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‘It’s time for action, not words’ – training students to translate Amílcar Cabral’s final speech into Portuguese Sign Language: Portuguese Sign Language at the crossroads of postcolonial studies and sign language translation studies

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ABSTRACT

In 2024, Portugal commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, marking the end of a 41-year dictatorship and colonial wars. In this context, a group from Portugal’s oldest institution offering higher education for Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) interpreters – the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal – undertook a voluntary project to translate Amílcar Cabral’s final speech into LGP. The project aimed to create an accessible video with LGP, Portuguese subtitles, and Cabral’s original audio to engage diverse audiences and provide educational content. Led by two professors with extensive interpreting experience, the project involved third-year students of a Translation and Interpretation of Portuguese Sign Language program (TILGP) and relied on collaboration with Deaf advisors to select appropriate signs. It sparked discussions within the Portuguese Deaf Community on decolonising LGP signs and examining racism in those signs from Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) perspectives. The project explored the challenges of interpreting a historically-significant speech, focusing on cultural and historical nuances of Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and Portugal. This article examines ethical, cultural, and technical aspects, showing how such projects enhance interpreter competence and intercultural mediation, and highlights extracurricular activities’ role in improving sign language translation skills.

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Introduction

The 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal set a powerful theme that inspired many across the country, particularly within academic settings (2024). It prompted reflective practices among faculty, students, and staff members, encouraging everyone to engage with a significant chapter of national collective history – one that has often been overlooked, minimised, or sanitised (Henriques 2016; Roldão, Pereira, and Varela 2023).

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The celebration of the 25th of April of 1974 marks not only the end of a 41 yearlong dictatorship, but it also marks the end of the Portuguese Colonial War¹ that was ongoing for 13 years, in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, and Cabo Verde.

The Roadmap for an Anti-racist Education (*Roteiro para uma Educação Antirracista*) emerged at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal. This is a collective of faculty members dedicated to advancing anti-racist and decolonial pedagogies, both within the educational landscape and in broader society. Founded in 2019, the group has actively engaged in various efforts to address and dismantle racial prejudices and biases from the classroom to society, inviting everyone interested in sharing perspectives on topics concerning decolonising education and unpacking racism and other entrenched forms of social discrimination (Alcântara, Roldão, and Cruz 2019; Roldão, Pereira, and Varela 2023). Given the context of the historical critical thinking surrounding the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, and within the framework of the Roadmap for Anti-Racist Education collective, in 2023, a new challenge emerged following the involvement of two professors from the Translation and Interpretation of Portuguese Sign Language program (TILGP). The School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal is, in Portugal, the pioneer higher education institution offering a bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation of Portuguese Sign Language (Almeida 2003). The course was established in 1997, the same year that marked the introduction of Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) in the Portuguese Constitution (Almeida and Duarte 2003; Gil and Freire 2025; Portuguese Constitutional Assembly 1997).

Following the initial meetings in 2023 of the Roadmap for Anti-Racist Education collective, it became evident that the project should also address the needs of the Deaf Community in Portugal, with particular attention to those with heritage from the formerly colonised countries – Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, and Cabo Verde – while remaining open to all those interested in the topic. For providing context, due to the close international relations still maintained between Portugal and Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, and Cabo Verde, and mostly due to the common ground of Portuguese language, many families from these countries decide to send their D/deaf² children to Portugal in hopes of a better education that accommodates their needs. Children are sent to study in schools for the Deaf, such as the Reference Schools for Bilingual Education ran by the Ministry of Education (Portuguese Republic 2018), or at the Centre for Education and Development Jacob Rodrigues Pereira at Casa Pia de Lisboa run by the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security.

Focusing on the initiative undertaken, the concept was presented to the graduating class of 2024 in the TILGP program, inviting students with an interest in the topic to volunteer. From the outset, five students volunteered for the translation task, and one student was exclusively dedicated to subtitling, drawing on her prior professional experience. The team also included an audiovisual technician and staff member, responsible for filming, video editing, and postproduction. Finally, two professors, recently members of the Roadmap for Anti-Racist Education collective and coordinators of the TILGP program, were involved in overseeing the initiative. The group embarked on the task of translating Amílcar Cabral's final public speech recording into LGP (Gil et al. 2024). In January 1973, Amílcar Cabral delivered what would become his final New Year's address. These were the closing stages of

the liberation war in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, as Portuguese forces had weakened and lost control over much of the territory, including the capital, Bissau. Cabral's speech was broadcast by Rádio Libertação, the PAIGC's (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde – African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde) communication channel with the Guinean population. The speech opened on a celebratory note, marking 10 years since the beginning of the armed struggle, at a time when the liberation forces had successfully expelled Portuguese colonial forces from most of the Guinean territory. Cabral was also encouraging the draft of a Constitution for Guinea-Bissau, as he believed preparations for the transition to independence were actively underway. However, Cabral was brutally assassinated on 20 January 1973, in Conakry, Guinea, and he did not live to witness the official declaration of independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (Precioso 2017). The translation of this speech was an unprecedented endeavour, not only intended to pay homage to Cabral's legacy, but also aimed to make Cabral's ideas and ideals accessible to the Deaf Community in Portugal. By choosing to render this significant speech in LGP, the project underscores the importance of access to historical discourse and aims to bridge cultural and communicational divides that often prevent Deaf Communities from fully participating in the collective memory.

Amílcar Lopes da Costa Cabral was a towering figure as the leader of the resistance in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde during the War of Liberation. Cabral's vision for independence and fearless critique of the Portuguese dictatorship and colonialism continues to inspire movements towards self-determination and cultural identity worldwide. There is a growing production of books, documentaries, and other cultural products towards the decolonisation of the mentalities in Portuguese society about Portuguese colonialism to dismantle the Lusotropicalism³ in public discourse (Barradas 2019; Domingues 2022; Henriques 2016; Rodriguez Maeso 2021; Roldão, Pereira, and Varela 2023). Thus, the circumstances were established for this case study of action-based research, through a thorough description of the process, the outputs, and the discussion it entailed.

Translation and interpretation training methodologies have been evolving for at least 50 years (Frisberg 1986; Mindess 2006; Stone et al. 2022). However, constant updates in training practices are important, and interpreter training professionals urge for spaces for discussion such as on the best methodologies and on interpreting learning community practices, as evidenced by interpreters' own experience in the field. It is also important to undertake a discussion on the evaluation of interpreters' language assessment within European countries, particularly in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2020). Integrating interpreting skill assessment with the CEFR would facilitate a more coherent and standardised articulation of interpreter competencies across different levels, while also supporting the recognition of specialised areas of expertise within the profession (Sheridan and Lynch 2020). Such an approach would contribute to a more systematic and transparent framework for assessing interpreter qualifications, ultimately enhancing the professionalisation and development of sign language interpreters across Europe (EFSLI 2013a, 2013b).

Methodology

The field of Sign Language Interpreting Studies has made significant contributions to Translation Studies. From the development of influential cognitive models of interpreting, such as those proposed by Colonomos (1987) and Cokely (1992), to advances in the understanding of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting articulated by Russell (2005) and by Russell and Takeda (2015), as well as the formulation of the Demand Control Schema (DC-S), which conceptualises sign language interpreting as a practice profession (Dean and Pollard 2001; Dean and Pollard 2013), the field has generated a substantial body of theoretical knowledge. While these theoretical frameworks are now widely incorporated into interpreter education and training programmes, students and practicing professionals alike continue to express a strong demand for more practice-based training aimed at enhancing interpreting competence (Bandin Trasbach and Clariá 2024; Davey, Bown, and Ballinger 2024; Wit 2024; Heyerick 2024; Kalata-Zawłocka and Skalska 2024). In the TILGP training programme, interpreting exercises evolve from small, simple discourse samples to a progressively elaborated level of complexity in discourse. Initial training in simultaneous interpreting typically begins with students practicing short, slow-paced texts and gradually increases in length and complexity. This progression is designed not only to expand linguistic and processing demands, but also helps the trainee interpreters build the cognitive capacity required to manage simultaneous listening, processing, and production, which are elements that contribute to overall cognitive load in the task (Seeber 2015). The size of the source text entails more than just the number of sentences, but also how long the brain is conducting extremely complex cognitive tasks and how to augment the ability and skill in the future interpreter's brain.

Via exposure to a range of texts, interpreters are prompted to deploy a variety of techniques, including spatial localisation to achieve linguistic economy and to exploit sign language syntactic structures; the use of synonyms and paraphrasing; shifts between affirmative and negative constructions; rhetorical questions; and other established translation strategies (Napier 2006, 2009, 2016; Shaw, Grbic, and Franklin 2004; Taylor 2002; Wang and Napier 2016). Training in a variety of registers is also very important, from informal to formal, from a more infantile to an elderly style, from academic to technical discourse, among many other linguistic features.

Therefore, the translation project as an extracurricular endeavour was very challenging. It entailed a political activist speech that had geographic toponymy, expressions that required historical context and understanding, a clear message, and intentionality. As a result of the Bologna Process,⁴ the degree, which was 5 years long, was shortened to 3 years, including reduced internship periods (Gil and Freire 2025). Given that most students enrol without any knowledge of Portuguese Sign Language, it takes great effort to undertake this study in only three years: learning LGP, translation techniques, history, and cultural aspects of new communities at national and international levels. Considering these aspects, the trainers thought that a 30-minute-long intervention by Amílcar Cabral could turn out to be a great knowledge-building experience for LGP interpreting students.

This translation experiment contributed to the knowledge of all participants involved, including both professors and students, across several key aspects. This initiative was guided by an action-based research approach (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2017; Elliott 1991; Galletta and Elena Torre 2019; Hines et al. 2026), targeting a specific participant group comprising five hearing students, two hearing professors, and one hearing staff member. The entire process, carried out step-by-step, provided formative elements throughout. Action-based research is commonly characterised by three types: operational (or technical), collaborative, and critical reflection (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2017; Elliott 1991; Galletta and Elena Torre 2019; Hines et al. 2026). Given the democratic impulse that shapes participation in this methodological approach, the present study incorporates elements of all three. The approach was operational and technical, as it encompassed multiple stages, materials, and methods, which are outlined below. As is typical in participatory action research, the setting was a real environment, meetings were conducted in classrooms and offices, filming was conducted in an improvised studio, and later the presentation was held at the auditorium at the School of Education of Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal (see Figure 3). The students signed consent forms granting permission to use their image in the recorded materials and authorising their names in this article. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal.⁵ Moreover, the initiative was also made possible with the valuable collaboration of six members of the Portuguese Deaf Community, whose contributions were pivotal to the project. Their input directly influenced the sign language choices featured on the video. The debate was a thought-provoking addition to the debate on lexical choices on decolonising certain LGP signs – this debate is still ongoing among members of the Portuguese Deaf Community. Consequently, in this method, the participants acted as co-researchers, with their lived experiences actively shaping the translation process, through contributing to the glosses,⁶ engaging in the practical steps of the process, performing in front of the camera, and providing reflections and testimonies during post-activity collective discussions.

Act 1 – from planning to acting

The first stage involved an overview of the theoretical and historical context provided by one of the professors to the group of volunteer students. This was followed by both individual and group readings and analyses of Amílcar Cabral's speech, accompanied by collective listening comprehension and clarifications. The students then engaged with the text, discussing specific terms and translation and interpretation strategies in a series of meetings both in person and online via a videoconferencing platform. The group of students collaborated to segment the text and determine who would be responsible for each excerpt. In addition, the entire team participated in the discussion of the full speech. This was followed by a close reading and the construction of glosses, with most students opting for pen and paper (see Figure 1), though digital tools were also permitted.

Terminology discussions were held with Deaf advisors, facilitated by both trainers and students, and took place both in person and through videoconferencing via personal devices, such as cell phones, using platforms like WhatsApp. Toponymic discussions focused on Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, drawing on the expertise of Deaf advisors familiar with these regions (this issue will be further developed in the discussion section).

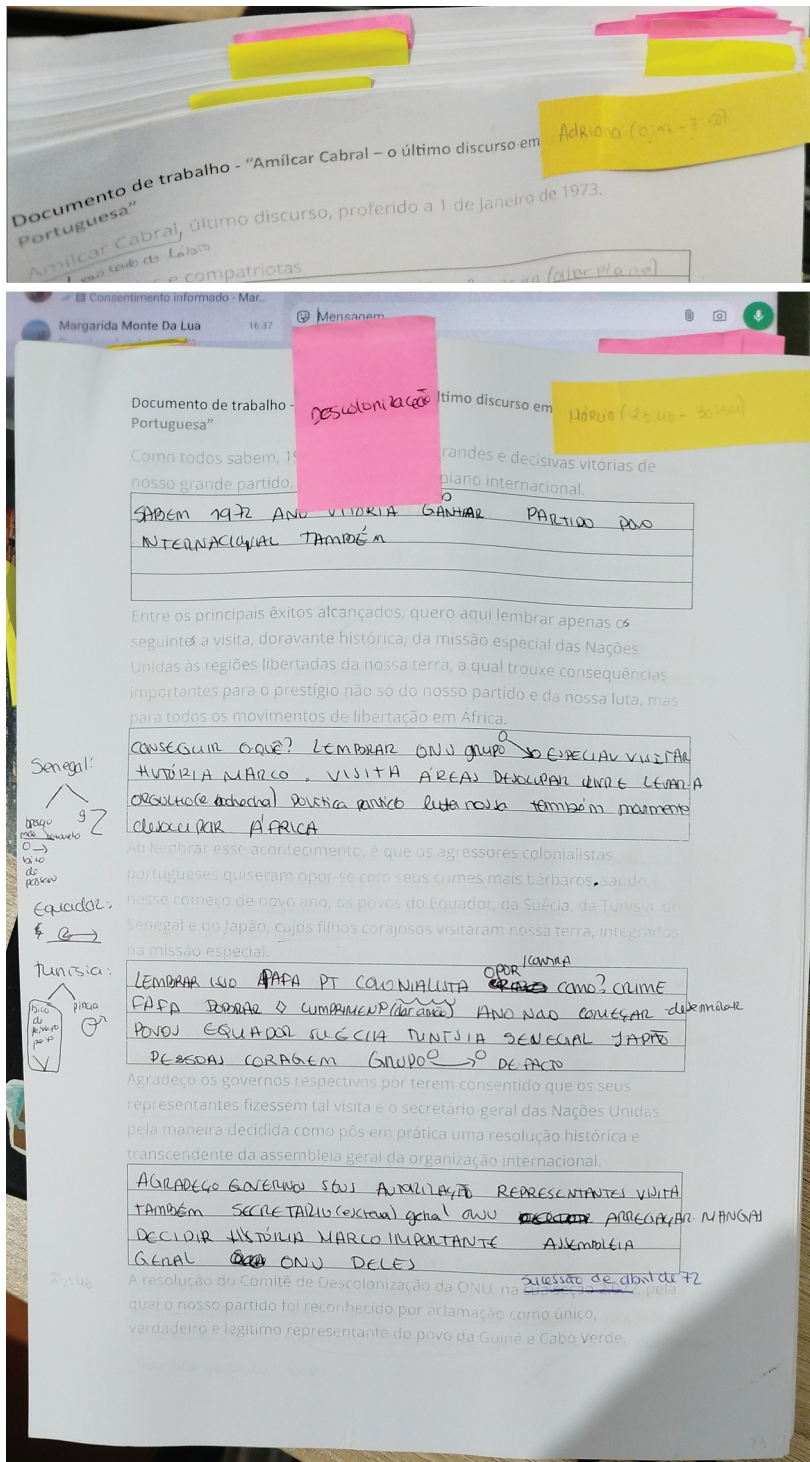


Figure 1. Right, a picture of the entire document with several colorful post-it notes attached. Left, a close-up of one page as an example, showing the student's glosses for LGP translation, written in Portuguese, with drawings to clarify certain signs, along with arrows and notes. The different colour post-it notes were used to highlight concepts, such as 'decolonization' (written on the pink post-it), and time stamps in yellow. This picture is from the glosses and notes of one of the students.

In addition, historical maps from Cabral's era were explored to enhance understanding, as current online maps were proving to be insufficient. Finally, a collective review and refinement of the glosses was conducted by the above-mentioned team, ensuring alignment and accuracy during the overall translation and interpretation process.

Act 2 – from acting to producing

In this stage, each interpreting student engaged in individual practice. To ensure visual clarity, the students selected appropriate attire for sign language interpretation. Audio playback was facilitated through a computer with external speakers, allowing the interpreters to closely examine the nuances of the original recording, which itself had some quality issues. The recording of the translation took place at the school facilities in an improvised studio with the audiovisual technician, who oversaw video recording, editing, and post-production. The setup included a video camera and two professional studio lights. Each of the interpreting students produced segments averaging six minutes each on camera and were closely monitored by the professors (who are also trained and experienced interpreters). After several takes the recorded footage was edited to include the best-performed version.

The editing process was carried out using Adobe Premiere Pro on computers at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal. This included the integration of background images, the interpretation, and audio. Archival images were sourced from RTP Arquivos (Portuguese Radio and Television Archives), the Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso, and a YouTube channel called Guiné-Bafatá, which were incorporated to provide historical and contextual depth to the interpreted content.

Subtitling was done using Adobe Premiere's Auto Transcribing feature, with the participation of a student trained in subtitling. As previously mentioned, issues with sound quality and prosody significantly affected the performance of automatic transcription tools, due to the AI tool's difficulty with phonetic variation and rapid speech. These errors were subsequently identified and corrected through careful manual monitoring. The team actively facilitated discussions and ensured that all participants were included in decision-making, providing ongoing guidance and recommendations throughout the process. The experienced audiovisual technician, familiar with the TILGP programme, played a key role as well. At every stage, photographs, video recordings, and detailed notes were used to document the process, creating a comprehensive record of decisions, challenges, and collaborative strategies.

Results

This initiative provided a unique opportunity to explore political activist discourse and register, fostering deep and meaningful discussions within the TILGP training programme. Without this intervention, the topic of political speech and its nuances and the heritage of Amílcar Cabral would not have been addressed through such a close lens. The project thus became an invaluable opportunity, not only for teaching but also for learning how to approach the translation and interpretation of political speech. Additionally, the specific intervention not only addressed the ongoing celebrations but also sparked critical discussions, helping students understand lexical preparation and test

various interpretation techniques and strategies, such as role-shifting, cultural equivalents, and simultaneity with directionality (Taylor 2002).

The key moments were the eureka insights after disentangling translation issues and during the collective decision-making processes. For example, minimal adjustments were made during the recordings, primarily when it became apparent that the speech's prosody and time constraints prevented the implementation of the originally planned version. One of the biggest challenges was that several recordings had to be made for each sentence, for each message section, and this led to several takes of each message segment, extending the recording days to twice what was expected in the beginning.

The promotional poster advertising the video launch in the auditorium was shared on YouTube and other platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, to reach a wider audience. This dissemination was further supported through internal networks, emails, and personal contacts, aiming not only to share the final product but also to continue the dialogue on decolonising LGP signs and the challenges and choices in sign language interpretation training. The language decolonisation process is reflected in the choice of terms, both in Portuguese words and in LGP signs.

This discussion has already begun among some members of the Deaf Portuguese community, such as the choice of alternative signs or words to better reflect contemporary and inclusive values, avoiding stigmatising or colonial undertones. Training interpreters to recognise these historical and cultural influences ensures that they can make informed choices when interpreting, preserving cultural identity, and fostering more accurate and respectful communication in a post-colonial context.

By employing this action-based approach, the team effectively navigated the complexities of interpreting a historically and culturally charged text into LGP, producing an accessible and culturally nuanced final product for all viewers. Furthermore, it was impactful to collectively witness the different perspectives in the auditorium.

While reflecting on the experience, one interpreting student noted feeling emotionally engaged with the initiative. Beyond completing the challenge and developing as a future LGP interpreter, she reported that the project connected her to her family's cultural heritage, as her maternal family originated from Cabo Verde. She emphasised that the project was deeply meaningful, allowing her to reconnect with her roots.

Another student emphasised the satisfaction of the brainstorming process, acknowledging that while the language register presented significant challenges, the final product was an accomplishment they were proud of. One other participant student shared that they felt the need to explore further research, not only online but also in libraries, studying the historical context and the impact of Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC. The collective motivation was to produce a translation that could be disseminated to reach many Deaf people from the Portuguese Deaf Community, being LGP signers, with heritage in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, and especially from Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde. Since curricular programmes rarely encompass their historical perspectives and heritage, this intended to spark interest in Amílcar Cabral and his legacy. Despite being in Portugal for most of her lifetime, one of the interpreting students who was born in Brazil, felt she had a personal connection with the topic and the decolonisation and the anti-racist education motivation behind the project. Another participant described the task as very interesting, challenging, and difficult. While public exposure caused her discomfort due to shyness, she welcomed the opportunity and engaged fully

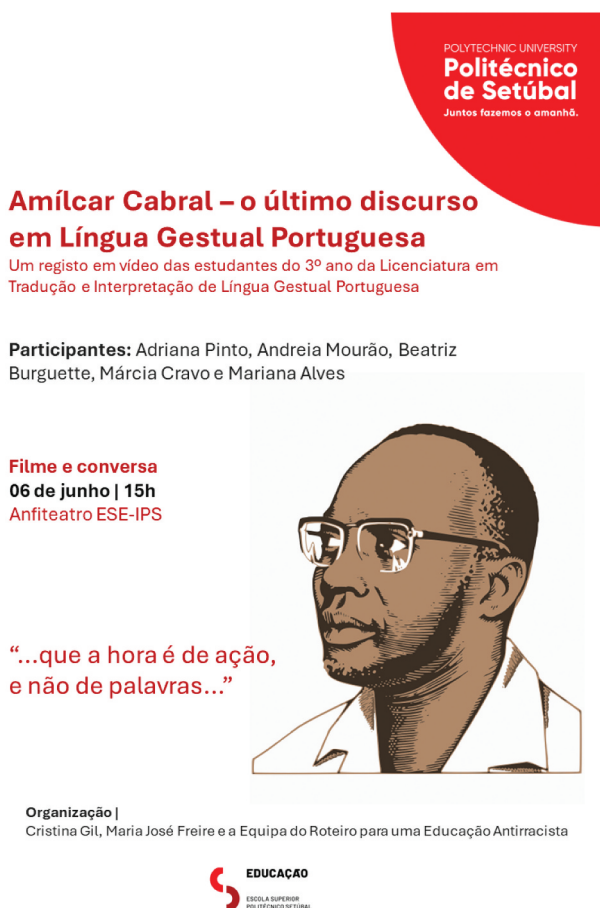
with the activity. The students showed a positive attitude towards what was understood as an extracurricular challenge outside of the frames of the traditional class practice, and they found it very motivating.

An anticipated positive change from the project was the enhanced understanding of the sign language interpreting process among everyone involved in the public presentation (see [Figure 2](#)). This action-based research allowed participants in the auditorium to know about the process firsthand, while students from other programmes attending the session gained a deeper understanding of the project and the professional demands that their colleagues encounter daily. Many of the participants also mentioned in their testimonies that this was a learning experience that allowed them to increase their own skills. Interpreting might at times seem like an individual endeavour. However, in this project, participants worked together with a shared objective, forming a team preparing the same full text. This collaboration helped solidify preparation methods. For instance, when working with a historical speech containing geographic references, interpreters need to study and locate a map from that year to accurately convey directionality in the signs, such as from location A to location B. Another example of a group task was choosing signs that are geographically and historically appropriate. For the concept of ‘social welfare’ one should use the composed signs in LGP of SOCIAL + SUPPORT,⁷ rather than using a sign for the concept in LGP that is tied to the entity’s logo, which represents a Portuguese organisation. Given the context of the source text, this second sign should not be used. Moreover, Deaf advisors were asked to discover signs for the cities and villages, rivers and other places in Guinea or Cabo Verde, since these were mentioned several times and at a very fast pace. Searching for the sign names of historical figures (Amílcar Cabral or Marcelo Caetano,⁸ for example), and many other details, made this project a group effort.⁹ Finally, the feedback from the audience during the public presentation, from students to faculty members, further validated the success of the initiative.

One conclusion drawn from this experience is that a dedicated timeslot or course should be established for activities of this kind. The results brought satisfaction to all participants and demonstrated that it was both a valuable learning and bonding



Figure 2. Participants at the end of the presentation in the auditorium signing Amílcar Cabral’s SIGN-NAME. From left to right: Ana Alcântara, Márcia Cravo, Beatriz Burquette, Mariana Alves, Andreia Mourão, Cristina Gil, Francisco Matias, Cristina Roldão, Maria José Freire.



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Um registo em vídeo das estudantes do 3º ano da Licenciatura em Tradução e Interpretação de Língua Gestual Portuguesa

Participantes: Adriana Pinto, Andreia Mourão, Beatriz Burguette, Márcia Cravo e Mariana Alves

Filme e conversa
06 de junho | 15h
Anfiteatro ESE-IPS

“...que a hora é de ação,
e não de palavras...”

Organização |
Cristina Gil, Maria José Freire e a Equipa do Roteiro para uma Educação Antirracista

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Figure 3. Poster announcing the live broadcast and launch at the ESE/IPS auditorium.

experience. However, the heavy workload in the graduate year for the students, and the workload of the professors and the audiovisual technician, was discouraging. Thus, sustainability is an issue, since the lack of formal curricular integration, workload allocation, and institutional support within the higher education framework makes it difficult to ensure the continuity of practice-based activities of this nature.

Finally, in terms of critical reflection, this intervention served as a joint effort conducted outside regular working hours (after work and after class) by everyone involved, compensating for the tight constraints of the programme and the limitations imposed by the Bologna Process on each course. An important result of this project is its contribution to sign language interpreting studies, and to the BIPOC Deaf Community as an intersectional approach. The professors' objective was to increase interpreting students' participation and engagement in the creation of the product itself, as well as to strengthen the link between TILGP students and the Portuguese Deaf Community. This close engagement and participation of Deaf people in such projects is crucial, as highlighted by the students after the experience. They emphasised that everyone should have the opportunity to undertake similar projects for their learning experience. Given the

reduced duration of the full interpreting training programme, and the high demands of the profession, not only in linguistic competency, but also in the need for exceptional interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Dean and Pollard 2001), activities such as this also offer a unique and valuable opportunity for further exploration and training. The feedback received from students, participants, and the audience provides constructive suggestions for improvement, which could inform future iterations of this initiative and similar projects in the field.

Discussion: Cabral's invitation to decolonise LGP

The debate on which signs should be used was a very interesting exercise and experience for both the students and the trainers. The discussion within this team was aligned with the broader conversation on the urgency of decolonising some of the signs used in LGP. This discussion also builds bridges within academia and, specifically, in interpreter training, which must be collaborative – bringing in more participation of the Portuguese Deaf Community. It is important for us and common practice, at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal, with 28 years of experience in interpreter training, to always hire native signers as professors of LGP. However, the fact that students can enrol in this programme without any previous knowledge of the language is very demanding for everyone involved. LGP is not available in the public-school network, nor as an option, and the number of schools that have Deaf children nationwide that can offer this training is very limited. Unlike other languages such as English, French, and Castellano or German, which can usually be attended by students in public schools (Direção-Geral da Educação n.d.). If higher education refused students based on their previous knowledge, it would be quite restrictive, as only a few have the opportunity to study LGP beforehand. Thus, by adopting a more inclusive approach, it is also acknowledged that three years is too short a time to learn a language in a modality that is usually unfamiliar to most students, while simultaneously acquiring the techniques to translate into it. However, during a recent international training opportunity and in networking with interpreters and interpreter training professors from other countries, it became apparent that this is a transversal issue that strains the sign language interpreter training field.

Returning to the initiative, although Amílcar Cabral's discourse is delivered in the language of the coloniser, its message urges the decolonisation of LGP, understood as an embodied, biopolitical practice that reject the traces of *biopolitical state racism* (Foucault [1963] 2003; [1976] 2004; Gil 2020; Wa Thiong'o [1987] 1994). In this project specifically, the team decided to incorporate insights from Deaf racialised people who preferred a different approach to the current signs and incite people to choose more culturally respectful signs. However, these signs have not yet been disseminated among the wider Portuguese Deaf Community, and the discussion on whether to use old or new signs is an ongoing discussion taking place in Deaf Spaces, including social media. However, not all Deaf people from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde have the same perspective on these signs. While some may affirm that they want new or other signs because the old ones include racist features based on skin colour or physical features, other people affirm that these signs are rich in visual information, since they are highly descriptive, as Deaf Culture is,

and that they should not be forced to be changed.¹⁰ Each opinion and position requires from the individual a close examination of the intersectionality of their Deaf and BIPOC identities, how are they overlapping and interrelating, as well as their own feelings and language ideologies towards their own expression in their native language (Crenshaw 1994; Kusters 2014). The signs the team opted to use as decolonised versions were the LGP sign for GUINEA-BISSAU and for AFRICA.¹¹ The first uses the middle finger on the tip of the nose, sliding down twice with a mouthing expression and then the index finger pulls slightly on the corner of the eye. This serves to indicate skin colour and eye shape features. The second sign AFRICA relies on the execution of the first sign and sometimes an open palm outward to outline the continent. Taking into consideration the content of the message of Cabral's speech, the team could not overlook this ongoing discussion and dismiss the responsibility in sign choices. Therefore, after receiving feedback from Deaf participants, the team decided to take into consideration the problematic nature of these signs, among others. People who share this perspective believe these are insensitive signs and should be considered outdated. Moreover, based on my experience, as a former interpreter, interpreter educator and a member of the Portuguese Deaf Community, it has become increasingly common for national sign languages to import the native sign used by a country to represent its name. In the past – before the widespread influence of globalisation, the internet, and social media – the transmission of signs across countries was slower and more limited. Like many other sign languages, LGP developed its signs for the names of other countries. However, as noted by Nana Gassa Gonga, Crasborn, and Ormel (2024) as they were researching lexical borrowing in International Sign interpreting, there is a growing tendency to adopt the original sign used in the country of reference. This practice of lexical borrowing of a country's sign can reflect a shift towards integrating alterity and fostering greater cultural respect in international sign naming conventions, but also endangers national sign language signs, and consequently, the issue remains without consensus. Given the inherently transnational nature of Deaf Communities, Deaf mobility reflects a respectful practice of incorporating each country's native sign. Accordingly, all these discussions were identified and addressed within the group grounded on the powerful inputs of Deaf advisors as cultural and linguistic consultants. The team therefore felt the need to include an introduction to the video compilation. The introduction was filmed by one of the professors explaining the motif behind the project, the voluntary collaboration by the interpreting students, as well as a short explanation and disclaimer of the LGP signs choices for this initiative (Gil et al. 2024).

Conclusion

The action-based approach is particularly popular with educators since it prioritises the bridge between theory and practice, builds upon existing knowledge, and, while formative, can serve as a lens for reflection. This kind of collaborative exercise is an empowering method for translation and interpreting educators.

The process, its outcomes, and the public dissemination provided new insights and contributed to a broader discussion. It challenged social and academic conventions in

interpreter training, encouraging practical projects through experience-based approaches.

The training of sign language interpreters must evolve to reflect the dynamic needs of both the Deaf Communities and the broader professional field. This study has highlighted the importance of using innovative teaching methods that are practice-based, ensuring that students not only gain theoretical knowledge but also develop the practical skills required to navigate real-world interpreting contexts.

A key aspect of this training involves the integration of ethical dimensions and an understanding of the ethical positioning required in interpreting (see also Gebruers in this issue), where fidelity to the source text is essential, but where the input of native signers must also be considered. Furthermore, the inclusion of technology in training, through both synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods, encouraging autonomy (in learning the preparation methods, rehearsing or researching for certain topics and best signs, for example), provides students with the tools to enhance their literacy and practicing behaviours which will be pivotal in their entire career as sign language interpreters.

Moreover, this research has emphasised the significance of collaborative practices in sign language interpreting and translation programmes (see also Pérez-Rojas in this issue). By incorporating perspectives from Deaf Communities, students learn to appreciate the valuable input and understand the power dynamics that shape interpretation practices. The collaborative nature of this training exercise fosters an environment of mutual respect and promotes collaborative teamwork, supporting the development of innovative pedagogical approaches. These approaches encourage discussion on how interpreting can incorporate ethical sociolinguistic practices, while also integrating technology into training. As the field continues to evolve, interpreter training programmes must create new challenges and pathways such as this new direction for potential research on interpreter training, and action-based research practices, to ensure that future interpreters are equipped not only with the technical and linguistic skills, but also with the ethical and cultural awareness necessary for effective and responsible practice.

Notes

1. In Portugal it is commonly named Colonial War and in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde, it is named War of Liberation.
2. The use of the D/deaf distinction in this article follows a long-standing convention in Deaf Studies that differentiates between audiological deafness ('deaf') and sociocultural, linguistic, and identity-based Deaf experience ('deaf') (Ladd 2003; Woodward 1972). While some authors have critically questioned the potential oversimplification and exclusionary effects of this binary (Kusters, Meulder, and O'Brien 2017), the capitalisation of Deaf is maintained here as an affirmative, non-homogenising form that acknowledges Deaf identities, Deaf Cultures, and signed languages as central axes of belonging. This usage is not intended to reinforce a rigid dichotomy, but rather to recognise the heterogeneous yet shared experiences of those who live within Deaf Communities, by signalling Deaf ethnicity and identity as in other minorities, such as Indigenous or Black (Gil 2019, 2020; Ladd 2003; Young and Temple 2014).

3. The social narrative in both Portuguese education and media is that the Portuguese colonialism was not as aggressive or as cruel as other European colonialisms. This is called ‘Luso-tropicalismo’ (lusotropicalism), a term coined by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in 1951 to refer to the way in which the Estado Novo (the name for the period of the Portuguese dictatorship) interpreted Portuguese colonialism as benevolent, cordial, and peaceful (Bastos and Castelo 2024).
In Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Cabo Verde, Portugal exerted a similar dynamic of ethnicity-based segregation very similar to South Africa’s apartheid to the point of a wipeout of local identity, culture, and languages, and a contamination of western ideology for the assimilation effort. The social hierarchy was clear between black and white, but ‘assimilado’ (assimilated) were conceded certain privileges. The *assimilados* were allowed to enter white only spaces – by speaking *correct Portuguese, acting like the Portuguese*, and earning a salary. These, among many other issues and very important details are not discussed in Portuguese society (Henriques 2016).
4. The Bologna Process is a series of intergovernmental agreements among European countries aimed at ensuring the comparability of higher education qualifications in terms of standards and quality. This initiative led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area, as outlined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Named after the University of Bologna, the process began with the Bologna Declaration in 1999, signed by education ministers from 29 European nations. As a result, most courses were shortened to three years, except for those in fields like medicine, law, and architecture. Some programs, particularly in education, transitioned to a bachelor’s plus master’s degree structure, as a master’s is now mandatory to become a teacher or educator. In other fields, a master’s degree is not required to practice, as seen in areas like TILGP, where Portuguese law (Lei 89/99) stipulates a three-year bachelor’s degree as sufficient. For more information, visit: <https://ehea.info/>.
5. Ethics Committee of the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal (Comissão de Ética do Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal), under the reference CE-IPS no. 167A/2025.
6. Glosses are a translation tool commonly used in signed language translation and interpretation training and a tool for professionals. Glosses are a transcription in a written language that does not provide any information about the signs and the words follow the signed language syntax. However, in the glosses for this project, since sign choices are at times unclear, students also added some drawings for clarification. Glosses are not a form of writing in sign language, but serve as a translation tool to develop and improve translation and interpretation skills.
7. SOCIAL SUPPORT – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wYxSF_DM7Q see at 23:08.
8. Marcelo Caetano SIGN-NAME – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wYxSF_DM7Q see at 30:59
9. All examples can be seen in Gil et al. (2024): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wYxSF_DM7Q.
10. See Marta Morgado’s contributions to the discussion in February and March 2024.
https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4_VdOBoHye/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5bG88GoZGd/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
11. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-07_J1_g for the LGP sign for AFRICA at 0:55 and for GUINEA-BISSAU at 1:28. This video is a LGP rendering by Amílcar Furtado of the story of Mamadu written and illustrated by Morgado (2007).

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