

MEDIATED RELATIONSHIPS: THE TRAINING OF THE EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETER IN THE CONTEXT OF DEAF EDUCATION

RELAÇÕES MEDIADAS: A FORMAÇÃO DO INTÉRPRETE EDUCACIONAL NO CONTEXTO DA EDUCAÇÃO DE SURDOS

RELACIONES MEDIADAS: LA FORMACIÓN DEL INTÉRPRETE EDUCATIVO EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA EDUCACIÓN PARA SORDOS

Lara Ferreira dos SANTOS¹

ABSTRACT: This study aims to present and analyze the relationships mediated by the Brazilian Sign Language Interpreter/Libras in deaf education. From video recordings of meetings with these professionals, in a space for continuing education developed in a school with a bilingual inclusive Educational Program for the deaf, relevant aspects regarding interpersonal relationships were recorded. The records were carried out over a period of one year (2018), and later episodes of interest were cut and transcribed for analysis purposes. The results and discussions, based on Lev S. Vigostki's theory, point to the need for a more careful look at the relationship between interpreters and teachers, and the relevance of formative spaces, aiming at a partnership relationship that favors deaf education.

KEYWORDS: Education. Formation. Interpreter. Libras. Special education.

RESUMO: *O presente estudo objetiva apresentar e analisar as relações mediadas pelo Intérprete de Língua Brasileira de Sinais/Libras na educação de surdos. A partir de videografações de encontros junto a estes profissionais, em um espaço de formação continuada desenvolvido em uma escola com Programa Educacional inclusivo bilingue para surdos, foram registrados aspectos relevantes referentes às relações interpessoais. Os registros foram realizados durante o período de um ano (2018), e posteriormente episódios de interesse foram recortados e transcritos para fins de análise. Os resultados e discussões, com embasamento na teoria de Lev S. Vigostki, apontam para a necessidade de um olhar mais cuidadoso para a relação entre Intérprete e professores, e a relevância de espaços formativos, visando uma relação de parceria que favoreça a educação de surdos.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação. Formação. Intérprete. Libras. Educação especial.*

RESUMEN: *Este estudio tiene el objetivo de presentar y analizar las relaciones mediadas por el intérprete de lengua de señas brasileña – Libras – en la educación para sordos. En grabaciones de vídeo de las reuniones hechas con estos profesionales en un espacio de formación continua que se desarrolló en una escuela que tiene un Programa Educativo Inclusivo Bilingüe para sordos fueron registrados aspectos importantes relacionados con las*

¹ Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCAR), São Carlos – SP – Brazil. Adjunct Professor at the Department of Psychology and at the Postgraduate Program in Special Education. Doctorate in Special Education (UFSCAR). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3196-9346>. E-mail: lfscantos@ufscar.br

relaciones interpersonales. Los registros se llevaron a cabo durante el período de un año (2018), y posteriormente los episodios de interés fueron cortados y transcritos a efectos de análisis. Los resultados y discusiones, basados en la teoría de Lev S. Vigostki, apuntan a la necesidad de una visión más cuidadosa a la relación entre el intérprete y los maestros y la relevancia de los espacios de formación, con el objetivo de una relación de asociación que favorezca la educación de los sordos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Formación. Intérprete. Libras. Educación especial.

Introduction

The National Policy on Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education (BRASIL, 2008) defends inclusive education for students with disabilities. The deaf population, part of the target audience of Special Education (TASE), has remained in line with this discourse for decades. However, from the struggles of the deaf community and scientific findings highlighting the need for a different look at this portion of TASE, a movement began in mid-2000 to create specific legislation to guarantee the right to use the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras).

From Law 10,436 (BRASIL, 2002) and Decree 5626 (BRASIL, 2005), documents obtained from the aforementioned movements, education for the deaf was slowly being understood by society. The proposal for bilingual education – which considers, in deaf education, Libras as the first language and Portuguese, in written form, as the second – was widely disseminated and some research disclosed the first positive results of this policy (LODI; LACERDA, 2009; MOURA, 2011), quite different from the inclusive education proposal.

According to Decree 5,626 (BRASIL, 2005), education is proposed in the following ways: in early childhood education and in the early years of elementary school, schools and bilingual education classes, with bilingual teachers and teaching through Libras; and in the final years of elementary school, high school or professional education, bilingual or common schools, with teachers aware of the linguistic uniqueness of the deaf and translators and interpreters of Libras-Portuguese Language (TILS). The text of the Decree highlights an important differential for the early years (Kindergarten and Elementary School I) in deaf education: the commitment to classrooms in which the regent teacher teaches classes/content in Libras.

Some recent studies point to experiences in this regard. Morais (2018) presents the trajectories of some experiences of bilingual education for the deaf developed in the interior

of the state of São Paulo. It is possible to note in his study that, despite the numerous laws and decrees that ensure the rights of deaf students to quality bilingual education, many of the programs and proposals are guaranteed to exist as the municipal administration shares the same ideals. When the proposals are no longer convenient to this or that management group, the programs (and all their benefits and achievements) are undone, and the deaf return to the margins of education. This fact is due to the non-consolidation of the proposals as permanent municipal policies, which generates profound impacts on the constitution of deaf subjects.

Lacerda, Santos and Martins (2016) present in their book an experience of bilingual educational inclusion, a proposal more suited to the reality of inland and/or smaller municipalities, where bilingual schools are not viable. Although it is possible to visualize, in its several chapters that address practices in early childhood education and in elementary school, positive experiences and satisfactory results, the proposal was reformulated after the change of management in the municipality. It is noteworthy that the new reformulation does not meet the principles set out in Decree 5,626/2005, as reported by Martins and Lacerda (2016).

Thus, it is understood that the most adequate bilingual education for legal purposes is the one in which, in the initial years of deaf education, the language of instruction is Libras and the content is taught by a bilingual teacher; the presence of TILS should only occur from the second stage of elementary school, and considering that teachers are aware of the specificity of deaf students in relation to the language they use (BRASIL, 2005).

About the TILS professional, it is known that he is the one who mediates between deaf and hearing people, between Libras and the Portuguese language; legally recognized, it operates in the most diverse social spaces where its presence is necessary (BRASIL, 2012). However, due to the specificity of their performance in the educational space (SANTOS, 2014; SANTOS; LACERDA, 2015), the name Educational Interpreter (EI) will be adopted in this study.

Based on the definition proposed by Lacerda (2009), it is agreed that when entering the educational space, the function of translating and interpreting becomes quite peculiar, either because of its interpersonal relationships (with teachers, deaf and hearing students, school management), or for its relationship with the teaching and learning processes. In this space, therefore, their performance differs from the professional who works in a general way and requires an educator's posture.

Thus, the mediating and educating perspective of the Educational Interpreter is assumed here, as a participant in the teaching and learning processes and a fundamental

element in the construction of scientific knowledge present in the classroom. In addition, it is important to consider that, during the act of interpretation, no matter how clear the role of the teacher is as responsible for teaching, the EI makes choices when enunciating in the target language, which makes it a non-neutral subject and responsible for his acts and, therefore, co-author of the speeches given (SANTOS, 2014; BAKHTIN, 2009).

Discussions about TILS emerged from the publication of Law 10,436 (BRASIL, 2002), with the recognition of Libras, and its formation became a topic of interest only with the publication of Decree 5,626 (BRASIL, 2005), which provided for the obligatory nature of this professional in public spaces where there are deaf people. The regulation of the profession only took place in 2010, with the enactment of Law 12,319 (BRASIL, 2010).

In view of this national history, it appears that the formation at the academic level of TILS is quite recent; the first courses date back to 2008 (GURGEL, 2010). Since they are very recent courses, it is possible that many of the professionals working – in schools and in other contexts – have learned Libras in contact with the deaf, in the religious context, and started their work in a very informal way. Some practices have revealed that the most common reality in our schools is exactly this (LACERDA, 2009; GURGEL, 2010; MARTINS, 2013; SANTOS, 2014). And it is up to the agents who work in school spaces to meet the training needs of these professionals who were constituted “in service”.

Considering the lack of academic formation on the part of EIs today, it can be said that possibly the only training they have is continuing education – when that happens. By exercising a function of mastery (MARTINS, 2013) or even of co-authorship in the sayings in the educational space (SANTOS, 2014), this work will provide an approximation of the concept of continuing education that refers to the teacher's profession. And, also, because they are, in fact, activities very close to the daily life of the school.

Nóvoa (2007) states that teacher education leaves a lot to be desired, being more focused on theory than on practices. The author emphasizes the need for continuous training that is supported at school, as a locus for professional development and growth, but also in the person. It is noted in their studies an appreciation of the school space as formative, as one that provides experiences not experienced in academic benches. However, it is important to emphasize that, with this statement, the author does not intend to cause an erasure of the knowledge produced at the University, but to emphasize practices under a different perspective; “It is not the practice that is formative, but the reflection on the practice. It is the ability to reflect and analyze” (NÓVOA, 2007, p. 16, our translation).

In agreement with the author's words, it is clear that when reflecting and analyzing the practice, it is possible to better understand what the educational space requires from the professional, in this case from the EI. In addition to linguistic knowledge and translation and interpretation processes, pedagogical knowledge is required to work in the classroom, as well as knowledge about ethics and professional attitude. In these cases, continuing education can collaborate in order to minimally meet the formative needs of this professional.

About interpersonal relationships, it can be said that they constitute the subjects (VIGOTSKI, 2007), and also determine the volitional-emotional aspects of myself (BAKHTIN, 2010). Therefore, in the face of the web of relationships in which the interpreter is entangled - EI/teacher, EI/manager, EI/deaf student, EI/listening student, EI/knowledge -, his constitution as a subject and as a professional cannot be thought of and organized only in terms of linguistic knowledge. The interpreter needs to receive notions of the types of relationships and hierarchies they will experience, so that they have a minimum emotional preparation to deal with adversities and responsibilities and not be so affected in their practice.

Also, according to Bakhtin (2010), when he mentions that “I constitute myself through the other” and “the understanding I have of myself is only possible through the eyes and words of the other”. Disconnecting from the other and living for oneself or by oneself (without considering relationships) causes the “loss of oneself” (p. 341, our translation). Given the many relationships that exist in the school space, which are always complex and involve power/hierarchy, understanding oneself and the other(s) is urgent in the training of EI professionals. Looking at the other and looking at oneself requires guidance, as this is not a simple process, but extremely relevant given the complexity that exists in the educational space.

In addition to the aspect mentioned above, acting in the classroom requires from the professional minimal knowledge about the teaching and learning processes of deaf students. The EI acts, like the teacher, as a mediator of knowledge and, therefore, responsible for enabling everyday concepts to be transformed into scientific concepts. The deaf student, immersed in the social relations present in the classroom – in interaction with the teacher, EI and deaf and hearing colleagues – will appropriate concepts that will favor the teaching and learning processes. Thus, the EI will present to the student the signs and meanings intended by the teacher, in order to encourage the internalization of such knowledge, in line with the studies by Vigostki (2007).

Given the above, the proposal of this study is presented. This article is part of a research carried out with a group of Educational Interpreters, working in an inclusive bilingual Educational Program for the deaf. It aims to present and analyze the relationships mediated by the Educational Interpreter in deaf education and discuss how interpersonal relationships influence/affect their practice. The methodological path will be described in the next session.

Methodological path

This research was carried out in a school with a Bilingual Inclusive Education Program for the deaf; it is a public elementary school in a medium-sized city in the interior of the state of São Paulo. The aforementioned Program, in operation since 2011, is developed through a partnership between the Department of Education and the University, and aims to guarantee the presence and circulation of Libras in the school space, as well as the implementation of more appropriate services to meet the needs of the deaf audience, such as: didactic methodologies and practices, continuous formation of the school team, and constant monitoring of the practices developed by bilingual teachers, deaf teachers and Educational Interpreters from Libras.

In 2015, based on the need frequently reported by the school's EIs, a space was created for discussions on practices in the classroom, doubts, guidelines and exchange of experience between professionals, a space for continuing education - this space conducted by the present researcher. In 2018, when the school had a stable staff of effective professionals who attended formation meetings assiduously, the data for this research were collected. It is noteworthy that only this formative space was the object of the research, so there was no intention of observing the practices in the classroom, nor even welcoming the perspective of professors and students regarding the work of the EI.

The subjects who participated in this study were two Educational Interpreters², who will be presented below, in addition to the Researcher. Taís had a college degree, where he learned Libras at a basic level, and his first experience as an interpreter was in 2016, in the Bilingual Educational Program. Vitória had high school education and learned Libras at church, where she began to work as an interpreter; its first formal performance in the educational space was in this same Program, in 2018.

² The participating subjects had their names kept confidential; the names presented in this survey are fictitious.

The practices developed with the group of EIs had quite varied dynamics, depending on the needs and demands identified by the participants; they ranged from discussion of texts to practices of collective interpretation. The meetings were conducted in order to meet the desire for discussion brought by the participants, as they emerged in the meetings, aiming to provide improvements in their performance in the classroom.

In order to approximate the school reality experienced by the EIs, we searched in their reports for indications of the needs for action and the most frequent questions in their speeches, such as the different interpersonal relationships and possible problems arising from them. Thus, the aim was to encourage reflection on the desired formation for this professional. During the formation meetings, for research purposes, video recordings were made, in order to capture, in the statements of the EIs and in the discussions promoted, indications of how the different relationships they mediated in the school space took place.

The video documentation was transcribed based on an approximation of the guidelines of microgenetic analysis, with an emphasis on the details of the interactive events and established dialogues (GÓES, 2000a). The criterion for choosing the moments to be presented (episodes) was the relationship between the findings and the objectives of this research.

The excerpts from selected video recordings were transcribed; the transcription notation pattern was as follows:

Table 1 – Notation system for data transcripts

Type of utterance	Written record
Oral utterances present in video recordings	<i>In italics and reduced font</i>
Statements in Libras present in video recordings	IN ITALIC, REDUCED SOURCE AND UPPER CASE ³

Source: Devised by the author

For this article, two episodes were selected, which emphasize the relationships mediated by EI in the school space and how interpersonal relationships affect their performance in the classroom. Data/episode analyzes are supported by assumptions and discussions about teaching and learning, and the self-other relationship, present in studies by Vigotski (2007; 2008), as well as in the literature in the area of translation and interpretation and deaf education, studies that support this research.

³ According to notation by Lacerda (1996), with changes according to Santos (2014).

Results and discussion

It is understood that the performance of the Educational Interpreter never takes place individually; it is a work that is always in relationship: be it with the regent teacher, with the deaf student, with the hearing student, with the management, or even with other interpreters. During continuing education meetings this theme was recurrent; the EIs frequently pointed out negative situations, which generated obstacles in their performance, and also positive situations, which mobilized them to a better quality practice. From some reports, it was possible to identify critical aspects that deserve an in-depth discussion about their impacts, as shown in the following episodes.

Episode 1: "This is the new interpreter"

This episode took place in the first video-recorded meeting held in the school year, on 12 March 2018. Vitória reported her first experiences and impressions about the school.

Vitória: [...] *I also felt that there are some teachers who don't look the interpreter in the face (laughs), nor greet... like, the girls introduced me in all the classrooms, I arrived... "Ah, this is the new interpreter, and such. ..."* And he doesn't say hello, I don't know if it's normal, if it is not... that's what I saw [...].

Taís: [...] *Just one caveat, that last year we had the issue that several teachers were new to the school too, who continued this year, so there was the newness of the school, and the novelty of the interpreter, and the novelty of the deaf, so we built this, we are still building, right... but in the beginning that thing was really good... so what? What do you do? What do I do? What's yours? What is mine? So, I'm saying this to make you calmer too, about the relationships, because we're still building... it's a relationship that being to be built and it's very cool, right? Even the worst ones... (laughs).* (our translation)

Vitória began its activities with Taís with the aim of appropriating the already established dynamics. It is possible to notice in Vitória's statement a bad impression about the teachers' reception of the new member of the interpreters' group. Taís' intervention proved to be very adequate; the way he presents the new situation to Vitória is marked by empathy and professional ethics, explaining to the new EI that the construction of the relationship between EI and teacher takes place in daily life and that positive and negative experiences are of great relevance. In an attempt to reassure, Taís seeks to present the justification for hard work: the partnership between Educational Interpreter and teacher(s).

Some works show the need for partnership between EI and teachers, for and for different situations: aiming at a better performance of both, for the most adequate preparation

for practice, for the development of teaching materials that favor the learning of deaf students, among other aspects (SANTOS, 2014; LACERDA; SANTOS; CAETANO, 2013). Thus, the pedagogical aspect of EI performance is taken as a basic principle and without which there would be great harm to deaf students. However, what has been observed and little discussed is the interpersonal aspect of this partnership/relationship. These are power relations, and, for this reason, they do not always work out amicably.

Due to the proximity of the EI with the deaf student in the classroom, as this is the only one who has the linguistic knowledge to communicate with the student, due to the prominent position it occupies in the classroom, its performance can cause discomfort for the teacher. There seems to be a dispute over territory, for who has more knowledge and, despite the clashes, still having to share the same space: the stage. The space in front of the blackboard, historically, has always belonged solely to the teacher, who is responsible for the student's academic education. Suddenly, dividing the space and the task of presenting knowledge to the student becomes a painful and painful process, culminating in estrangement (SANTOS, 2019).

In the episode presented, one notices much more an EI insecurity than actual facts; but a bad impression can affect the subsequent job negatively. Upon entering the classroom, the EI expected to be received as a working partner and not as an intruder – and, although none of these actions occurred, an unease remained. However, her colleague's support and her speech about building relationships was quite positive and formative, preparing EI Vitória for the experiences (positive and negative) that would come ahead.

It is understood, in this way, that the other has a fundamental role in the constitution of the “I”; thus, the EI is constituted (as a professional) in the relationship with teachers (and also with students, deaf and hearing people) and constitutes the other as well, regardless of whether the experiences are positive or not - they are constitutive and affect their internal processes, as pointed out by Góes (2000b, p. 119, our translation):

Social relationships, which underlie individual processes, are characterized by tensions and balances. They are linked both to solidarity and coercion. Man builds his individuality in a contradictory way, as, when he becomes singular, he is supported and constrained. He is singularized by the name he receives, the act of greeting the other, the roles assigned and expectations set.

Although Vygotski highlighted child development in his studies, his theory (and thus the use of this theoretical position is justified) is that development and learning do not stop in childhood. The human is in constant and permanent development/learning and, for this

reason, every event/phenomenon experienced – socially and culturally – in the classroom by the EI will mark its actions and its relationships with different subjects, constituting it.

Episode 2: "I was so happy, so happy! I got discouraged..."

This episode refers to a procedure taken by a teacher and which caused a lot of discomfort in Vitória; the report was extracted from the video recording of the group's fifth meeting, held on 23 April 2018. She excitedly reported a previous situation, of a good relationship with the science teacher, who was willing to use a material indicated by her, but there was a change of plans.

Vitória: [...] *but this week has already missed, it will be for the next...*

Researcher: *Why?*

Vitória: *(makes a gesture of denial with her head and an expression of sadness) This week something like this happened... there was a test, in the subject of atoms, and I interpreted the questions for the girls, and then in the end when they handed in the tests the class ended, he asked me: "Do the three of them wear hearing aids?" Then I said: "No, just two. A. and M." "But can they hear well?"*

Researcher: *No, in this case, they are deaf...*

Vitória: *Yes, I said M. can hear a little better than A. but still has difficulties. "Oh it's ok!". Then, when we left, he asked M. to stay.*

Researcher: *Without you?*

Vitória: *Without me. He asked M. to stay and then when we got back together I asked her what he had been talking about, then he asked her if I'm a good interpreter, that he doesn't want me to interpret the test questions because, later, when they go to Senai or Ifsp, there won't be an interpreter, they won't be capable, he wants to see their Portuguese, he started asking questions in this sense [...] I was super sad, I even cried with the Coordinator... I was very sad because I said, hey, he took M. and he does this to me: IGNORE (signs), because she is a "listener", to ask if I'm a good interpreter... [...] I was so happy, so happy, I GOT DISCOURAGED (sign).*

According to the theory proposed by Vigotski (2001), emotion arises and develops as a result of social and cultural relationships to which individuals are exposed from birth to adulthood; just as one learns to speak, act and think, feeling is also something learned in relationships, interpersonal and cultural. Oliveira and Rego (2003, p. 23, our translation) discuss the issue of emotions and affectivity and state that “this process does not materialize homogeneously, conforming to identical subjectivities, as each subject reacts, elaborates and deals with the same determinations and social influences in a unique way.” The concepts of emotion and affectivity are understood from the readings of Vigostki and other authors who share the same perspective, such as the demonstration of behaviors that affect social relationships, including beliefs, values, tastes, desires.

Vigotski (2001) states that from language and social interactions, human beings are able to express their thoughts, through culturally constructed concepts, and likewise with emotions and affections. The concept of emotions and affectivity is briefly listed in order to explore the everyday situations to which Educational Interpreters are exposed, as emotions throughout development move away from their most instinctive aspect and start to constitute a historical-cultural phenomenon. Work is also directly associated with changes in the psychological and social life of individuals, as it promotes diverse relationships with equally diverse subjects.

Events of this type directly affect the performance of EI, as well as the partnership that becomes marked by the relationship of power, of hierarchy in the classroom. In addition to affecting the interpersonal relationship, the fact can influence the professional's relationship directly with the content. Santos (2014, p. 187, our translation) presents in his study that the creative process of interpretation is clearly linked to the issue of affinity:

Depending on the level of reflection on their practice, on their knowledge and affinity with the themes they interpret and with their interlocutors, on the dynamics used by teachers in the classroom, the creations will be more or less effective [...].

Some more current research demonstrates the need for continuing education for professionals working in deaf education: bilingual teachers, educational interpreters, deaf teachers/instructors (LACERDA; SANTOS; MARTINS, 2016; ROCHA; OLIVEIRA; REIS, 2016). It is understood that this is a real need, considering how recent the practices in which these professionals are present are, and also because of the novelty of their performance. However, little has been discussed about the urgency on the formation of teachers who work in these spaces. For the EI-teacher partnership to actually occur and promote benefits to all the subjects involved, commitment from both professionals is required. Even though the continuing education of the EI contemplates and repairs some postures and actions, if the teacher does not understand their relevance in this process, the work can be in vain.

Final considerations

From the bibliographical survey carried out, it was possible to notice that the education of the deaf is still recent in our country; despite having in its favor a series of laws and decrees that ensure minimum rights - such as accessibility, presence of interpreters, teaching Portuguese as a second language -, most schools are still not sure how to offer

quality education and suitable for deaf communities. As for the educational interpreter, it is noted that the most current discussions and research are still in the affirmation phase about their mediating and pedagogical role, but it is still not possible to find formation proposals that consider the specifics of performance in the educational space.

This article intended to accompany Educational Interpreters, acting in an inclusive bilingual Educational Program for the deaf, in periodic continuing education meetings, in order to present and analyze how interpersonal relationships in the school space influence/affect the performance of the Educational Interpreter. In the episodes presented, the results point less to linguistic problems and more to relationships and to the *human being*.

The social relationships that permeate and constitute the Educational Interpreter's actions are complex, involving power relationships, affections, emotions that directly affect their actions in the classroom and, consequently, the mediation of knowledge for the deaf student. The results indicate that creating a support network, exchanging experiences, and providing experiences of seeing and being seen, benefit professionals, providing greater security and flexibility to deal with adversities and the people they interact with. However, there is a lack and urgent need for teacher formation; the EI-teacher relationship needs to be taken care of by both, so that there is partnership and empathy, and consequently, teamwork.

The results point to an aspect that has been little addressed in university training courses for Libras Translators and Interpreters; in addition to linguistic knowledge, it is necessary to carefully reflect on interpersonal relationships, considering the spaces to be occupied by these professionals and what impacts their presence generates on other professionals – especially in the educational sphere. Based on these reflections, it is expected to contribute to this area of research that is so recent, but which has been standing out as promising and, therefore, deserving of discussions that promote and expand knowledge.

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