student was able to produce a text of five lines, written in sign language structure (Field Notes, Oct. 29, 2010).

In this episode, we noticed that, facing the student's difficulty in the writing, the interpreter assists him in carrying out the activity in a movement that goes beyond interpretation, working almost as co-teacher (Kelman, 2005). Using his knowledge of Libras, João creates a strategy to assist the student in writing the text: Guilherme used Libras to indicate what he wanted to write and the interpreter, by dactylogy, showed how to write the word in Portuguese. Although the interpreter's performance involves the interpretation, we can say that his performance exceeds this function, characterized itself as an *educational* activity.

On the other hand, the situation reported leads us to consider that, in most of the cases, the difficulty of the deaf is not to understand or discuss a particular content, but to do so in Portuguese, which is closely related to the reading and writing practice (Karnopp, 2002). Thus, we identified the school need to adopt teaching strategies and assessment tools that take into account the condition of deaf students. Only the inclusion of the interpreter did not ensure that the student would perform the writing task at the same time it was intended to the hearing students.

Although we may question certain interpreter's control over Guilherme in the reported situation, he had an important mediating role between the deaf student and the knowledge, being co-responsible for the process of the knowledge appropriation. This fact leads us to the notes made by Tuxi (2009), who states that the interpreters, when acting in the education sector also assume the status of teachers.

As already mentioned, the inclusion in the school environment produces changes in the work that the interpreter performed until then, demanding changes also in the way that this professional understands the interpretation work and himself/herself as an interpreter in an institution that has a teleological character, in other words, he/she is responsible for the appropriation of knowledge by the new generations. The school is committed to student learning and, in this context, so does the interpreter. Thus, it is important to discuss what is appropriated to this professional considering the school responsibility.

In this perspective, the training of the educational interpreter needs to consider these functions, in order to give to this new professional who enters in the school the relevant knowledge to the interpretation of the sign language and to pedagogical work. Currently, the approach of pedagogical issues is not foreseen in the interpreter training programs. The Decree No. 5.626 /2005 indicates the training of this professional in a general perspective, with a much greater focus on language matters and translation/interpretation.

However, although the interpreter has a major role in the learning of the deaf student and his/her performance sometimes equates to the teacher's, in our view, he/she is not the student's teacher and, despite of having a share of responsibility in processes of teaching and learning, it is the classroom teacher the responsibility to lead the teaching process.

It is important to highlight that with this statement, we are neither disregarding, at the perspective of *Bilingual Education* within the *Special Inclusive Education*, the need for the classroom teacher to have knowledge in Libras nor that the deaf teacher has a fundamental role at school. Understanding that Libras is the deaf student's first language (L1) and the Portuguese, in the case of Brazilian deaf, was established as the second language (L2), the presence of teachers who are fluent in Libras is crucial to the deaf student's reality (Quadros, 2005). At this important contribution from Quadros, we consider relevant to add considerations from Carvalho (2016), concerning the teacher fluent in Libras: for the author, being deaf and fluent in Libras is not enough to be a teacher in Bilingual Education context, but a professional identification with teaching is necessary too.

Final Considerations...?

Among the results obtained from this study about the Libras interpreter's work at school, we pointed out four aspects that we consider highly relevant. First, our analyses indicate that, at school, interpretation intertwines with the teaching and learning processes, assigning to the interpreter's action particularities that need further discussions and attention from education systems as well as researchers, in order to enable new studies about his/her work. The second aspect is related to the need of rethink the training of the interpreter who works in the educational field which, besides the linguistic approach, should also include pedagogical matters.

The third aspect concerns to the importance of deaf teachers fluent in Libras in schools called bilingual, as well as the importance of this professional to the interpreter's role itself, as it is from the contact between language pairs that the deaf student will have higher subsidies to appropriate knowledge worked in school and also understand the process of interpretation.

Finally, we highlight the urgent need to expand the discussions about the bilingual policy implemented by some education systems that focus primarily on the interpreter's work, disregarding the active participation of other school professionals, while there are not basic working conditions offered in the educational space.

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Notes

- 1 All citations were translated from Portuguese into English by the translators.
- 2 Translator's note: The Youth and Adult Education program is a mode of education that aims at young people and adults who did not continue their studies and those who did not have access to education at the appropriate age.
- 3 All names in this text are fictitious.
- 4 At the time of the research, the school had its primary education structure divided into nine grades, organized as follows: the organization age / grade remained the same, the 1st grade with seven years old students, and so on until they reach the 8th grade. However, to start the changes, it was added to the school space a room to receive the six years old children. This room was named 1st grade classroom.
- 5 This project involves the free distribution by the Brazilian Education Ministry (also known as MEC) of textbooks from 1st to 4th grade, with a CD-ROM, containing specific explanations in Libras about some concepts that are worked in the printed material.

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