

Heritage languages of young people from linguistic and cultural minorities in Portuguese schools

monolingual temptation versus multilingual realities

arts and humanities

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Abstract

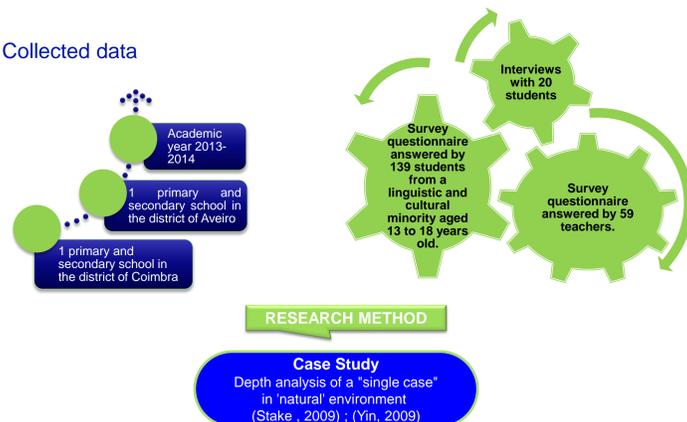
The main purpose of this poster is to present a case study aimed at researching the multilingual repertoires of young people from a linguistic and cultural minority. Further, it analyzes the role of and the place given to heritage languages (HL) in the development of a multilingual and intercultural competence in schools. In the scope of this study, a survey was conducted using two online questionnaires distributed to students from a migrant background and teachers. These students and teachers attended two primary and secondary schools in the central region of Portugal during the academic year 2013–2014. The results show that the students value their HL and perceive them as an instrument of social interaction as well as identity construction and affirmation. Additionally, the results show that both school and teachers recognize and respect the students' linguistic and cultural capital as well as their composite and plural identities. However, they do not take advantage of this in the classroom by not promoting activities that enrich their students' cultural and linguistic culture. In this context, the possibilities for an education in/with HL, as a pedagogical and didactic project, are not yet present in the school curriculum and habitus, on the one hand, because there are no educational language policies that incorporate it, and on the other hand, because both school and teachers do not seem to value the role and usefulness of HL in the promotion of an intercultural and multilingual education.

The migration reality has brought to our country more cultural diversity, and new languages, opening up new horizons, as more recent immigration is not limited to Portuguese-speaking countries (SEF, 2014). The Portuguese school is composed of several minority groups that tend to be perceived as belonging to distinct cultures with specific and distinctive traits. Considering the complexity and tension seen in the social and educational fields, there is growing awareness of the need to understand young people from a linguistic and cultural minority, acknowledging and valuing the role of HL in building multilingual and intercultural competence (Faneca, Araújo e Sá, & Melo-Pfeifer, 2016).

Aims of the study

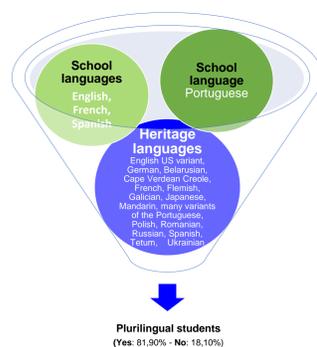
- To contribute to a better understanding of the role of HL in the Portuguese educational context.
- To reflect on the possibilities of developing a HL didactics in Portuguese educational contexts.

Collected data

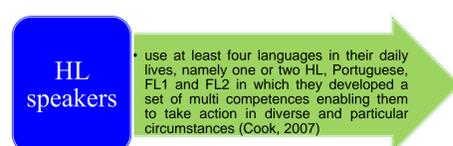


Main outcomes

- These young people are individuals with composite and plural identities, who are plurilingual and pluricultural. However they consider themselves as essentially bilingual in HL and Portuguese. It was possible to perceive an important heterogeneity of language profiles and relations maintained with the different languages, notwithstanding the fact that there is a common denominator: the affective relationship with the HL (Graph 1 & 2).

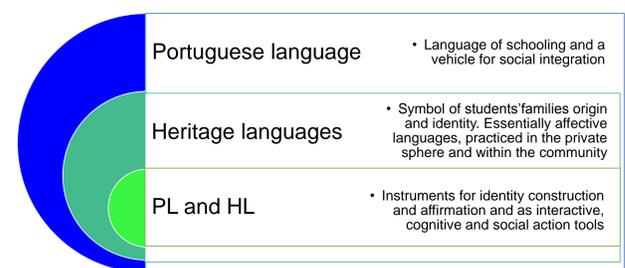


Graph 1 / Languages present in both school



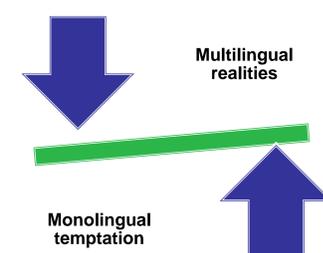
Graph 2 / Heritage Language Speakers

- Portuguese is represented as a school subject-matter.
- Both the HL and Portuguese are considered tools for the construction and affirmation of identity and as instruments of social communication.
- HL are essentially affective languages which are practiced in the private sphere (Graph 3)



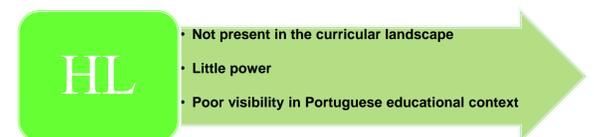
Graph 3 / Representations of languages

- The school and teachers do not take advantage of the students' HL, except for, English, French, German and Spanish which are also foreign languages at school, and do not implement a more plural and inclusive education (Graph 4).



Graph 4 / Dilemma in Portuguese schools

- The diversity, in general, and the presence of the HL, in particular, are still evaluated as obstacles in the classroom, despite all efforts and policies (Little, 2010) (Graph 5).



Graph 5 / The role of Heritage Languages

- Full study results reveal that some students claim to abandon the language and heritage of culture in favor of Portuguese which is a form of 'symbolic violence' (Gogolin, 2008)

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