Bilingualism, Portuguese L2 learning and educational success in the Portuguese school

Currently, Portuguese schools are characterized by a rich linguistic and cultural diversity. The work experience gained in the project Diversity in the Portuguese School proved to be an inexhaustible source of knowledge, which led to a need for more research in this area. Therefore, following this project, Bilingualism, Portuguese L2 learning and educational success in the Portuguese school began in July 2007 with a duration of 60 months.

The project now underway aims to contribute to the educational integration of students who do not have Portuguese as their mother tongue and to find methodological answers conducive to the educational achievement of these students. The project consists of two separate but converging domains:
- Development of methodologies for second language learning and the creation of adequate materials for teaching Portuguese as a second language;
- Implementation of bilingual Portuguese-Cape Verdian teaching in a bilingual basic education class.

a) Development of methodologies and creation of adequate materials for teaching Portuguese as a second language

I - Principles

Controlled experimentation

Due to a relatively recent experience, the Portuguese school is still looking for ways to teach Portuguese as a second language. This allows, in our view, the trial of specific strategies of both foreign language teaching or mother language teaching, considering the necessary adaptation to context and situation.
Fundamentally, the aim is to support the students' language and academic development through the learning of the language of school at school, recoursing to strategies that should involve teachers of other subjects. This is an issue that we consider central to the investigation.
Students who we accompany attend three educational levels of three school groups that agreed to work with us. They are students of different ages and language levels. A way to organize the students in the school groups was determined by the material conditions and resources available.
The aim is to also collect information that allows us to formulate rigorously issues to investigate and also to strategize and produce materials, fulfilling the overall objective of the project: "Creation and application of strategies and materials conducive to the educational success of students of Portuguese as a second language" (PSL).

Flexibility and autonomy

The work developed by the team should be anchored in some programmatic lines to guide, in a flexible way, the tasks of PSL teachers of the 3 School groups. These guidelines are, in turn, framed by the legal guidelines of the Ministry of Education and performed by the school groups, under their autonomy and specificity, depending on the
objectives of the project.

**Communication and sharing in the team**

For the accomplishment of the project activities the importance of the team is reinforced as a decision-maker, a producer of knowledge, testing and evaluation of work fulfilled. In this continuum we highlight the importance of contacts in the team, whether in situations of doubt or to share materials and ideas and also to report the results of activities taking place. This can be an interesting and useful practice for a process that should be dynamic and productive.

**Collective construction**

The collective construction of the guidelines should allow each school group to contribute with its experience and knowledge for the sustainability of the whole team’s work, in other words, it will validate and enhance best practices, share what others do and create new formative experiences, in the view of the creation of a collective competence, in which knowledge requires sharing and is created by sharing. (Le Boterf, 2005).

That is why this text is now updated by integrating the contribution of each group.

**Visibility in school groups**

It is essential to realize that there is a "program", meaning "an organizational path which allows one to achieve the desired learning" (Roldão 2003:28), which will give substance to different learning tasks, always with a dual purpose: to enable students to acquire competence in Portuguese and contribute to the improving of their educational attainment in other subjects.

The same is true for teachers in other disciplines from who we want collaboration, through a constructive and strategic dialogue, contributing in a positive way to the students’ education. We know it’s a difficult path, requiring sensitivity, persistence and generosity.

The recourse to the class directores should contribute to the construction of a collective competence in the class council.

The adhesion of the school groups, opening schools to the project, requires that the team should make regular progress reports, giving and asking for cooperation under the protocol signed between the school groups and ILTEC.

**II - Strategy for the years 2009-2010**

This is the first year of project’s development in the three school groups. We are concerned with building the teams, meeting people and schools and their manner of operation, contributing, within the project, to develop a friendly working relationship, outlining a plan of action and supporting the creation of responses to the immediate needs earlier this year. To this end, in all school groups, the application of sociolinguistic and diagnostic tests was performed with the help of the ILTEC research team.

Determined by the legal guidelines, our work is guided by three dimensions that the language of schooling, or language used in the school system (Cuq, 2003), assumes and
for which is responsible:
i) mean of interpersonal communication;
ii) subject of study;
iii) mean of curriculum learning.

These three dimensions are present, to a varying degree, in the tasks of teaching and learning that will be developed based on four working strategies, because we believe that "the strategy guides the organization of actions or activities, articulated between them, in order to achieve the previously outlined goal, that is, the overall success of these actions."(Lamas, 2000: 166).

It is our idea to potentiate some PLS teaching practices, diverse but complementary, identified as positive in the preparatory meetings held in the school groups and discussed at the meeting on 15 July.

The following work strategies are being carried out during this year:
(i) Language teaching: direct instruction (a more explicit teaching);
(ii) Language learning through autonomous work (the student is expected to carry out tasks independently and outside class);
(iii) Integrated learning through tutorial support (an interface strategy of PSL with other subjects);
(iv) Intercultural learning (development of activities and materials that provide knowledge and respect for cultural diversity in the classroom);

We expect that the work developed contributes to achieving the overall objective of the project and to the development of the expected products.

References


b) Bilingual teaching - Bilingual Class and Control Class

This part of the project aims to implement bilingual teaching in a primary education class, during the first to fourth year of schooling.

In order to research the effect of bilingual education on language development and academic success of students, there is a control group of monolingual education, which aims at a comparative analysis of the progress of pupils in both classes. Instruction is in both languages by two teachers accompanying the students from first to fourth year of schooling.

Considering the presence of the mother tongue of students in the school, this project aims to contribute to their language development, as well as cognitive, emotional and cultural growth, provide learning in two languages (Capeverdean crioule, along with the Portuguese), and contribute to the integration of Cape Verdean school students and their approach to community and culture of origin.
In this project, the class display of Vale da Amoreira has one hour a day dedicated to the Cape Verdean language. The Cape Verdean classes are a place of:

• development and learning of language;
• bilingual and intercultural education;
• development of linguistic awareness and the ability to reflect on languages in general;
• learning and improvement of some of the school subjects (particularly math and environment studies).

Despite the great disparity in the number of classes devoted to each language, we tried to keep, as much as possible, a close relationship between the two areas of education, particularly on the themes and content covered. The fact that Creole is not the mother tongue of a large part of the class, has, of course, compelled the adoption of specific methods for language teaching, influenced by methodologies of bilingual education models that underpin the project. Bearing in mind the coordination between the Portuguese and creoule lessons, we take into account the structural model and the new program proposed for the Portuguese Primary School, for the development of the Cape Verdean language class.

The Portuguese Program is a partition of the primary education in two steps, separating the first two years from the last two years, and is organized around the five basic skills that are expected to be developed in students: listening, speaking, reading, writing and explicit knowledge of the language.

**Expected results for the first two years:**

**Oral Listening**
• Learn to listen in order to produce short messages and to fulfill orders and requests.
• Paying attention to brief speeches on topics that are familiar to them, retaining the essence of the message.
• Essential understanding of told stories, poems and texts of oral tradition.

**Speaking**
• To speak clearly and audibly.
• To make requests and questions with regard to the situation and the interlocutor.
• Narrate experienced and imagined situations.

**Reading**
• Read varied texts clearly with appropriate length and vocabulary.
• Understand the essential of read texts.
• Read various texts with recreational purposes.

**Writing**
• Write short texts, respecting the subject, the basic rules of spelling and punctuation, ensuring referential coherence and text opening and closing.

**Explicit knowledge of language**
• Handle and compare data in order to discover regularities in the functioning of language.
• Explain rules of spelling and punctuation.
• Mobilize the knowledge acquired in comprehension and production of oral and written texts.

The Cape Verdean program follows the same methodology, presentation of content and performance descriptors, as defined in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Given the special importance of intercultural and bilingual education and in our project, a sixth program area is added in this field. Some descriptors closely follow the program in Portuguese, in the corresponding areas.

**Actions developed**

The coordinated teaching of two languages (Portuguese and Cape Verdean) occurs since the academic year 2008 / 2009. The reading and writing of the Cape Verdean Creole began in the 2nd grade. In the mean time, it has been introduced in some school subjects, such as Environment Studies. Intercultural content and practices have also been introduced in the classroom.

Research in this part of the project includes the collection of teaching materials, a survey of linguistic and sociolinguistic features of the class, the creation and implementation of linguistic evaluation tests, observation and audio and video recording of classroom activities, the transcription of data and the collection and treatment of school assessments to analyze the evolution of pupils in relation to school contents. Additionally, the training of teachers involved is developed along with the creation of teaching materials and guidance documents.

**Assessment – Bilingual Class and Control Class**

In terms of research, our aim is to see whether the bilingual education model which was applied, has brought any gains over the traditional model, in academic, linguistic and intercultural terms. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the bilingual class with another class of the same year, that we consider a control group and which experiences the usual monolingual education.

Focusing on a linguistic evaluation, we used the new Portuguese Program for Basic Education as reference to compare the skills and knowledge of students in the two classes.

This program is organized by levels of education and in it are listed the results expected in each level or phase of learning as well the performance descriptors (i.e. "what students should be able to do" (ME & DGIDC, 2009, p.27)) - in accordance with the specific skills defined in the *Currículo Nacional do Ensino Básico* (ME, 2001).

The 1st level of basic education "includes, in its specificity, two moments" (ME & DGIDC, 2009, p.22): 1st and 2nd Grades and 3rd and 4th Grades. We are interested in the first moment, since the bilingual class and control group (hereinafter referred to as TB and TC, respectively) are presently in the 2nd year of schooling.

Thus:

1. We proceed to the selection of the performance descriptors;
2. From these, we prepare evaluation grids - one for each specific competence.

So that the data collected from the two classes is useful for research:

1. We start from the performance descriptors for the development of activities;
2. We apply the same activities in both classes.
3. We use the results of activities for the comparative evaluation of the level of knowledge of students in both classes in relation to the results expected, for each descriptor selected.

The proposed activities are pre-negotiated with the teachers of both classes, discussing the most appropriate time for its completion. We also try to understand the teachers expectations regarding the performance of the class. The whole evaluation process inherent in each activity is then shared with the teachers, in close collaboration intended to be an adjunct to their teaching activity.

To compare the two groups, not only are these activities considered but also other work performed during Portuguese classes, as well as activities proposed by the teachers of TB and TC, with the aim of evaluating the performance descriptors selected by us.

References:

*Curriculo Nacional do Ensino Basico – Competencia Essenciais*, (2001), Ministério da Educação, DEB, Lisboa

*Programas de Portugues para o Ensino Basico* (2009), Ministério da Educação e Direccção Geral de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Curricular.

Trips to Cape Verde and Protocols

In December 2008 Ana Josefa Cardoso participated in the roundtable on the ALUPEC Assessment, in Praia, Cape Verde, where she had the opportunity to speak about the project to the participants and to contact the Ministry of Culture in order to formalize a cooperation protocol.

Maria Helena Mira Mateus went to Cape Verde in April 2009 where she presented the project to the Ministers of Culture and Education and the teachers of primary and secondary school, and formalized ILTEC partnership relations with the Institute for Research and Cultural Heritage of Cape Verde by signing the cooperation protocol between the two institutions.

Dulce Pereira and Ana Josefa Cardoso traveled to Cape Verde in February 2010 where they presented the Bilingual Education project in the Ministries of Culture and Education in Cape Verde and gave interviews transmitted by the Cape Verdean radio and television. At the same time Dulce Pereira presented two communications on the Bilingualism project at the University of Cape Verde.

The following seminars have been conducted under the project Bilingualism, Portuguese L2 learning and educational success in the Portuguese School:

- Seminar on Bilingual Education and Mother Tongues, February 21, 2008
- Seminar on Methods and Materials for Teaching Portuguese as a Second Language, 29 and 30 October 2009.
- Seminar on Development, production and use of materials for teaching a second language, February 26, 2010