



## **KNOWLEDGE OF CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF INTERPRETERS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THAT SERVE DEAF AND HAITIAN STUDENTS**

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**SUMMARY:** During a class at a regular school, a Haitian Creole interpreter, unfamiliar with the popular Brazilian expression "He kicked the bucket", had difficulty conveying the meaning of the phrase. He had never heard this expression and was unaware of its meaning. On another occasion, in a Libras class at the university, a deaf teacher greeted the class with gestures that were reminiscent of a popular song, and the interpreter was able to reproduce the greeting correctly because he knew the movements associated with the song's lyrics. This research project aims to explore this relationship between culture and the act of interpreting from one language to another, focusing on the linguistic pairs of Libras and Haitian Creole. The presence of Haitian and deaf communities in Brazil is significant. The research will analyze interpreting practices in educational institutions, seeking to promote an understanding of how knowledge of culture influences the competence of interpreters. The project will address specific aspects of Haitian and deaf culture, with the goal of fostering quality and inclusive public education.

**Keywords:** Interpreting, Haitian Creole, deaf, Haitians, culture.

**ABSTRACT:** During a class at a regular school, a Haitian Creole interpreter, due to his lack of knowledge of the Brazilian popular expression "Ele Bat as Botas" (He kicked the bucket), had difficulty conveying the meaning of the phrase. He had never heard this expression before and was unaware of its meaning. On another occasion, during a Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) class at the university, a deaf teacher greeted the class with gestures that referred to a popular song, and the interpreter was able to correctly reproduce the greeting because he was familiar with the movements associated with the song's lyrics. This research project aims to explore the relationship between culture and the act of interpreting from one language to another, focusing on the linguistic pairs of Libras and Haitian Creole. The presence of Haitian

and Deaf communities in Mato Grosso is significant. The research will analyze interpretative practices in educational institutions, aiming to promote an understanding of how cultural knowledge influences interpreters' competence. The project will address specific aspects of Haitian and Deaf cultures, with the goal of fostering quality and inclusive public education.

**Keywords:** Interpretation, Brazilian Sign Language (BSL), Deaf, Haitians, Culture.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is fundamental for social inclusion and mutual understanding between different cultures. In Brazil, linguistic diversity is a reality, especially with the significant presence of deaf and Haitian communities. In this context, this project research, aims to analyze simultaneous and consecutive interpretation, focusing on interpreters of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) and Haitian Creole.

Addressing the issue of Haitian Creole, for example, in an experience of internship I noticed how the cultural aspect influences the interpretation, as exemplified at the beginning of the summary. In the same context of the situation that gave rise to the situation described, there was a dialogue in class about other expressions common to Brazilians such as: Peeling the pineapple, swallowed the sapo, among others. A Haitian Creole interpreter with a high degree of knowledge of the vocabulary of the Portuguese language was unable to give meaning to similar expressions, as they are linguistic cultural aspects of Brazil.

The other situation, involving Libras, specifically in an interpretation of Libras for spoken Portuguese, when starting the class, the deaf teacher normally, as I did it every day, I would say good afternoon, I would ask the students if everything was okay, I would make brief dialogues with one or another student, and then I would start teaching the content, but on the day mentioned, she started the class by making the hang loose sign with both hands going up the left and right arm. A singer was making this sign at the time in the chorus of a song that said: "it's calm, it's favorable". So with the signs that the teacher was doing so, the interpreter should not say: Good afternoon class, how are you? He would reproduce correctly according to the broadcaster's intention if he said: "Hey guys, how are you,

is it favorable?”, and that’s what he did, creating it, as seemed to be the intention of teacher, a happy and relaxed environment for the beginning of the class. If the interpreter does not had knowledge of the music, of the popular movements of that time, probably would not be successful in its interpretation.

Therefore, what we intend to highlight more comprehensively is how what happens around us, like what has already happened in history, like striking aspects and cultural factors influence the way in which interpretation will be done.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Lee, H. de O and Pereira, V. C in an article on translations between cultures, published in the Translation Notebook, Florianópolis, 2015, there is no translation without transformation. To translate is to pass from one signifier to another, preserving, as much as possible, possible, but never completely, the meaning. If translation between cultures had to if it shows the most pertinent model for thinking about interculturality, it would suppose a passage of this order. It would imply the existence of cultural meanings that, in a culture to another, change signifier or even meanings whose passage requires the invention of another signifier.

The author of the book *His Majesty, The Interpreter*, Ewandro Magalhães, in a citing the interpreter's work, he stated that the interpreter "works as a transformer". The idea of "transformer" is central. The interpreter is not just a channel, but an active agent who needs to have deep knowledge of both languages and cultures. In Libras, this includes familiarity with signs, facial expressions and cultural context. In Creole, it involves understanding the often different linguistic and cultural subtleties the expectations of French or English speakers.

The same author states that "the great limiter of performance in translation simultaneous is emotional, not linguistic." This reflection touches on a crucial point: the emotional pressure can affect the interpreter's performance. In Libras, anxiety can prevent the interpreter from fully utilizing his/her visual and bodily abilities.

Especially in the academic field, the challenge for interpreters to do is evident. interpretation of Libras into Portuguese. In Haitian Creole, the fear of judgment can interfere with fluency and confidence in speech.

At least sixteen other quotations from the author in the cited book with respect to interpreter's work applies to the work of those who work with Libras and Haitian Creole, and we intend to associate his writings with practice.

Moraes AHC, commenting on Vigotsky (1998) and talking about mediators of foreign languages, and following the author's socio-interactionist line, highlights that this mediation can occur, among other means, by interpreters. This is what we intend highlight that interpreters, as mediators, not only of academic content, but language, can contribute greatly to a better understanding of those with whom interacts, having comprehensive knowledge of culture.

In his analyses, Fairclough emphasizes the importance of considering how culture influences the way texts are produced and received. He suggests that when translating, It is essential to be aware of cultural differences and the social implications that may affect the understanding and interpretation of the translated text.

These references highlight how the act of interpreting needs this resignification, with knowledge of culture.

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHOD**

This research project takes into account the significant presence of Haitian and deaf communities in Brazil, which demand an inclusive education that is sensitive to their cultural specificities.

The same website that highlights the significant number of Haitians in Brazil also highlights that this is the nation from which the highest number of births are recorded here in Brazil, reinforcing the idea that education, and interpretation, when applicable, is important, as is the case for those who, even living in Brazil, grew up with Haitian Creole as their mother tongue, until they entered the early years of school. As for the deaf, according to the IBGE, there are around 10 million.

**Tabela 1. Número de imigrantes por classificação, segundo principais países de nascimento - Brasil, 2011 - 2020**

| Principais países | TOTAL          |                |                |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                   | Residentes     | Temporários    | Total          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>265.408</b> | <b>706.398</b> | <b>971.806</b> |
| VENEZUELA         | 8.933          | 163.373        | 172.306        |
| HAITI             | 99.669         | 49.416         | 149.085        |
| BOLÍVIA           | 3.540          | 52.100         | 55.640         |
| COLÔMBIA          | 2.727          | 51.075         | 53.802         |
| ESTADOS UNIDOS    | 5.420          | 32.295         | 37.715         |
| CHINA             | 19.312         | 16.278         | 35.590         |
| ARGENTINA         | 2.212          | 25.392         | 27.604         |
| CUBA              | 5.464          | 20.128         | 25.592         |
| FRANÇA            | 6.026          | 18.593         | 24.619         |
| PERU              | 2.044          | 21.484         | 23.528         |
| PORTUGAL          | 11.406         | 11.479         | 22.885         |
| ITÁLIA            | 8.901          | 12.590         | 21.491         |
| PARAGUAI          | 3.408          | 17.237         | 20.645         |
| ESPANHA           | 6.123          | 13.505         | 19.628         |
| FILIPINAS         | 372            | 18.738         | 19.110         |
| ALEMANHA          | 3.560          | 15.460         | 19.020         |
| URUGUAI           | 10.448         | 7.532          | 17.980         |
| ÍNDIA             | 970            | 15.648         | 16.618         |
| JAPÃO             | 4.234          | 10.088         | 14.322         |
| MÉXICO            | 1.667          | 11.259         | 12.926         |
| Outros países     | 58.972         | 122.728        | 181.700        |

Fonte: Elaborado pelo OBMigra, a partir dos dados da Polícia Federal - SisMigra, 2020.  
Nota(\*) A categoria "Residentes" inclui as antigas classificações permanentes, asilados, outros e provisórios.

The social inclusion of deaf and Haitian students in the educational field is very relevant. Education should be a space where all voices are heard and respected, allowing these students to develop their potential. Therefore, investigating how the cultural knowledge influences interpretation and communication within the environment school is essential to promote pedagogical practices that truly meet the needs of needs of these groups.

Furthermore, the training of qualified interpreters is crucial. The need for a specific and adequate training for interpreters working in these institutions is a point central to ensuring effective communication and building an educational environment inclusive. Without a deep understanding of the cultures involved, interpreters may encounter difficulties in mediating interaction between deaf and Haitian students and the community school in general.

People from other areas who promote the inclusion of deaf and Haitian people, who have access to this research project, they will be able to better understand the particularities cultural aspects of these groups. This understanding is essential for policy formulation public policies that not only recognize but effectively integrate these populations, ensuring their rights and promoting their full participation in society. The lack of knowledge of the language and culture, for example, meant that in an extension project

Haitian students who came from their country after having been placed in the same room trained in higher education courses together with students who did not have the opportunity not even learning to read in their own language. One Haitian student even asked help to complete one of their course activities which included completing a list of verbs in different tenses, when in reality he didn't even know how to read. The interview with them to enter the course was done in French, as many believe that all Haitians speak, write and understand French well. There were some gaps in the communication and knowledge about it, which generated such a situation.

Thus, the proposed research seeks to contribute to a broader dialogue on inclusion, education and cultural diversity, highlighting the importance of methodologies that respect and value the uniqueness of each student, promoting a fair and equitable, focused mainly on the performance of interpreters of the respective languages.

This research project has as its guiding question how Libras interpreters, Haitian Creole and Portuguese come into play when the interpreted context requires cultural knowledge and how can this influence your performance? To address this issue, the research will be developed in two main stages:

**Data Collection with Interpreters.** Sign language interpreters will be invited, Portuguese and Haitian Creole who work in educational institutions. The selection will be carried out by through direct invitations. An interview will be conducted to collect information about the experiences and challenges faced in their daily practices. The questionnaires will include questions about the training, cultural knowledge, and situations. Depending on acceptance, I intend to form a study group for a few months to talk, which I perceive is a desire on the part of the interpreters who really enjoy specific training in the area.

**Analysis of Biographies and Relevant Literature:** An analysis of the biographies will be carried out and available academic studies that address the work of Libras and Creole interpreters in Haiti, with a focus on cultural interactions and interpretive competence.

Based on the considerations raised in the interviews, and possibly in a group of study, as well as the bibliographic review, a text will be prepared that summarizes the main

difficulties faced by these professionals. This text will serve as a guide for training of interpreters, addressing the importance of cultural knowledge and its practical implications in performance in academic environments. The data collected will be analyzed qualitatively, seeking to identify patterns and categories that emerge from the interpreters' experiences. The triangulation between the information obtained in the interviews and in the literature will allow a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and best practices in interpreting.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Some deaf students do not immediately understand what popular sayings mean, proverbs and idioms that are cultural aspects of the Portuguese language and commonly used in everyday life by Portuguese speakers with whom they live. Some interpreters, when faced with such statements, make a point of clarifying the meaning of similar expressions sharing their literal meaning and then their application, and they do this at the same time as the lecture or class continues, but this requires techniques and choices, as it may delay interpretation by causing omission of the content that follows and that could be relevant to the student. The interpreter would be adding to the statement to explain something that he considered relevant, but would lose others during the class content that could also be relevant. So the thought remains about what would be more appropriate in moments of interpretation like this. Other interpreters simply choose to interpret according to the words, without passing on the complete meaning to the deaf, which little by little, could create gaps in their assimilation process and learning by the deaf, whether of the language itself or of specific points. Analyzing all these details, as a Haitian Creole interpreter and a Libras interpreter, can provide everyone in the area with knowledge that results in subsidies for achieving of interpretative competence taking into account the culture of the language users.

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In the case of Libras, for example, in the practice of interpretation, the problem is observed and its effects of working with two languages of different modalities. When the task is to perform sign language interpretation, the interpreter goes from an oral language to a foreign language

signaled. As is common in the classroom, this professional is located in a specific spot in the room that is visible to the deaf student, often far from the teacher, and usually has only the voice of the person expressing himself as a resource, to then carry out the interpretation. He is concerned that its signage is clear to the deaf community present.

When interpreting from Libras to Portuguese, the interpreter sits facing the speaker and needs a high level of concentration to make the decision to express a word or a sentence that reflects the author's thoughts and sounds clear to the audience with each movement, look and sign. So, in this important place, Libras to Portuguese interpretation is observed in practice. This type of interpretation represents one of the greatest challenges for interpreters, especially at the beginning of their careers. If training were developed and some cultures of learning Libras were changed a little, thinking about providing interpreters with the necessary framework to develop interpretive competence in this language pair, the benefits for the deaf community would be countless.

In line with this, there is also the fact that interpreters tend to specialize in a specific subject, such as in the area of linguistics, but quite often, as is the case with interpreters at federal educational institutions, they need to interpret content from different areas such as health and law, just to name a few. This aspect also needs to be addressed, in addition to referring to the emotional preparation of interpreters who, when interpreting for an audience familiar with Libras, as happens at events in the area, may feel intimidated and unable to express themselves the way they would like due to emotional blockage. How can we address this issue?

Regarding the interpretation of Haitian Creole into Portuguese, the two languages are of the same modality, but there is difficulty with different cultural aspects. In one example that I observed in a regular school, when the teacher told the students that they would have to make an effort to individually carry out the proposed activity, the interpreter used the expression “naje pou soti”, which literally means “swim to get out”. It was clear on the faces of the Haitian students that they had understood the meaning of what was expected of them, and some even laughed at what they heard. This expression became popular in Haiti during



the period of government of a president named Renè Prèval, who at a critical and demanding moment said that everyone was, so to speak, in the same boat. If they needed to eat, he needed to eat too. If they needed clothes, housing, health, he needed to eat too. So if the boat, the country, was sinking, what everyone needed to do was get off the boat and swim to a safer place, or simply as he said, "swim to get out". Haitians know this expression. It has even become the theme of a song in the country. It would make no sense at all for a Brazilian student, a Portuguese speaker, to hear a teacher tell him to "swim to get out" with the intention of encouraging him to make an effort to do an activity. But for Haitian students, users of the Haitian Creole language, familiar with that expression and its historical context, it would make a lot of sense, as in fact happened in the context mentioned.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study highlights the importance of cultural knowledge in the performance of interpreters, especially when dealing with the language pairs of Libras and Haitian Creole, in the context of educational institutions that serve both deaf and Haitian students. Through the examples analyzed, it is observed how the lack of knowledge of specific cultural and linguistic expressions can hinder the performance of the interpreter, making it difficult to understand and faithfully transmit the message between different linguistic and cultural groups.

The research reveals that the competence of interpreters is not limited to the technical mastery of the languages involved, but also to the ability to understand and interpret the cultural nuances that permeate these languages. In the specific case of Libras and Haitian Creole, mastery of the cultural particularities of each group — deaf and Haitian — is fundamental for effective and inclusive communication. The exchange between cultures, through interpretation, goes beyond the mere translation of words, involving the understanding of gestures, idiomatic expressions and cultural contexts that shape languages and social interactions.

The research also highlights the importance of training interpreters to recognize these cultural differences and be prepared to face them in the day-to-day activities of institutions.

teaching, creating a more inclusive and accessible environment for students. The role of the interpreter, therefore, extends beyond the linguistic field, reaching the fields of education and culture, becoming an essential link between the deaf and Haitian communities.

With the growing presence of Haitian and deaf communities in Brazil, it is essential that the educational system promote interpreter training that includes in-depth study of the cultures of these groups. This not only improves the quality of interpreting services, but also contributes to a more inclusive and quality public education. By addressing these issues, this project reinforces the importance of a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses language, culture and education, in the search for a more just and egalitarian society for all.

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