

Portuguese Teachers in Bilingual Schools in Brazil: Professional Identities and Intercultural Conflicts

Authors : Antonieta Heyden Megale

Abstract : With the advent of globalization, the social, cultural and linguistic situation of the whole world has changed. In this scenario, the teaching of English, in Brazil, has become a booming business and the belief that this language is essential to a successful life is played by the media that sees it as a commodity and spares no effort to sell it. In this context, it has become evident the growth of bilingual and international schools that have English and Portuguese as languages of instruction. According to federal legislation, all schools in the country must follow the Curriculum guidelines proposed by the Ministry of Education of Brazil. It is then mandatory that, in addition to the specific foreign curriculum an international school subscribes to, it must also teach all subjects of the official minimum curriculum and these subjects have to be taught in Portuguese. It is important to emphasize that, in these schools, English is the most prestigious language. Therefore, firstly, Brazilian teachers who teach Portuguese in such contexts find themselves in a situation in which they teach in a low-status language. Secondly, because such teachers' actions are guided by a different cultural matrix, which differs considerably from Anglo-Saxon values and beliefs, they often experience intercultural conflict in their workplace. Taking it consideration, this research, focusing on the trajectories of a specific group of Brazilian teachers of Portuguese in international and bilingual schools located in the city of São Paulo, intends to analyze how they discursively represent their own professional identities and practices. More specifically the objectives of this research are to understand, from the perspective of the investigated teachers, how they (i) rebuilt narratively their professional careers and explain the factors that led them to an international or to an immersion bilingual school; (ii) position themselves with respect to their linguistic repertoire; (iii) interpret the intercultural practices they are involved with in school and (v) position themselves by foregrounding categories to determine their membership in the group of Portuguese teachers. We have worked with these teachers' autobiographical narratives. The autobiographical approach assumes that the stories told by teachers are systems of meaning involved in the production of identities and subjectivities in the context of power relations. The teachers' narratives were elicited by the following trigger: "I would like you to tell me how you became a teacher in a bilingual/international school and what your impressions are about your work and about the context in which it is inserted". These narratives were produced orally, recorded, and transcribed for analysis. The teachers were also invited to draw their "linguistic portraits". The theoretical concepts of positioning and the indexical cues were taken into consideration in data analysis. The narratives produced by the teachers point to intercultural conflicts related to their expectations and representations of others, which are never neutral or objective truths but discursive constructions.

Keywords : bilingual schools, identity, interculturality, narrative

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