

**CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES IN THE SCHOOL INCLUSION OF DEAF STUDENTS:
THE ROLE OF THE LIBRAS INTERPRETER AND PEDAGOGICAL ADAPTATION** <https://doi.org/10.63330/aurumpub.013-010>**Clara Ramos Pedroza¹ and Helen Trefzger Ballock²****ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the challenges and potentials of the inclusion of deaf students in regular schools, focusing on the role of Libras interpreters and the need to adapt pedagogical practices to meet the specificities of visual learning. Using a qualitative approach, observations and analyses of classroom interactions among deaf students, teachers, and interpreters were conducted, highlighting the importance of linguistic mediation to ensure access to educational content. However, it was found that the fast pace of lessons, combined with the lack of planning that considers the visual time needed for comprehension and note-taking, significantly compromises the learning of deaf students. Additionally, insufficient teacher training regarding the particularities of bilingual education and the interpreter's role worsens the difficulties for effective inclusion. The study emphasizes that inclusion cannot be limited to the presence of the interpreter but requires a reorganization of pedagogical time, the valorization of Libras as the first language, and collaborative work among all school professionals. Therefore, ongoing teacher training and the development of pedagogical practices that respect linguistic and cultural differences are essential to promote a truly accessible, equitable, and inclusive school environment.

Keywords: School inclusion; Deaf students; Libras interpreter; Visual learning; Pedagogical practices.

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INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of deaf students in mainstream education is a right guaranteed by the **Federal Constitution of 1988**, by the **Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB – Law No. 9.394/1996)**, by **Law No. 10.436/2002**, which recognizes **Brazilian Sign Language (Libras)** as a legal means of communication and expression, and by **Decree No. 5.626/2005**, which regulates this law and establishes guidelines for the training of professionals, linguistic accessibility, and the guarantee of specialized educational services. These legal provisions not only recognize Libras as the first language of the Brazilian deaf community but also reaffirm the State's commitment to **equitable, inclusive, and quality** education, respecting the linguistic and cultural specificities of deaf students.

In this context, the presence of the **Libras interpreter** in regular education classrooms has become an essential measure to enable communication between deaf students, teachers, and hearing peers. This professional acts as a linguistic and cultural mediator, interpreting content from spoken Portuguese into Libras and vice versa. However, it is important to emphasize that the interpreter's role does not replace the teacher's pedagogical responsibility. As Quadros (2004, p. 35) points out, **linguistic mediation alone does not guarantee full learning**; it is necessary for the teaching staff to understand the implications of deafness in the educational process and to adapt their practices in accordance with the students' needs.

Despite legal advances and the recognition of Libras as a fundamental part of the inclusive educational process, significant challenges remain in realizing this right. The presence of the interpreter in the classroom, although crucial, **does not by itself ensure quality education**. Many factors hinder the learning of deaf students: the fast-paced nature of lessons, the centrality of oral communication, the scarcity of accessible visual materials, the lack of specific teacher training, and the absence of pedagogical planning that considers the time required for mediation through Libras.

One of the most critical aspects relates to **pedagogical time**. Simultaneous interpretation requires pauses and a different organization of classroom dynamics. When this time is not respected, the deaf student's right to comprehension is compromised, resulting in learning gaps, veiled exclusion, and frustrations that could be avoided with more sensitive and collaborative pedagogical practices. Furthermore, the presence of Libras in the school environment should extend beyond the moment of interpretation. It is essential that the school community — teachers, administrators, students, and staff — develop a culture of accessibility and linguistic respect, valuing Libras as part of the educational routine.

This article aims to reflect on the **challenges faced by deaf students in mainstream education**, even with the support of the Libras interpreter, based on **concrete situations observed in the school context**. The analysis seeks to highlight that the full inclusion of deaf students requires more than formal



compliance with legislation: it demands **ongoing teacher training**, reorganization of pedagogical practices, and the valorization of **visual learning as the primary channel** for these students.

The study is supported by **legal, theoretical, and pedagogical** foundations that underpin the educational inclusion of deaf individuals in Brazil and point to ways to overcome the communicational and attitudinal barriers still present in educational institutions. The valorization of Libras as the first language, the understanding of deafness as a linguistic and cultural difference — and not merely a disability — and the commitment to inclusive practices should guide the actions of education professionals at all levels of teaching.

By shedding light on these issues, the article hopes to contribute to the strengthening of a **truly inclusive school**, one that not only welcomes the presence of deaf students but also recognizes their uniqueness and promotes real conditions for learning, participation, and belonging. Inclusion, in this sense, should not be seen as a technical or bureaucratic challenge, but as an **ethical, collective, and ongoing** construction, grounded in social justice and the right to quality education for all.

METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in a qualitative approach, of a descriptive and interpretative nature, which seeks to understand the meanings and practices related to the inclusion of deaf students in mainstream education. The choice of this approach is justified by the complexity of the subject matter, which involves subjective, social, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions present in the relationships established between deaf students, teachers, and Libras interpreters within the school environment.

The research was conducted in a public regular education school located in an urban area, which includes the presence of Libras interpreters in the classroom to support deaf students enrolled at various stages of basic education. The selection of this institution was intentional, considering the existence of an internal policy for specialized educational services for deaf students, which allowed access to a concrete and relevant context for investigation.

Data were collected through **participant observation**, carried out over the course of one academic semester, with systematic monitoring of classes in different subjects. During the observations, efforts were made to meticulously record the interactions among the research subjects — deaf students, teachers, and interpreters — as well as the pedagogical resources used, the communication strategies adopted, and the teaching-learning dynamics.

In addition to classroom observations, informal accounts obtained through **spontaneous conversations** with interpreters and students after classes were considered. These accounts were fundamental to understanding the experiences of the subjects, their perceptions of the inclusion process, and the obstacles faced in daily school life. Although no formal interviews were conducted, the



conversations were recorded in a field diary and analyzed as complementary material to direct observation.

The adopted methodology enabled an in-depth analysis of school practices and the actual conditions of inclusion, especially regarding the role of the Libras interpreter and the pedagogical adaptations made — or not made — by teachers. As Mantoan (2003, p. 47) highlights, “*school inclusion will only be effective when educational practices are reviewed with a focus on equity, respecting different ways of learning.*” From this perspective, the study sought to understand how the traditional pedagogical model, often centered on orality and linear content delivery, impacts the learning of deaf students and what alternatives have been (or could be) adopted to promote equitable access to knowledge.

During the analytical process, several **central categories** emerged, constructed from the observations and anchored in the scientific literature of the field. These categories guided the interpretation of the data and served as the framework for organizing and discussing the results:

1. The Role of the Teacher in School Inclusion

It was observed that teacher commitment to inclusion goes beyond the presence of the interpreter.

Teachers who show openness to dialogue, sensitivity to difference, and methodological flexibility are able to create a more accessible and participatory environment. However, the lack of specific training remains a limiting factor, and many teachers feel unprepared to deal with deafness in the classroom, transferring the responsibility of mediation to the interpreter.

2. Pedagogical Time and Visual Learning

Mediation in Libras requires a different teaching rhythm, with strategic pauses, repetitions, and the use of visual resources. However, it was observed that most teachers maintain the traditional pace of lessons, compromising the understanding of deaf students. The time needed for simultaneous translation, copying from the board, and mental elaboration of concepts in Libras is often disregarded in lesson planning.

3. The Role of the Libras Interpreter as Mediator

The Libras interpreter acts as a bridge between two distinct linguistic and cultural worlds: Libras and spoken Portuguese. However, their role, although essential, cannot compensate for the absence of accessible pedagogical practices. When the teacher does not adapt their strategies, the interpreter becomes overburdened, being forced to “teach” and “interpret” simultaneously — which is neither their legal nor ethical function, as established by Decree No. 5.626/2005.

4. Deaf Identity, Visual Culture, and School Belonging

The data reveal that recognizing Libras as the first language and deafness as a cultural difference — not merely a disability — is essential for building an inclusive educational environment. Valuing deaf culture, respecting the timing and forms of expression of students, and



encouraging the use of Libras in school contexts are fundamental strategies for promoting the sense of belonging among deaf students.

5. Ongoing Teacher Training

The research also highlights the urgency of teacher training policies that address deaf education, Libras, and the specificities of visual learning. Teachers who participated in continuing education courses demonstrated greater engagement and initiative in creating accessible activities. Training should not be sporadic but continuous and integrated into the school's daily routine.

Thus, the choice of a qualitative methodology enabled **immersion in the school reality and a deep understanding of the practices and challenges of including deaf students**, valuing the voices and experiences of those involved in the process. The interpretative analysis, combined with theoretical grounding, allowed for a critical examination not only of existing barriers but also of the possibilities for transforming the educational context from an ethical, critical, and inclusive perspective.

DEVELOPMENT

Although the presence of the Libras interpreter is essential to ensure communication between the teacher and the deaf student, experiences observed in school contexts demonstrate that this mediation alone does not guarantee full access to the teaching-learning process. The educational inclusion of deaf students requires, beyond linguistic translation, the recognition of the cognitive, cultural, and visual specificities involved in learning through Libras.

One of the main challenges observed in everyday school life relates to **pedagogical time** and the **structure of lessons**, which are often organized to prioritize orality and the linearity of verbal exposition. In many subjects, teachers speak continuously while writing on the board, asking students to simultaneously follow the explanation and take notes. For hearing students, this dynamic is feasible because they can listen while looking at the board and writing. However, for deaf students, this simultaneity is unworkable, as they rely on the visual channel both to follow the interpreter and to make written records. As Lacerda (2011, p. 45) points out, *“deaf students learn visually and, therefore, need more time to alternate between paying attention to the interpreter and engaging in recording and reading activities.”*

This exclusionary dynamic results in significant losses in the learning process. In trying to keep up with the pace of the class, the deaf student often has to choose between understanding the content through interpretation or taking notes from the board, which leads to cognitive gaps and compromises their performance. Moreover, the **rapid switching between subjects** and teachers, without adequate breaks, exacerbates this reality. In many cases, when the student is still finishing copying the previous content,



the next teacher begins a new explanation and erases the board, disregarding the need for extended time for students with a visual learning profile.

In this context, it becomes evident that the **presence of the interpreter, although necessary, is not sufficient to ensure effective inclusion**. As Quadros and Schmiedt (2006) emphasize, the inclusion of deaf students goes beyond simple linguistic mediation — it requires a restructuring of pedagogical practices focused on linguistic accessibility and the valorization of Libras as the language of instruction. It is essential to understand that the deaf student is part of a bilingual and bicultural process, and that the time needed to access, process, and understand information requires **planned pedagogical pauses** as well as **adapted visual resources**.

Furthermore, the interpreter's role is not limited to sign translation. Often, at the end of classes, deaf students seek out interpreters to clarify doubts about words, concepts, or terms they did not fully understand during the lesson. This shows that, in addition to being linguistic mediators, interpreters also act as **cultural and conceptual mediators**, translating not only language but also the meaning of what was said, contextualizing the information so that the student can fully understand it. This overlap of functions, although necessary, highlights a gap in the pedagogical process: **the absence of teaching strategies that ensure the deaf student's autonomy**.

Another relevant factor is the lack of coordination between teachers and Libras interpreters. When there is no prior communication about the content, methodology, or objectives of the lesson, the interpreter is forced to perform improvised mediation, without time to prepare specific signs, visual resources, or metaphors that facilitate content comprehension. This directly compromises the quality of learning, as the interpreter is not — and should not be — responsible for adapting pedagogical content, a function that belongs to the teacher, as emphasized by Decree No. 5.626/2005.

This reality reveals a lack of **ongoing teacher training** for working with the inclusion of deaf students. Initial training generally does not include Libras, nor the principles of bilingual education or visual learning. Many teachers, although well-intentioned, show a lack of knowledge about how to plan a lesson accessible to deaf students. As Gesser (2009) points out, there are still strong stigmas and myths about deafness, which negatively impact teachers' expectations and reduce the possibilities for full inclusion.

Therefore, pedagogical practice needs to be rethought in its entirety. The inclusion of deaf students should not be understood as a punctual adaptation or an institutional favor, but as an **ethical commitment to the right to quality education**. This implies:

- the systematic use of **accessible visual materials** (images, videos, concept maps, diagrams);
- **coordination between speech and writing**, respecting visual attention times;



- the implementation of **strategic pauses** so that the student can alternate between watching the interpreter and recording information;
- the establishment of **ongoing dialogue with the Libras interpreter** to jointly plan moments of explanation and assessment.

Moreover, it is essential that the **school institution as a whole understands and respects the visual time of the deaf student**, reevaluating the organization of the school schedule, transitions between classes, support resources, and spaces for listening and welcoming. Inclusion, in this sense, goes beyond the classroom and becomes a collective responsibility — involving administrators, teachers, interpreters, families, and the students themselves.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The inclusion of deaf students in mainstream education is a complex process that goes beyond simply placing these students in regular classrooms. It is a challenge that involves a series of structural, pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural factors, which require a deep understanding of the specificities of deafness and bilingual education. Brazilian legislation, through **Law No. 10.436/2002** and **Decree No. 5.626/2005**, recognizes **Brazilian Sign Language (Libras)** as a legal means of communication and expression for deaf individuals, establishing, among other provisions, the mandatory presence of Libras interpreters in educational contexts as a way to guarantee the right to communication and learning.

However, the presence of the interpreter, although essential, **does not by itself guarantee quality education**. It is necessary to understand that the role of this professional must be embedded within an inclusive pedagogical project, built upon adapted practices, the valorization of deaf culture, and respect for the visual time required for the student to understand the content being taught. As Quadros (2004) emphasizes, the Libras interpreter acts as a **linguistic and cultural mediator**, responsible for translating between spoken Portuguese and sign language, without being directly responsible for the learning or pedagogical development of deaf students.

The school, in turn, must recognize that **visual communication is the primary means of accessing knowledge for deaf students**. This characteristic demands significant changes in pedagogical planning, including the organization of school time, the use of appropriate visual resources, the creation of moments for note-taking, and the strengthening of cooperation between teachers and interpreters. In many everyday situations, deaf students are exposed to a **fast-paced lesson rhythm**, in which the teacher's continuous speech, simultaneous with writing on the board and requests for copying, prevents the student from following and recording information autonomously (Lacerda, 2011).

This difficulty is directly related to the need for constant visual attention to the interpreter during explanations. When alternating between interpretation and the content on the board, the deaf student ends



up missing important parts of the lesson. Additionally, immediate transitions between subjects, without sufficient time for reorganization, result in **cognitive and emotional overload**, which compromises learning and school engagement.

In light of this, **pedagogical time must be reconsidered** through the lens of visual learning. According to Skliar (2010), the true inclusion of deaf students depends on a school that recognizes **linguistic and cultural differences** as legitimate components of human diversity and does not impose a pedagogical model centered solely on orality. The valorization of **Libras as the first language (L1)** and written Portuguese as the second language (L2) is an essential guideline of bilingual education for the deaf, which seeks to ensure not only access to the curriculum but also the strengthening of deaf identity and culture.

Mantoan (2003) reinforces that inclusion will only be effective when the school stops treating difference as a problem and begins to understand it as an **educational and social value**. This implies offering **appropriate training to teachers**, enabling them to adapt their teaching practices and work in partnership with Libras interpreters, respecting the limits and possibilities of each professional's role. Unfortunately, the lack of training is still a reality in many institutions, causing teachers to be unsure of how to respond to the specific needs of deaf students, which often leads to merely formal or symbolic inclusion.

It is in this context that the Libras interpreter becomes a key figure, but not a sufficient one. Their role must be articulated with accessible pedagogical practices, visually organized teaching materials, collaborative teaching strategies, and, above all, **an inclusive school culture**. As Gesser (2009) warns, there are still many misunderstandings and prejudices surrounding Libras and the role of interpreters, which hinder the construction of an educational environment truly open to difference.

Therefore, it is necessary to overcome the assistentialist view of inclusion, which is limited to ensuring the physical presence of the deaf student and the interpreter in the classroom. The inclusive school must understand that deafness is not a deficiency in the sense of lack, but a linguistic and cultural difference that demands respect, recognition, and empowerment. As Strobel (2008) states, deaf education must promote the empowerment of deaf identity, valuing the use of Libras as a legitimate means of knowledge production and subjective expression.

Thus, the theoretical foundation for the inclusion of deaf students points to the need for a broader transformation in how schools understand teaching and learning. This involves:

- Understanding **Libras as a language of instruction** and not merely as an auxiliary resource;
- Respecting **visual time and the interpreter's mediation** as part of the pedagogical process;
- Providing critical and ongoing teacher training focused on **bilingual education and inclusive practices**;



- Valuing **deaf culture and identity** as constitutive elements of a democratic school;
- Promoting collaborative action among teachers, interpreters, students, and administrators to build accessible and welcoming learning environments.

Therefore, more than ensuring compliance with legislation, the inclusion of deaf students in mainstream schools requires **an ethical and political commitment to educational equity**, which will only be possible through the development of pedagogical practices committed to respecting differences and promoting quality education for all.

DISCUSSION

Based on the observations conducted in the school environment and the theoretical reflections, it is possible to affirm that, despite the legal and normative advances regarding the inclusion of deaf students, everyday practice still presents several limitations that compromise the learning process of these students. The inclusion of the Libras interpreter in the classroom, as provided by Decree No. 5.626/2005, represents a significant achievement for the right to communication, but their isolated presence does not guarantee full educational inclusion.

One of the main obstacles identified relates to the lack of synchronization between the fast-paced nature of lessons and the visual time required for deaf students to follow explanations mediated in Libras. Visual learning demands that the student dedicate full attention to the interpretation, making it impossible to perform other tasks simultaneously, such as copying content from the board. This necessity creates an attention overload and a rhythm incompatible with the traditional teaching model, which privileges orality and speed, failing to accommodate the specific pedagogical time of deaf students (Lacerda, 2011).

Moreover, the absence of adequate ongoing training for teachers regarding bilingual education and the particularities of deafness contributes to many educators being unaware of the interpreter's role and the needs of deaf students. This training gap can lead to a mistaken attribution of responsibilities to the interpreter, who should not act as a pedagogical mediator, but rather as a facilitator of communication between the teacher and the deaf student (Quadros, 2004). The lack of joint planning between interpreter and teacher highlights the fragility of the collaborative work necessary for effective inclusion.

It was also observed that the interpreter frequently assumes roles beyond simple sign translation, acting as a cultural and conceptual mediator by clarifying doubts and explaining content in an accessible way to deaf students. This scenario reveals the need for interdisciplinary and integrated work, in which the school is organized to provide adequate support to students, considering their linguistic and cultural specificities.

These difficulties reflect a school organization still poorly prepared to embrace diversity as a pedagogical principle. Inclusion, when understood merely as formal compliance with legislation or the



physical presence of the student in school, becomes a superficial and ineffective process. Mantoan (2003) emphasizes that true inclusion requires the transformation of pedagogical practices, with respect for difference and equity in access to knowledge.

In this context, pedagogical time emerges as a central element for the inclusion of deaf students. Respecting the rhythm of visual learning implies reorganizing classroom time, with planned pauses so that the student can follow the interpretation, take notes, and clarify doubts. This reorganization demands sensitivity from educators and commitment from school management to review and adapt traditional methodologies (Skliar, 2010).

Finally, the school inclusion of deaf students must be understood as a complex process involving multiple aspects: critical teacher training, collaborative action by the entire school team, valorization of Libras as the first language, strengthening of deaf identity, and adapted pedagogical practices. Failure to observe these elements can turn inclusion into veiled exclusion, where the student is physically present but does not effectively participate in the educational process, nor is recognized in their uniqueness (Strobel, 2008).

The construction of a truly inclusive school therefore depends on collective engagement in an educational culture that values diversity, recognizes deafness as a cultural and linguistic difference, and promotes real conditions for learning for all.

RESULTS

The observations conducted in the school environment revealed that, although the presence of the Libras interpreter is essential for the inclusion of deaf students, there are still several barriers that hinder full access to classroom content.

One of the main aspects identified was the **fast pace of lessons**, which prevents the deaf student from simultaneously following the explanation and taking notes. Since the student relies exclusively on visualizing the interpreter to understand what is being said, they must focus entirely on the moment of translation. As a result, the time available to copy content from the board is reduced. In many cases, when the student attempts to record the information, the board has already been erased or the teacher has moved on to another topic.

Another observed factor was the **lack of organized pauses during lessons**, which impairs mediation between teacher, interpreter, and student. In many situations, the content was presented continuously, without breaks that would allow the deaf student to reflect, ask questions, or adequately record the information.

It was also noted that there is a **lack of prior coordination between teachers and interpreters**. In most of the observed classes, there was no joint planning between these professionals. This made the



interpreter's work more difficult, as they often had to improvise signs or explain technical terms during the lesson itself, consuming time and requiring additional effort from both the interpreter and the student.

Additionally, it was recorded that **the Libras interpreter frequently assumes expanded roles**, such as clarifying doubts after class, explaining word meanings, and reinforcing concepts. On several occasions, deaf students approached the interpreter after class to seek information they were unable to grasp during the explanation.

During transitions between subjects, it was noted that **the deaf student was still copying material from the previous class when the new teacher had already begun the explanation**, causing confusion and loss of information. This occurred repeatedly and highlighted the need for more flexible pedagogical time for this group.

Another significant finding was the **absence of complementary visual resources**, such as images, videos, or diagrams, which could facilitate the learning of deaf students. Most of the observed classes relied solely on the teacher's speech and the use of a traditional chalkboard.

Thus, the data indicate that, although the presence of the Libras interpreter is an important advancement, it is not sufficient to ensure full inclusion. The main results point to the need for adjustments in lesson pacing, improved communication between teachers and interpreters, greater appreciation of the deaf student's visual time, and the use of resources that support learning through Libras.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study has shown that the presence of the Libras interpreter is fundamental to enabling communication and access to pedagogical content for deaf students in mainstream education, serving as an indispensable instrument for school inclusion. However, the results indicate that inclusion, although guaranteed by law, faces significant practical challenges that still compromise the effectiveness of the learning process for these students.

Among the main obstacles identified is the fast-paced nature of lessons, which does not respect the visual time necessary for information assimilation. The traditional dynamic, based on orality and the simultaneity of speech and writing, does not accommodate the specificities of visual learning for deaf students, who need to alternate their gaze between the interpreter and the board, requiring more time to process and record content. This discrepancy creates learning gaps and reinforces the need to readjust pedagogical practices to make them truly inclusive.

Effective inclusion therefore requires more than the mere presence of the interpreter in the classroom; it demands collaborative and coordinated work among teachers, interpreters, and the entire school team. Joint planning and the organization of pedagogical activities, considering the pace and



particularities of deaf students, are essential to ensure equitable learning. Furthermore, ongoing training for education professionals becomes indispensable to expand knowledge about deaf culture, the specificities of Brazilian Sign Language, and methodologies that promote full inclusion.

Another key point for successful inclusion is the recognition and appreciation of the linguistic and cultural diversity of deaf students. The school must be a space that promotes respect for deaf identity and Libras as the first language, building an educational culture that embraces differences and offers real conditions for participation and development.

Thus, it is recommended that educational institutions invest in the awareness and training of their professionals, in the reorganization of pedagogical time, and in the adaptation of teaching resources, prioritizing a bilingual and multicultural approach. Only through this collective commitment will it be possible to guarantee the right to quality education for deaf students, promoting an inclusion that goes beyond formality and translates into effective practices of equity, accessibility, and respect for differences.



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