The (Bi)Literacy Social Practices in the Border Region Between Brazil-Uruguay[1]

Práticas sociais de (bi)letramentos em zona de fronteira entre Brasil-Uruguai

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RESUMO: Neste trabalho, focalizamos a zona fronteiriça uruguaio-brasileira de Aceguá/Aceguá, para descrever as atividades de letramentos realizadas em uma ou mais línguas (BORTOLINI, 2009; HORNBERGER, 2004) por alunos e seus familiares fora do contexto escolar, em suas práticas sociais cotidianas. A pesquisa combinou perspectivas metodológicas quantitativa e qualitativa (cf. RAUEN, 2006), fazendo o uso de formulários aplicados em entrevistas, notas de campo e observações. Os resultados sugerem que a manifestação de diferentes línguas ocorre na vida cotidiana dos sujeitos que vivem na fronteira focalizada. Embora o português seja a língua predominante, o biletramento é localmente um fenômeno importante e corrente na comunidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: fronteira, bilinguismo, letramentos.

ABSTRACT: The present work focuses on the Brazilian-Uruguayan border region at Aceguá/Aceguá in an attempt to describe the literacy activities carried out in one or more languages (BORTOLINI, 2009; HORNBERGER, 2004) by students and their relatives outside the school context, in their daily lives. This research

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articulated quantitative and qualitative methodological perspectives (cf. RAUEN, 2006), and made use of forms applied in interviews, observations and field notes. The results suggest that the manifestation of different languages occur in the daily activities of border subjects. Even though Portuguese is the predominant language in use in some of the activities, biliteracy was found to be an important and current phenomenon in the lives of the individuals of the community.

KEYWORDS: border, bilingualism, literacy.

1. Introduction

This work presents a research developed on the Brazilian-Uruguayan border, more precisely on the border section of Aceguá (Brazil) and Aceguá (Uruguay). In the community in focus, there is no geographic barrier between the two countries, which contributes to the trespassing of the subjects who carry out their daily lives in the region. In this sense, "one learns the essence of a way of life interpenetrated by diverse conceptions and practices of those who live there, because on the border spontaneous laces emerge independently from the official line demarcated by the border States" (PEREIRA, 2009, p. 54, our translation). Bearing this in mind, the contact/conflict among languages and cultures is constant; therefore, the bilingualism[2] and transculturality[3] are experienced in the border region.

Considering that described above, this work aims to describe literacy and/or biliteracy activities in which the border subjects (family members of students and students themselves) participate outside school contexts, in their daily social practices, as well as reflect on the implication of biliteracy on education. This research is situated in the area of Critical Applied Linguistics (URZÊDA-FREITAS; PESSOA, 2012), and follows a discursive perspective (ALMEIDA; CAMPOS ALMEIDA, 2011; ANDRADE, 2011; CORACINI, 2007; UYENO, 2011). This work also relies on previous research about bi-multilingualism and the border region, which are cited throughout this article. It is important to mention, though, that few studies can be found on the specific context of the Aceguá/Aceguá border. It is also important to highlight that developed research has mostly focused on formal educational settings (cf.

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[2] This concept will be better developed in the sections that follow.

[3] The term transculturality is used in the sense of movement, interaction and fusion among different cultures in contact (COX; ASSIS-PETERSON, 2007). This term is also fitting to denaturalize meanings that come from the idea of cultural homogeneity.

CORRÊA and DORNELLES, 2010a, 2010b; TRINDADE, BEHARES and FONSECA, 1995).

In the border context, it is important to focus on the linguistic factor, because in the communities located within that space, different languages constantly come in contact with each other, that is, two or more languages coexist as a means of communication. Thus, bi-multilingualism becomes a crucial issue for these groups. For this reason, it is important to reflect on what we, the authors, understand by bilingual/bilingualism and make some relevant considerations. Brian, Brovetto and Geymonat (2007) establish some criteria to consider an individual to be a bilingual, and give emphasis to the level of proficiency necessary to qualify bilingualism. Maher (2007, p. 77), on the other hand, opposes the idea of categorizing and argues that the question for which we should seek an answer is not "How should a subject behave to be qualified as a bilingual?", but rather "How does a subject that makes use of more than one language behave?" (our translation).

The border is a space that presents a very peculiar social dynamics, which involves the constant contact among distinct languages and cultures, which is the *locus* that forms the border subject. S/he is "the one that is, in a (unique, intransposable, irreversible) embodied form, affected by all the contingencies of its unique condition" (IRALA; ALVAREZ, 2011, p. 67). In schools located in the border region, the linguistic factor is sometimes taken as a negative aspect that might impede teaching. Students' bilingualism/biliteracy is most of the time, made invisible, and schools are traditionally directed by political and ideological interests that expect monolingual teaching, as previous research in the focused region has shown (cf. CORRÊA; DORNELLES, 2010a, 2010b). In this manner, the process of homogenization is reinforced, as is the process of stigmatization, because "when one homogenizes one marks the difference", and "when one marks the difference, one neglects the *other* as a historical agent" (ALMEIDA; CAMPOS ALMEIDA, 2011, p. 164, our translation and emphasis on the original).

The complexity of the dynamics of the border region and its impacts on people's lives in and outside the school instigate our interest to apprehend the border subjects and the practices that constitute them. The guiding question to our research is: Which (bi)literacy activities are carried out by the border subjects outside the schooling context? Our purpose is to generate empirical support to discuss questions related to language use in the border region. This research was developed in a school community, focusing on the following subjects: students' parents or legal guardian, the students themselves

and the educational managers of schools located in the Brazilian-Uruguayan border region.

In the next section, we present the theoretical background of the research and reflect on the border(s) and the language(s), reflecting on literacies and biliteracies. After, we present the design of the research, describing the way we generated and analyzed the data. Last, we present the analysis and some considerations about the results and its implications.

2. Border(s) and language(s)

Although "border" is a polissemic term and it is temerary to attribute fixed characteristics to it, it is historically transposed by a legitimated and logically stable meaning – that of separation/demarcation of limits, especially from a geographic or political contemplation that tends to refer to it as a fixed area.

However, the border represents more than a geopolitical limit, because it is better understood by the mobility point of view. As Sturza (2010, p. 88) points out "human displacement, migration, interrelations make the border much more than a periferic social space at the boundaries of the State. This is a concept that invokes the border as a place which is emptied of historical, political and social subjects".

The polissemic understanding of the border, that is, the idea that the concept of border includes multiple meanings, depending on who utters and where the utterance emerges, is a novelty. The traditional and socially widespread notion comes from the geopolitical interest sustained throughout history, which establishes the separation/limit among countries. In this sense, according to Finbow (2011), the consolidation of the languages as distinct was a latent question to the survival of the peoples as geopolitically well-defined Nation States.

Nevertheless, what could be observed was "a movement toward the dissolution of the ideal of a geographic space delineated by language, in other words, that of a spacially defined linguistic border" (GUISAN, 2011, p. 147, our translation). This movement can be clearly seen in border regions, such as that which characterizes the space that connects Brazil and Uruguay. In this space, there is no set linguistic border, given that in the dynamics of social relations, the subject manifests traces of a heterogeneous constitution which transcends a historical process of homogeneization marked by a cultural and ideological policy (ALMEIDA; CAMPOS ALMEIDA, 2011).

In the border context, the contact among languages and cultures, which are generated by subjects from distinct nationalities, is constant, because inhabitants

share a common geographic space, the border region.[4] An immediate result of this way of living is linguistic conflict. Lagares (2011, p. 174) discusses this linguistic conflict, which he understands as "a game of forces and interests" that occurs around language in society and that constitutes the space for political action. The notion of linguistic conflict points to a dynamic perspective, but also to the standard language,[5] be it related to variables of the same language or to different languages, "mainly in the many cases in which these distinctions are not very clear" (our translation). The standard ends up exclusively and ideologically representing the idea of "the" language. Such a representation might culminate in prejudice and negative attitudes, provoking discursive formations permeated by ideas of linguistic uniformity and correctness.

In this light, it is important to observe that bilingualism is a common phenomenon in the border region; however, there are different expectations about the performance of a bilingual subject, which points to diverging conceptions of bilingualism. Brian, Brovetto, and Geymonat (2007, p.11), for instance, who are grounded in the structuralist tradition regarding language, establish the following criteria to consider an individual bilingual:[6]

> Una persona bilíngue es aquella que (a) tiene la capacidad de utilizar dos lenguas en ambas modalidades lingüísticas: oral (hablar y entender), y escrita (leer e escribir); (b) tiene um control sustancial em todos los niveles de ambas lenguas (fonógico, morfológico, sintáctico, semántico y pragmático); (c) puede eligir uma lengua y usarla de acuerdo a las funciones sociales y los requerimentos del contexto comunicativo; y (d) posee dos sistemas lingüísticos que es capaz de mantener separados.

Maher (2007, p.73), on the other hand, revoicing contemporary perspectives, argues that:

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[4] "The border region consists of the territory 'strips' of each of the sides of the international demarcation. They are characterized by interactions that, though international, create a geographic space of the border, which is only recognizable in local/regional scales of transborder interactions" (BRASIL, 2005, p. 152, our translation).

[5] Language variety which has prestige and is seen as the norm (cf. LAGARES, 2011).

[6] We opted not to translate the citations that we present outside of the main text. It is a way to value academic writing as a multilingual space of knowledge production.

> O bilíngue – não o idealizado, mas o de verdade – não exibe comportamentos idênticos na língua X e na língua Y. A depender do tópico, da modalidade, do gênero discursivo em questão, a depender das necessidades impostas por sua história pessoal e pelas exigências de sua comunidade de fala, ele é capaz de se desempenhar melhor em uma língua do que na outra – e até mesmo de se desempenhar em apenas uma delas em certas práticas comunicativas.

Within the fluidity of exchanges in border regions, special attention is demanded for the linguistic experience, since "language is much more than a set of forms, because it is also an instrument of socialization that is suitable to communication, to the exchange of ideas, to transport and shape a view of the world and of the subjects, a place where the tension between the social and the individual is solved" (RAITER, 1999, p.15, our translation).

Languages are complex linguistic systems that materialize through communicative interaction, and it is important to emphasize that this interaction takes place in socially and historically defined contexts. As Lagares (2011) suggests, our conception of language interferes in social constructions articulated for concrete political realities generally identified within Nation States. César and Cavalcanti (2007, p.61), upon reflecting on the concept of language in movement and always dynamic, make use of the metaphor of the kaleidoscope:

> (...) sendo feito por diversos pedaços, cores, formas e combinações, é um jogo de (im)possililidades fortuitas e, ao mesmo tempo, acondicionadas pelo contexto e pelos elementos, um jogo que se explica sempre fugazmente no exato momento em que o objeto é colocado na mira do olho e a mão o movimenta; depois, um instante depois, já é outra coisa.

We consider the kaleidoscope to be the best metaphor to refer to the expressiveness of language, especially in the case of the language(s) in border regions, which is/are seen in so many different ways by those who live in that space and by outsiders, as well as by those who have the desire to understand it/them and, in this manner, accept the challenge of researching it/them.

3. The border in focus

Nowadays, the border has been conceived as a peculiar space, which articulates divergent and convergent conceptions, and transforms them from being stigmatized to being romanticized. The border is a conflituous and

complex space, and its recognition as a marginalized region has been questioned by geographic, political, and cultural factors. Stigmas mainly occur due to the media and the negative means through which it frequently describes the daily life in the border regions (cf. SILVEIRA, 2009). By contrast, the romantic view is attached to a view of the border as a space of integration that embraces everything. However, this integration is generally not confirmed, as can be seen in educational terms. One holds the integrationist view because it is convenient in some discourses and/or aspects, yet it is illusory in others. In this sense, MERCOSUL policies should represent a channel toward effective integration, "which should not be restricted to economic aspects, but which advance into other areas, such as cultural and social issues and especially education" (DUARTE, 2011, p. 16, our translation).

In practice, teaching in border regions is normally directed by the same pedagogical concepts carried out in zones that are not located on the border (cf. IRALA, 2012). The context that embraces the school community, that is, the space (border region) and its subject-students, is desconsidered. Therefore, the concept of a community of practice, as developed by Eckert and Mcconell-Ginet (1992), becomes relevant, since it focuses on the dynamics of social relations:

> A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor. A community of practice is different as a social construct from the traditional notion of community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages. Indeed, it is the practices of the community and members' differentiated participation in them that structures the community socially (ECKERT; MCCONELL-GINET, 2014, p. 8).

In the present study, we focus on the border between Brazil and Uruguay, which has an extension of 1,068.4 kilometers, the separation of which occurs mainly through an imaginary line called "dry border". We call the attention to the fact that both nations have experienced similar processes of formation as Nation States. Brazil and Uruguay were European colonies that adopted the language of the colonizer as official languages when they became independent countries. Both the Portuguese and the Spanish empires fought over the geopolitical demarcation between their territories, especially on the platinum region. Thus, the southern Brazilian society constitutes itself by using the border as a reference point.

Our work concentrates on the so-called "twin cities" of Aceguá/Aceguá, situated on the Brazilian-Uruguayan border, forming a "rurban"[7] (BORTONI-RICARDO, 2011) border section, with a population of 4,138 inhabitants. The Aceguá zone is 60 kilometers from Bagé,[8] on the Brazilian side, and 60 kilometers from Melo, on the Uruguayan side. In this Brazilian-Uruguayan zone, the official demarcation between countries is set only by stones along the demarcation strip, with the International Avenue "separating" the twin cities, which does not limit the interaction among people that live in both places.

FIGURE 1 - Stone on the International Avenue in Aceguá/Aceguá–personal archive

In this community, situations of bi-multilingualism can be observed, because the languages of interactions, besides Portuguese, Spanish, and Uruguayan Portuguese,[9] includes the use of Arabic and German, which are used by the immigrants and their descendents. We can thus consider this to be a transcultural community, since this is the concept that better defines the

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[7] We refer to Bortoni-Ricardo's (2011) concept, because the border region in Aceguá/Aceguá presents traces of urban and rural societies.

[8] Aceguá (Brazil) was awarded its independence from the city of Bagé in 1996 and became a new city in 2001.

[9] Usually known as *portunhol.* In this work, we understand *portunhol* as a language "even though it is still not instrumentalized in grammar and dictionaries, because we consider it to constitute subjects" (MOTA, 2012, p. 201, our translation).

border context. In addition to conceiving cultural diversity/multiculturalism, transculturality involves movement, interaction, and consequent fusion among cultures that come in contact with one another.

The border regions figure as multilingual spaces. However, we observe that, even facing these contexts, political and ideological views that privilege and defend monolingualism are both implicitly or explicitly perpetuated. A very common idea is that there is a superior and an inferior language, that is, a diglossic situation in which two contact languages cohabit, but one overlaps the other. Generally, in bi-multilingual contexts, one of the languages/varieties enjoys the social status, the legitimacy, whereas the other remains in social disadvantage (cf. Heller, 1996).[10] This monolingual view is often testified in school contexts, where bilingualism is usually considered a "problem" and the subject-student is encouraged (or forced) to temporarily renounce the language/variety that is not chosen by the school. The pedagogical specificities of language teaching on the border are not considered. Thus "the schooling culture resists the inclusion of the diversity of its social actors" (CÉSAR; CAVALCANTI, 2007, p. 50, our translation).
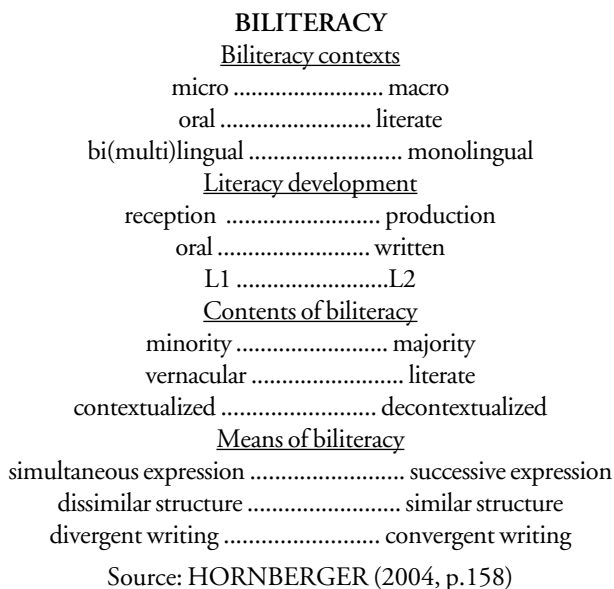
4. Considerations about (bi)literacies

> Ler não é decifrar, como num jogo de adivinhações, o sentido de um texto. É a partir de um texto, ser capaz de atribuir-lhe significação, conseguir relacioná-lo a todos os outros textos significativos para cada um (...) e, dono da própria vontade, entregar-se a esta leitura (...) (LAJOLO, 2009, p.101)

Literacy means more than the codification and decodification of written language. It refers to processes and practices that encompass progressive appropriation of reading and writing in discursive practices. It thus goes beyond the techniques of writing or alphabetic acquisition. Literacy is the ability to

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[10] Heller (1996) problematizes the process of language ligitimization in a French-language minority high school in Ontario (Canada), which has the aim of bilingual education, but ends up promoting *monolingual* education and thus idealized views of the bilingual subject. She points out that the linguistic policy that predominates in the examined context is underlined by a "concept of bilingualism as a pair of fully developed monolingualisms, as distinct from a unified form of competence drawing from a range of language varieties" (p.145).

situate itself within a context where reading and writing have meaning and become part of the social activities of the subject. In Soares' words (2006, p. 75, our translation), "literacy is a set of reading and writing practices that results from a conception that considers what, how, when, and why to read and to write". It thus depends mainly on how reading and writing are conceptualized and practiced in a specific social context.

Regarding biliteracy, Hornberger (2004) defines this term as all situations in which communication takes place in two or more languages through the use of writing or about writing. Therefore, biliteracy refers to a literacy social practice which occurs in more than one language. In this sense, Hornberger (2004) applies the idea of biliteracy continua, through a model that characterizes the context, the means, the content, and the development of biliteracy. From these categories, the author demonstrates the multiple and complex interrelations between bilingualism and literacy, as can be observed in the figure below:

BILITERACY
<u>Biliteracy contexts</u>
micro .... macro
oral .... literate
bi(multi)lingual .... monolingual
<u>Literacy development</u>
reception .... production
oral .... written
L1 ....L2
<u>Contents of biliteracy</u>
minority .... majority
vernacular .... literate
contextualized .... decontextualized
<u>Means of biliteracy</u>
simultaneous expression .... successive expression
dissimilar structure .... similar structure
divergent writing .... convergent writing
Source: HORNBERGER (2004, p.158)

The proposed model intends to underlie the development of linguistic research, teaching and planning in multilingual context. Hornberger (2004) justifies the use of the idea of the continua to highlight that all the points are integrated and to break with the binary oppositions that we usually create, thus highlighting the articulation of experiences, abilities, and knowledge (HORNBERGER, 2OO4) throughout the linguistic processes carried out in

two or more languages. However, as the author asserts, the traditional educational policies and practices about biliteracy tend to direct more power to one extreme of the continuum than to the other.

We follow Bortolini's view (2009, p. 43, our translation and emphasis in the original) that not all subjects experience in their daily lives "differing and variable literacy practices, but school is the place where many could have the opportunity to carry on an *intense experience*, dealing with diverse social practices that involve written texts". This is the reason why we believe that (bi)literacy needs to be recognized as an enriching ability of language practices in differing social spheres. However, as (bi)literacy practices are not always incorporated in teaching planning, they are not part of the conceptions explored by schools or their agents in border regions (cf. CORRÊA; DORNELLES, 2010a, 2010b).

The present research sought to delineate an overview of the literacy activities carried out in Portuguese and Spanish outside the school context by the communities' students and their relatives. As for literacy activity, Bortolini (2009, p. 17, our translation) refers to "social action reported by participants and in which writing is central for its accomplishment". Relying on the author, we consider our data to be formed by literacy activities, rather than literacy practices and/or literacy events. Our procedure for generating data included listening to the experience of subjects about (bi)literacy activities and written materials that the subjects have, and we did not observe them engaged in literacy events.

5. Research design

The present work is situated within the interface between quantitative and qualitative perspectives (cf. RAUEN, 2006). For this reason, the present research combined the use of quantitative and qualitative instruments, as well as descriptions and analysis. The data were generated through forms applied in interviews, observations, and field notes.

To achieve the objective of this research — to describe the written materials and the (bi)literacy activities carried out by students and their relatives outside the school context — we used forms, which were applied through interviews, observations, and field notes. The forms present a list of questions defined according to information that we wanted to access (RAUEN, 2006). These questions were based on Bortolini (2009), with small adaptations, such as the addition of activities and the preparation of forms specifically for students (Bortolini's were not produced with students in mind).

The process of data generation occurred in 2012, when we visited the homes of some of the students of the four schools that were closest to the border demarcation. It is important to highlight that we chose not to distinguish the analysis of the data generated according to the official boundaries of the countries. The justification for that is our conception of the border as a section and not a limit. This methodological procedure was reinforced when we discovered that there are Uruguayans living in the Brazilian territory, which made it problematic to consider the subjects as belonging to "one side" or to the "other side" of the border demarcation.

We applied the forms to twenty-four students, including those with Brazilian or Uruguayan nationality and *doblechapa*,[11] between eight and nineteen years of age. We also applied the form to thirteen students' relatives:[12] ten mothers, two grandmothers, and one sister. The criterion to apply the forms with the relatives was to search for the legal guardian of the student.

Below, we present the results of the data analysis generated with the subject participants to quantify the (bi)literacy activities and written materials that are available to border subjects.

6. Analysis of the forms applied to students and their relatives

The forms applied to students and their relatives list 16 (sixteen) social activities that involve reading and/or writing; 16 (sixteen) written materials; 15 (fifteen) written materials in which the interlocutor has/had contact at work; and, specifically for students, 22 (twenty-two) extra class activities involving reading and/or writing. The (bi)literacy activities addressed were varied and belonged to media, religious, literary, school, digital, bureaucratic, and commercial spheres. In this sense, as Euzébio (2012, p.726) points out:

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[11] Popular designation of subjects that have dual nationality (Brazilian and Uruguayan). Sánchez (2002) explains the origin of the term *doblechapa*. It appeared for the fist time in the 60's to refer to the cars that were bought in Santana do Livramento (Brazil) and that could circulate in Rivera (Uruguai) because of a license given by the Uruguayan City Mayor. This way, these cars had two car licenses (*chapas*), one Brazilian and the other, Uruguayan. As time passed, the meaning was dislocated, and is nowadays very commonly used to refer to the subjects.

[12] The family members that were responsible for the students and answered the forms were mostly women, but we did not take this information into consideration for the analysis, since gender was not a relevant category for the purpose of this study.

Tomar a escrita sob a perspectiva dos usos sociais a que se presta consiste em conceber a língua, tanto na modalidade oral quanto escrita, como objeto social. Sob esse olhar, o fenômeno do letramento implica compreender os diferentes usos sociais da escrita não apenas no que tange às práticas de ensino da língua no espaço escolar, tal como tem sido compreendido historicamente, mas, também, no que diz respeito às práticas de usos sociais da escrita que têm lugar em outras instituições, tais como família, igreja, trabalho, entre outros espaços presentes na vida social.

Table of the (bi)literacy daily activities carried out by families

Activities carried out more frequently	Activities carried out less frequently
Preparing shopping lists	Searching for good prices on flyers and newspapers
Writing electronic messages on the cell phone	Pronouncing proverbs

We primarily focus on the (bi)literacy activities carried out by the students' relatives. Figure 2 below presents the frequency of activities and the language(s) used to carry them out in the family space:
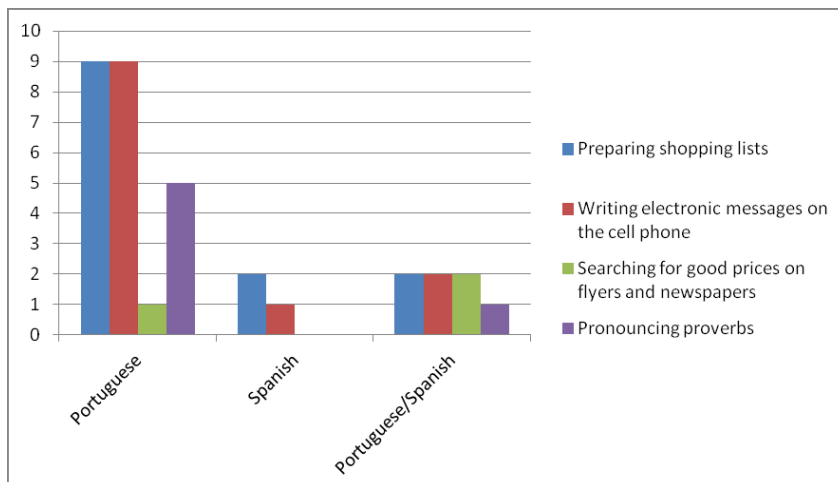

FIGURE 2 - Graph of the occurrences of languages
in the activities practiced by the families

The activities of *preparing shopping lists* and *writing electronic messages on the cell phone* represented the most common activities in all families: the first usually carried out by the *mother of the home*, as they themselves pointed

out. Portuguese language use was predominant in both activities, since 9 (nine) of the families mentioned the use of Portuguese to the implementation of the activities, to the detriment of 2 (two) families that mentioned that they would use Spanish in *preparing shopping lists* and 1 (one) that would use this same language in *writing electronic messages on the cell phone*. Similar results occurred regarding the use of both Portuguese and Spanish to carry out the two mentioned activities.

As for the activities related to *searching for good prices on flyers and newspapers* and *pronouncing proverbs*, these were the activities that were the least indicated by the families. The conversation about the first activity suggests that the families do not have access (because of economic or cultural reasons) to newspapers in circulation in the border region. Regarding the second less frequent activity, subjects demonstrated that they did not know what *proverbs* were. We thus gave examples, but still, families said they were not familiar with the activity.

Regarding written materials, we present below a table that shows the activities that are most and least present within the subjects' homes:

Table of written materials found at home

Most present materials	*Least* present materials
Children's books	Telephone books
Medicine leaflets	Newspapers
Calendars	
Products with written packages	
Certificates/Degrees	

The figure below shows the occurrences of written materials that exist in the subjects' residences. *Medical leaflets*, for instance, is a material that is present in almost all the homes in Portuguese and appears in Portuguese and Spanish in the home of only 2 (two) families. The lack of written materials in Spanish called our attention. Concerning the other materials, the percentage indicates relevant occurrences in both languages, especially of *products with written packages*, *calendars*, *children's books*, and *certificates/degrees*. A very similar result was found in relation to the occurrence of only Portuguese:
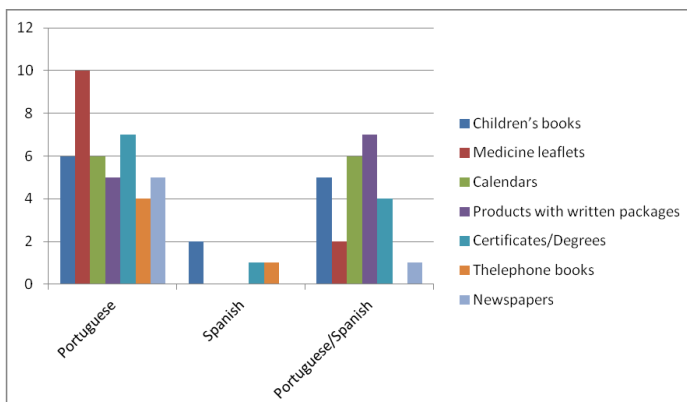
FIGURE 3 - Graph of the occurrence of languages in written materials at home

Children's books were recognized as one of the most common written materials that families have at home, suggesting that the incentive and the investment to value the literary sphere have reached the domestic space. However, the *adult fictional book*, also listed in the applied form, was very rarely mentioned in the narratives of the subjects, which points to a discontinuity and devaluation of the mentioned practice in adult's lives. Below are some images of the written materials that subjects had at home:
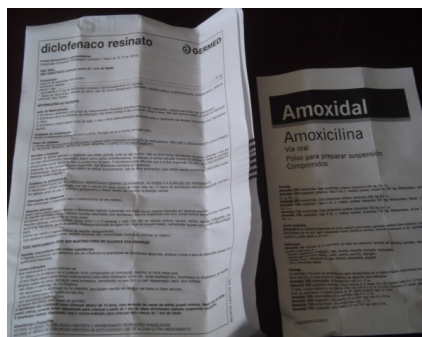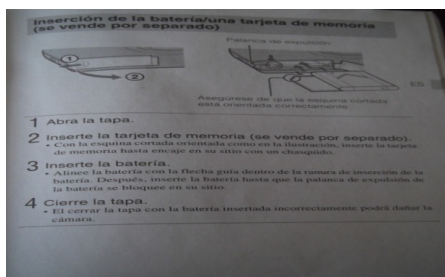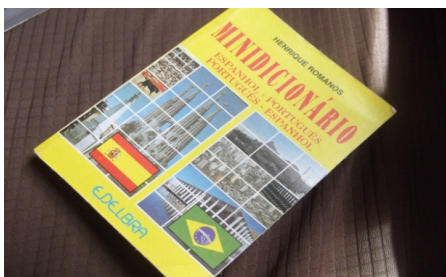
Table of written materials used at work

Most materials	*Least* materials
Manuals	Street guides (no one)
Messages	Letters
Requests and receipts	Reports
Notes and posters	Maps

The next figure presents the written materials used by the subjects at work. It is interesting to illustrate the professions of the subjects, which are varied and distinct, such as: owner of a shop; clerk at a lottery; Portuguese language teacher; supervisor of cashiers at the freeshop; cafeteria worker; hairdresser/owner of a shop; owner of a bakery; housekeeper; public servent; housewives.
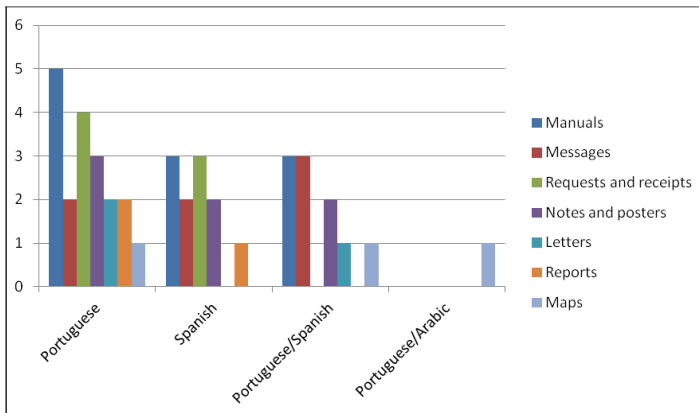

FIGURE 4 - Graph of the occurrences of languages in written materials used at work

As figure 4 demonstrates, *manuals, messages, requests and receipts, notes, and posters* are the most common written materials used by subjects in their workplace. The languages themselves occur only in Portuguese, only in Spanish, as well as in both cited languages, except for the *requests and receipts*, since subjects informed that these occur in either one language or other, but not in both. By contrast, *letters, reports,* and *maps* were less cited as part of the written materials used in the workplace. When asked about *street guides*, most of the answers were accompanied by laughs and ironies, which were justified by the fact that in the border region of Aceguá/Aceguá all people know each other. They said that the two twin cities are small and that this kind of material was not necessary there. We also observed the occurrence of another language,

Arabic,[13] in *maps* exhibited (also in Portuguese) on the wall of a shop of one of the families, which is of Arabian descent.

Another interesting finding is that some of the subjects live in one national territory and work in the other: the Uruguayan teacher that lives in Aceguá/Brazil and teaches Portuguese at a Uruguayan school in Aceguá/Uruguay; the supervisor of the freeshop, who has Brazilian nationality, lives in Aceguá/Brazil, works in the Uruguayan territory and uses mainly Spanish written materials in her daily routine at work. One of the interviewed subjects said: "I'm Uruguayan; I live on the Brazilian side of the border; I have a bakery on the Uruguayan side and my husband is Brazilian, of German descent, and works in Brazil" (field notes, our translation). The free and daily transit from one country to the other establishes specific practices/dynamics of binational relations between Brazil and Uruguay in Aceguá/Aceguá, and our data points to the recognition of the transcultural constitution of this space.

Table of (bi)literacy activities carried out by students

Activities *most* frequently carried out by students	Activities *least* frequently carried out by students
Drawing frameworks and writing summaries to study	Reading medicine leaflets
Writing electronic messages on the computer	Reading and/or writing letters
	Reading newspapers

We can observe in the next figure that among the more frequent activities carried out by students, the use of both Portuguese and Spanish predominate. (Bi)literacy activities can then be considered meaningful for this group of subjects, which may well impact the subjects' schooling.

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[13] We verified that, in the region our investigation took place, the Arabic language is present in both written materials and biliteracy events of Arab descendants, such as the reading of the Holy Koran. Even though Arabic does not have the same dynamics as Portuguese and Spanish, it constitutes subjects in the community and points to a focus for future studies.
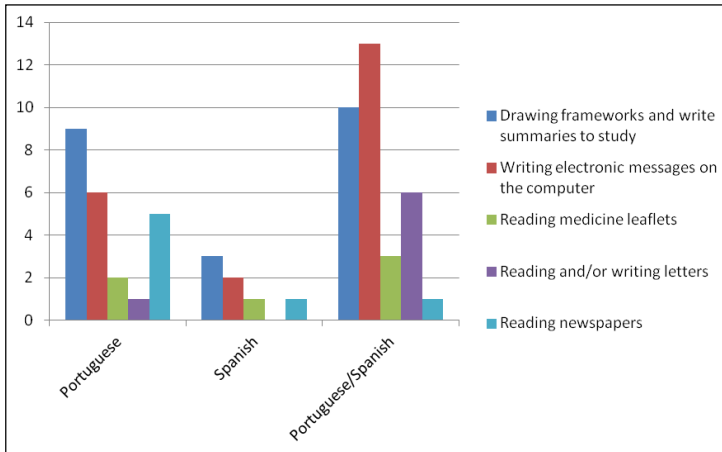
FIGURE 5 - Graph of the occurrence of languages in activities carried out by students

Drawing on the interviews that resulted in the data presented in figure 5, it can be inferred that the students from the Spanish/Portuguese immersion school (the only one that has a bilingual education proposal in the region) verbalize more about carrying out activities in both Portuguese and Spanish, and, from our point of view, it suggests that they are more conscious of the biliteracy activities they engage in everyday. On the other hand, we notice that some of the subjects, when telling about the occurrences of the languages in daily activities, follow the rationale that "if I'm Brazilian, the language that is available for my routine activities is Portuguese", or, the inverse, "if I'm Uruguayan, then I use only Spanish". These assertions echo monolingual ideologies, such as that which correlates one nation to one language, and hides the complex and fluid characteristics of linguistic exchanges in the border region.

7. Final remarks

The present work produced evidence about the linguistic-discursive (bi)literacy activities/materials related to the lives of subjects of a community located in the border region in Aceguá/Aceguá (Brazil/Uruguay). The study relied on previous research on literacies and biliteracies (BORTOLINI, 2009; HORNBERGER, 2004), and focused on the activities carried out by students and their relatives outside the school context. The results suggest that the manifestation of different languages occurs in the daily activities of border

subjects. Even though Portuguese is the predominant language in use in some of the activities, we found that biliteracy is an important and current phenomenon in the lives of the subjects of the community.

As for the implications of the study concerning education, it can be concluded that it is necessary to plan an educational intervention that is appropriate for the border linguistic context, which must consider the existence of subjects with varied appropriations of the linguistic capital available within their community, as well as the diverse effects that these appropriations have in their school lives. In this sense, the border integrates specificities that demand sensible and collaborative actions from the involved countries, "because the border is a place constant of flow and complementarities, and education plays a fundamental role in integration" (PEREIRA, 2009, p.54, our translation).

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