TEACHING PORTUGUESE AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TO BRAZILIAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: REFLECTIONS FROM AN EXPERIENCE REPORT[1]

ENSINO DE PORTUGUÊS COMO LÍNGUA ADICIONAL PARA INDÍGENAS: REFLEXÃO A PARTIR DE UM RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA

ENSEÑANZA DEL PORTUGUÉS COMO LENGUA ADICIONAL PARA LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS: REFLEXIÓN A PARTIR DE UN INFORME DE EXPERIENCIA

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Editor: Prof. PhD. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno
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ABSTRACT: The teaching of languages, within the critical perspective of learning, has become even more imminent in the face of the need to meet the demand that requires the development of linguistic skills for an integral formation; this fact becomes even more evident when contemplating the teaching of Portuguese language to indigenous people. The study presented here aims to reflect, from the experience report, how language teaching can promote the relationship of knowledge acquired in the classroom with everyday practice. This reflection aims to contribute to the construction of an integral formation having the language as a tool of access to the exercise of Brazilian citizenship, such as civil rights and professional training, envisioning the teaching of languages and social relations in indigenous education, postulating a better insertion in the spaces in which these students wish, or need, to be.

KEYWORDS: Language education. Indigenous education. Citizen education.

RESUMO: O ensino de línguas, dentro da perspectiva crítica de aprendizagem, tornou-se ainda mais iminente frente à necessidade de atender a demanda que requer o desenvolvimento de habilidades linguísticas para uma formação integral, este fato torna-se ainda mais evidente ao contemplar o ensino de Língua Portuguesa para indígenas. O estudo aqui apresentado tem como objetivo refletir, a partir do relato de experiência, como o ensino de línguas pode promover a relação do conhecimento adquirido em sala de aula com a prática cotidiana. Tal reflexão intenta contribuir com a construção de uma formação integral tendo a língua como ferramenta de acesso ao exercício da cidadania brasileira, como direitos civis e formação profissional, vislumbrando o ensino de línguas e as relações sociais, na educação indígena, postulando uma melhor inserção nos espaços em que estes estudantes desejam, ou precisam, estar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de línguas. Educação indígena. Formação cidadã.

RESUMEN: La enseñanza de lenguas, dentro de la perspectiva crítica del aprendizaje, se ha vuelto aún más inminente ante la necesidad de atender la demanda que exige el desarrollo de competencias lingüísticas para una formación integral, este hecho se hace aún más evidente al contemplar la enseñanza de la lengua portuguesa a indígenas. El estudio que aquí se presenta pretende reflexionar, a partir del relato de la experiencia, cómo la enseñanza de la lengua puede promover la relación entre los conocimientos adquiridos en el aula y la práctica cotidiana. Esta reflexión pretende contribuir a la construcción de una formación integral con la lengua como herramienta de acceso al ejercicio de la ciudadanía brasileña, como los derechos civiles y la formación profesional, contemplando la enseñanza de la lengua y las relaciones sociales en la educación indígena, postulando una mejor inserción en los espacios en los que estos alumnos desean, o necesitan, estar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza de lenguas. Educación indígena. Formación ciudadana.

Introduction

We begin this study by examining the Brazilian educational scenario to discuss indigenous education in Brazil. We understand the language classroom, specifically the Portuguese Language (hereinafter PL), as an additional language, an area of knowledge, and a search for meaning. As a synthesis of human action resulting from a historical-cultural process, we promote an analysis based on pedagogical approaches and official documents governing education.

Regarding the teaching of PL, there is a certain notoriety given to the fact that it is the official language of the country and, therefore, holds all representation and validity within society, as language is inherent to the socialization process. On the other hand, we have the indigenous population who, as Brazilians, have the right to exercise citizenship but are conditioned to master PL, which is not their mother tongue. Thus, it is necessary to examine the assumptions surrounding the teaching of PL throughout the history of education, as looking at history, the PLs understand the roots of classroom actions and allows for the proposal of initiatives to contribute to improving the educational reality.

In light of the above, this study proposes a reflection originating from a free course offered by the State Technical School of *Barra do Garças* (MT), which provides Portuguese as an additional language instruction to the target audience, which is composed of indigenous people. Through language learning, this initiative aims to enable access to Brazilian citizenship exercises, ranging from civil rights to professional development. This is because the region of *Barra do Garça* (MT) is home to two ethnicities, *Bororo* and *Xavante*, with demarcated lands respectively: *Merure* Indigenous Land, with 82 thousand hectares and a population of 657 inhabitants, and São Marcos Indigenous Land, with 188 thousand hectares and a population of 2,848 inhabitants. In terms of economy, the indigenous population mainly relies on hunting, fishing, family farming, and handicrafts.

Thus, initially, we raise the assumptions surrounding the context of PL teaching to understand the methodological approaches taken, addressing the bias of pedagogical trends adopted in Brazil. Subsequently, we discuss how indigenous education is articulated in the PL classroom in the current context, reserving a section to specifically infer about viewing PL as an additional language. Finally, under Vygotsky's (2001) language development theory, we present considerations on the Portuguese for Indigenous People course, exercising citizenship to promote citizenship for a public that still faces barriers to communication in various

discursive practices and, consequently, provide support to ensure communication in PL as a resource to operate in social spaces.

The pedagogical focus of PL teaching in Brazil: conception and implications

To understand the current aspects of PL teaching in the classroom, it is necessary to consider the paths taken to promote and develop education. Thus, it is known that the teaching scenario is structured according to each pedagogical conception in the evolution of education in Brazil, considering the adequacy of didactic resources available at a given period, adapted to teacher training and learner interests.

According to Saviani (2006), these conceptions are grouped into two types of trends in public education in Brazil. Liberal Trends result from Non-Critical Theories (encompassed by Traditional Pedagogy, New School, and Technicist Pedagogy) and Critical-Reproductive Theories (involving Ideological Apparatus, Symbolic Violence, and Dualistic theories), while Critical Theories (Libertarian, Liberating, and Historical-Critical Pedagogies) are part of Progressive Trends.

Such conceptions, in accordance with different trends, not only direct "the theory of educational practice" (SAVIANI, 2006), but also shape philosophical, political, and ideological assumptions inherent in Brazilian history. Associated with these approaches, they also determined how and what to teach through different principles and methodologies involving a language's teaching and learning process. Thus, they were influenced by the educational objectives established by society at a given time in history.

In this study, we will focus on pedagogical organization based on critical theories derived from a conception of teaching based on progressive trends: liberating, libertarian, and historical-critical. These pedagogical proposals stem from a critical analysis of social realities, as they encompass the socio-political purposes of education, making it an instrument of social practice.

The liberating trend advocates pedagogical self-management and anti-authoritarianism. The liberating school, also known as Paulo Freire's pedagogy, is directly linked to education, the struggle, and the organization of the oppressed class. In it, the teaching of PL to the learner should represent a process of understanding, reflection, and criticism (LIB NEO, 2014).

Thus, PL teaching in this conception proposes that teaching content should be focused on the student's reality, meaning that what is lived should be considered, and only then does

education make sense. Teaching and learning PL are built through problematization, based on questions that provoke new answers rooted in critical dialogue.

The libertarian theory is based on informal learning via group and the denial of all forms of repression. The relevance of experience and practical activity are incorporated and used in new situations. It focuses on personal and group growth. In this pedagogical approach, the teacher assumes the role of a guide and catalyst (facilitator), while students have freedom, emphasizing valuing the text they produce in Portuguese language classes. Additionally, the importance of negotiating meanings in reading is highlighted.

In the context of historical-critical pedagogy, it is believed that the school depends on social, political, and cultural aspects so that education enables the understanding of historical-social reality, specifying the role of the individual as a builder and transformer of this same reality (SAVIANI, 1992). Thus, PL teaching needs to be demystified from discourses that circulate ideas of development, democracy, and modernization, according to Pennycook (2001). Such bias "considers language as a way of acting on man and the world and of modern theories on text studies, such as Textual Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Argumentative Semantics, and Pragmatics, among others" (DA SILVA, 2018, p. 6, our translation).

In this context, within a historical-critical concept, PL teaching understands language as a tool for mediation and understanding higher mental functions due to social interaction, culture, and history. It is intended that teaching aims to develop learners who are intercultural speakers or mediators capable of engaging with complexities and multiple identities, avoiding stereotypes.

Similarly, the theoretical concepts of human development postulated by Vygotsky (2001) are aligned as a premise for FL teaching, understanding that the student acquires these functions and develops through language mediation. The psychological perspective of human development implies that scientific concepts (school knowledge, such as language theories and language learning) and spontaneous concepts (knowledge acquired through practical experiences) influence each other. This approach aligns with the progressive idea of confronting the knowledge brought by the student with elaborated knowledge (SAVIANI, 2006), emphasizing language mastery in a scientific/philosophical context of social reality.

Although presented in a diversified manner, with different manifestations throughout history, when it comes to FL teaching as an additional language and more specifically focused on the indigenous population, methodologies still tend to be anchored in a teaching methodology based on the study of language through normative grammar. This adopted

methodology interferes with the development of this portion of the Brazilian population, facing obstacles in teaching that promote alienation and little meaningful learning.

Based on the above-mentioned conceptions, when considering FL teaching for indigenous peoples, it is incumbent upon us to discuss the aspects of historical-educational relations adopted for indigenous peoples and then, proportionally, analyze FL teaching. Thus, it is imperative to become aware of the dynamics of indigenous education in order to advance the proposal of promoting Portuguese language teaching directed to the indigenous population comprehensively, aiming to provide essential knowledge to transform the lives of these students. It is in this context that historical-critical pedagogy is suitable as a basis for supporting the socio-political purpose of FL teaching.

Indigenous School Education in Brazil: Establishing Pedagogical Concepts for Language Teaching

We have already postulated the concepts of pedagogical conception, which, according to Saviani (2006)

> [...] is correlated with 'pedagogical ideas.' The word pedagogy and, more particularly, the adjective pedagogical have a markedly methodological resonance denoting how to operate and carry out the educational act. Thus, pedagogical ideas are educational ideas understood, however, not in themselves, but in the way they are embodied in the real movement of education, guiding and, more than that, constituting the very substance of educational practice (p. 31, our translation).

Thus, it is possible to affirm that school practice has always been subject to various social and political conditioning factors and apprehensions that, to a greater or lesser extent, impact the role of the school and learning.

Such an opportunity should also apply to indigenous school education since, according to official documents, the LDB (National Education Guidelines and Bases Law of 1996), (BRASIL, 2023) and the DCEEI (Curricular Guidelines for Indigenous School Education of 1999) (BRASIL, 1999), involve the schooling processes experienced by indigenous peoples.

The guidance is that indigenous school education be guided as a specific, differentiated, bilingual, or multilingual teaching modality in some cases, as well as intercultural. However, several studies, such as those by Silva (2019) and Martins (2019), point out that, in practice, this process of indigenous schooling appropriates the colonial and colonized school model, understanding formal education from traditional pedagogical practice. The traditional

pedagogy, with a liberal bias, unlike the progressive one, adopts the idea that teaching consists of imparting knowledge through content assimilation.

The continuation of this pedagogical trend is in many ways the result of historical influence, in which the school was the privileged instrument for catechesis, then to train labor, and finally to "incorporate" indigenous peoples definitively into the nation as national workers, devoid of ethnic or cultural attributes. This is exacerbated when considering that the schooling process is mainly conducted by non-indigenous teachers, who, for the most part, reproduce teaching practices aimed at the non-indigenous population and have little mastery of the culture and practices of the ethnicities with which they work.

However, it is relevant to mention that indigenous school education is undergoing a period of reflection, aiming to ensure a specific and differentiated educational approach that meets the particularities of different indigenous peoples.

> In this sense, school education, once seen as an element of "civilization" and/or cultural "homogenization," is redefined by these same actors and subjects, becoming seen as an instrument of empowerment in the struggle for their recognition through an educational model that is "Differentiated, Specific, Intercultural, and Bilingual" (NASCIMENTO, 2017, p. 267, our translation).

In this context, the aim is to ensure indigenous peoples have the right to specific and individualized education based on the cultural values of each people. Thus, regarding teaching Portuguese as a second language, which for indigenous peoples involves learning a language that is not their mother tongue, beyond mastering the methodologies of teaching additional languages, it is essential that teachers also understand the life reality in which these students are inserted. Language assumes the role of a mediating instrument and understanding of higher mental functions as a product of social interaction, culture, and history, as advocated by Moita Lopes (2003).

From the linguistic perspective seeking to incorporate historical-cultural conceptions into the teaching of Portuguese as a second language, communicative competence is understood as an integral process of human activity in which higher mental functions arise from social interaction, culture, history, integration, and dialogical social practices (VYGOTSKY, 2001). In this sense, we base ourselves on the precepts of intercultural critical pedagogy in the teaching of Portuguese as a second language, as this must be committed to a linguistic education that effectively collaborates in overcoming violence, racism, and economic, social, and environmental injustice (DELGADO; PERNA, 2021).

Consequently, under this pedagogical view, teaching Portuguese following the communicative approach in language teaching is understood as a concrete way that allows learners to relate to the target language and, consequently, promote social interaction and the construction of learning committed to critical and social aspects inherent in language activity.

The goal of teaching Portuguese as a second language will be to facilitate learning through the construction of critical discourses, synthesizing teaching that aims to develop learners capable of engaging with linguistic complexities related to multiple identities of a social and interactive nature.

In this sense,

> [...] Communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communication strategies, or what we will refer to as strategic competence. There is not strong theoretically or empirical motivation for the view that grammatical competence is any more or less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic competence or strategic competence. The primary goal of a communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge (CANALE; SWAIN, 1980, p. 27).

Given this proposition, teaching with a communicative bias can be understood as a methodology aimed at teaching PL based on social interaction and the construction of learning committed to critical and social aspects inherent to language activity. Based on this premise, it is assumed that the main focus of the process of teaching PL must be to exercise citizenship training.

Therefore, the aim is that, when teaching PL, we promote the development of learners as intercultural speakers or mediators capable of engaging in complexities and multiple identities, avoiding stereotypes. Following Widdowson's (2005) proposal, the teaching/learning of an additional language must consider the surrounding contexts and the target audience for learning. It is believed that, by improving PL communication for people, we not only meet the demand for linguistic skills but also structure meaning to promote social interaction and contextualization of these meanings, overcoming the isolated approach to linguistic forms.

Portuguese Course for Indigenous People: reflections based on an experience report

We highlight that this work is an interpretive reflection developed through an observation made from the Portuguese Course for Indigenous People: Exercising Citizenship offered in the first semester of 2023 with a workload of 80 hours, offered at the State Technical School of Professional Education in *Barra do Garças* (MT). The initiative for this course originated from the observation, in everyday school life, of the search for the indigenous community in the last two years, seeking to expand their knowledge.

This extension project, presented in the form of a free Portuguese course, arose from the observation of the difficulties faced by the indigenous community during selection processes, highlighting the difficulty in understanding notices, in addition to carrying out simple tasks such as taking copies of documents, filling out forms and understand the instructions provided by the secretariat. Furthermore, after joining the courses, students had difficulty following the progress of the classes due to the language barrier. Based on the execution of the course mentioned here, this reflection is proposed.

The research proposal presented here aims to analyze and interpret data from the field of education, in which, through the experience report we had, it was possible for us to problematize language teaching as a way to promote the exercise of citizenship for a public that still encounters barriers to fully communicating in various discursive practices. Likewise, it is possible to see that with the objectives of teaching PL as an additional language for the indigenous community, it is necessary to reflect on how this teaching, in addition to promoting linguistic knowledge, allows the exploration of the student's knowledge of the world and social functions and cultural knowledge learned.

Since the beginning of the course, we have observed a gap in students' knowledge related to basic everyday discursive practices, such as filling out forms, understanding texts, presenting themselves orally, and formulating doubts regarding the content. The diagnostic activities indicated that the teaching of PL to which these students were exposed probably followed a model similar to the teaching of PL as a mother tongue, focusing on morphology, phonology, syntax, and semantics, evidencing a predominantly structuralist approach.

Galvão (2010) highlights the importance of the language of schooling for the consistent and structured acquisition of a PL, which must be considered. However, the design of PL teaching for indigenous students must prioritize communication and understanding of the language based on elements related to the "mastery" of the code, considering that teaching-

focused exclusively on linguistic competence does not guarantee the depth of linguistic learning, which presupposes a conscious relationship of social functions and uses (CANALE; SWAIN, 1980).

In this way, we found that when proposing to teach PL to this audience, it is also required, in the pedagogical practice, a dimension of practicality and use of the rules and their attributions of the semantic value of the language (CANALE; SWAIN, 1980; WIDDOWSON, 2005). This theorization must contribute to the development of communicative capabilities, as it is through it that we bring subsidies that guarantee the target audience, including Brazilian citizens, their right to learn the most spoken language in Brazil - Portuguese.

During the course, work was proposed involving different textual genres[4], aiming to provide access to a variety of knowledge about citizens' daily lives. The objective was to contribute to better insertion of students in the spaces they want or need to occupy. Furthermore, we hoped that, at the end of the course, the students would be able to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom in everyday situations, expressing themselves and communicating through verbal interaction.

Another aspect worth noting in this study concerns the pedagogical methodologies used in teaching additional languages and the practical reality of the course. In line with Vygotsky's educational psychology, teaching additional languages adopts the Communicative Approach as a theoretical contribution, sharing a conception of teaching/learning languages that seeks to enable learning through the construction of historical and critical discourses. The idea of teaching that aims to develop learners as mediating speakers capable of engaging with linguistic complexities, however, can represent a challenge, given the teaching culture that these students bring as a reflection of their school training.

Most students taking the course had PL teaching as their mother tongue in their primary education, specifically, the prescriptive teaching methodology. This type of teaching is linked to the first view of language and normative grammar, noticeable in their academic habits of making copies of excerpts from texts in activity responses and the difficulty initially demonstrated in carrying out interpretation activities, both in written activities and mainly in oral activities. That said, it is understood that teaching practiced through loose and decontextualized sentences can harm the student, as it does not allow them to be able to relate

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[4] Here, we adopt the concept of genre defined by Bakhtin (1997), who understands textual genre as relatively stable types of utterances created by different spheres of language use.

the multiple identities of the social and interactive nature of the language (WIDDOWSON, 2005).

Therefore, it is eminent to propose to students' additional language activities to reflect on the language and on different construction possibilities that allow students to assign certain meanings to the text, in addition to the ability to create opportunities to think about what is learned (SCHLATTER, 2009). Thus, we can state that, when teaching Portuguese to indigenous people, it is up to the teacher to be concerned with a range of potential aspects to be elaborated in teaching, namely: interaction with the language and its multiple forms; interaction with contextual representations; perceptions of the world and the cultivation of appreciative values.

We highlight that, when proposing language teaching work for indigenous people, it is also necessary to consider an institutional concern with the methodologies to be used. In this sense, in addition to thinking pedagogically about language teaching methodologies, it is essential to take into account the culture of the ethnic group itself and the ways of transmitting knowledge used by them, so as not to nullify the culture that belongs to them, thus promoting "a careful and measured way of building pedagogical work based on dialogue" (MARTINS, 2019).

In this sense, it was essential to promote discursive work during the course that allowed students to exercise their citizenship and return to themes linked to their history, culture, and social practices. Therefore, what was proposed was a free course offering Portuguese as an additional language for the indigenous people, not as a teaching in order to exclude the mother tongue of their community. We believe that by adding another form of communication in addition to the existing one, such linguistic skills can promote critical engagement and reflection on diversity arising from social, cultural, political, and economic contexts.

Throughout the course, students discussed issues such as social inequality, Indigenous Constitutional Law, Indigenous Identity, Indigenous Education, and indigenous participation in the formation of the municipality of *Barra do Garças*, in the state of *Mato Grosso*, and in Brazil, in addition to other global themes such as health, environment, education, drugs and technologies. Furthermore, in line with Leffa's concepts of critical language teaching, it is understood that learning a language also promotes education for interactional understanding and intercultural education (DELGADO; PERNA, 2021). It was identified that these practices, when carried out and described, contribute to the expansion of linguistic and cultural repertoire, considering that these actions can contribute to PL learning that adds linguistic and social repertoires to the student.

Learnings and Implications

Being an PL teacher as an additional language is a challenging task. Teaching in Brazil, in general, is not. However, teaching PL with a focus on social formation and providing the knowledge necessary for the exercise of citizenship by indigenous students is significant. As a function of education, language teaching must be linked to literacy, schooling, and development. The results of this study show that the teaching of PL as an additional language for indigenous peoples, within the concepts of interaction and mediation, must be developed considering the development of the acquisition of linguistic skills and the critical analysis of the implications of its practice in production and reproduction social (PENNYCOOK, 1994).

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the forms of action and instructional choices in teaching processes to promote linguistic development. This implies understanding school knowledge, language, and language learning theories, as well as the knowledge acquired during these students' practical experiences (VYGOTSKY, 2015). Furthermore, it is crucial to conceive this work not as the production of passive consumers of the cultural forms of the Portuguese language and white people as hegemonic, but, within a dialectical reality, as a tool to build a critical look at the social world around them.

However, we emphasize that when adopting the perspective of critical theories as theoretical support, we cannot only consider the indigenous student's learning process, but we must also think about the dialectical relationship between institutional adequacy and the teacher's work. Adopting this proposal results in significant teaching work driven by a commitment to learning and emancipatory development.

Therefore, we consider the direct relationship between language teaching/learning and the use of pedagogical methodologies that serve as a resource for developing this target audience, inserted in perspectives that pass through the sieve of linguistic training as a path to citizenship training, essential. Despite the possible difficulties and challenges in teaching aimed at indigenous people, overcoming possible barriers and each student's achievements justify the potential for realization, application, and interaction in teaching PL as an additional language.

From the systematization of this study, we observed that the theoretical contribution revives the teaching of PL as valid in the construction of knowledge of the language and in accessing the exercises of Brazilian citizenship for indigenous peoples. In this way, under the pedagogical vision of communicative functions in teaching PL as an additional language, it mobilizes the interaction between culture, history, and social practices in a dialogical way,

allowing the student to relate the target language to the breadth of their contexts and assuming as a condition for teaching, not a mere reproduction of content, but, above all, reflective production.

According to the results obtained, we affirm the validity of teaching PL for indigenous people from the perspective of teaching it as an additional language according to a communicative approach, which allows the student to interact with the target language due to its interactionist potential. The course presented challenges that were not considered harmful since difficulties are usually inherent to the study of an additional language and possibilities that can provide communicative events in the Portuguese language, serving the construction of linguistic knowledge with the aim of guaranteeing access to the exercise of full Brazilian citizenship.

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CRediT Author Statement

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.