

**The Educational Policy of Related Languages:  
Spanish and Portuguese  
Spanish as a Foreign Language in Portugal.**

Considering that the mother tongue of all students studying Portuguese in the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (Official School of Languages) in Madrid is Spanish, we could structure resources designed to help with a repertoire of linguistic functions that will help the student in the reformulation of the basic communicative functions. In the first stage, I consider of extreme usefulness the recognition of related or similar structures and/or, far from being unnoticed, the highlighting of the supposed equality and connection between the languages in question. We have experiences in that the student recognises words like *ventana* or *janela*, but fails to remember words that were not sufficiently pointed out, because the general textual or contextual comprehension was given. The categorical repertoire that I refer to will help the student recognise specific functions of the oral language and is a picture of reality, even though in this field it is always difficult sociologically to categorise the uses. In this sense, the function of the linguistic manifestation and the obligatory memorisation of the same would be reduced and would only be carried out when necessary. This first proposal, which would contain what is known as the "threshold level", would have to examine up close the linguistic peculiarities and always, when possible, give examples of its contextual use.

The main factor contributing to confusion (which, when permitted, enables the establishment of the most dangerous errors) is the intervention of the maternal language that is always referred to in the learning process.

The systematic studying of vocabulary is, from my point of view, another of the fundamental supports of the compulsory studying of any foreign language. In the case of Portuguese and Spanish, the recuperation of a contextual lexical body and the search for idiomatic expressions in closely related languages is sufficiently useful and can be utilised as a auxiliary resource and even as creative and theatrical techniques.

The techniques of – collective or individual – creativity enable reproduction of the creative process bringing out behaviours and particular mental attitudes. Its process is practically the same independent

of the type of research that is involved. The research, whether artistic, technical, scientific, didactic, or simply an adaptation of the professional or daily life, is made up of the same phases and, in general, the same steps.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of the learning of foreign languages, there is always certain information of which the students are aware and other information of which they are unaware. But in order to emphasise the resources, permanent training is needed.

It would be interesting to be able to measure and evaluate the quality, and to determine the correlation between the various typical features of the creative subject, but we lack versatile, adaptable and precise measuring instruments for these situations.

In Spain there currently exists a reasonable demand for the teaching of Portuguese, not only at the University level, but also at the intermediate levels. On the contrary to what many believe, Portuguese is not easy to learn for Spanish native speakers, precisely because the apparent similarities between both languages constitute a continuous cause for interferences at phonological, morph-syntactical, and especially lexical levels. To reach a perfect mastery of Portuguese, it is necessary to undertake a profound study of the linguistic structures in order to prevent "false friends". The similarities between both languages, that at one advanced stage can cause difficulties, in the first stage, in change, of great help and motivation, after two or three years of Portuguese the student can acquire a base and linguistic competence deeper than what he/she had acquired if he/she had not dedicated the same time to learning another foreign language that was not romance. In this sense, pointing out the document in the frame of reference, the portfolio and the threshold level, essential documents in these moments to move towards a Europe of Languages, in this European Year of Languages celebrated by this event.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the tendency of the rising demand of Spanish teaching with specific goals, as a consequence of the business appraisal of the Spanish language, indicates rapid economic growth as caused by the push from Mercosur and the diverse process of liberalisation of new sectors of the market (like the incorporation of the business area in the

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<sup>1</sup> Sanz Juez, A. (1999), "Educación Creativa y Aptitudes", Polibea, Madrid, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Portuguese is taught in the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (Official School of Languages) in the Autonomous Communities of Madrid, Extremadura, Castilla-Leon, Cataluña, and Galicia.

internet). According to the report of *El Español en el Mundo* (1998) prepared by the Instituto Cervantes, the expansive cycle of the Spanish language will continue until 2010. I believe, thus, that the combined action of organisations like the Instituto Cervantes or the Instituto Camões, whose goals are very tied to this promotion of their languages, should make themselves though their regular actions intensified and without search of immediate economic results. The *Acción educativa en el Exterior* (Spanish Educational Movement abroad), regulated by the Royal Decree 1027/1993 from June 25<sup>th</sup> (B.O.E. from E. from August 6<sup>th</sup>), guarantees the cultural and educational presence, establishing a network of educational establishments designated by the Spanish state or mixed design; Spanish sections, bilingual sections, etc...

I must highlight the function of the linguistic assessors (*Asesores lingüísticos*) which have the specific obligation of co-ordinating, assessing, supporting, promoting, and empowering the language and Spanish culture together with organisms, universities, etc.. In my case position, I worked as a linguistic assessor in the Embassy. From 1992 to 1994 I observed directly the complementary actions for the implantation of Spanish in the Mercosur in general and in the state of Santa Catarina, in particular, together with the Education Secretary in Florianópolis. Experience that provided both interests that served as a point of reference.

The analysis and evaluation of the real situation of Spanish in Brazil cannot but motivate us to continue the search for serious methodological proposals that contribute effectively to the creation or adaptation of a specific methodology.

To that end one must incorporate the necessity to enhance the specialised formation of the authentic administrators of the implantation of Portuguese or Spanish as educators. All of it takes time and permanent effort. Moreover, the accelerated requirements would inundate the bureaucratic fabric that supports it if there was not a previous systematic analysis, and if the educational ideas were not organised in reference to definite action.

The experts must develop an adequate dialectic formulation that contributes to elaborating an appropriate, serious, coherent, and, above all, rigorous methodology that supports Spanish and Portuguese, as in this case, the tracing and quick spreading of closely related languages. In this sense the reaction of the Instituto Cervantes and the Instituto Camões (as well as translators and interpreters) must assist in overcoming this historic shortcoming. Because of this, I believe that for the

integral formation of teachers of Spanish as a foreign language (and in particular reference to teachers of Portuguese as a mother tongue), it is necessary to elaborate a specific methodology where the general principles of learning a foreign language are contemplated but with a permanent vision of genetically close languages.

That new conception of the development should include a global proposal where the economic, the social, the cultural, and the political are integrated harmoniously, and that the educational and the political have premeditated articles with planned actions that are well analysed and not left to improvisation.

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