

The regular school as a training space for the Libras teacher - educational interpreter duo

A escola comum como espaço formativo para a dupla professor e intérprete educacional de Libras

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Abstract: In order to achieve better results in the education of deaf students, Libras teachers and interpreters benefit from studies on more efficient ways of jointly organizing teaching activities for deaf students in Elementary Education II. Thus, this study aims to address the importance of the training space in the regular school between the teacher and the Libras educational interpreter (EI), based on the discussions and analyses in this research field. In a mediated and specialised way, expanding the possibilities for instruction and development, it is necessary to discuss the training needs of teachers and EIs, the challenges they experience daily in the inclusive classroom, and to address the teaching possibilities in a training space at school. The reflections will be permeated by the theoretical framework of exponents in deaf education who articulate with the principles of the cultural historical approach proposed by Vygotsky (2021), expanding the teaching possibilities and development through and in shared social relationships. The results reveal productive meetings that helped professionals to rethink their representations, experiences and practices, individually and collectively, in order to transform the teaching of deaf students into more effective actions.

Keywords: Teacher education. Libras interpreter training. Communication accessibility. Mediation. Deaf education. Special education.

Resumo: Para conseguir alcançar melhores resultados na educação de alunos surdos, professores e intérpretes de Libras se beneficiam de estudos sobre modos mais eficientes para organização conjunta das ações de ensino de estudantes surdos no Ensino Fundamental II. Assim, esta pesquisa pretende tratar da importância do espaço formativo na escola comum entre professor e intérprete educacional (IE) de Libras, partindo das discussões e análises nesse campo de pesquisa. De forma mediada e especializada, ampliando as possibilidades de instrução e desenvolvimento, faz-se necessário discutir sobre as necessidades formativas de professores e IEs, sobre os desafios vivenciados por eles no cotidiano da sala inclusiva e apontar as possibilidades de instrução em espaço formativo na escola. As reflexões serão permeadas pelo arcabouço teórico de expoentes da área da educação de surdos que se articulam com os princípios da abordagem histórico cultural propostos por Vigotski (2021), ampliando as possibilidades de instrução e desenvolvimento, pelas e nas relações sociais compartilhadas. Os resultados revelam encontros produtivos, que contribuíram com os profissionais para que pudessem repensar suas representações, suas experiências, suas práticas, de maneira individual e coletivamente, a fim de transformarem em ações mais efetivas o ensino de estudantes surdos.

Palavras-chave: Formação de professores. Formação de intérprete de Libras. Acessibilidade comunicacional. Mediação. Educação de surdos. Educação especial.

1 Starting the conversation

Deaf education, from the perspective of inclusive education and its accessible conditions, have been discussed by various researchers. However, there are still few recent publications focussing on discussions about the importance of creating a shared training space for teachers and educational interpreters of Libras, with a focus on the process of instruction related to their experiences in ordinary schools.

One of the problems encountered in this area is the lack of spaces in schools, which are now indispensable for providing training conditions for educators in the field. The aim is to guide teachers and educational interpreters (EIs) on ways of working in the teaching of deaf students - beyond study - in a process of seeking instructions that strengthen their actions and daily working relationships.

These professionals, unaware of the characteristics of their work and role in the classroom, may also not recognise Libras as a fundamental part of development, which certainly makes quality instruction unfeasible for deaf students (DAROQUE, 2022).

It must be emphasised that most of those who accompany the students still need instruction, especially on specific knowledge about aspects related to deafness, knowledge of Libras, bilingual education in collective situations in the classroom and their modes of operation, in search of more efficient performance and actions (Daroque, 2021). In this sense, there are still many barriers in the workplace, which makes it necessary to make attitudinal changes to social practices and relationships, as well as to the education system and public policies, in order to achieve an inclusive bilingual school based on issues that benefit deaf people.

In addition, it is also necessary to meet the needs for the development of better teaching methodologies and pedagogical practices, understanding the specificities of deaf people in educational spaces and their demands in terms of teaching. Above all, there is a need for effective professional work between the teacher in the inclusive classroom and the EI in the same space, so that their

actions and relationships can be better organised and designed for the student's benefit. Transformations are needed at all levels; from the political level, to the administration of the education and school system, and to specifically targeted didactic-pedagogical issues (LACERDA, 2009; LACERDA; SANTOS 2013; THOMA, 2016).

It is therefore essential to discuss the training needs of teachers and EIs when working with deaf students in regular schools, and the importance of creating training spaces that promote joint reflections that go beyond acting and seek to break down the everyday problems in teaching dynamics.

Thus, we reiterate, this paper deals with the importance of creating a shared training space between teachers and EIs in the regular school, based on the discussions and analyses in this field of study by researchers whose reflections, permeated by the theoretical framework of other leading exponents in deaf education, are articulated with the principles of the cultural historical approach proposed by Vygotsky (2021), expanding the teaching possibilities and development, through and in shared social relationships.

For this to happen in a mediated and specialised way, it is necessary to clarify the training needs of teachers and EIs, the challenges they experience in the daily life of the bilingual inclusive classroom and the teaching possibilities in a training space at school. All these aspects will be dealt with in the course of this text.

2 Training needs of teachers and EIs

Education professionals need to act in a targeted manner, in their search to understand deaf students' specificities while working towards development based on humanised training and respect for diversity.

We believe that training can be understood as a teaching process, in the sense intended by Vygotsky, since it aims to promote development (Vygotsky, 2003). Thus, it is understood that the development of teachers and EIs can take place through a proposal

mediated by an experienced professional in the field of deafblindness, who works with everyday and scientific concepts, in order to provide intentional instruction, aiming to change actions, and seeking to systematise teaching by sharing it in a formative space at school (VIGOTSKI, 2001b).

With regard to what we assume to be the educational process, let's take a look at what Vygotsky meant by "instruction". The author states that the word "instruction" carries the concept of "[...] an activity that generates development and, therefore, must be at the forefront of development, [and] not following development like a shadow [since it is] an activity that takes into account the content and the concrete relations of the person with the world" (PRESTES, 2021, p. 210).

In this way, we understand that in instruction "every activity is a process", an action that promotes development, unlike the commonly used term "learning", which aims to obtain results. From this perspective, instruction is attributed to an autonomous activity of the subject, which is guided by someone who has the intention of doing so (PRESTES, 2021, p. 219).

In this sense, instruction and development are shared and mediated processes. Mediation creates countless possibilities of understanding for each of the subjects, which ends up helping pedagogical practice. Subjects are active beings in their development, although they need activities mediated by others to help them co-construct higher psychic functions (VIGOTSKI, 1991).

Based on these considerations, we can say that in order to understand the training process of the professionals, of the teacher and EI, who will work together in the regular classroom, it is necessary to address some aspects they have experienced in order to understand how shared work becomes possible.

3 Challenges experienced daily at regular schools

It is worth reflecting on the complexity of the teacher's situation in relation to their work with deaf students in the ordinary classroom. It is observed that,

most of these professionals, are unaware of the work ways, the language, the linguistic singularities and the specific needs for teaching this public. And yet, at the same time, the teacher shares situations and actions in the same space with another professional, the EI, who also has their own specificities when working in the classroom.

It is also worth highlighting the fact that the teacher is unfamiliar with how the EI works and this often hinders their performance, preventing a good and necessary relationship between them within the same space.

Teachers therefore go through many experiences and discoveries when they have deaf students and interpreters in their classroom. These are new experiences, often without any prior guidance, which they have never reflected on in their training. He will therefore need to build up an understanding of the particular actions needed to teach deaf students and this shared performance in everyday relationships. It is also worth remembering that teachers are responsible for all the students in their classrooms, whether they are hearing, deaf or have other specific needs. They need to organise and plan the content, devise strategies, propose activities and assessments so that all the students achieve the objectives expected by the curriculum for the grade in question. (DAROQUE, 2021, p. 52).

In this case, as there are different working dynamics for each of the professionals, the teacher needs to know and understand how their deaf students work, how interpreting works, the moments of interventions and explanations mediated by the interpreter, seeking to carry out pedagogical actions in line with the demands presented (DAROQUE, 2021).

The EI, being familiar with the deaf student's sign language, is responsible for making the interactions accessible, while mediating the explanations made orally by the teacher. In most of the situations I have experienced, when translating from oral language to sign language, the time taken by the EI to translate ends up being different to that used by the teacher to enunciate the content. Sometimes the EI needs more time and the teacher may have already started another explanation, creating a complicated

dynamic for the EI and the deaf student. This situation can become chaotic when the teacher cannot be involved in decisions about the interpretative aspects to be enunciated, indicating that the pair lacks openness to discussing the processes and challenges involved in pedagogical teaching strategies, interpreting strategies and the deaf student's comprehension processes.

This dynamic implies unique aspects in terms of the way they work, because beyond the translation aspects, educational practices and teaching-learning processes are at stake. Aware of the difficulties faced by deaf students, the educational interpreter actively seeks out new ways of mediating on a daily basis that favour the knowledge construction. Because they know Libras and are therefore closer to the deaf student, they also end up taking on a number of other roles as a result of the dynamics of the classroom, the teacher's lack of sign language knowledge and specific aspects. (DAROQUE, 2021, p. 59).

Most of the time, even though the EI knows Libras, specific aspects of deafness, and the functioning of deaf students, they are not professionally prepared to meet all educational demands. After all, it is not because they know Libras that they consequently know how to organise materials and master teaching strategies. It is often the case that in their day-to-day work in the classroom, EIs attempt to improve their knowledge of pedagogical organisation and teaching strategies, making them more skilled for this purpose (DAROQUE, 2021).

In view of these issues, the EI also needs training geared to the needs of this dynamic approach to working in an inclusive bilingual classroom, as they experience educational teaching practices shared with the teacher in charge. This is why there is an urgent need to provide continuing training to develop and expand knowledge related to pedagogical issues, teaching methodologies linked to this space, as well as to better develop aspects of sign language and specific translation processes for educational work (LACERDA, 2010). Therefore, interpreters need to be trained to work in this context, as they need to know how to

mediate the teaching-learning processes of deaf students in the classroom (LACERDA; LODI, 2009).

It is also necessary for teachers and EIs, who are responsible for teaching deaf students, to take part in specific training together in order to meet their daily needs and guarantee the linguistic rights of these students by creating different pedagogical conditions in search of more qualified teaching. It is therefore hoped that they will seek moments of shared reflection on what each professional can do for better organisation and planning, in order to devise better ways of acting together (LACERDA; SANTOS, 2013).

Such improvements may be achieved as soon as the professionals are willing to sit down and discuss their needs, and have moments to think together about all processes. These actions are still quite complex as they involve mobilising them to organise themselves, without mediation bringing motivation and experiences that point to better performance. By focusing on these professionals' education, we consider work as an intentional practice that can enable subjects to go through a humanising process in their personal and professional development (DAROQUE, 2021).

In this context, the aim of such reflections is to help build relationships between professionals when a mediated space is provided for such joint and shared actions.

4 Teaching possibilities in a training space at school

In order to overcome the daily difficulties involved in teaching deaf students, it is important for professionals to have training spaces in their day-to-day work that allow for moments of joint reflection. Seeking a continuous process of reflection and action on praxis (ZANATA, 2004) is possible when moments of reflection and discussion between teacher and educational interpreter are provided in a mediated space designed for this purpose.

Examples of organising a shared training space between teachers and EIs is described based on Daroque (2021), who discusses aspects of actions carried out in a training space in a school with

professionals in the 8th year of primary education, in a regular class with 30 hearing and 4 deaf students, in a public school in the municipal education network.

The space was created with the aim to provide instruction and create a partnership between a teacher and an EI, in search for more productive in-service actions at school. Weekly face-to-face meetings took place with the pair of professionals (teacher and EI of Libras) and with another person experienced in the area (in Deaf Education and educational translation and interpreting), who served as a mediator throughout the process for one year. With the presence of the experienced mediator, theoretical and practical discussions were held, and shared actions among the professionals were established through dialogical processes for the construction of attentive actions for deaf students' teaching.

These mediations provided moments of dialogue that led to reflections on teaching practices. By fostering interaction, these meetings allowed the professionals to create new forms of development. Thus, even though the activities were created jointly, they could be developed autonomously by each participant. The process made them think about each other and themselves (PRESTES, 2021).

At the meetings, reflections and discussions were held on the content being taught and new activities were planned, seeking a differentiated and attentive look, both from the teacher and the EI, mediated in terms of the specific aspects of deaf students' teaching. With these actions, the professionals were able to transform their experiences, doubts and practices into actions, with a view to teaching and seeking to develop better strategies and materials, devised jointly.

The methodology used for the meetings was based on issues brought up by the professionals based on their daily practices, which they discussed together. The mediator tried to emphasise reflection on activities carried out in the classroom, in which, in some way, teacher and EI shared actions. She then invited the pair to plan teaching activities in advance and together, and encouraged them to evaluate the activities

planned and carried out, so as to reflect on possible adjustments and changes.

Through these interactions, we dealt with the dialectic between theory - specific scientific knowledge about deafness and bilingual education for the deaf shared throughout our mediation - and practice - the experiences and knowledge of the practice of teachers and educational interpreters in constant dialogue. Thus, everyday situations were always present in the meetings. However, depending on the discussions generated, we would emphasise a specific situation in order to focus on joint reflections. We used notes with triggering themes for possible reflections on the planning, execution and evaluation of actions in the training space, but this was not a script to be followed rigidly. (DAROQUE, 2021, p. 74).

Thus, when teachers felt the need to reflect on how to teach content with deaf students in mind, "discussions were held on the specificities and ways in which teaching works, seeking to broaden the knowledge of those involved" (DAROQUE, 2021, p. 76). There were also demands made by the EIs, related to interpreting methods and strategies, what they lacked in terms of content and pedagogical strategies chosen by the teacher, which they needed to understand in order to better carry out their work.

The joint discussions sought to think up new teaching strategies focusing on specific content and how deaf students could actively participate and learn.

All these aspects were dealt with by thinking about the organisation of the activities and ways of mediating the content in Libras. For this reason, the interpreter was always invited to bring elements of their understanding of sign language, visuality and semiotic aspects of Libras, seeking their contributions on how the content could be directed towards deaf students according to their learning dynamics. (DAROQUE, 2021, p. 76).

These moments in the training space valued the ability to reflect and analyse practice through relationships, promoting instruction and development, as they were encouraged to interact with positions, listening to others in an intersubjective process. The constant search was for a better organisation of rethought, differentiated and shared practices.

In order to better situate the training work with the pair formed by the teacher and the EI, we present an excerpt from the work meetings, which will be analysed below. The following occurred in the excerpt; the mediator responsible for conducting the training process and the discussions; a primary school teacher in the 8th grade who taught science (Science Teacher); and EI1. They had two deaf students (A1 and A2) in the 8th grade A, and A3 and A4 in the 8th grade B, totalling four deaf students. The rest of the students in each class, with an average of 30 students, were hearing (DAROQUE, 2021).

5 Training and discussion

The training meetings took place fortnightly over the course of a year. At the first meetings, the pair complained that they could not find the time to deal with the subjects to be taught to their deaf students. Gradually, with each meeting, the pair became more involved in the teaching activities and planning issues, as the excerpt shows:

Mediator: After our meeting reflecting together and thinking about how to work on the theme of cells and tissues, how did you organise yourselves? Were you able to think about the evaluation afterwards?

Science Teacher: It was great, because it helped me think of other strategies for the subject. So, I organised slides with images, writing, examples with photos, very visual. I sent them to EI1 so she could help me understand if the students would understand and if she could use them to interpret.

IE1: Yes, the teacher gave me the slides. I studied them for a while, because there was a lot of content that I couldn't remember what it was and I had to get the book and study the content.

IE1: And with the materials you [mediator] made available, the dictionary with Libras vocabulary, the games, the idea of the slides, of using the drawings, it helped a lot. We were able to think through the material, you know. It broadened things. To think about making games too, which we're already thinking about making for the digestive system, similar to the one you lent us.

IE1: And when it came to thinking about interpreting in Libras, when I didn't know the signs, I searched in various places and couldn't find them, even with the dictionary. Then, as the teacher works with a lot of drawings, right? I even made a sketch with the drawings she gave me so I could visualise and think about the signs. So I can use it in my explanations, the students can make associations and I can create strategies in Libras with the classifiers in mind.

Mediator: Nice. It sounds like you've shed some light there, right? And it's super important to study beforehand, so that you understand better and look for strategies for interpreting. It's essential that you know the content too. If the interpreter is there, prepared, knowing what is going to be worked on in the classroom, the quality of the interpretation will be different. They'll have a different repertoire and will think up better strategies. They'll be full of information, increase their vocabulary and all this in Libras too.

IE1: I used all the visual space. She showed the drawing on the blackboard too and I followed the drawing. I went very much by her drawing. We used the same place, the drawings, explaining. I kept asking them questions. They understood a lot, they participated, they showed their answers.

Mediator: If you hadn't talked about it beforehand, thought about it together, considered possibilities, do you think it would have been the same lesson?

Science Teacher: Impossible. We knew what we had to do, it was clearer to us. This was also reflected in the students. Because they wanted to participate by answering, showing that they understood. This activity with them was very good. It was very good with everyone, because I used the slides for everyone and the drawings as examples to interact with.

IE1: Wow, that day was great. I already knew what I was going to do, I had more confidence in how to signal and I also had the material prepared. It was great.

Mediator: And to prepare the assessment after that, which we also talked about, were you able to organise and apply it?

Science Teacher: It hasn't been applied yet, it will be in a while, but I wanted to organise it beforehand. So, together with EI1, I adapted each question as we understood whether or not they could answer it and how we could adapt it to each case. Just as we started in the meeting the other day, with your help [mediator].

The actions built up during the training process enabled the pair to reflect on their work, organise themselves in advance for the activity, suggest strategies to each other in such a way that, in the end, both said they were more satisfied with the results achieved in the classroom. They realised that both the teacher and the interpreter were more motivated as they expanded their knowledge and practical ways of conducting the activity throughout the instruction process. They reorganised the use of resources (slides, drawings, images) and also the ways of using sign language, as they came to understand their use in the teaching conditions.

With the help of the mediator, the organisational processes and shared ways of thinking sought to promote enlightening joint reflections on specific aspects, leading the professionals to construct reflections geared to their needs. With the process of rethinking their practices throughout their daily experiences, what the excerpt shows us is that the professionals have improved their actions, showing more elaborate and effective practices, which points to good results. Working in pairs, better organised and discussed together, was beneficial to both professionals' work. This allowed the EI to organise and prepare for the translation aspects in a safer and more effective way with the opportunity to anticipate information. The EI was able to expand her Libras repertoire and better understanding deaf students in the classroom through simultaneous interpreting.

The teacher became more active and organised, planning together with the EI. Furthermore, the EI brought elements that made it clearer to the teacher what the complex points were in teaching the content and how to deal with them. In a shared way, the pair became more of a partner, contributing to more elaborate reflections and strategies that would benefit teaching and, consequently, deaf students' understanding.

When we talk about building a partnership between professionals:

[...] we need to start from the premise that, if we are aware of the possibilities of each

person's contribution to their specific domain, there is a greater chance that shared work will work better. In everyday school practice, working together is not a 'habit': it needs to be built up. Those professionals who have adapted most quickly have been able to carry out practices that are closer to the needs of deaf students. (DAROQUE, 2021, p.117).

In this way, the greater the proximity and interaction between the pair, the greater the chance of "resolving issues that are apparently difficult to solve when done individually" (SANTOS, 2020b, p. 153). In the training space under discussion, the professionals looked for opportunities to study together, which encouraged them to rethink their questions about the dynamics of their work through shared dialogues about their experiences, planning methods and the construction of materials.

Thus, we understand that the training space shared between the professionals enabled them to think about new classroom dynamics in a more fluid way, which favoured better deaf students' participation in interactions and content understanding. In their interpersonal relationships and experiences, there were signs of modified themselves and the others around them. This is because we modify our consciousness when we are affected by the experiences of others, re-signifying our way of being and acting in the environment, as well as in relationships (VIGOTSKI, 2001a).

6 Conclusion

The discussion points to the importance of creating training spaces at school that promote sharing between professionals, with mediated instruction on the needs of deaf students and the professionals who work directly with this public. The training space mediated and shared between teachers and EIs shows the benefits of collective actions that favour discussions and proposals for actions that are more in tune with everyday demands, providing an opportunity for a differentiated and careful look between and with professionals, which results in changes to their practices.

The shared moments served to realise work in partnership, so that the professionals involved could decide together on actions aimed at the instruction and development of deaf students, as well as on the interpretative processes of the content taught and mediated in the classroom. Thus, together, the participants tried to discuss and reflect in pairs, as well as rethink their representations and practices, through their experiences, planning, construction of materials, evaluations and reorganisations that were managed collectively.

Therefore, promoting meetings between these professionals can contribute to better quality teaching for deaf students, pointing to alternative paths and changes that need to take place both in school culture and in society (GÓES, 2002).

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