

The Teaching of Foreign Languages in Brazil with LDB Law n°. 5.692/71

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Abstract

The memoirs on the teaching of foreign languages in Brazil are provided. Through documental methodology the historical data on the teaching of foreign languages have been researched from 1970 period with the 1971 Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education. Aspects on the teaching of foreign languages and the manner certain issues on the subject have been shown in 1970 period in Brazilian history are discussed based on the interpretation of narratives that history presents. The perspective of different law and reform on the teaching of foreign languages and the impact that they caused during the above-mentioned period will also be investigated.

Keywords: Foreign language, Brazilian context, Politics of the teaching of foreign languages

1. Introduction

Throughout history, there were several changes in the scenario of teaching a Foreign Language (FL) in Brazil. They occurred not only in the structure of curriculum component of elementary schools and high school, but also in the structure of the school curriculum, which suffered constant transformations as a result of political, social and economic aspects. Deriving this context, we understand that history isn't organized by chronology, but it's organized by power relation, by relation of meanings. It's this power relation (politics) that determines the choice of a language being used in a relation in which "the words gain their existence and be realized in a context of enunciation" (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 23). Within the limits of this work, the main objective is to investigate the history of Brazil to understand old episodes to discover, explore and create new senses that can produce new perspectives and relevant attitudes in formation and performance in the FL area and later, begin a historiography, build a line of development with information of spaces reports, so posterior works can have data in the academic environment to refer to when speaking about the history of language teaching in Brazil.

From this perspective we encourage ourselves building a work around the trajectory of teaching a FL in Brazil, giving more attention to the 70's with the creation of the Law of Basic Tenets and Guidelines of National Education (LDB), Law 5.692 (Brasil, 1971). In this sense, when traveling along this historical route we see that the supply of schools in a given country don't occur without conflict in the power struggle between the countries involved in the acceptance process for teaching a FL. The decision point of teaching the determined FL is a result of intense process of agreements or political impositions, ideological and cultural concerning the choice of teaching one or another FL.

2. A Memory of the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Brazil with the LDB 1971

Basic education in Brazil, with more emphasis, from the 1970s, has undergone great changes. Analyze it implies to consider certain preliminary as the regulation of the Law of Basic Tenets and Guidelines of National Education (LDB), Law 5.692, of August 11, 1971 (Brasil, 1971). So that was attended an orientation of vocational education, the LDB of 1971 (Brasil, 1971) was reduced from 12 to 11 years teaching in education in Brazil. With this reform, the primary courses are now replaced for five years, and the gymnasium, four years, changing its name to First Degree with eight years' duration. The science course was merged with the classic and came to be called Second Degree with three years' duration, and the university came to be called the Third Degree. In this reconfiguration, the LDB 1971 (Brasil, 1971), Brazil eliminated a year of study, bringing to 11 levels, reaching the Second Degree, now called High School. On the other hand, other European countries and Canada have at least 12 levels. The reform also emphasizes the special training focusing on professional qualification.

The reduction of a school year and the need to introduce professional qualification caused a drastic reduction in the hours of foreign language teaching, aggravated by a further opinion of the Federal Council that the foreign language would be "given by adding" within the conditions of each establishment. Many schools took the foreign language in the first degree, and in the second degree, offered no more than an hour a week, sometimes for only a year. Many students, especially the supplementary, passed by the 1st and 2nd degrees, without ever learning a foreign language (Leffa, 1999, p. 19).

Regarding the FL teaching in Brazil, the LDB of 1971 led to a dramatic decrease in teaching it in the curriculum because it reduced significantly the weekly in 2 or 3h when compared with the Reformation Capanema, that kept the workload of FL teaching in 23h per week since the Reformation of 1931. A LDB de 1971. The LDB of 1971, by instituting teaching for 11 years and with it go the offer vocational education, did “many schools take off the study of foreign language from the first grade, and in high school, didn't offer more than 1h a week, sometimes for only a year” (Leffa, 1999, p. 19).

With the enactment of Law 5.692 (Brasil, 1971) it is clear that the measures of policy implementation of English as a curriculum component in Brazilian schools ensures a consumer market for U.S. and English products, enabling supremacy of language above, leaving devalued the presence of other languages such as French, Spanish and Italian as curriculum subjects of Brazilian schools. During this period, the English, to gain space and solidify as the only compulsory subject in public and private schools in the country needed a teaching method that would meet the objectives of industrialization of the country. Therefore, regarding the method used to FL teaching, audio-lingual and audio-visual was the most suitable to suit new requirements of the industrialization process of the country. Similar to the direct method, however, with theoretical arising behaviorism and a structuralism conception of language, the audio-lingual method, in an instrumental perspective, values the language as a mode of social interaction through concrete situations. From the theoretical assertions of Fogaça and Gimenez (2001, p. 58) can you confirm that “the audio-lingual method, [...] came timidly in the public schools, remaining narrower to the context of private schools teaching languages”.

Brazil, in the 1970s, to suit determinations of international¹ financial institutions to developing countries² consolidated system reconfiguration, by Law 5692 (Brazil, 1971), which spent to maintain vocational training courses to suit market requirements which needed skilled labor. So, the figure of FL teaching has grown to serve the needs of the industrialization process, leaving aside the educational needs that should be facing a practical training of the student's own human spirit.

The role of language teaching has become fundamentally instrumental, not in the sense of more general communication tool, but also, and mainly, to its own tool for certain purposes, which ended up reinforcing the choice of keeping only the English in schools (Picanço, 2003, p. 47).

At the time, the impact of changes to the Act was significant in the educational system, especially regarding the teaching of LE. The discipline required to be passed in the second degree and recommended to the 5th to 8th grade, although in the second degree the LE has been

¹ The creation of international financial organizations intended to equalize differences between countries that need financial resources for its development. One of these organizations was the World Bank, assumed the role of interventionist public policies of countries that resorted to it to get financing. In Latin America in the 1970s, the focus was on vocational education, in the 1980s, was on the formation of lay teachers in the 1990s, the expansion of primary education. With the advent of neoliberal policies in the 1990s and early 2000s, the influence of international organizations became explicit and gained legitimacy by the Brazilian Government. The World Bank came to the inside of public schools through programs, projects and plans prepared by their technicians and advisers and endorsed by the Ministry of Education, separating thinking and doing. The school community was only informed about the programs, projects and plans, receiving guidance needed to fill forms and to accountability.

² The role historically was to import merchandise such as scientific and technological products produced by developed countries.

reduced to 1h per week and offered only once during the whole second degree. Unarguably, as pointed Saviani (2006), the political aspect behind Law 5692 (Brasil, 1971) cannot be passed unnoticed. This law completes the cycle of educational reforms designed to adjust education to the Brazilian political break perpetrated by the military coup of 1964. For this reason, when the author draws our attention to the political issues behind the Law it is noticeable that the military government was more interested in training professionals to form citizens who refute the ideologies of previous periods. During the military period, government's interest was only economic and political. Therefore, it is clear that the goal of educational institutions was to educate citizens that attended the first model (vocational training) and, somehow, could meet the qualification requirements of the market for skilled labor, as the country was being placed on a future capitalist sphere by economic and political moment of the decade in 1970, which took the proportion in the reorganization of the educational system proposed by LDB 1971.

The reform of teaching 1st and 2nd degrees waved for a wide opening to propose universal vocational education [sic] level of 2nd degree in the name of combating the formula "secondary education for our children and vocational education for the children of others" (Saviani, 2006, p. 150).

By differentiating the ideal instruction³ of teaching from the real instruction, Saviani (2006) stresses that were coincidences with finishing the 2nd grade from the real instruction, through which vocational education could be anticipated for the students, for the regions or schools that did not have conditions to overcome de 8th, 6th and even 4th year of the 1st grade, the Reformation caused a formula "terminally cool for our children and terminally real for the children of others" (Saviani, 2006, p. 149). Because of this, there was the opening of private education, while keeping discrimination in defense of ideal and real by the elitists. Thus, there was increasing uniformity of the pattern of private schools in the country, which, consequently, there was the opening of many private institutions, creating a scenario where public schools did not have quality of education. And to ensure the interests of the elite for a qualified school that would ensure the educational standard required by elites, "reversed in teaching 1st and 2nd grades, public-private relationships to established level of 3rd degree" (Saviani, 2006, p. 149).

This all happened for political and economic period⁴ since, as stated earlier, Brazil was fulfilling the requirements of international financial institutions, and, from 1964, after the military coup, the Brazilian government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), started to receive financial aid and technical assistance United States Agency for International (USAID). This organ, the United States Agency for International Development - USAID, in Brazil, is to support Brazilian efforts towards sustainable development, as reported by Nogueira (1999).

Still, according to the claims of Nogueira (1999), the rise of USAID was in 1961 with the signing of the Foreign Assistance Decree by President John F. Kennedy, which had as its central objective to unify the various instruments of U.S. assistance to improve the focus needs

³ The term "instruction" is understood here as "Terminality," according to Saviani (2006).

⁴ As Brazil needed financial resources for its economic development, government leaders at the time, appealed to the World Bank (international organization) to ask for such a feature, and consequently there was a reconfiguration in education in the 1970s to attend to open a vocational training that met the political and economic development of the country in favor of the financial arrangements with international organizations.

(health, safety, education and transportation) of a changing world. USAID is an independent agency of the U.S. federal government, responsible for programs of economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide. Through this agreement MEC-USAID that was implemented the reform in the educational system by Law 5692, and consequently offered to USAID data about the situation of the Brazilian educational system.

Therefore, as corroborates Nogueira (1999), the education reform of 1971 LDB, Law 5.692, of August 11, 1971 (Brazil, 1971), aimed to make the union of acronyms ECM and USAID, simply known MEC-USAID as agreements whose purpose was to improve the Brazilian educational model. This was achieved through the educational reform which aimed at establishing technical assistance agreements and financial cooperation to Brazilian education. The MEC-USAID inserted into a historical context strongly marked by the technicality of educational human capital theory, that is the conception of education as a prerequisite of economic development. Within this perspective, the pedagogical practice was highly controlled and directed by the teacher, with mechanical activities as part of a rigid educational proposal and capable of being fully programmed in detail.

The overvaluation of programmed technology education brought consequences to school that allowed it take great self-sufficiency, recognized by it and all affected communities, thus creating the false idea that learning is not something natural for human beings, but that depends solely on experts and techniques. This way, human⁵ capital would be the fundamental component of uneven economic development between countries.

Since the continuity socioeconomic demanded a political break, this inevitably score the last two decades. Consequently, the inspiration that characterized the liberal Law n. ° 4024 gave way to a technicist tendency in Law n. ° 5692 (Saviani, 2006, p. 122).

In this context, foreign aid for education was intended to provide policy guidelines and techniques for a reorientation of the Brazilian educational system, in the light of the needs of international capitalist development. The U.S. technicians who landed in Brazil, more than concerned about the Brazilian education actually were concerned to ensure the adequacy of the education system to the designs of the economy, particularly the interests of large U.S. corporations.

As explicit Fávero (2006), in practice, the MEC-USAID did not mean direct changes in educational policy, but had a decisive influence in the formulation and guidance, which subsequently led the process of education reform in the Brazilian Military Dictatorship.

It is worth emphasizing that among the committee that appointed the MEC-USAID include: Meira Mattos, established in 1967, and the Working Group of the University Reform (GTRU), of 1968, both decisive in the university reform - Law 5.540 (Brazil, 1968) and the reform of teaching 1st and 2nd degrees - Law 5.692 (Brasil, 1971), which we discussed at the time. The

⁵ Amid the current situation, marked by the presence of new cultural symbolism, in which the central word becomes the "competitiveness", school education, which should be an instrument to build more supportive relationships between people, comes to be seen only as a training tool for individuals contesting a position in the labor market. In this perspective, according to the theoretical postulates of Frigotto (1989), to propagators of the theory of human capital, such a concept is derived by incorporating human beings, and especially in the form of a "human capital" that would be the key component to uneven economic development between countries. The concept of 'human capital' was resumed in the 1980s, by multilateral institutions more directly linked to thought, in education, in the context of the demands resulting from the restructuring process.

GTRU and Law 5.540 (Brasil, 1968) were the other reforms implemented by the MEC-USAID partnership in Brazil. Changes in the financial aspect of the country⁶ reflected in the educational system, resulting in a rapid change as a whole, and therefore, this change has made the teaching of FL were tied to the new requirements of policy issues related to the period.

3. Conclusion

Until the mid-twentieth century, the teaching of FL had very different objectives from the present day⁷, as formerly, from the Empire to the LDB 1971, the LE was understood as part of training for the unit of the human spirit of youth.

Considering this scenario, the LE, in turn, has always been and will be an essential component for the basic education of Brazilians and needs to be considered a knowledge area as important as any other. With the Law 5.692 (Brasil, 1971), English has become the only LE mandatory in high school, causing the disappearance of the teaching of French. Teaching LE binds strictly to the stipulations of the labor market, from the Law 5.692 of 1971, and education shall respond only to vocational aspirations; therefore English is replaced by its supremacy in the scenario of language teaching.

Through history, the senses and the politics of a foreign language could assert, based on the reflections developed in this paper, that the teaching of a FL is directly linked to the political and economic aspects of a country, which, in a way, reflect the power scenario of global economic powers.

Therefore, in the face of everything that was discussed, explored, argued and analyzed in this discursive space, by way of closing this text is guided by the history that enables us to break with the paradigms, with the linearity of the symbolic constructions, question what is subjective because the story brings the ambiguity of what changes and what stays. For this reason, it is in and through history we are able to position ourselves on the determinations and imposition of sense of teaching foreign languages in our country.

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⁶ The world economy and particularly the U.S., went into remission after the oil crisis in 1973. With this, Brazil is experiencing a phase of "economic miracle" that brought the country to an exceptional economic growth that occurred during the military dictatorship, especially between 1969 and 1973 during the government of Emilio Medici Garrastazu. The country began to live a feverish production for which it required skilled labor to perform functions on production lines and assembly of large companies. Thus, language teaching, in this case the English wins emphasis in all public schools in the country to meet this growing demand in the labor market through training in vocational courses quickly extended to the whole country.

⁷ Currently, language teaching is linked to the history and social world. Thus, subjects are exposed to the world through discourse and soon are affected by it, contemplating the relationship with culture and identity of the subject.

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