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Question of Dominance: The Portuguese Language in Two Contexts, while Dominant and Non-Dominant Language

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[Abstract] In two different, but similar, contexts of migration and of language contact, the Portuguese language finds its position as dominant or non-dominant. This paper aims to explore the perceptions of local speakers within the two studied contexts and about their language and individuals' process of integration into the new society. Education is a one of the main tools to assess migrants' integration, but it is also important while promoting a Heritage language in a new context of communication.

[Keywords] Portuguese language; power; minority languages; education; integration

Introduction

Education is one of the main tools of governing entities such as a state, a region or even a municipality in order to deal with the migration process and the integration of new citizens and their descendants. Questions of power are important between languages that find their position in a ranking where each language gains new positions of power and prestige.

In the two cases under study here, it will be possible to observe the position of the Portuguese language within two different systems – one which has a dominant position in Portugal and the second one, which has a non-dominant position within the Portuguese community in Montreal, Quebec.

In the first case, a Portuguese is the main reference for the Cape Verdean Creole speakers still suffering past colonial dominion and classified as a sublanguage, depending on the European Portuguese (EP) norm. In the second case, Portuguese is as an amalgam of different varieties, finding in EP (continental) its “norm of prestige” and fighting for power in a complex context in which two languages are dominant: French and English.

Language and Power in a Context of Migration

Portugal and New Processes of Integration

There are currently about 4% of foreigners among the total population in Portugal (Oliveira, 2016); about 46% of them are from African countries where Portuguese is the official language (PALOP), and whereas those of Cape Verdean background represent a major group.

This community has been studied since the 1980s in terms of difficulties related to education and insertion, alongside with the arousal of studies in descendants of immigrants in other European countries. However, the main previous databases with variables allowing identification of pupils with immigrant backgrounds come from 1990's data (*Entre Culturas* Secretariat's database, Portuguese Ministry of Education); however, policy concerns with these students' language issues date considerably later with the discipline: Portuguese, as a Non-Mother Tongue Report (PLNM), was introduced at school in elementary to upper secondary education (2006, 2007). The Portuguese Ministry of Education financed and directed many studies on a national schedule in order to plan this discipline's implementation and, later, to evaluate its first impacts (DEB, 2003; Dionízio, et al., 2005; DGIDC, 2009; Madeira, et al., 2014), along with a

sensitivity to urban areas where problems of education and insertion were more significant, such as in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML) (Mateus, et al., 2008); the latter was accomplished with public and private funding.

These studies sum up a complex situation in Portugal in which 70-80 different nationalities or immigrant backgrounds can be identified at school (Mateus, et al., 2008). Questions of language learning are of major interest, considering the social insertion of these students within the new society. All of these studies agree on the fact that Cape Verdean Creole presence in Portuguese schools is ahead of other languages (estimating about 3000 speakers and compared to less than 2000 thousand speakers for those of Guinea Bissau Creole, and less 300 speakers for speakers of any of the other languages (Mateus, et al., 2008) that are considered a major language spoken by pupils (beside Portuguese).

Montreal, a Round-About between Quebec and Canada

In Quebec, more precisely in Montreal, the situation is different. The complexity of this context relates to the presence of two dominant languages; French and English have, for ages, played a major role in terms of integration for new migrants. Anglophone schools were preferred before the 1970s by immigrants in Montreal. In fact, starting with Bill 101 (1977), it was declared that all new migrants within the Francophone province of Quebec had to be integrated into the Francophone school system and should learn French. This was a main action of *Parti Québécois* government of René Lévesque (premier 1976-1985).

The Portuguese community in Montreal dates from the early 1950s, and had to deal with all processes of linguistic integration and having two main groups among those with a Portuguese immigrant background, one more integrated into the Anglophone system (arrived before the implementation of Bill 101) and one in the Francophone system (before Bill 101).

However, since the Multilingualism Act (1988), the government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau focused its action not only on bilingual Canada, but also for a more open society in which allophones' languages (mainly spoken by immigrants) could be taught. Many communitarian schools were then created within the urban area of Montreal (Scetti, 2015). Those schools were integrated in the 1990s into the *Conseil des Écoles de Langues et Cultures d'Origine* (C.E.L.C.O.). MSC's activity is integrated into the educational system of the Province of Quebec. Students accumulate credits that will be important for their future (Scetti, 2016c).

Missão Santa Cruz (MSC), located in the center of the Portuguese district of the city, is an example of a communitarian school. Portuguese is the main language spoken within this institution, being simultaneously a school and, also, a church and an association. Here, Portuguese and their descendants find their "corner."

Multilingual Education as a Step for Integration

Bilingual Education in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (Portuguese/Cape Verdean)

The first research refers to a post-doctoral research project on sociology (funded by Science and Technology Foundation, FCT), with a study named *Konta bu storia: Patterns of linguistic acculturation among descendants of African immigrants in Vale da Amoreira*, wherein the impact of institutional and family language policies on individuals' biographies and attitudes are the main focus of analysis.

The fact that students with immigrant backgrounds from Cape Verde have systematically shown weaker school achievement compared to pupils of non-immigrant origin or those of other immigrant origins; there are questions about the efficiency of linguistic and educational policies, especially when there's a seeming

proximity between European Portuguese and minority languages like Cape Verdean creole. Aiming to develop linguistic education as a tool to improve school success in socioeconomically deprived neighborhoods and focusing on children with a Cape Verdean family background, the project, “Bilingual Class,” and the subsequent project, “Multilingual School,” were implemented in two schools of the 1st and 2nd cycle of basic education (2008-2013, ILTEC), with the coordination of a linguistic expert in Creole studies and sociolinguistic studies, Dulce Pereira. These projects were financed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (FCG) and were part of a larger project of linguistic education; the latter was the main concept, too, for fighting against education failure at earlier ages and in socially deprived territories. These schools were pioneers in the Portuguese system, involving students of Portuguese and immigrant backgrounds, mainly Cape Verdean but also Guinean, Angolan, and Moroccan. The intervention was made directly with children through daily classes and indirectly with the broader school community: parents, grandparents, and school staff. These projects’ first focus was on early bilingual education in 1st to 4th grade during elementary school (“Bilingual Classes”). Because methodological approaches are different from language teaching, in addition to the teaching of (and in) Cape Verdean Creole and Portuguese, focus was given to the development of the students’ implicit and explicit linguistic conscience and positive linguistic attitudes. In the 5th and 6th grades (“the Multilingual Classes”), Cape Verdean was introduced, together with other languages, within the disciplines of Portuguese and English teaching.

The aim was for children to acquire biliteracy skills at an earlier stage of their educational experience, meaning first alphabetization in Portuguese and through immersion classes with Cape Verdean Creole writing. More important was developing linguistic awareness by allowing them to adapt to different contexts, producing autonomously their own linguistic analysis and reflection on languages and their uses: words, structures, meanings, and language functions. Thus, working (socio)linguistic attitudes and behaviors was the strategy, hoping that these children would accept the value of each language, be active agents of linguistic cooperation, enjoy of language uses, develop listening skills, and be more prone to translate.

However, this “particular” group of children with Cape Verdean immigrant background, at the same time, have been since the 1980s one of the main targets of educational policies in dealing with school failure and earlier drop-outs, but not language policies. The current discipline of PLNM, introduced only very recently nation-wide (2006, 2007), was paired with the experimental and local “bilingual classes” experience. Differently, the first was mainly for children who were Eastern European and Asian immigrants and refugees from around the world, who started arriving in Portugal between the end of the 1990s, beginning in the 2000s. Despite this fact, recent reports and studies (2009, 2014; see above) pointed that its main attendance was among students from PALOP, followed by Eastern European countries, and descendants of Portuguese immigrants who returned. In addition, problems with this discipline PLNM (DGIDC, 2009) showed that retention in PLNM are more present among students from PALOP, particularly those of Cape Verdean background. These numbers have promoted few debates on the efficiency of this discipline, while more debates have arisen with a more recent study in 2014, highlighting that still 96% of PLNM teachers were not skilled on the subject. Thus, the efficiency of schools in evaluating students’ profiles and progress in Portuguese learning processes, as well as in other subjects, was questioned.

The Trilingual System in Montreal: Education in Portuguese on Saturdays

The second research project is based on a doctoral research entitled: “The Evolution of the Portuguese Language Spoken within the “Portuguese Community” of Montreal Considering Transmission Dynamics”

(Scetti, 2016a) – an ethnographic description of the Portuguese community in Montreal. The main focus of this research is the evolution of the Portuguese language spoken today within the group. Analysis showed some elements of attrition (Scaglione, 2000) in the Portuguese structure and uses from one generation to another. Oral practices analysis was combined with epilinguistic discourse analysis (Canut, 2000) (discourses on practices).

In Montreal, the Portuguese community, also called *comunidade*, was created in the 1950s due to the treaty of immigration signed between the two countries. The district is located in Saint-Louis and represents the center of the communitarian life, even if many members have moved to other suburbs of the metropolitan area (Da Rosa & Teixeira, 2000). The *Missão Santa Cruz* (MSC) church was then created among other associations and clubs. This church, together with the secondary school, *Lusitania*, takes charge of the education in Portuguese of young descendants of the community.

According to the head of the institution, the MSC school is today the promoter of the European Portuguese (EP) variety and gives to students the possibility to cultivate a passion for a language for their future. In fact, young speakers defend “*O Português é a 6a língua mais falada no mundo*” (Portuguese as the 6th most spoken language in the world – Jamie, 3rd generation) and promote its position of a leading commercial language for the future.

Discourses promoting the power of Portuguese circulate within the community and help the school every year, considering the non-continuous migration flux from Portugal to Canada nowadays. However, Portuguese maintains its vehicular position in the group and finds its “space of practice” on a social urban context. In Montreal, together with English and French, the fight for survival seems difficult but not impossible. The fact that the educational system supports allophone languages is a positive factor shows a continuation between Multilingualism Act (1988) and present policy of Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister). The MSC classes of Portuguese are given on Saturdays, and they complete the mandatory schedule of students enrolled in either the Anglophone or the Francophone systems.

To conclude, it is important to underline how important it is the context in order to maintain a heritage language within a group with an immigrant background. It is also very important to observe which discourses are created and how in a context where multilingual practices are not considered unusual. The question of the norm of reference, in this case EP, is relevant while promoting access to the Portuguese school system or in order to acquire Portuguese as a tool for the future, a language of power. The MSC school represents, then, the heart of the Portuguese community in Montreal. Since the decrease of Portuguese migration to Canada, the group’s members elaborate other strategies to keep alive their story and trajectories. Language is still a marker of the identity of the group, and members must speak their language, “*É primordial a língua Portuguesa*” (the Portuguese language is fundamental), added Vítor (1st generation).

Implications and Conclusion

Through the examination of these two contexts of studies, we see how education plays a major role in terms of integration of migrants into a new system. In both situations, languages are ranked in terms of power and find their place not only into the common social space, but also in speakers’ discourses. Portuguese defends its international position in Montreal where it is related to strong commercial opponents. In Lisbon, on the contrary, the “*marché aux langues*” (market of languages; Calvet, 2002) is different, and Portuguese owns its top position, whereas Cape Verdean is still fighting for a ranked position. The maintenance of its subordinated position, or its forced “deafening silence” position has (Pereira, 2016), on the other hand,

implied significant consequences in undermining the efficiency of Portuguese language policies and planning.

In Portugal, the fact that Cape Verdean was introduced into public education has been a main *manoeuvre* to improve school achievement in a specific socioeconomic deprived neighborhood in the AML of Lisbon. In Quebec, the Portuguese migration is older and not continuous today. The immigrants have had to deal with different issues, and the question of language related to identity has been more focused on one norm. However, the Canadian system has been favorable to allophone languages, which are defended and promoted as a heritage for the entire country.

We would like to summarize our paper by remembering that the relation through language and power has been shaped during the years, but it seems to fix on relevant ideologies on normative and standard forms that are considered as “proper.” Children, at school, are passive to parents’ decisions, and institutions’ changes in terms of educational and linguistic policies, but are, indeed, active agents for their own language learning processes, and can, thus, develop different tools to think and bridge the relation of power between their languages: their mother tongue(s) or language(s) spoken at home and the dominant language(s) of the society.

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