

## MULTILINGUAL SERVICE TO INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS IN THE POLICE CONTEXT OF PELOTAS, BRAZIL

O ATENDIMENTO MULTILÍNGUE A MIGRANTES INTERNACIONAIS  
NO CONTEXTO POLICIAL DE PELOTAS, BRASIL

Gabriel Plácido Campos<sup>1</sup>  
Bernardo Kolling Limberger<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** In the face of the growing phenomenon of migration, numerous research studies have emerged in recent decades addressing the subject from a myriad of perspectives. This study aims to identify how multilingual service is conducted within the police context involving international migrant individuals potentially facing language-related vulnerabilities at Civil Police Stations. To achieve this, the study employs an exploratory methodology structured in two sections. In the first section, a review of previous literature of similar nature is conducted, along with an examination of the notions of linguistic rights and their context in the Brazilian setting, as well as definitions of the international migrant. In the second section, aiming to deepen the understanding of the multilingual service scenario, a questionnaire was developed and applied in seven Civil Police Stations mapped in the city of Pelotas, Brazil. Results demonstrate that the police stations lack technical and human resources to effectively carry out multilingual service. It was evident that no police station has protocols guiding service provision for international migrants. Furthermore, reported linguistic mediation and service provision procedures significantly differ among police stations. Thus, it can be implied that, in Brazil, Civil Police Stations lack centralized guidelines from their governing bodies about multilingual service to international migrants.

**Keywords:** International migrant; multilingual service; police context; language rights; language policies.

**RESUMO:** Diante do crescente fenômeno da migração, inúmeras pesquisas surgiram nas últimas décadas abordando o tema a partir de uma variedade de perspectivas. Este estudo tem como objetivo identificar como são realizados os atendimentos multilíngues em âmbito policial envolvendo indivíduos migrantes internacionais em possível vulnerabilidade linguística e agentes policiais nas Delegacias de Polícia. Para isso, este estudo emprega uma metodologia exploratória estruturada em duas seções. Na primeira, é realizada uma revisão de literatura

<sup>1</sup> Master's student in the Postgraduate Program in Linguistics at the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Undergraduated in Translation - English-Portuguese from the Federal University of Pelotas. Researcher financially supported by the Government of the State of Santa Catarina through the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa e Inovação do Estado de Santa Catarina (FAPESC).

<sup>2</sup> Professor of undergraduation and postgraduation in Linguistics at the Federal University of Pelotas. Master and Ph.D. in Linguistics from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul. Head of the research group Laboratory of Psycholinguistics, Minority Languages, and Multilingualism.

anterior de mesma natureza, bem como uma revisão das noções de direitos linguísticos e das definições do grupo migrantes internacionais. Na segunda, visando a aprofundar o entendimento do cenário de atendimento multilíngue, foi elaborado um questionário e aplicado em sete Delegacias de Polícia Civil mapeadas no município de Pelotas, Brasil. Resultados demonstram que as delegacias carecem de recursos técnicos e humanos para realizar um atendimento desse nível de forma mais efetiva. Foi possível observar que nenhuma das delegacias dispõe de protocolos que orientem os atendimentos a migrantes internacionais. Além disso, os procedimentos de atendimento e de mediação linguística relatados divergem significativamente entre delegacias. Logo, é possível assumir que, no Brasil, as Delegacias de Polícia Civil não dispõem de diretrizes centralizadas advindas dos seus órgãos diretivos acerca do atendimento multilíngue a migrantes internacionais.

**Palavras-chave:** Migrantes internacionais; atendimento multilíngue; contexto policial; direitos linguísticos; políticas linguísticas.

## 1 Introduction

Over the past decade, whether due to political, environmental, conflict-related, human rights violations, or labor issues, the phenomenon of international migration has been on the rise. According to a 2022 report from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately 3.6% of the world's population is in the status of *international migrants*. With the increasing trend of international migration, an increasing number of studies related to linguistic integration have emerged in various contexts and scenarios. However, few delve into issues regarding multilingual service encounters in public services, and even fewer within the police sphere. Thus, this research centers on the issue of multilingual service provision in the police context, primarily involving international migrants who may face linguistic vulnerabilities – defined in this study as immigrants (voluntary and involuntary), border residents, visitors, and stateless individuals – and law enforcement officers – defined in this study as police officers.

Multilingual service provision refers to a linguistic practice (see Vallentin, 2019) involving two or more actors (in this case, police officers and international migrants) in a multilingual context. Therefore, these actors do not necessarily share the same native language (L1). Consequently, multilingual service provision by police officers is of fundamental importance, as it not only involves interactions with individuals who may be linguistically vulnerable but also a circumstance of potential vulnerability due to a police context, whether it be a statement, testimony, or interview, placing them in a possible situation of rights violation and prejudice to due legal processes. In Brazil, according to research conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (2018), the lack of training for public servants and tools to assist them often results in international migrants not being assisted by public services.

Hence, this research aims to contribute, through an exploratory study, to the development of future public language policies that address linguistic integration and access to public services for linguistically marginalized groups neglected by the State (see Maher, 2013). According to Abreu (2020), studies of this nature assist in promoting language policies, avoiding proposals that overlook specific characteristics of these communities and, consequently, result in significant failures. Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify how multilingual service is carried out within the police context involving international migrants who may face linguistic vulnerabilities and police officers at Civil Police Stations.

## 2 Literature Review

While there is a growing interest in issues related to multilingual interactions in the law enforcement domain – particularly concerning the interrogation process (e.g., Filipovic; Gascón, 2018; Kredens, 2016) –, few studies have devoted themselves to exploring the intricacies of multilingual service provision in this context. In this regard, as stated by Gil (2008, p. 50), "some exploratory studies can be defined as literature reviews." Thus, the following subsection aims to compile studies of a similar nature that address multilingual service provision within the police context, specifically focusing on individuals who may experience linguistic vulnerabilities. Following this, a brief review is conducted on the notions of language rights and their situation in the Brazilian context, as well as the definition adopted by this research concerning *international migrants*.

### 2.1 Studies on Multilingual Service Provision in the Police Context

In order to identify the state of the art in the topic to be explored, four criteria were considered for the literature review. All the works presented here are: i) open access; ii) peer-reviewed; iii) empirical in nature; and iv) related to the theme of multilingual service provision for a group in possible linguistic vulnerability. To achieve this, the methodology employed for the literature review involved using various combinations of keywords related to the topic (such as "forensic translation," "police," "police station," "immigrants," "migrants," "refugees", among others) in academic repositories and indexes. The research was conducted using search engines and academic repositories, such as Google Scholar, Scielo, the Capes Journal Portal, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Additionally, boolean operators (specifically, AND and OR) were also used to refine or expand the search when necessary (Saks, 2005).

Therefore, the literature review of a similar nature resulted in a total of five research studies, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 – Previous studies on multilingual service in police context

Authors	Title	Country	Date
Marina Piovesan Gonçalves	Occurrence Reports (OR) at the Tourist Protection Police Station in Santa Catarina: a discursive and translational analysis	Brazil	2015
Heide Salaets & An-Katrien De Pooter	The cooperation between the Waterway Police and the legal interpreters in the legal district of Antwerp a qualitative study on best practices	Belgium	2015
Alexandre António Timbane	The Mozambican Justice System and Issues of Forensic Interpretation: a long road ahead	Mozambique	2017
Carmen Valero-Garcés	That damn financial crisis: A turning point in the linguistic integration of the migrant population?	Spain	2020
Ashley Rose Keaton	"You Have the Right to Keep Quiet": Translation Inadequacies in Nevada's Spanish Miranda Warnings	USA	2021

Source: Authors.

In order to investigate multilingual service within the police context, these studies employ various methodological approaches, including the use of questionnaires (Gonçalves, 2015; Salaets; De Pooter, 2015; Valero-Garcés, 2020), interviews (Gonçalves, 2015; Timbane, 2017), collection of written *corpora* (Gonçalves, 2015; Keaton, 2021), and observation (Gonçalves, 2015; Salaets; De Pooter, 2015; Timbane, 2017). Furthermore, in approaches involving participants (questionnaires and interviews), the subjects represent two groups: police officers (Gonçalves, 2015; Salaets; De Pooter, 2015; Timbane, 2017; Valero-Garcés, 2020) and interpreters or language service providers (Salaets; De Pooter, 2015; Valero-Garcés, 2020). Consequently, it is evident that the group of *international migrants* did not have direct participation in any study within this review.

Although the research studies have been conducted in different countries, similarities can be observed in the practice of multilingual service within the police context, as well as in the challenges faced by researchers. Concerning this service, it becomes evident, whether through questionnaires, interviews, observations, or document collection, that law enforcement agencies lack guidelines and protocols to guide their actions, as well as training to deal with linguistically vulnerable groups and with interpreters.

Gonçalves (2015) reports that due to the lack of specialized foreign language personnel in the police station for linguistic mediation, police officers contact colleagues or individuals near the municipality's bus station. This *ad hoc* interpreter usage procedure in the police context is well-documented in the research studies from this review, as seen in Salaets and De Pooter (2015), Timbane (2017), and Valero-Garcés (2020). According to Gonçalves (2015, p. 36), the mediation carried out by linguistically unqualified individuals is "a very serious point in relation to the proper development of communicative interaction between the parties involved, and its consequences can be harmful." For Timbane (2017, p. 92), this "issue is problematic because any mistake may result in the accusation or not of the suspect."

The scenario is similar regarding documents translated into foreign languages that police stations have at their disposal. On the subject, Gonçalves (2015) and Keaton (2021) report linguistic and translational issues. Keaton (2021, p. 65), when analyzing documents related to *Miranda warnings* translated into Spanish, identifies three recurring problems: "errors caused by unskilled translation, complex grammatical constructions, or the false assumption that suspects have a baseline familiarity with their rights." Furthermore, Gonçalves (2015) describes a situation in which a police officer uses automatic translators to create the document resulting from the service. For the author, the use of these tools can assist the translation process; however, without proper linguistic and translational knowledge, it can result in "impairment of interpretation and of future case closure" (Gonçalves, 2015, p. 73).

Lastly, it is also important to mention the difficulties faced by researchers, as it appears to be a prevalent aspect in exploratory studies within the police context. These difficulties mainly occur during data collection. Reports range from participants' refusal to cooperate in questionnaires (Gonçalves, 2015; Valero-Garcés, 2020) and unsuccessful contact attempts (Salaets; De Pooter, 2015; Keaton, 2021) to the prohibition of interview recordings (Timbane, 2017). The lack of cooperation from law enforcement agencies documented in the research studies is possibly one of the exacerbating factors for the scarcity of studies of this nature. With proper collaboration, it would be possible to not only deepen the studies but also formulate more effective language policies in the promotion and defense of linguistic rights for these individuals. Consequently, in the following section, we briefly present some notions on

language rights, as well as linguistic legislations within Brazilian and international legal frameworks, and their relations with the linguistically vulnerable group focused on in this research: *international migrants*.

## 2.2 Notions on Linguistic Rights

In the wake of the "new rights"<sup>3</sup> (Abreu, 2020, p. 173), linguistic rights have gained prominence among researchers and legal practitioners in recent decades. Practically common ground among scholars in the field (see Rodrigues, 2018; Sigales-Gonçalves, 2019, 2020; Abreu, 2020), these rights originated in the mid-20th century, a period that depicts the end of World War II and the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). However, it is only in the late 20th and early 21st centuries that linguistic rights have gained significance, primarily due to the growing international interest in the protection of minority groups (Abreu, 2020).

In Brazil, precursor norms related to linguistic rights only emerged in the early 21st century, both at the national level, with the promulgation of Law No. 10.436/2002, recognizing Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) as the legal means of communication and expression for the deaf community, and at the local level, with the promulgation of Municipal Law No. 145/2002 in the city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas, which co-officialized the Baniwa, Neengatu, and Tukano languages.

Mentioned as a lacking aspect, Abreu (2014) seeks to contribute to the delimitation of linguistic rights in his research. To do so, the author divides linguistic rights into two categories: i) the right of languages and ii) the right of linguistic groups. Thus, according to Abreu (2014, p. 108-109), the first pertains to "languages as legal objects to be protected by the State," and as a result, through officialization, the possibility of developing language policies. The second, Abreu (2014, p. 109) defines as the "fundamental right of individuals and communities to express themselves in their own languages", with the realization of the linguistic citizenship of these individuals as its main purpose. In line with the first concept, Arzo (2007, p. 4) states that "language rights are concerned with the rules that public institutions adopt with respect to language use in a variety of different domains." Furthermore, according to the author, linguistic rights should primarily concern the legal status of speakers of minority languages.

In this regard, after a non-exhaustive review of norms related to linguistic rights for international migrants regarding multilingual service, both at the national and international levels, the following current legal provisions were identified in Brazil:

- a) Article 2, Section I of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992): provides for the "right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination."

---

<sup>3</sup> According to Abreu (2020, p. 173), the "new rights" emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries with the "growing interest of the international community and national states in the protection and defense of the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups," including women, children, the elderly, the LGBTQIAPN+ community, and others.

- b) Article 3, Section II, fourth paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1998): provides for the collective right of language groups – defined in Section 5 of Article 1 as immigrants, refugees, deported persons, and members of diasporas – to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations.
- c) Article 6, Section III of Brazilian Law No. 13.344 (2016): provides for the protection and assistance to direct or indirect victims of human trafficking and attention to their specific needs, especially in relation to language, among other issues.
- d) Article 112 of the Brazilian Law No. 13.445 (Migration Law/2017): provides for the tolerance of Brazilian authorities regarding the use of border and immigrant languages when accessing public bodies and offices.
- e) Principle 39 of Resolution 04/19 of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2019): provides for the right of every migrant to enjoy their own culture and to communicate in their own language, whether individually or as a community, in both public and private spheres.
- f) Article 4 of Brazilian Resolution No. 405 (CNJ/2021): provides for the guarantee of the presence of an interpreter or translator of the language spoken by the migrant person at all stages of the criminal process in which they appear as a party, including the custody hearing.

However, Rodrigues (2018) comments that the Brazilian state fails to guarantee these rights. According to the author, except for some initiatives related to bilingual intercultural education<sup>4</sup>, there are no effective language policies promoting linguistic rights in Brazil (Rodrigues, 2018). In alignment with this, a study conducted by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) (2015, p. 142) found that, among other aspects, language is the main obstacle to accessing public institutions for the international migrant population, accounting for 20.73% of cases. For Abreu (2020), with regard to access to justice for linguistic minorities,

we are far from the ideal ways of dealing with linguistic diversity in court, and... it is necessary to train the country's *police and judicial authorities* to deal with the national multilingual reality, ensuring the linguistic citizenship rights of all those who seek judicial protection, regardless of the linguistic community to which they belong (Abreu, 2020, p. 181, emphasis added)<sup>5</sup>.

Next, we present the definition adopted by this research regarding *international migrant*

---

<sup>4</sup> Bilingual intercultural education initiatives, based on the Brazilian Constitution and education legislation, are conventionally referred to as initiatives related to the rights of indigenous peoples. In this regard, Silva and Rocha (2017, p. 1) mention that these legal provisions allow indigenous peoples and communities to develop "educational proposals that value their languages, cultural practices, and places of ethnic belonging, while also opening doors to new forms of integration into non-indigenous Brazilian society, with an emphasis on citizenship that respects and integrates differences, the other."

<sup>5</sup> Source: "estamos bem distanciados das formas ideais de tratamento da diversidade linguística em juízo e [...] é preciso capacitar os órgãos policiais e judiciais do país para que possam lidar com a realidade plurilíngue nacional, garantindo os direitos de cidadania linguística de todos aqueles que busquem o amparo jurisdicional, independentemente da comunidade linguística da qual faça parte."

individuals, as well as their branches according to the Migration Law.

### 2.3 International Migrant

For the definition of the term *international migrant*, we rely on the *Glossary on Migration* produced by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and published by International Migration Law in 2019. According to the *Glossary*, the term is defined as:

any person who is outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national, or, in the case of a stateless person, his or her State of birth or habitual residence. The term includes migrants who intend to move permanently or temporarily, and those who move in a regular or documented manner as well as migrants in irregular situations (Sironi; Bauloz; Emmanuel, 2019, 2019, p. 112).

Enacted in 2017, the Brazilian Migration Law (Law No. 13.445/2017) considers, from the perspective of the country of arrival, four types of individuals: i) immigrants; ii) border residents; iii) visitors; and iv) stateless persons. Despite the "visitor" type not indicating an intention to reside, whether permanently or temporarily, we consider it important to address it in this research, as their human and linguistic rights are independent of both the length of stay and migratory status.

From the same perspective, individuals in refugee status are also included in the "immigrant" (involuntary) category. It is necessary to clarify that, although individuals in refugee status are classified as immigrants, not all immigrants are in refugee status. Therefore, in this research, we consider the definition of refugee established by the Refugee Law (Law No. 9.474/1997), which defines, in Article 1, that refugee status will be recognized for any individual who:

- I - owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;
- II - not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or is unwilling to return to it due to the circumstances described in the preceding item;
- III - due to serious and widespread human rights violations is obliged to leave his or her country of nationality to seek asylum in another country.

Therefore, in the following section, we present the methodology used in this research, aiming to identify how multilingual service is provided in the police context involving international migrant individuals in possible linguistic vulnerability and police officers at the Civil Police Stations in the city of Pelotas, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

### 3 Methodology

This research is exploratory in nature, meaning it deals with a relatively unexplored topic and aims to "provide a general, approximate view of a certain phenomenon" (Gil, 2008, p. 27). Therefore, following the literature review process, the methodology is divided into three stages: i) interview; ii) mapping; and iii) questionnaire development and application.

Firstly, a virtual, consented, and authorized informal interview was conducted with a key informant (Gil, 2008). For this interview, Professor Anelize Maximila Corrêa, coordinator of the Group of Studies on Migration Policies and Human Rights (GEMIGRA) and the Legal Assistance Clinic for Immigrants and Refugees (CAJIR) in Pelotas, was selected. The interview consisted of eight open-ended questions aimed at gaining an overview of the researched problem (Gil, 2008).

Subsequently, following the guidance received during the interview, the mapping of police stations was conducted. In total, nine police stations that met the established criteria were identified (i.e., Civil Police Stations located in the municipality of Pelotas, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil). The mapped police stations have different specialties and encompass different sectors, including three District Police Stations, one Regional Police Station, one Women's Police Station, one Police Station for the Repression of Organized Criminal Actions, one Child and Adolescent Police Station, one Homicide Police Station, and one Immediate Assistance Police Station.

After the mapping, the stage of developing a questionnaire to be applied was initiated, considering the responses from the key informant interview and the previous literature. To this end, six questions were developed and structured into three categories based on Gil (2008): open-ended (Questions 5 and 6); closed-ended (Questions 1 and 4); and dependent (Questions 2 and 3). Additionally, terminologies from the police field used in the questions were adjusted according to the glossary of police terminology of the Civil Police of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Costa; Bevilacqua; Maciel, 2016).

Therefore, with the aim of identifying how multilingual service is provided to international migrant individuals in possible linguistic vulnerability in the police context, the following questions were formulated:

1. Has the police station received international migrants, either as detainees or informants?
2. Is there a protocol for serving international migrants at the police station? If so, what is it?
3. Are there any documents in languages other than Portuguese to inform migrants about their rights in their own language at the police station? If so, what are they?
4. Are there any professionals (e.g., police clerks, officers, inspectors) proficient in foreign languages at the police station responsible for serving migrants?
5. How are statements (custody records) or incident reports filed if there is no qualified professional available who speaks the migrant's language?
6. If an interpreter needs to be requested, how is the contact made (e.g., self-made lists, third party companies, associations, consulates, embassies, universities)?



After contacting their respective secretariats and obtaining the participants' consent through the signing of the Informed Consent Form, the questionnaire was administered to six police chiefs and one police commissioner, totaling seven out of the nine police stations in the municipality. Thus, two police stations refused to participate in this research study. Both claimed not to have authorization from their superior officers to respond to the questionnaire.

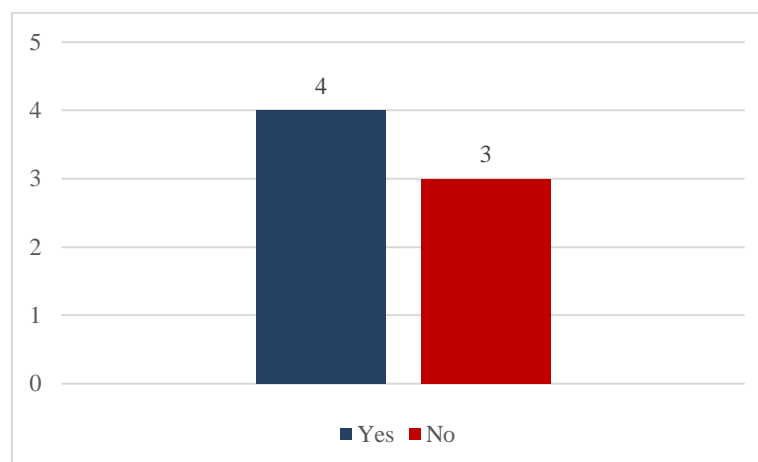
As a result, in the following section, we present the analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires applied in seven Civil Police Stations in Pelotas, state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, based on the previously gathered literature.

#### 4 Analysis of the Data Obtained in the Questionnaire

First and foremost, it should be noted that, for ethical reasons, in this analysis, the police stations are referred to only as *Police Station 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7*, as established in the Informed Consent Form. It should also be mentioned that, as observed in previous literature (Gonçalves, 2015; Salaets; De Pooter, 2015; Timbane, 2017; Valero-Garcés, 2020; Keaton, 2021), the data collection stage was marked by several difficulties, with emphasis on refusal to participate, reducing the number of participants from nine to seven. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the entire data collection process was carried out in 2022 and lasted for about two months, as some police stations canceled appointments with the researchers. In addition, they often claimed not to have the available time to participate, resulting in numerous unsuccessful visits to the department for questionnaire administration. Therefore, after this initial observation, the data obtained are presented below in accordance with the order set out in the questionnaire (see section 3).

In Question 1, which relates to the history of multilingual service to international migrants, four police stations stated that they had provided such service before, as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1 - Results on police stations that have provided service to international migrants before



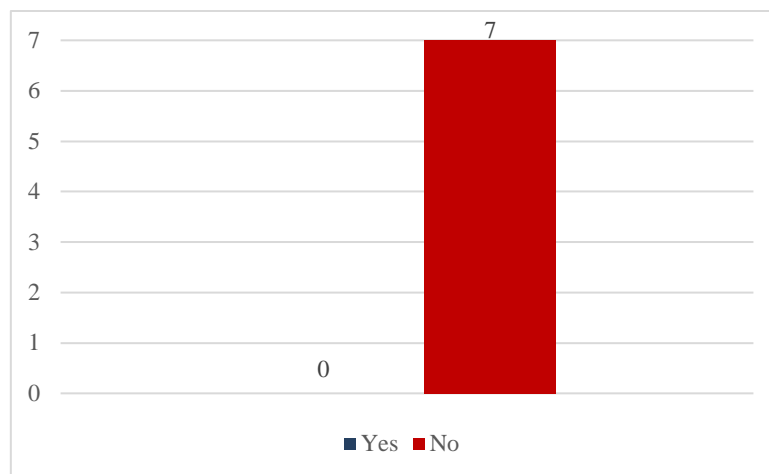
Source: Authors.

It is worth noting that one of the police stations that claimed to have provided service to

this group (*Police Station 1*) does not file incident reports on-site. Instead, they follow two procedures: either redirect the individual to a police station that handles the registration or request the individual to file the incident report online through the *Delegacia Online* (Police Station virtual platform). This procedure aligns with the *Guide for Assisting Migrants in Public Services* (IOM, 2021), which specifies the right of every migrant to file an incident report through virtual police platforms. However, upon checking the platform, it is evident that there is no availability in languages other than Portuguese, except for a tool for Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) assistance. This finding contradicts Article 3, Paragraph 2 of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), an international document prepared with the sponsorship of UNESCO, a United Nations (UN) agency of which Brazil is a signatory.

In Question 2, concerning a protocol for serving international migrants, all police stations stated that they do not have any documents of this nature, as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Results on the presence of protocol for serving International Migrants



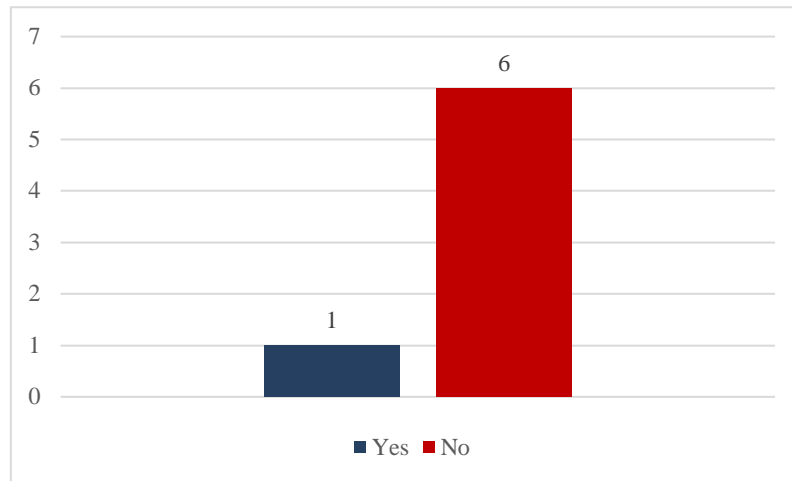
Source: Authors.

The unanimous result in Question 2 reveals that Civil Police Stations in Brazil are not adequately prepared for such levels of service. A protocol is of utmost importance to ensure that there are no violations of the rights of international migrants, as police officers lack linguistic training to determine if individuals sufficiently understand their rights (Eades; Pavlenko, 2016).

In this regard, it is important to highlight that countries such as the USA, Australia, England, and Wales already have guidelines available for police officers to consult when communicating rights to non-native speakers (for further details, see Eades; Pavlenko, 2016). In the Brazilian context, although it does not constitute a police service protocol, it is crucial to mention the "*Guide for Assistance to Migrants, Refugees, Victims of Human Trafficking, and Returning Brazilians in Vulnerable Situations and in Border Areas*" (Pedra, 2016). This guide, developed jointly by ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development), the Ministry of Justice and Citizenship of Brazil, and the European Union, provides practical guidance for public and non-governmental agents in various sectors for initial assistance, social and labor inclusion, and monitoring. However, the seven police stations surveyed in this research did not report knowledge of this specific guide or any other similar resource.

In Question 3, regarding the existence of a document intended to inform the rights of international migrants in a foreign language, only one police station claimed to have such a document available, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Results on the presence of document(s) in foreign language(s)



Source: Authors.

Despite only one police station stating that they have a document of this nature (*Police Station 3*), the participant chose not to provide or specify the type of document and in which language it is accessible. Regarding this type of documentation, it is possible to observe its use as a material resource to assist multilingual service to foreign language speakers in police detention in the UK (*Notice of rights and entitlements*<sup>6</sup>) since 2013, translated into more than 50 different languages - including intralingual translation into plain English. In Brazil, some brochures resulting from language policies aimed at contributing to the linguistic integration of speakers of foreign and indigenous languages can be mentioned, especially in the context of healthcare (e.g., *Multilingual Booklet*<sup>7</sup>, *Booklet for Welcoming International Migrants in Healthcare Units*<sup>8</sup>, *Multilingual Booklet on Health Communication with Warao and Eñepa Indigenous Peoples*<sup>9</sup>, among others). However, no booklet addressing issues and situations in the legal-police context could be identified.

In Question 4, which concerns the presence of a qualified foreign language professional in police stations to provide multilingual service, four stations claimed to have at least one *self-declared* proficient staff member in a foreign language, as shown in Figure 4.

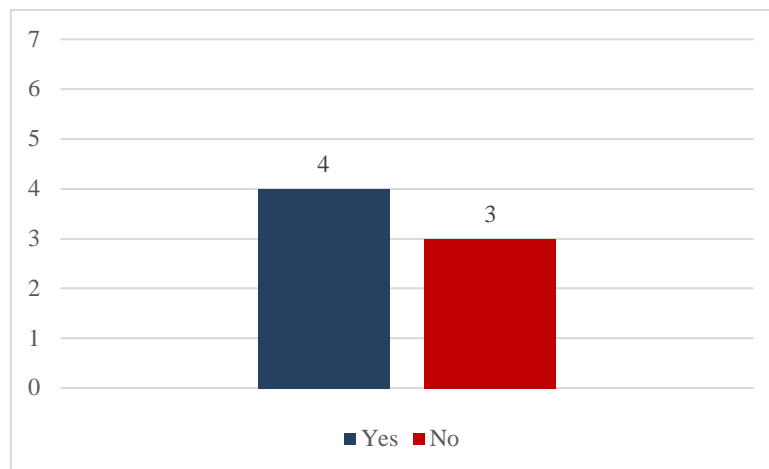
<sup>6</sup> Notice of rights and entitlements. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/notice-of-rights-and-entitlements-a-persons-rights-in-police-detention>. Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Multilingual Booklet (*Cartilha Multilíngue*). Retrieved from: <https://www.migrante.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Cartilha-multilinguas-Web.pdf>. Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Booklet for Welcoming International Migrants in Healthcare Units (*Cartilha para acolhimento de migrantes internacionais em unidades de saúde*). Retrieved from: [https://brazil.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1496/files/documents/Cartilha-para-Acolhimento-de-Migrantes\\_0.pdf](https://brazil.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1496/files/documents/Cartilha-para-Acolhimento-de-Migrantes_0.pdf). Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Multilingual Booklet on Health Communication with Warao and Eñepa Indigenous Peoples (*Comunicação sobre Saúde com Indígenas Warao e Eñepa*). Retrieved from: <https://www.acnur.org/portugues/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Cartilha-Saúde-Indígena-Online.pdf>. Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2024.

Figure 4 – Results on police stations that employ professionals trained in different language(s)



Source: Authors.

It is worth highlighting that, as the aim of this research is not to measure the level of proficiency in foreign languages of police station staff, the result shown in Figure 4 illustrates *self-declared* capacity. Just as reported in previous literature (Keaton, 2020), participants expressed confidence in providing multilingual service without the presence of a professional interpreter.

The police stations that claimed to have qualified foreign language professionals in their staff mentioned two languages: Spanish and English. Nevertheless, while both languages can provide service some international migrants in Brazil, they are not sufficient for a significant portion, including nationalities that, according to Cavalcanti, Oliveira, and Lemos Silva (2023), are among those with the highest number of visas granted in Brazilian territory (e.g., China, India, Iran, Haiti, France, Pakistan, among others), and those with the highest number of requests for recognition of refugee status (e.g., Nigeria, Ghana, Morocco, Lebanon, among others). Furthermore, according to the *Brazilian Statistical Tourism Yearbook* (2021), both mentioned languages exclude various nationalities in the perspective of international migrants categorized in Brazilian law as "visitors" (e.g., Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Netherlands, Japan, among others).

In Question 5, as it was an open-ended question, more comprehensive responses were obtained. For this analysis, these responses – related to the procedure for taking statements and/or filing incidents reports in the absence of a qualified foreign language professional – were summarized and then condensed into five categories:

- (1) Contact with *ad hoc* interpreter (linguistic mediation usually carried out by someone known to the individual);
- (2) Contact with universities;
- (3) Contact with qualified interpreter;
- (4) Contact with government entities (e.g., Federal Police and Ministry of Justice and Public Security); and
- (5) Use of online machine translators (e.g., Google Translator).

Therefore, the procedures adopted by each police station, as well as a summary of their reports, are observed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Procedures of Civil Police Stations in the absence of qualified foreign language professional

Police Station	Summary of the response	Procedures
1	Linguistic mediation is carried out by someone familiar with the individual who has knowledge of both languages.	(1)
2	For the linguistic mediation, contact is made with universities to seek assistance.	(2)
3	No action is taken until a qualified interpreter is present.	(3)
4	The police station chose not to respond.	Did not respond
5	Seek contact with someone familiar to the individual, and, if necessary, reach out to government entities to assist in linguistic mediation.	(1) and (4)
6	If communication is impossible, assistance would be sought from universities.	(2)
7	If possible, a qualified interpreter is requested. If not, communication is conducted using online machine translation tools.	(3) and (5)

Source: Authors.

We can observe that, as in Gonçalves (2015, p. 36), Salaets and De Pooter (2015, p. 209), Timbane (2017, p. 92), Valero-Garcés (2020, p. 159), and Keaton (2020, p. 61), *Police Stations 1* and *5* reported using *ad hoc* interpretation. In both cases, participants stated that, in a possible interpretation situation, an attempt would be made to contact someone already known to the international migrant who had proficiency in both Portuguese and the migrant's language. It is worth noting that *Police Station 1*, in its response, states that the migrant usually comes accompanied by someone familiar who can perform linguistic mediation.

Regarding the procedure of contacting universities (2), it was not possible to identify mention of its use in the previous literature, making it novel data from this research study. In relation to contacting a qualified interpreter (3), *Police Stations 3* and *7* claimed to follow this procedure (more on this in Question 6). Moreover, it is important to mention that both police stations are part of the group that has previously provided service to international migrants (Question 1).

Despite the procedure of contacting government entities (4) also being characterized as previously unobserved data in the previous literature, during the interview with the key informant conducted prior to the questionnaire development and administration, it was mentioned that the Brazilian Federal Police have a specific department for service providing to international migrants. It is important to clarify that, according to Cavalcanti, Oliveira, and Silva (2022), the Brazilian Federal Police Department (DPF) is responsible for bureaucratic

matters such as registering regular entry visas to the country and requests for recognition of refugee status, as well as issuing specific documentation for the *international migrant* group; a different scope from what is addressed in this research, that of the Civil Police Stations.

Finally, the procedure of using automatic translation (5), reported by *Police Station 7*, is also observed in Gonçalves (2015, p. 72) and Keaton (2020, p. 61). It should be emphasized that the use of this procedure is not recommended and should be used with caution, as it is a police context, an environment permeated by specialized legal language (Hagen, 2005). Therefore, the misuse of machine translators in multilingual service at police stations can result, especially in vulnerable situations, in the violation of linguistic (see section 2.2) and human rights of *international migrants*.

In Question 6, regarding the procedure for requesting an interpreter, the responses, as in the previous analysis, were condensed into three categories:

- (1) Contact with foreign language teacher;
- (2) Contact with universities; and
- (3) Contact with interpreters through *self made* lists.

In this way, Table 3 below presents the procedure used by each participating Civil Police Station:

Table 3 - Procedure of Civil Police Stations for requesting interpreters

Police Station	Summary of the response	Procedures
1	If the international migrant does not speak Spanish, an English teacher is informally sought.	(1)
2	If necessary, we would seek assistance through universities.	(2)
3	<i>Self made</i> list.	(3)
4	The police station chose not to respond.	Did not respond
5	All possible forms of contact.	Not specific
6	There is no procedure.	No procedure
7	From previous experiences, through <i>self made</i> lists.	(3)

Source: Authors.

Firstly, regarding the response provided by *Police Station 1*, we can assume it to be incompatible with the most recent data on the linguistic landscape of international migrants in Brazil (Cavalcanti; Oliveira; Lemos Silva, 2023). This is because it presupposes that individuals always speak either Spanish or English, disregarding various nationalities that constitute a significant portion of migration, revealing unpreparedness for multilingual encounters involving other languages.

As for the procedure of contacting universities (2), an interesting point is observed. Only *Police Station 2* stated that they use this procedure, even though in Question 5, regarding the procedure in the absence of a qualified foreign language professional, both *Police Station 2* and *Police Station 6* mentioned seeking assistance from universities. The disparity in responses leads us to assume that there is an absence of centralized guidelines from governing bodies, in this case, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, regarding multilingual service within the police stations.

Similar to what was reported in previous literature (Salaets; De Pooter, 2015, p. 213), police stations showed a preference for contacting interpreters through *self-made* lists (3). However, in contrast to what was described in Salaets and De Pooter (2015), the Police Stations did not mention any difficulties in requesting interpreters through this procedure, except for the challenges reported by *Police Station 5*. In justification of their response, *Police Station 5* claimed that, due to the specificity of their department, most of the cases occur during the nighttime. Therefore, in a possible multilingual service encounter, the police station uses the assistance of available linguistic mediators at that condition.

In summary, based on the analysis of responses to the questionnaire administered in seven Civil Police Stations in the municipality of Pelotas, Brazil, we can assume that there are no uniform procedures for multilingual service to *international migrants*. Consequently, multilingual services are carried out according to what the responsible police officer deems as the most appropriate procedure, varying from one police station to another due to the lack of guidelines and instructions from superior authorities.

## 5 Conclusions

This research, conducted through an exploratory approach, aimed to address questions about how multilingual service provision to international migrants in possible linguistic vulnerability is carried out in Civil Police Stations in Brazil. For this purpose, we utilized a questionnaire, which was administered in seven police stations in the municipality of Pelotas, state of Rio Grande do Sul.

Through the questionnaire, it was possible to identify that, despite the majority having a history of providing such services, none of the police stations has a specific protocol to guide multilingual service for *international migrant* groups. Furthermore, while only one police station claimed to have a document translated into a foreign language, it was not possible to determine the nature of this document or in which languages it is available, as the police station chose not to provide this information. Additionally, procedures related to situations requiring a professional proficient in a foreign language varied between police stations, including those within the same sector. Therefore, it can be assumed that multilingual service provision to international migrants in Brazilian Civil Police Stations is ineffective concerning both the linguistic and human rights of these individuals and the guarantee of due legal process.

In light of this finding, it is evident that the police stations lack the technical and human resources necessary to ensure the effectiveness of such services. Consequently, this research aims to provide support for the fields of Language Policy and Linguistic Rights by offering primary insights for future studies that seek to contribute to the language planning within this domain. In this regard, throughout the analysis, we provided examples of tangible technical resources designed to assist in multilingual service provision across a range of

scenarios and contexts. However, it should be noted that factors such as the level of education and other potential vulnerabilities may result in the inefficiency of using written materials. Thus, it is important to mention the "Interpreter Bank" project, organized by the *Mobilang*<sup>10</sup> research and extension group at the University of Brasília (UnB). The project aims to register volunteers who wish to work with public agencies in linguistic mediation between institutions and individuals in possible linguistic vulnerability, such as migrants, indigenous peoples, or individuals with hearing impairments.

Regarding the limitations of this research, considering the absence of previous studies that include representations of the *international migrant* group in their approaches – as seen in Gonçalves (2015), Salaets and De Pooter (2015), Valero-Garcés (2020), Timbane (2017), and Keaton (2021) – initially, this research intended to apply the questionnaire to these individuals as well. To this end, a mapping of support networks for migrants in the state of Rio Grande do Sul was conducted simultaneously with that of the police stations. After numerous attempts to contact several associations, institutions, non-governmental organizations, and legal assistance groups, only a small fraction responded. Unfortunately, it was not possible to locate participants who matched the research profile. In light of this, we question: is this difficulty a result of the lack of individuals belonging to the specified profile or due to Brazil's historical record of police violence and discrimination against this group (see Carneiro, 2018; Rocha, 2021)?

Finally, due to the geographical limitation, this research was also restricted regarding data related to the police stations. However, it is not our intention to express a representative totality of Civil Police Stations, but rather to offer a view of the current situation regarding multilingual service to international migrants in the police context within the municipality of Pelotas, a scenario that may also be identified in other regions of Brazil. Therefore, future research that delves deeper into this topic is essential, encompassing not only the Brazilian Civil Police but also the Federal and Military institutions. Furthermore, research that addresses not only multilingual service provision to international migrants but also to other groups in possible linguistic vulnerability, such as deaf communities, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, among others, is of utmost importance.

## References

Abreu, R. N. Contribuições para uma delimitação dos Direitos Linguísticos no Brasil. In: IPHAN, Seminário Ibero-americano de Diversidade Linguística, 2014, Foz do Iguaçu. *Anais [...]* Foz do Iguaçu: UNILA, 2014. p. 108-117.

Abreu, R. N. Direito Linguístico: olhares sobre as suas fontes. *A Cor Das Letras*, v. 21, n. 1, p. 172-184, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.13102/cl.v21i1.5230>

Arzoz, X. The Nature of Language Rights. *JEMIE*, v. 6, n. 2, p. 1-35, 2007.

Brasil. *Lei nº 10.436, de 24 de abril de 2002*. Dispõe sobre a Língua Brasileira de Sinais - Libras e dá outras providências. Retrieved from: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/2002/110436.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/2002/110436.htm). Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2024.

Brasil. *Lei nº 13.344, de 6 de outubro de 2016*. Dispõe sobre prevenção e repressão ao tráfico interno e internacional de pessoas e sobre medidas de atenção às vítimas. Retrieved from:

<sup>10</sup> For further details about the project, see Mobilang Group website: <http://mobilang.unb.br>. Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2024.



[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2015-2018/2016/Lei/L13344.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2015-2018/2016/Lei/L13344.htm). Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2024.

Brasil. *Lei nº 13.445, de 24 de maio de 2017*. Institui a Lei de Migração. Retrieved from: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/113445.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/113445.htm). Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2024.

Brasil. *Lei nº 145, de 11 de dezembro de 2002*. Dispõe sobre a Co-oficialização das Línguas Nheengatu, Tukano e Baniwa, a Língua Portuguesa no Município de São Gabriel da Cachoeira/Estado do Amazonas. São Gabriel da Cachoeira.

Brasil. *Lei nº 9.474, de 22 de julho de 1997*. Define mecanismos para a implementação do Estatuto dos Refugiados de 1951, e determina outras providências. Retrieved from: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/19474.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/19474.htm). Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2024.

Brasil. *Migrantes, apátridas e refugiados: subsídios para o aperfeiçoamento de acesso a serviços, direitos e políticas públicas no Brasil*. Ministério da Justiça, Secretaria de Assuntos Legislativos (SAL): IPEA, 2015.

Carneiro, M. L. T. Imigrantes indesejáveis: a ideologia do etiquetamento durante a Era Vargas. *Revista USP*, n. 119, p. 115-130, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9036.v0i119p115-130>

Cavalcanti, L.; Oliveira, T.; Lemos Silva, S. *Dados Consolidados da Imigração no Brasil 2022*. Série Migrações. Observatório das Migrações Internacionais; Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública/ Conselho Nacional de Imigração e Coordenação Geral de Imigração Laboral. Brasília: OBMigra, 2023.

Cavalcanti, L.; Oliveira, T.; Silva, B. G. *Relatório Anual OBMigra 2022*. Série Migrações. Observatório das Migrações Internacionais; Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública/ Conselho Nacional de Imigração e Coordenação Geral de Imigração Laboral. Brasília: OBMigra, 2022.

Comissão Interamericana de Direitos Humanos (CIDH). *Princípios interamericanos sobre los derechos humanos de todas las personas migrantes, refugiadas, apátridas y las víctimas de la trata de personas*. [S. l.]: Organización de los Estados Americanos, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.5377/cuadernojurypol.v5i13.11134>

Conselho Nacional de Justiça (CNJ). *Resolução nº 405, de 06 de julho de 2021*. Estabelece procedimentos para o tratamento das pessoas migrantes custodiadas, acusadas, réis, condenadas ou privadas de liberdade, inclusive em prisão domiciliar e em outras formas de cumprimento de pena em meio aberto, em cumprimento de alternativas penais ou monitoração eletrônica e confere diretrizes para assegurar os direitos dessa população no âmbito do Poder Judiciário. Retrieved from: <https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/original1352192021070960e85493ec010.pdf>. Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2024.

Costa, M. I. P.; Bevilacqua, C.; Maciel, A. M. B. Terminologia jurídico-policia: seleção de termos de uma terminologia inexplorada através de corpus. *TradTerm*, v. 28, p. 249-271, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2317-9511.v28i0p249-271>

Eades, D.; Pavlenko, A. Translating research into policy: New guidelines for communicating rights to non-native speakers. *Language & Law*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 45-64, 2016.

Filipovic, L.; Gascón, A. H. Interpreting meaning in police interviews: Applied Language Typology in a Forensic Linguistics context. *Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, n. 15, p. 67-103, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.35869/vial.v0i15.87>

Follow-Up Committee. *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights*. Barcelona: Institut d'Edicions de la Diputació de Barcelona, 1998.

Gil, A. C. *Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social*. 6. ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2008.

Gonçalves, M. P. *Relatos de ocorrência (RO) na delegacia de proteção ao turista de Santa Catarina: uma análise discursiva e tradutória*. 2015. 118 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Estudos da Tradução) – Centro de Comunicação e Expressão, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2015.

Hagen, A. M. M. *O trabalho policial: estudo da polícia civil do estado do Rio Grande do Sul*. 2005. 328 f. Tese (Doutorado em Sociologia) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociologia, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2005.

IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística). *Perfil dos Municípios Brasileiros – 2018*. Brasília: IBGE, 2018.

Keaton, A. R. You Have the Right to Keep Quiet: Translation Inadequacies in Nevada's Spanish Miranda Warnings. *Language & Law*, v. 7, n. 1-2, p. 56-76, 2021.

Kredens, K. Conflict or convergence? Interpreters' and police officers' perceptions of the role of the public service interpreter. *Language & Law*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 65-77, 2016.

Maher, T. M. Ecos de resistência: Políticas Linguísticas e Línguas Minoritárias no Brasil. In: Nicolaidis, C.; Silva, K. A.; Tilio, R.; Rocha, C. H. (eds.). *Políticas e Políticas Linguísticas*. Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2013.

Mcauliffe, M.; Triandafyllidou, A. *World Migration Report 2022*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wom3.25>

Ministério do Turismo. *Anuário Estatístico de Turismo 2021*. v. 48, ano base 2020, 1. ed. Brasília: Ministério do Turismo, 2021.

OIM (Organização Internacional para as Migrações). *Guia para Atendimento a Migrantes nos Serviços Públicos*. [S. l.]: OIM, 2021. Retrieved from: [https://brazil.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11496/files/documents/4\\_Guia%20para%20Atendimento%20de%20Migrantes%20nos%20Serviços%20Públicos\\_WEB.pdf](https://brazil.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11496/files/documents/4_Guia%20para%20Atendimento%20de%20Migrantes%20nos%20Serviços%20Públicos_WEB.pdf). Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2024.

Pedra, A. *Guia de Atendimento aos Migrantes, Refugiados, Vítimas de Tráfico de Pessoas e Brasileiros Retornados, em situação de vulnerabilidade e em áreas de fronteira*. Brasília: ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development) / Ministério da Justiça e Cidadania, 2016.

Rocha, L. *Capitalismo, Racismo e Violência Policial no Brasil*. 2021. 156 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Segurança Cidadã) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Segurança Cidadã, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2021.

Rodrigues, F. A noção de direitos linguísticos no Brasil: entre a democracia e o fascismo. *Línguas e Instrumentos Linguísticos*, v. 42, p. 33-56, 2018.

Saks, F. C. *Busca Booleana: Teoria e Prática*. 2005. 61 f. Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (Bacharelado em Gestão da Informação) – Setor de Ciências Sociais Aplicada, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2005.

Salaets, H.; De Pooter, A. The cooperation between the Waterway Police and the legal interpreters in the legal district of Antwerp a qualitative study on best practices. *The Interpreters' Newsletter*, n. 20, p. 195-216, 2015.

- Sigales-Gonçalves, J. A noção de deveres linguísticos e sua contribuição para a configuração do Direito Linguístico no Brasil. *Travessias Interativas*, v. 10, n. 22, 256-278, 2020.
- Sigales-Gonçalves, J. Direitos Linguísticos e Políticas Linguísticas no Brasil: uma análise de processos seletivos para acesso à universidade pública por migrantes forçados. *Línguas e Instrumentos Linguísticos*, n. 43, p. 192-216, 2019.
- Silva, M. S. P.; Rocha, L. M. Educação bilíngüe intercultural entre povos indígenas brasileiros. *Revista UFG*, v. 8, n. 2, p. 1-5, 2017.
- Sironi, A.; Bauloz, C.; Emmanuel, M. Glossary on Migration. *International Migration Law*, v. 34, p. 1-236, 2019.
- Timbane, A. A. A justiça moçambicana e as questões de interpretação forense: Um longo caminho a percorrer. *Language & Law*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 78-97, 2017.
- United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. [S. l.]: ONU, 1992.
- Valero-Garcés, C. That damn financial crisis: A turning point in the linguistic integration of the migrant population? *Open Linguistics*, v. 6, n. 1, p. 154-161, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2020-0011>
- Vallentin, R. Linguistic Practices. Theoretical approaches and empirical findings. In: Savedra, M. M. G.; Pereira, T. C.; Gaio, M. L. (orgs.). *Repertórios plurilíngues em situação de contato*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições LCV, 2019.

Recebido em: 15/04/2024

Aceito em: 11/08/2024