

The Roles of the Educational Interpreter: Between Social Practices and Education Policies / *As funções do intérprete educacional: entre práticas sociais e políticas educacionais*

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we reflect on the roles played by Educational Interpreters of Brazilian Sign Language–Brazilian Portuguese in current Deaf Education in inclusive schools that follow a bilingual perspective. Drawing on Bakhtin’s notions of discourse and interpretive activity, we analyze excerpts from a document issued by the Florianópolis City Department of Education, in Brazil, which defines the duties of Educational Interpreters. Our findings point to refraction in how Educational Interpreters are characterized and to an attempt to frame their roles in general and specific duties, some of which focus on planning/training and others focus on the classroom routine. Our conclusions suggest that the role of Educational Interpreters is a merger of both interpreting practices and pedagogical activities.

KEYWORDS: Brazilian Sign Language; Education; Educational Interpreter; Education policy

RESUMO

Neste artigo, apresentamos algumas reflexões sobre os papéis assumidos pelos intérpretes educacionais de Libras-Português na atual educação de surdos em escolas inclusivas baseadas na perspectiva bilíngue. Para tanto, consideramos a contribuição do pensamento bakhtiniano às Ciências Humanas, no tocante ao discurso e à atividade interpretativa, e analisamos trechos de um documento publicado pela Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Florianópolis, que visa à definição das atribuições desses profissionais. Constatamos uma refração na forma de designar os intérpretes educacionais e, também, uma tentativa de delimitação de sua função entre atribuições gerais e atribuições específicas, subdivididas em atribuições com foco no planejamento/formação e com foco no dia a dia da sala de aula. Por fim, concluímos que os papéis do intérprete educacional se definem na fusão da prática interpretativa à ação pedagógica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Libras; Educação; Intérprete educacional; Política educacional

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Introduction

The current Education Policy in Brazil is inclusive in that it advocates the participation of any and all students in the regular education system, while the school's duty is to provide the necessary conditions for quality education of all (BRAZIL, 2008). When it comes to deaf students, this policy entails a bilingual education program, with Brazilian Sign Language (Libras as referred to in Brazil) and Brazilian Portuguese coexisting with different roles and uses in the school (BRAZIL, 2005).

Researchers in the field of deaf education have argued for adult deaf individuals as language models and for bilingual classrooms with Libras as the language of instruction in inclusive elementary schools (e.g., Antia; Kreimeyer, 2001; Lodi; Lacerda, 2009; Lodi; Rosa; Almeida, 2012; Martins; Albres; Sousa, 2015). However, the national education policy has not smoothly translated into legal documents that define deaf-specific language, education and social processes, as different frameworks have been posited to implement inclusive education. Besides, differences across the deaf communities and in the availability of specialists in the Brazilian cities and states have led to gaps between the national education policy and the city and state policies.

The professionals that respond to the language and sociocultural specificities of deaf education include: 1) bilingual teachers working in early child education, elementary school and teaching of Portuguese as a second language, 2) Libras teachers, and 3) translators and interpreters of Libras-Portuguese. The recruitment of such professionals and their on-the-job training, as well as the definition of local policies, are prerogatives of the city and state departments of education.

In the face of the controversies around and the challenges to deaf education in Brazil, we set out in this article to reflect on the roles, duties and job framework of Educational Interpreters (EIs). To this end, we investigate documents that address the inclusive policy in Brazil and in the City of Florianópolis (the capital city of the State of Santa Catarina), as well as the role of Educational Interpreters of Libras. Building upon the current inclusive education policies and the roles played by the EIs in the schools, we reflect on the aspects underlying a local inclusive education policy and how they interfere

with the conception, makeup and performance of the professional translator and interpreter of sign languages in deaf education.

We take a dialogical approach to language as our theoretical and methodological framework whereby the phenomena are socially and historically situated and ideologically marked. We start by introducing the inclusive education policy and its unfolding for deaf education. Then we move to a brief account of how the dialogical studies of language contribute to understanding translation/interpreting. Finally, we report on our analysis of the roles played by the EIs in the documents under scrutiny.

1 Inclusive Education Policy(ies) and Deaf Education in Brazil

A starting point in a discussion about the inclusive education policy for deaf people in Brazil is linguistic difference. Any discussion about inclusive education for deaf people inevitably involves the social, cultural and political aspects of languages (RODRIGUES; BEER, 2016). Policies acknowledging languages are established through official documents, which sanction the use of one or more languages in different dimensions of our daily lives; they define *political strategies*, and set the basis for educational policies aimed “to influence people’s behavior about the acquisition and use of linguistic codes” (SEVERO, 2013, p.452).¹

Language policies enforcing linguistic rights through official documents have been key in defining and guiding education policies aimed at the schooling of deaf people in Brazil. More specifically, the deaf communities’ struggles over the past four decades have paved the way for introducing Libras as both a right and language of instruction in Brazil. Rodrigues and Beer (2016), like other scholars, acknowledge the centrality of Libras in deaf education and the importance of both language rights and Libras-oriented language policies. Even though there is no undisputable approach to deaf education, policies targeting the deaf community need “to rely on linguistic human rights by recognizing and prioritizing human dignity, which can be grasped as quality of life, social welfare and citizenship” (RODRIGUES; BEER, 2016, p.676).²

¹ Our translation for: “com vistas a influenciar o comportamento dos sujeitos em relação à aquisição e uso dos códigos linguísticos.”

² RODRIGUES, C.; BEER, H. Rights, Policies and Languages: divergences and convergences in/from/for deaf education. *Educação & Realidade*. Porto Alegre, v. 41, n. 3, pp.661-679, 2016. Available at:

A relatively recent policy is the National Policy of Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, issued in 2008, which grants the right to regular education to any and all students in Brazil. The guiding principle of this policy is inclusive education as a political, cultural, social and pedagogical movement towards the “right of all students to stay together, learning and participating, without any kind of discrimination” (BRAZIL, 2008, p.5).³ Similarly, the National Plan for the Rights of People with Disabilities, issued in 2011, aims to ensure that all people with disabilities exercise their rights like any others by integrating policies, programs and activities oriented to such individuals (BRAZIL, 2011).

Both documents have contributed significantly to advances in the policies targeting people with disability in Brazil, as they both reinforce discourses of difference. However, the Brazilian schools are far from being a truly inclusive setting that allows people with disability to fully enjoy their education rights. They fail to truly comply with the inclusive discourse: “the most important thing is everyone *together, normal and abnormal occupying the same space*, regardless of them sharing the same language, of being able to dialogue with each other or of having the same conditions as the other students” (RODRIGUES; BEER, 2016, p.664; italics in the original).⁴

The National Plan for Education, issued in 2014, addresses, as its Goal No. 4, the universal access to education by all people with disabilities, people with global developmental disorders and gifted students. Like the previous documents, this plan restates that deaf students shall have the support of “translators and interpreters of Libras, guide-interpreters for the deaf-blind, Libras teachers, primarily deaf teachers, and bilingual teachers” (BRAZIL, 2014).⁵

Another important document is Decree No. 5626, issued in 2005, whereby the translator/interpreter of Libras-Portuguese has a different role than the classroom teacher (Section 14, §2). The translator/interpreter is responsible for mediating the access of the deaf to communication, information and education. S/he works “in the classroom to

[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S2175-62362016000300661&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en]. Access on: 30 Jun. 2018.

³ Our translation for: “defesa do direito de todos os alunos de estarem juntos, aprendendo e participando, sem nenhum tipo de discriminação.”

⁴ For reference, see footnote 2.

⁵ Our translation for: “tradutores(as) e intérpretes de Libras, guias-intérpretes para surdos-cegos, professores de Libras, prioritariamente surdos, e professores bilíngues.”

ensure the students' access to the curriculum knowledge and content in all didactic and pedagogical activities; and in support to their accessibility to the services and main activities of the school institution" (Section 21, §1, Subsections II and III, BRAZIL, 2005).⁶

In distinguishing the role of the interpreter from the role of the classroom teacher, the document highlights the translator's/interpreter's role as a language mediator as opposed to that of a teacher. However, the Decree, like several other documents, places Libras neither as a language of instruction nor as a language comparable to Portuguese in the school. Even though the documents promote Libras in the school, they limit it to the deaf, to the translators/interpreters, and to a space of Specialized Educational Service (SES). This "ends up reinforcing the idea that to include means to allow for social contact only, which leads back to the principles of school integration" (LODI, 2013, p.60).⁷

In her criticism to the National Policy of Special Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education, Albres (2016) stresses its lack of differentiation of the Educational Interpreters' role in different levels of education. She contends that the higher the level of education and the older the deaf person, the more focused will the EIs' activities be on the interpreting aspects. In contrast, the lower the level of education and the younger the deaf person, the more focused will the EIs' activities be on language, social and cognitive aspects, which will require that the EIs play further roles.

Among the professionals involved in deaf education, it seems to us that the EIs are those appearing the most in the inclusive policies in comparison to the teachers of Libras or the teachers of Portuguese as a Second Language. Strong criticisms have been made against inclusive education that is centered upon the mere presence of EIs or performed by them without any interface with other specialists (LODI, 2013).

The EIs need to apply and develop translation and interpreting strategies to deal with written and oral texts which implicate a type of discourse that is specific to the classroom context, especially to the lesson genre (ALBRES, 2015). Such strategies need to involve the discursive dimension of language (SOBRAL, 2008a) if they are to enable

⁶ Our translation for: "[...] nas salas de aula para viabilizar o acesso dos alunos aos conhecimentos e conteúdos curriculares, em todas as atividades didático-pedagógicas; e no apoio à acessibilidade aos serviços e às atividades-fim da instituição de ensino."

⁷ Our translation for: "acaba por reforçar a ideia de que incluir significa apenas propiciar convívio social/escolar, retomando-se os princípios da integração escolar."

the deaf learners to participate in the teaching and learning processes that take place through meaning production processes in actual situations of utterance.

The enforcement of inclusion without skilled professionals and pedagogical care has built spaces of exclusions and commonly overwhelmed the EIs, who have been held responsible for the deaf students' learning as if they were the teachers themselves. Given the lack of understanding and definition of the actual role of the EIs, especially when it comes to the official documents, some policies and scholars have described their role without any association with the pedagogical activity. However, interpreting in education settings, especially in the classroom, cannot neglect the interaction between the subjects of enunciation situated in these specific settings.

Before discussing interpreting as a social practice, the next section provides some aspects of the dialogical approach to language and emphasizes sob contributions from Bakhtin and his Circle.

2 Dialogism and the Translation Studies

In this section, we explore the interface between Bakhtin's dialogism and the Translation and Interpreting Studies and review their contributions to analyzing educational interpreting. From a dialogical perspective, language is conceived of as essentially alive and unrepeatable, a social practice that is feasible in actual verbal interactions. Therefore, a dialogical perspective (PONZIO, 2008, p.89)

[...] is not limited to a relationship between language as a code and the discourse or the text. Neither is it limited to the linguistic relationship between the language system items or between the items of a single enunciation; it is rather focused on the dialogical relationships in the utterances, in the texts, in the genres, and in the languages.⁸

In translation studies, the first linguistic approaches to translations conceived of translation as a technical operation between languages. Such an approach, which is

⁸ Our translation for: “[...] não se limita à relação entre a língua, como código, e o discurso ou o texto. Também não se limita às relações linguísticas entre os elementos do sistema da língua ou entre os elementos de uma única enunciação, mas ocupa-se das relações dialógicas nos atos de palavra, nos textos, nos gêneros do discurso e nas linguagens.”

usually based on the traditional comparative linguistics, entails translation as transfer from one language to another and commonly neglects the translation process, the subjects and the social and political contexts involved in translation (HURTADO ALBIR, 2001).

However, the 1970s witnessed the emergence of new theoretical approaches that move away from a perspective of translation as an operation centered upon or limited to the linguistic dimension to a perspective of translation as a text operation. Since then, the theoretical approaches have incorporated elements of text linguistics and discourse analysis to understand translation not only as a matter of languages in comparison, but rather and most importantly as a relationship between texts. Therefore, translation studies has increasingly incorporated and emphasized the communicative, sociocultural, cognitive and ideological aspects of the translation phenomenon. For instance, drawing on Cultural Studies and Post-Structuralist Theories, translation studies has conceived of translation as “cultural mediation” and focused on discursive, contextual and cultural aspects of translation, especially on the function of translation and its target audience (SNELL-HORNBY, 1995; BASSNETT, 2003).

In translation studies, and more specifically in interpreting studies, interpreting is seen as a “‘real-time’ human translation in an essentially shared communicative context” (PÖCHHACKER, 2009, p.128). Unlike translation, this type of interpretive activity is situationally located and requires mediation between interlocutors who experience the language novelty on site. Nevertheless, the interpreter is still conceived of as “a ‘non-person’ in a neutral position between the interlocutors” (PÖCHHACKER, 2004, p.147).

We assume that both translation and interpreting processes can be seen and analyzed from the perspective of the dialogical studies of language, since both of them are a communicative act, a text operation and a cognitive activity performed within a social context and with a concrete purpose (HURTADO ALBIR, 2001). As such, the notions and concepts of the dialogical studies contribute to comprehending translation/interpreting as a discursive phenomenon and as a fruitful field to understand and reflect upon language(s) and its/their diverse meaning relationships.

In addressing ‘ideology’ as one of the intercultural issues involved in the interpreters’ performance, Pöchhacker (2006) draws our attention to the importance of the extralinguistic aspects of interpreting. Considering ‘ideology’ and its impacts, a reflection about the cultural elements involved in interpreting points to it as a social

interaction that is established conjointly in a particular institutional setting, thereby “[...] moving away from the view of interpreters positioned more or less impartially ‘between’ ideologies and acknowledging their role ‘within’ socio-political systems and institutions” (PÖCHHACKER, 2006). As such, it is fundamental to admit that activities with language that involve others entail personal, social and value judgements. Thus, we can state that choices and decisions made during the translation and interpreting processes are based on contextual, political and ideological frameworks, since “[...] conceptual processing and logical organization, e.g. the assessment of what is important and unimportant, is not possible outside a class-based perspective and independent of a basic political-ideological stance” (KADE, 1963, p.15 *apud* PÖCHHACKER, 2006, p.200).

Like Pöchhacker, important scholars within Translation and Interpreting Studies have paved the way to interface the approaches to translation with contributions from Bakhtin and his Circle. By drawing on dialogism as a key notion, such scholars see language as a social practice inscribed in a dimension within which different genres circulate and within which the interpreters’ activity implicates cultural and ideological aspects. One of the challenges involving language in the school is the observation of the educational interpreting phenomenon as imbricated in the context of enunciation, i.e., “every utterance dialogues with previous utterances, even in an attempt to respond to utterances that have not been made” (SOBRAL; GIACOMELLI, 2016, p.1079).⁹

In sum, the dialogical perspective of language is an interesting theoretical and methodological framework to raise questions about educational interpreting, by providing theoretical notions to tackle its specificities and allowing for an analysis that is not closed in on itself and raises new questions. “The ‘dialogical paradigm’ overcomes the principles of dualism, instrumentalism and perfectionism that have guided the Western thoughts and practices in translation” (SOUZA, 2010, p.79).¹⁰ Translation, like any other language-using activity, is based on “oneness” (SOUZA, 2010, p.80),¹¹ what Sobral refers to as

⁹ Our translation for: “todo enunciado produzido dialoga com outros enunciados já ditos antes dele, tentando até mesmo responder a enunciados que não foram ditos.”

¹⁰ Our translation for: “O ‘paradigma dialógico’ se caracteriza por uma superação dos princípios do dualismo, do instrumentalismo e do perfeccionismo que têm pautado o pensamento e a prática ocidentais da tradução.”

¹¹ Our translation for: “singularidade temporal.”

“single, never repeatable occurrence of currently lived and experienced life (2008b, p.233).”¹²

From the dialogical perspective, the translator/interpreter is a situated subject, and translation/interpreting is a language act, because “there is never a static system, but rather a constant makeup process between stability and change that makes up this system [...] as one of dynamism integrating the elements” (SOBRAL, 2008b, p.230).¹³ As such, the concepts and notions of language as featured in the Bakhtin Circle are not limited to defining language as linear and are not used to prescribe activities for interpreters, since they contemplate ideological, historical and cultural aspects. As Sobral (2008a, p.98) states,

[...] a translator seeks to understand what is articulated in one language by considering who says what, how, where, when, and above all, with what intention and within what culture, and then s/he seeks to make this understood in another language while taking into account who says what, how, where, when, and above all, with what intention and within what culture.¹⁴

Educational interpreting situated in a teaching and learning space has particular nuances, as the types of discourses circulating in this space characterize the EIs’ behavior. Also, Bakhtin contends that language implicates multiple discourses. Languages from different social worlds and related to different contexts, interests and genres coexist in every social situation (BAKHTIN, 1981).¹⁵

The educational dimension essentially involves teachers and students, while placing the interpreter as a mediator in the teaching and learning processes. The EI is called upon by the interlocutors in different manners depending on the level of education, conditions of language acquisition, curriculum content to be interpreted, and affective and

¹² Our translation for: “uni-ocorrência nunca-repetível da vida atualmente vivida e experimentada.”

¹³ Our translation for: “nunca há um sistema estático, mas um constante processo de interconstituição entre estabilidade e mudança que faz desse sistema [...] um dinamismo que integra os elementos.”

¹⁴ Our translation for: “ao traduzir, o tradutor procura entender o que é expresso numa língua, considerando quem diz o quê, como, onde, quando e, principalmente, com que intenção e no âmbito de que cultura, e procura fazer isso ser entendido em outra língua, levando em conta quem diz o quê, como, onde, quando e, principalmente, com que intenção e no âmbito de que cultura.”

¹⁵ BAKHTIN, M. M. Discourses in the Novel. In: HOLQUIST, M. (Ed). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. BAKHTIN. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.269-422.

subjective relationships with the others as defined by their social roles (i.e., students and teachers).

Hence, there is an inter-relationship between genres and activity dimensions. In the interpreting process, there are “[...] necessarily new relationships in enunciation, discourse, and a new relationship between the author and the audience” (SOBRAL, 2008a, p.70).¹⁶ Nascimento states that “as genres, translation and interpreting call up historicities, traditions that expose their flexible, organic logic (2014, p.215).”¹⁷ From this dialogical perspective, different genres emerge in school, including lesson, orientation and explanation genres, and this requires that the EIs play different roles.

Drawing on this theoretical framework and reflections arising from the very school, we set out to discuss the public policies that have defined the roles of the EIs. In the next section, we analyze the documents issued by a city department of education to devise the activities of EIs.

3 Methodology

Our reflection builds upon elements of document study. We address two specific public documents with a view to describing and analyzing both the context and the process of their conception and makeup as to how they record and define the roles of the EIs in Florianópolis.

The language used in the documents was produced with a purpose, written by someone and for someone occupying (in)distinct social spaces to articulate circulating meanings that await interpretation. Therefore, an understanding of their discourse requires an understanding of their context. Understanding means “not only identifying the formal language and the normative signs of the language, but also the subtexts, the intentions that are inexplicit” (KRAMER, 2007, p.58).¹⁸

To analyze any document, we need to consider the contextual aspects of its production, its intentionality. Therefore, we need to identify the dialogical relationships

¹⁶ Our translation for: “[...] necessariamente novas relações enunciativas, discursivas, uma nova relação entre autor e público.”

¹⁷ Our translation for: “na condição de gêneros, a tradução e a interpretação convocam historicidades, tradições que denunciam sua lógica flexível e orgânica.”

¹⁸ Our translation for: “a compreensão implica não só a identificação da linguagem formal e dos sinais normativos da língua, mas também os subtextos, as intenções que não se encontram explícitas.”

in the social, political and ideological context, inscribing those who produced the text and its recipient. It is fundamental to take into account the plurality of meanings in the document as well as the impacts and consequences that it can produce because of the place it holds in the social relationships. To understand such relevant elements in our analysis, we address two perspectives, namely: 1) the denomination of the professional who translates and/or interprets in the education setting, and 2) the roles and duties of the professional interpreters of Libras-Portuguese in the education setting.

The documents selected for the present reflection are two recent administrative rules issued by the Florianópolis City Department of Education. They are concerned with the EIs of Libras-Portuguese, their roles and performance, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Documents Issued by Special Education Unit of the Florianópolis City Department of Education

DOCUMENT	DESCRIPTION
Administrative Rule No. 126, issued on July 6, 2016	It changes the job title from Assistant Teacher of Libras to Educational Interpreter Assistant Teacher
Administrative Rule No. 122, issued on July 15, 2016	It establishes the policy for special education in the public education system of Florianópolis

Source: The authors, based on the selected documents.

The criteria for document selection were: first, documents providing the job title and description of the professionals performing as interpreters in education settings; second, the most recent documents. The data analysis and reporting follow the principles of discourse analysis as a qualitative method and aims “to integrate the materiality of the texts to the enunciation-discourse dimension, thereby going beyond the content and form themselves, and to account for the architecture of the discourses, which connects the text to the situation of utterance” (BRAMBILA; SOBRAL; GONÇALVES, 2017, p.40).¹⁹ Thus, we set out to interweave the discourses with our voices and dialogue with scholars that take a dialogical approach to language, with a view to understanding the complex definition and identification of such professional translators/interpreters and their roles.

¹⁹ Our translation for: “integrar a materialidade dos textos à dimensão enunciativo-discursiva, indo além do conteúdo e da forma em si e considerar a arquitetônica dos discursos, que une o texto à situação enunciativa.”

4 The Roles of the EIs in the Education Policy of Florianópolis

The public system of education in Florianópolis started restructuring its special education services in 2002 through actions aimed at the access, permanence and participation of any and all students in the regular education. It launched a *Program for diversity in the school* in 2003, which institutionalized its guidelines for inclusive education and defined the services provided to special education students enrolled in the regular public education system (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2015).

The changes in the city policy involved the training of teachers to work in the Specialized Educational Service (SES) and in Multimedia Classrooms. Such teachers would work with the deaf, the blind, the visually impaired, the blind-deaf and/or people with motor difficulties, while the mentally impaired students would receive SES “in the special associate schools in addition, but not in substitution, to the regular education” (SEGABINAZI, 2015, p.104).²⁰ The Multimedia Classrooms would be meant for the teaching of Braille, abacus and Libras, with a view to increasing the students’ accessibility in the regular classrooms (MACHADO, 2009).

The guiding document for special education in Florianópolis explicitly refers to *Assistants of Libras* or the *Libras teaching assistants* as professionals in charge of

[...] translating and interpreting the Brazilian Sign Language – Libras – into Portuguese and vice-versa in any mode, spoken or written, in the pedagogical activities carried out in classrooms with deaf students and developing activities according to the organization of the education unit and the current curriculum guidelines (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2010, pp.3-4).²¹

The job titles *Libras assistant teachers*, *Assistants of Libras* and/or *Libras teaching assistants* derive from the City Department of Education’s administrative requirement to hire licensed teachers or educators to work as interpreters of Libras-Portuguese in deaf education.

²⁰ Our translation for: “nas escolas especiais parceiras, em complemento ao ensino regular, sem, no entanto, ser substitutivo.”

²¹ Our translation for: “[...] realizar a tradução e interpretação da Língua Brasileira de Sinais – LIBRAS – para o português e vice-versa em quaisquer modalidades que se apresentar, seja de forma oral ou escrita, nas atividades pedagógicas desenvolvidas pela turma do aluno com surdez e desenvolver atividades de acordo com a organização da Unidade Educativa e as diretrizes curriculares vigentes.”

The interpreters were hired only when the deaf students were fluent in Libras, and several challenges to recruitment emerged because this was a ‘recent profession’ which lacked criteria to assess the services provided (MACHADO, 2006). The requirement of the students’ fluency in Libras makes us inquire into the services provided to the deaf students with language delay and, therefore, no fluency in the spoken language or in the sign language.

We found records of a civil service entrance examination for *Libras teaching assistants* (i.e., EIs), which approved two candidates (Public Call No. 008/2010). This examination was followed by others, which approved four candidates in 2011 (Public Call No. 003/2011), six in 2012 (Public Call No. 005/2012), and three in 2014 (Public Call No. 010/2014). Data provided by the Florianópolis City Department of Education pointed to five permanent and two temporary interpreters in 2017, i.e., seven in total. The demand for this professional fluctuates substantially, as it depends on the number of deaf students enrolled in the schools every year.

The Special Education Unit of the Florianópolis City Department of Education formed a partnership with the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) in 2015 with a view to better reflecting upon the education of the deaf and to training Libras teachers and Educational Interpreters. It is in this context that the training sessions, enriched with discussions with the Special Education Unit, promoted new perspectives about deaf education and the related professionals.

4.1 Job Title of Professional Translators and/or Interprets in Education Settings

We find two different denominations for the EIs of Libras-Portuguese in the item 1.2.1 of the guiding document for special education in the public education system of Florianópolis: 1) *Assistant of Libras* in subsection XIV, and 2) *Libras teaching assistant* right after the subsections. Even though the notion of assistant may somehow refer to the notion of a profession similar to that of a teacher, the document distinguishes the *Libras teacher*, responsible for language teaching, from the *Libras teaching assistant*, responsible for interpreting (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2010).

The work of translators and interpreters of Libras-Portuguese started with their recruitment as teachers in the public education system of Florianópolis. Their recruitment

as permanent or temporary workers used one of the three job titles mentioned above, all of which referring to a professional meant to *assist* in those issues involving Libras. However, this nomenclature seems to suggest that such professional is meant to collaborate with the teaching of Libras, rather than performing as a translator/interpreter in activities related to language and cultural mediation.

This terminological undefinition has sparked reflections about its consistency and adequacy for naming the translator and interpreter of Libras-Portuguese working in the education setting. After wide discussions of lecturers from the UFSC with workers from the Special Education Unit and *Libras teaching assistants* from the public education system of Florianópolis from 2015 to early 2016, we reached the conclusion that the job title should be changed to *Educational Interpreter Assistant Teacher*.

On July 6, 2016, the Florianópolis City Department of Education issued Administrative Rule No. 126 upon request of the Special Education System, which was based on discussions with both specialist educators in the area and Libras assistant teachers. The aim of the administrative rule was: “Section 1. Change the title of the job from Assistant Teacher of Libras to *Educational Interpreter Assistant Teacher*” (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2016a, italics added).²²

Like one of the previous nomenclatures, this new job title carries the term *teacher* to evince the requirement that professionals directly working with education must be licensed teachers or educators. It stands out that the term *teaching* was suppressed, while the term *Educational Interpreter* was applied to the job title, which is a significant advance in the affirmation of professional translators/interpreters of Libras-Portuguese working with education and their differentiation from Libras teachers.

This historic context is important in the public education system of Florianópolis, with the adoption of a new nomenclature through an official document that embraces the interventions and needs of those working as EIs. This opens new avenues for meaning production and ideologic signs (i.e., forms of naming, conceiving, and describing roles), as signs are always social signs and, as such, carry value and ideology (PONZIO, 2008).

Sign Language Translation and Interpreting Studies has contributed to defining the new term: consistent with job titles used in other countries and in other Brazilian

²² Our translation for: “Art. 1º ALTERAR a nomenclatura da ocupação do cargo de Professor auxiliar de libras para *professor Auxiliar Intérprete Educacional*.”

education settings, the job title refers to the *Educational Interpreter* as the professional who deals with language and cultural mediation. Following Fiorin (2008, p.59), “the historicity of the utterances is captured in the very linguistic movement of their production.”²³ Therefore, we can say that the production of this inclusive education policy in practice entails several, and even contradictory, ways of assigning meaning to the world we experience.

4.2 Roles and Duties of the Interpreters of Libras-Portuguese in Education Settings

Because of the partnership with the UFSC and drawing on the reflections developed in the on-the-job training of professionals working as Educational Interpreter Assistant Teacher, Administrative Rule No. 122, issued in 2016, incorporated some indications and conclusions from the team in its guidelines for the special education policy in the public education system of Florianópolis. The most important aspect of these guidelines when it comes to the interpreters is that it sees such professionals as part of the organizational structure of special education. Subsection IV of Section 3 defines that such structure also comprises “Libras-Portuguese/Portuguese-Libras translation and interpreting performed by Educational Interpreter Assistant Teacher who work in the education units, in response to the demand of deaf students” (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2016b, p.4).²⁴

The new guidelines set forth the following as the general duty of the EIs: “Section 10. The Educational Interpreter Assistant Teacher translates and interprets Libras-Portuguese/Portuguese-Libras in different contexts and situations in the education setting” (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2016b, p.6).²⁵ In general, the work of this professional involves the school setting in its diverse situations and activities. Besides defining that the role of the EIs is to translate and to interpret in the school setting, the single paragraph of Section 10 also provides a list of duties of these professionals. It evinces the general

²³ Our translation for: “a historicidade dos enunciados é captada no próprio movimento linguístico de sua constituição.”

²⁴ Our translation for: “tradução e interpretação Libras-Português/Português-Libras – realizadas por Professores Auxiliares Intérpretes Educacionais que atuam nas unidades educativas, conforme a demanda de estudantes com surdez.”

²⁵ Our translation for: “Art. 10º O professor Auxiliar Intérprete Educacional atua na tradução e na interpretação Libras-Português/Português-Libras em diferentes contextos e situações do ambiente educativo.”

and specific duties of planning/training and working in the classroom for the teaching and learning process of deaf students.

4.2.1 General Duties of the Educational Interpreters

Single paragraph. Educational Interpreter Assistant Teachers have the duty of:

I. Contributing to building an inclusive, bilingual school in the education unit.

II. Assisting in the communication process between deaf and hearing people in the context of the education unit.

III. Providing deaf students with access to audible information from the environment in the education unit.

IV. Providing guidance in Libras to deaf students as to the roles of the different agents in the education units and to their own role as students.

V. Communicating with the special education teachers and the Libras teachers in the classroom to obtain information and qualify the assistance to deaf students.

VI. Contributing to promoting language spaces for deaf students to express their ideas, have access to new information in Libras, develop their knowledge of Libras, and improve the language used in the education unit [...] (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2016b, pp.6-7).²⁶

It is apparent that the EIs' work is related to the dynamics in the school, but it goes beyond the classroom and needs to be based on the principles of inclusive education. Deaf children have the support of different professionals, with the EI being an articulator who contributes to the professionals' performance and to the children's development in a bilingual, inclusive education paradigm.

There are standardized forms to conceive of the (sign and non-sign) reality from a value 'standpoint', with the sign being ideological in nature (PONZIO, 2008). In this sense, every ideological element should be considered in its original field of production and cannot be deprived of its historicity. Therefore, the interpreters working in education

²⁶ Our translation for: "Parágrafo único. São consideradas atribuições dos professores Auxiliares Intérpretes Educacionais: I. Contribuir, na unidade educativa, para a construção de uma escola inclusiva e bilíngue. II. Auxiliar o processo de comunicação entre as pessoas com surdez e as pessoas ouvintes no contexto da unidade educativa. III. Fornecer acesso, aos estudantes surdos, às informações sonoras do ambiente da unidade educativa. IV. Orientar, em Libras, o estudante surdo quanto aos papéis dos diferentes agentes da unidade educativa e de seu papel como estudante. V. Articular-se com os professores das salas de aula, de Educação Especial e de Libras para obter informações e qualificar o atendimento ao estudante surdo. VI. Contribuir com a promoção de espaços linguísticos para que os estudantes surdos expressem suas ideias, tenham acesso a novas informações em Libras, desenvolvam seu conhecimento em Libras e aprimorem a linguagem usada na esfera da unidade educativa [...]."

settings are characterized as education agents who have the ‘key role’ of promoting inclusive education.

However, the materiality of a bilingual, inclusive education goes beyond the interpreters’ role: If their work is circumscribed by the performance of classroom teachers who have no specific training in deaf education and adopt hearing-oriented pedagogical practices, the interpreter can do nothing but make mitigative adaptations. Vision-oriented pedagogical practices that are primarily based on explanations in Libras transcend the presence and performance of an interpreter. It is very unlikely that a bilingual education will emerge from guidance and talks between the interpreter and classroom teacher. Even though both Portuguese and Libras may be common in the school, they are accessed and used by different groups. Most schools have no adequate space for the hearing students to learn Libras and for the deaf students to learn Portuguese as a second language.

Both the documents produced by the city administration and the professionals in the schools are active participants of the enunciation event, as

[...] every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates. The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction. [...] Such is the situation in any living dialogue (BAKHTIN, 1981 p.280; italics in the original).²⁷

The discourse of the documents is oriented to the EIs and to guiding their work in the school. The six first subsections in the single paragraph containing the general duties of the EIs show these professionals’ accountability as an inclusive agent aimed to turn the school into a bilingual, inclusive space. However, as mentioned above, the assignment of such responsibility to the EI does not ensure that the bilingual education will come true. The bilingual, inclusive education process is not restricted to the interpreter, as it depends on both the engagement of all agents in the education settings and a change in the education methods, conceptions, perspectives, and practices.

According to Martins (2016, p.149), “in any education space, whatever it may be, there will be a pedagogical call of the sign language interpreter.”²⁸ In considering this

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁸ Our translation for: “em espaço educacional, qualquer que seja ele, haverá uma convocação pedagógica direcionada para o intérprete de língua de sinais.”

“pedagogical call,” we can understand that the general duties provided in the document under scrutiny allow the interpreter to engage with other education professionals from a wider perspective of engagement in and contribution to the school setting. This call evinces the role of Educational Interpreters as part of the pedagogical team, co-responsible for the bilingual, inclusive education project.

4.2.2 Specific Duties

- [...] VII. Interpret from Libras into Portuguese and vice-versa to provide deaf students with access to knowledge in the classroom.
- VIII. Act on the production of knowledge in the classroom by mediating in Libras students’ interaction with the classroom teachers.
- IX. Resort to different translation and interpreting strategies to provide deaf students with the best understanding.
- X. Follow and interpret the lessons while complying with the didactic sequence as proposed by the classroom teacher, without anticipating conclusions or answers.
- XI. Promote interaction between classroom teachers, deaf students, hearing students and other agents in the education unit.
- XII. Contribute to the classroom teachers’, hearing students’ and other agents’ understanding of the specific aspects of deafness and Libras.
- XIII. Promote contextualized Libras learning and acquisition processes in the pedagogical activities.
- XIV. Be a language model for the language acquisition and development of both Libras and written Portuguese.
- XV. Encourage and intermediate communication between deaf students in the education setting, whenever applicable.
- XVI. Collaborate to deaf students’ execution of the pedagogical activities, while contributing to their autonomy through learning and performance in the tasks.
- XVII. Encourage self-confidence and independence among deaf students [...] (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2016b, pp.6-7).²⁹

²⁹ Our translation for: “[...] VII. Interpretar da Libras para o Português e vice-versa a fim de proporcionar aos estudantes surdos em sala de aula o acesso ao conhecimento. VIII. Atuar na construção dos conhecimentos em sala de aula mediando em Libras a interação dos estudantes com o professor regente. IX. Empregar diferentes estratégias tradutórias e interpretativas com vistas à melhor compreensão por parte do estudante surdo. X. Acompanhar e interpretar as aulas respeitando a sequência didática proposta pelo professor regente, sem antecipar conclusões ou respostas. XI. Motivar a interação entre professores, estudantes surdos, estudantes ouvintes e demais participantes da unidade educativa. XII. Contribuir na orientação aos professores, aos estudantes ouvintes e aos demais participantes da unidade educativa em relação aos aspectos específicos da surdez e da língua de sinais. XIII. Favorecer os processos de aquisição e de aprendizado da Libras de forma contextualizada no decorrer das atividades pedagógicas. XIV. Ser modelo linguístico para aquisição e desenvolvimento da linguagem, tanto da Libras quanto do Português escrito. XV. Estimular e intermediar a comunicação entre estudantes surdos no contexto educativo, quando for o caso. XVI. Colaborar com o estudante surdo no desenvolvimento das atividades pedagógicas, contribuindo com o aprendizado da execução da tarefa com vistas à sua autonomia. XVII. Estimular a autoconfiança e independência dos estudantes surdos [...]”

We can find a number of perspectives and relationships associated with the EIs' roles in the list above. It assigns several roles and meanings to such professionals, including: translators, interpreters, motivators, mediators, educators, tutors, collaborators, advisors, specialists, stimulators, interlocutors, and language models. Some scholars have discussed and raised questions about such different roles, including Antia and Kreimeyer (2001), Lawson (2012), and Albres (2015; 2016).

In considering the experience of the EIs, it is worth mentioning that “[e]very ideological sign is not only a reflection, a shadow, of reality, but is also itself a material segment of that very reality. [...] In this sense, the reality of the sign is fully objective [...] A sign is a phenomenon of the external world” (VOLOŠINOV, 1986, p.11).³⁰ Therefore, we notice that the ideological signs related to the different roles assigned to the EIs have materiality and, as such, reflect and refract the transforming heterogeneous reality that encloses them.

All activities associated with the EIs are unique and depend on the context of the classroom, on the needs of each student, on the characteristics of each subject and even on the empathy and engagement with each classroom teacher. Such diverse roles of the EIs evince the complexity of their job and reiterate the importance of adequate training that encompasses linguistic, extralinguistic, attitudinal, translational, interpretive, didactic and pedagogic aspects. While playing their diverse roles that are necessary in their work with the deaf, it is fundamental that the EIs be aware of their responsibilities and be prepared to deal with the translation and interpreting processes involved in the education settings, as they require knowledge, skills, attitude and meta-reflection for problem solving and decision making.

The possibility of multiple interpretations and appraisal of this set of roles is one of the constitutive elements of the meaning and understanding of what an EI is, since the semiotic material used in the document utterances entails a less forceful discourse structure and, therefore, a more flexible set of roles, which may tend to one field or to another. Carvalho and Martins (2014, p.65) stress that in the Educational Interpreter's

³⁰ VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Lasislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge/ Massachusetts/London: Havard University Press,1986 [1929].

activity, “the establishment of a pedagogical relationship is produced by the very framework offered by the inclusion rationale.”³¹

The roles of the EIs are not restricted to the language and interpreting field, as the “inclusive situation urges the interpreters to perform pedagogical tasks during the interpreting act” (GESSER, 2015, p.534).³² Building upon ethnographic research, Gesser (2015) states the spaces and times in which a lesson is organized determine the different bonds between the student and the interpreter as well as partnerships between the classroom teacher and the interpreter that go beyond mere ‘interpreting’. Similarly, Santos, Diniz and Lacerda’s (2016) longitudinal study of bilingual, inclusive schools point out that the roles played by the EIs trespass the interpreting of the classroom teachers’ utterances. In fact, it points to some activities that are similar to those described in the policy of the city department of education under scrutiny in the present article. Such studies evince the “current challenges to training such professionals, as they deal with complex contexts that involve the learning relationships of the deaf subjects in their daily lives in the school” (MARTINS, 2016, p.147).³³

It is worth mentioning that the EIs are supposed to devote part of their weekly activity to studies, planning and assessment. For this reason, the document lists some roles involving studies, preparation for interpreting, selection and production of materials, discussion of resources and strategies, as well as continued training.

4.2.3 Planning and Training Duties

- [...] VIII. Study Libras, intermodal translation and interpreting, deaf education, and aspects of visual didactics.
- XIX. Plan interpreting, based on the curriculum content to be taught by the classroom teacher - the study of lexicon and terminology, study of concepts and forms to approach such concepts in Libras.
- XX. Select and/or produce visual teaching materials and supports (videos, images, texts, materials) that contribute to the classroom teacher’s planning.
- XXI. Produce video material to help deaf students organize school knowledge.

³¹ Our translation for: “a construção de uma relação pedagógica é produzida pela própria composição oferecida pela lógica da inclusão.”

³² Our translation for: “situação inclusiva impõe aos intérpretes fazeres pedagógicos durante o ato interpretativo.”

³³ Our translation for: “desafios atuais de formação destes profissionais uma vez que lidam com contextos complexos que envolvem a relação de aprendizagem de sujeitos surdos no cotidiano escolar.”

XXII. Work collaboratively with the classroom teacher and the Libras teacher, considering the pedagogical resources that are appropriate to the teaching of deaf students while also dialoguing about teaching strategies.

XXXIII. Participate in continued education, following determinations from the education unit and/or the City Department of Education (FLORIANÓPOLIS, 2016b, pp.6-7).³⁴

The role related to planning for interpreting implies attention to the planning carried out by the classroom teachers. It is noticeable that there is a certain search of alignment with the activities of study, planning and assessment performed by the classroom teachers. However, the EIs mingles the preparation of the interpreting activity with the mastering of the curriculum contents and the pedagogical function.

Santos and Lacerda (2015, p.519) corroborate the perspective adopted in the document when they point out the EIs' working hours need to include "the work in the classroom, some time for study and exchange of experiences with colleagues, as well as attendance to planning meetings with the classroom teachers every week."³⁵ Interestingly, the EIs do not assume the specific role of teachers, because they do not plan the classroom contents or the specific activities for the deaf students, but they do deserve working hours to study and prepare their interpreting, materials, resources, etc.

The requirement of collaborative work with the classroom teacher and the Libras teacher, as well as the requirement of continued training, points to an understanding of bilingual, inclusive education as a dynamic process which requires a constant dialogue between its subjects as well as continued improvement and training. We see that the actual demands of the EIs produce different challenges, which in turn require that the EIs' previous training, as much as their continued training and update, be not limited to a single field of knowledge to the detriment of the others. In addition, in their daily interpreting

³⁴ Our translation for: "[...] VIII. Estudar sobre Libras, tradução e interpretação intermodal, educação de surdos e aspectos de didática visual. XIX. Planejar a interpretação a partir do conteúdo a ser desenvolvido pelo professor regente – estudo do léxico e terminologia, estudo dos conceitos e das formas de abordar esses conceitos em Libras. XX. Selecionar e/ou produzir materiais e suportes didáticos visuais (vídeo, imagens, textos, materiais) que contribuam com o planejamento do professor regente. XXI. Produzir material em vídeo com o intuito de colaborar com o estudante surdo na sistematização do conhecimento escolar. XXII. Trabalhar de forma colaborativa com o professor regente e com o professor de Libras, discutindo os recursos pedagógicos adequados ao ensino dos estudantes surdos e dialogando sobre as estratégias de ensino. XXXIII. Participar da formação continuada, de acordo com o determinado pela unidade educativa e/ou Secretaria Municipal de Educação."

³⁵ Our translation for: "distribuída entre o trabalho em sala de aula, algum tempo disponível para estudo e troca de experiência com os demais colegas, e ainda participação nas reuniões de planejamento com professores, semanalmente."

work, the EIs mediate the several relationships that exist in the school and provide for the teaching and learning of several curriculum contents, which requires specific competences to perform different, and even contradictory, roles. Carvalho and Martins (2014, p.53-4) warn about this: “To what extent can the educational translator and interpreter of sign language speak of something s/he does not know and teach something s/he does not master?”³⁶

Final remarks

Considering our reflections about the education policy in Brazil and the role of the EIs of Libras-Portuguese, we notice that Section 10 in the Guidelines for Special Education Policy in the Public Education System of Florianópolis, which was set forth from a dialogue with the EIs, evinces the movement of the EIs towards the makeup and legitimacy of their educational interpreting practice, eventually reinforcing it and making it discursively stable in a document record. By means of the linguistic sign, the document designates the EI as a unique professional in a process of categorization and recategorization that shapes attributions and complementary activities that are directly overlapped with those of the classroom teachers, as their planning is supposed to be aligned with that of the classroom teacher.

According to Vološinov (1986, p.10), “[a] sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality — it reflects and refracts another reality.”³⁷ Drawing on their historically and socially contextualized reality, the individuals reflect upon their own experiences in the school, in the classroom, and materialize such experiences through language, thereby forming a tangle of knowledge acquired in the relationships with the others (managers, workers, professors, interpreters, and students) and producing their interpretations (refractions) of this reality.

This excerpt of the city guidelines, collectively developed, building on the statements of those involved in the translation and interpreting activity, materializes anxieties and afflictions, thereby becoming a discourse of desire. Refracted as a normative

³⁶ Our translation for: “Até que ponto, neste caso, o TILSE [tradutor e intérprete de língua de sinais educacional] pode falar daquilo que não sabe e pode ensinar aquilo que não domina?”

³⁷ For reference, see footnote 30.

document, such an excerpt materializes the practices, even the contradictory ones, which are activated in each reading, thereby being open to new interpretations from the subjects that will follow some of the bundles of meaning.

Hence, the dichotomy between the EIs' interpreting role and their pedagogical-didactic-educational role remains despite all efforts to describe and detail their roles and duties. To what extent are the roles assigned to such professions not essentially pedagogical? What is the problem in having interpreters perform teaching activities? The need for answers give rise to new questions and investigation possibilities.

It is worth mentioning that the professionals working with Libras-Portuguese translation and interpreting in the public education system of Florianópolis are, first of all, teachers, as shown in their very job title: Educational Interpreter Assistant *Teacher*. Therefore, we can state that the very training background required for the job stimulates a certain merger between the interpreting practice and the pedagogical practice. While the guidelines delimit specific translation and interpreting activities, they also define a number of roles of an educational, attitudinal, didactic and pedagogical nature.

If we take into account the specificity of the discourse dimension, it may follow that it is not even necessary to define the teaching and interpreting role of the EIs. In any case, it is apparent that the EIs' work brings the merger of these two established areas, which in their intersection produce new discourses, new interpreting possibilities and new fields of actions that are capable of responding to the new social demands and overcoming a dichotomy between the interpreting per se and the educational vocation of interpreting.

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