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BILINGUALISM FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: CODE SWITCHING AND CODE MIXING IN TODDLERS

CAMPINA GRANDE – PB
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Trabalho de conclusão de curso apresentado ao Curso de Letras da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba como requisito para a obtenção do grau de Licenciatura em Letras com habilitação em Língua Inglesa.

Orientador: Prof. Bruno Maiorquino Silva

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies have proved that bilingualism provides different linguistic behavior in preschool children. The studies reveal that it is incident and natural the code switching and mixing among toddlers. This paper will promote discussions about definitions of code switching, code-mixing according to Centeno (2013) and Blanc and Hamers (2000), bilingualism with Bialystok (1991, 2001, 2010) and, based on the researches of Potowski (2007) discuss how the immersion system works to give basis for the experiences that will be showed throughout examples from the experiences and discussions we had about linguistic behavior in toddlers.

Key-words: Code switching. Code mixing. Bilingualism. Preschool children.

INTRODUCTION

This research will analyze the concepts of bilingualism, the goals and the impacts of bilingual immersion teaching method for toddlers with ages between eighteen to thirty months. It will also be carried out a discussion about how young children acquire/learn the languages, as well as the consequences of the bilingual education on linguistic aspects.

As we live in the globalization era, it means that with the economic progress, international politic integration and technology advance, people are interconnected. Speaking more than one language is not about vanity or bragging, it is a real necessity. Education matters more than ever. As a teacher in a bilingual preschool in an English immersion program, I recognize the importance of knowing how the process of acquisition works and which possible impacts it can develop for toddlers' linguistic learning processes.

According to Baker and García (2007), educational needs and focus change to comply with people's communicative needs. With this purpose, the bilingual school system was created in the 1970's and its basic aim was to teach most basic schools' subjects in the second language and some in the mother tongue. Since it started being developed, many researches were conducted from that moment on about bilingual learning programs. The authors mention that, in the early years, the students are immersed in the foreign language and as the years pass, the mother tongue is inserted and the child is able to communicate in both languages. The studies are comprised of alterations in the linguistic behavior, in which we can notice code switching and code mixing during this process, as we are going to study forward with Blanc and Hamers (2000) and Centeno (2013).

Baker and García also mention that the number of bilingual schools has been increasing really fast for the last ten years around the world. And, even though there are bilingual schools in many different languages, such as French and Spanish, the most sought

are the English ones, even if the families do not speak it fluently or at home. It is important to know the impacts of this kind of education in a child's life. Francis' (2012) investigations about bilingual learning and bilingual proficiency will address us to relevant considerations about the multilingual learning/acquisition process.

Acquiring a language is a complex task. It involves cultural, social, cognitive, grammatical and phonological matters. When it involves two languages, methodological, psychosocial and proficiency implications must be considered. It is important to consider how the learners are going to develop their vocabulary, literacy, distinguish phonetic aspects and overregularizations of the languages to make sure that the teaching method is being efficient.

It is consensual among many scholars that, when we speak two languages phonological awareness is needed. This, according to Bialystok (2001), is directly connected to cognitive abilities. But it is not only important for reading or speaking, but also for syntactic processing and vocabulary choices. Bialystok (2001) also reinforces that children who are exposed to a bilingual teaching system have their cognitive abilities lifted to a different step; they are more prepared to accept and shelter other cultures, have more mathematical precision and more linguistic and historical sensibility.

To achieve the objectives of this case study, we will base our research in the studies of Bialystok (1991, 2001, 2010) on concepts of bilingualism and experiences with an immersion program; Blanc and Hamers (2000) on code mixing and code switching; Krashen (1982) on his five hypothesis on language learning and acquisition; Francis (2012), about bilingual proficiency and competence; and Potowski (2007), on the immersion educational system. And, based on this theory, we will mention experiences and reflections we had throughout a year with toddlers with ages from eighteen to thirty months in a bilingual school.

This research is structured in three steps: theoretical references, that will give us basis to support the practice lived in an immersion program; a presentation of the actions developed in a year of reported experiences in a bilingual school system; and, at last, the final considerations about the presented theme.

1 LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Krashen (1982) affirms that language acquisition is like "picking up" the language, in a kind of non-conscious learning, because the users of the language can communicate and make use of the language without being conscious of that. It differs from language learning, because in this process, the speaker is aware of the grammar uses, the rules and the mistakes.

According to Krashen (1982), for many years, scholars used to believe that only children acquire language and adults only learn it. Based on Krashen (1982), however, started to change this thought in the way that adults can acquire language too. What remained from this statement is that children learn language by acquisition. Thus, it might be possible to consider that young children acquire the second language the same way they learn the first, in the most natural way.

Notwithstanding, Krashen (1982) admits that language learning and language acquisition cannot be completely separated from each other. Certainly at home, with their parents, in a direct or indirect way, children will be corrected by their "mistakes" on pronunciation or grammar rules on constructing sentences.

Krashen (1982) also adds that these two terms are not used only for the second language, it is part of the process of the first language too, because children can also learn and acquire their first language at school.

Bialystok (2001) says that children from two to three years old can distinguish two languages and start being aware of the language choices they make depending on who they are talking to. But the difference between young children and adults learning/acquiring a second language is that the children are not so concerned about their mistakes on pronunciation or grammar rules.

> Modern-day psychologists […] have suggested that young children begin to categorize objects by developing an understanding, on some level, about objects' more fundamental properties, beyond their outward appearance. (Francis, 2012. p.7)

Francis (2012), when talking about "Children's categorization" of objects, suggests that children can create their own concepts about things and develop their lexical collection based on the everyday experiences. He adds that, in bilingualism, this process happens twice. The author also gives examples of how early bilingual children can still mix the language codes, that he considers a normal part of the process before starting to separate the language codes. Francis says that a two-year-old child's capacity of making patterns, recognizing and switching codes in languages is more "elaborate" than some authors suggest.

In addition, Bialystok (2000) comments that the corrective feedback is another mechanism that can improve the development of language acquisition/learning. Francis says that the teacher/responsible to stimulate the bilingual children development should give different situations and opportunities for them to find out the possibilities in tasks related to

language proficiency. It helps the children to identify similarities and differences and help them to understand and make the proper separation of the codes automatically, helping in the process of literacy in the future.

In Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses about language learning and acquisition, he explains that acquisition occurs in a very natural way and the focus of it is on the meaning, while the focus on learning is a process that occurs consciously and the grammatical structures are the main aspect. Children learn through experiencing, on comprehending and only then, with time, the grammatical structures start to become clear and are learnt inductively. The adults start in the learning process of a second language concerned about mistakes. And that is the huge difference Krashen (1982) makes clear in the process, that children are not afraid of making errors/mistakes, while the adults are more concerned with pronunciation and grammar rules, which this makes the path for this process a little longer.

Therefore, on Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses, the first one is the acquisition itself, which occurs in a natural way. The second is the learning process, which is more related to the school system. The third supposes that the knowledge stored in our minds is responsible for the second language's production. As we already have the mother tongue, this would be the "unconscious" (background) knowledge that will be the base for the "conscious" (the learnt) knowledge in the second language, which "monitors" how we are going to use the second language properly. The fourth hypothesis is that the acquisition/learning occurs when the learner is aware and responds properly to the "input" given by the teacher in the process. The fifth and last hypothesis is related to affective aspects. That, for learning another language, understanding the input is not the only the relevant thing, but it is also important to consider affection, because, for Krashen, the learner has to be "opened" and motivated to learn. Thus, when the affective role of the teacher and input takes place, an "intake" is created, which is the result of the learning/acquisition process.

It is important to consider the hypothesis studied by Krashen (1982) to understand that the process of learning a second language is not only about the rules, but also about an environment, social and economic aspects. The most comfortable and affective environment the child has, the most he/she will be opened to accept the second language without hesitating.

Bialystok (1991) also considers many aspects on children's LANGUAGE processing. For her, the most we get "inductive learning" and "conscious manipulation of ideas", the most we can improve and make a better use of our linguistic knowledge. For Bialystok, the learning environment is also decisive for the language learning and acquisition.

According to Bialystok (1991), the process of learning and acquisition in a child happens both the same way for the mother tongue and for the second language. In the case of bilingual children that are immersed at home or at school to both languages, the processes would be the same, the difference is that we could add another linguistic system, without losses or damages to the first language.

2 BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The concept of bilingualism is quite complex. According to Lado (2008), many scholars regard different aspects before considering someone a bilingual person and, to some of them, for example, a person can be fluent in two languages without being, necessarily, bilingual.

According to the Cambridge's Dictionary of English, a bilingual person is someone "able to use two languages equally well, or (of a thing) using or involving two languages". To Bloomfield (1933 *apud* BIALYSTOK, 2001), a bilingual person is someone that is fluent in both languages. To Grosjean (1989 *apud* BIALYSTOK, 2001), bilingualism refers to someone that can "function" in the two languages. And, there are also other concepts addressing bilingualism that consider bilingualism related to proficiency and literacy in both languages, as what Lado (2008) would name "biliteracy".

Considering that a bilingual person is someone that can speak both languages. However, talking about children, Lyon (1996) implies that it is hard to measure the language of a young child. So, based on his studies, most parents considered their children bilingual when they had more ability to deal with situations in both languages. Nevertheless, according to the author, it is still a very hard and uncertain task to define a child as bilingual among the scholars, because the child can have a huge lexical background, but is still developing his/her bilingual competence.

Francis (2012) distinguishes bilingual proficiency from bilingual competence. One, according to him, is related to ability and the other is related to knowledge, which is the proficiency. The knowledge is what is stored in the person's mind according to his/hers senses and experiences, while ability is how the person manages this knowledge to accomplish a proper level of communication with someone else.

Another important factor is that we cannot consider bilingualism and bilingual education as synonyms. Bilingualism can occur, according to Bialystok (2001), in many different places and situations: at home, families that move to other countries, at work, etc. –

it is promoted by social experiences. Bilingual education is restricted to an educational program that generally occurs in a school. But it can be also, for example, a professional hired by the child's family to promote this environment for learning/acquiring another language, like the "*au pair*" system – in which there is a foreign person that comes to the family's house to live for a period of normally one year to take care of the kids.

It is also relevant to understand what a bilingual school is. In Brazil, it is common to see schools that consider themselves as bilingual, but they only have a huge English course load. According to Banfi and Day (2004), to be considered bilingual, the schools must be prepared, have an environment that works to create situations for the students in the other language. In bilingual education, according to Banfi and Day, there is a system with prepared professionals to promote an immersion environment that, inside these educational programs, children are going to experience situations immersed in the other language.

3 THE IMMERSION SYSTEM

Potowski (2007) says that an immersion educational system was created in the 1960's in Canada with French-English languages, aiming to promote a prepared environment where children can be able to be in contact with a high interaction with the second language. The objectives of this kind of education for already bilingual children is to extend the levels of development in both languages and, in monolingual students, to develop the bilingualism.

According to Potowski (2007), there are also two types of immersion. The one-way, when children are all native speakers from the place they are in that moment, and they are completely immersed in the second language. And the two-way immersion, in which there are native and non-native speakers of the immersion language and there are moments that teachers provide activities in both languages, thus providing them with the contact with the classmates is really important for the children to help developing their language skills.

In Brazil, based on information given in the USP magazine named *Espaço Aberto*[1], the most common type of immersion in use is the one-way. The children have access to all the subjects in the second language in the early preschool years. The school creates a ludic environment where the children are exposed to the second language while playing, doing ordinary activities and experiments. The magazine also says that some parents' concern is

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[1] Available on: http://www.usp.br/espacoaberto/arquivo/2007/espaco83set/0comportamento.htm>. Accessed on: May 2016.

about culture, if children's cultural identity could suffer any damage. However, Cenoz and Genesee (1998) suggest that the cultural aspects can be integrated in the teaching program.

> In content-based programmes where the language curriculum is the driving force, integrating culture learning can be more easily achieved because the language/culture curriculum is the primary focus of instruction. It is desirable, however, for culture learning to be integrated into content teaching to the fullest extent possible. It is useful for teachers to remember that culture learning, like language and content, is more easily learned and retained when it is embedded in authentic contexts, purposes and meanings, and when learning is cognitively engaging and demanding. (CENOZ AND GENESEE, 1998, p.54)

This affirmation explains us that children can learn about their own culture in the second language without problems. With the cultures integrated in the teaching program, the authors assure that there will be no loss for the cultural aspects among children. When the teaching system leads the content to the student's reality, the process of learning becomes motivating and successful. Feeling comfortable and confident about the environment and with the second language, the child feels free to explore and use the two languages to express himself/herself, their abilities of communication are more open to a range of possibilities when they have the opportunity to acquire/learn more than one language. This explains why bilinguals switch and mix codes.

4 CODE SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Code, according to Cambridge's dictionary[2] is "a system of words, letters, or signs used to represent a message in secret form, or a system of numbers, letters, or signals used to represent something in a shorter or more convenient form". In other words, Liu (2006) explains that code is a convention to correspond one system of information into another in order to stablish communication.

In multilingual communities it is common to notice the phenomena of "code switching" and "code-mixing" that, according to Bokamba (1989 *apud* Liu, 2006) is:

> Code switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub)systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event… code mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from a cooperative activity where the participants, in order to in infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand. (p.4)

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[2] Available on: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/> Acessed on: May 2016.

Blanc and Hamers (2000) adress code switching as a term that refers to when the speaker is, in fact, using both languages to communicate. The authors also explain that code switching is not only about a "linguistic borrowing" or a superficial or inattentive code-mixing. Centeno (2013), explains that the speaker, in this case, is switching the languages "forth and back" and it involves more than just vocabulary, but also the structure of the language. For children, Centeno (YEAR) highlights that it happens when they feel comfortable to use both languages. Some kids feel more comfortable to speak the two languages when they have a bilingual environment, which can be the house or the school, for example.

On the other hand, code-mixing means, according to Blanc and Hamers (op. cit.), that the speaker is mainly using one language, but getting some vocabulary or ideas from another. A bilingual person often does it in order to keep the speech flowing. Such speaker, in most of the cases, is not thinking in the other language and wants to express something that comes up to the mind, keeping the fluency of the speech. The author emphasizes that, when a child mixes codes, it does not mean that he/she is confused or does not manage to "separate" the languages, it is a natural process that happens to bilinguals that, most often, are just trying to express themselves in a proper manner.

5 "LOOK AT THE *PÁSSARO*": CODE SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING FOR CHILDREN IN AN IMMERSION PROGRAM

In the bilingual system that we have been working throughout two semesters, it is important to consider that the approach applied to this program is the immersion one. In which the toddlers are exposed to an English language environment. There are three professionals in the classroom that work on distinct functions: the head teacher, that plans and executes the classes planning, a professional that communicates with the children and the adults only in English; the teacher assistant, that is aware of the daily planning and works as the "second teacher", but can speak Portuguese with the kids and other adults when it is really necessary, in case of emergency situations or in situations that the teacher needs to make sure that the kids or the carer understood what he/she is saying; and the carer, previously mentioned, that takes care of the children's personal hygiene, security during playground or other situations in the classroom and gives support during some activities, a professional that

only speaks Portuguese; sometimes the teacher assistant might mediate the communication between head teacher and carer.

As Potowski (2007) affirms, in the immersion system, an environment for the second language is created. In the case reported here, the children have contact with the English language during all the time they spend in school; during the activities in or outside the classroom, the music and physical education classes and even in playground or snack time. It is important to make sure that their teachers speak English, so the kids might have a greater need to communicate and to use the second language as time passes.

We work with a specific program, divided in thematic units that function in playing areas to provide the kids a setting in which they can feel comfortable to explore and be stimulated to reach both cognitive and physical development. The number of students per classroom is limited in order to provide a better use of the space and promote a better teaching quality. That is important to consider, because there are students who spend the whole day in school – although there is a possibility to stay only one shift too.

It is also relevant to consider the adaptation phase that the toddlers go through in the beginning of their year at school. They are young and it might be their very first year in school. This way, the adaptation period depends on the child and, sometimes, with the help that we can get from their parents as well. The very first week of school is completely different from the rest of the year – during this week, one of the parents or a carer accompanies the toddler. The number of hours they spend in school during this week is also different; they are reduced and increase day by day. For instance: if they spend one hour in the first day, on the second day they spend two hours and so on. After this, parents go home with the kids.

During the first week of school, it is also allowed, as the only exception, that the head teacher can speak Portuguese. It happens in order to create a better environment in school that the children can notice the approach between their parents and teachers. Specialists from the franchise believe that it is an important factor that helps building a relationship of trust between the children and their teachers. Because, if they realize that their parents enjoy the school and are attached to the teachers, it can be a good place for them. It increases their self-confidence and the school turns into a comfortable and amusing place. The following weeks are not easy, because, as we have said before, it is probably the first time of these students in school and most of them are still very attached to their parents or carers. We could notice that some kids are still nursling during this time, so it is a delicate moment that the teachers, carers and parents should be as attentive and affectionate as possible.

Even with many strategies, patience and affection, it is relevant to point out that children, especially young toddlers, need an organized routine to feel less anxious and happier. To stablish this new routine in their lives it is not always an easy task. Most of them show signs of distress in their behavior, especially during the first weeks. Some toddlers cry during the separation from their parents and then stop; some cry out loud for a longer time, other toddlers do not cry, but they can show a surly behavior or coarse movements with their colleagues or teachers.

Most kids in the very first moments might avoid the second language. We could experience kids that used to scream when someone spoke English beside them. Or kids that could simply ignore when we would say something that was not in their mother tongue. These examples show that in the immersion system there are also difficulties, especially from the children who never heard that language before, sometimes we could imagine that they would think: "Oh, wait! That is not that language my mother uses to talk to me. I don't want to hear this anymore". It sounds funny, but it happens. During the adaptation phase, it is considered normal this resistance against the "new" language. We should also take into account that there are cases that the kid is not able to get adapted to the immersion system, even though we did not have cases like this during our experience with the bilingual program.

That is the reason why teachers are, in this case, a guide, a coach, that play, do activities and provide children a cozy and comfy place where they can feel free to explore and interact. In this experience we could notice that the preschool moment in a child's life should be the best of their lives, a place where they can play, explore, get dirty, get wet without guilt or shame, and, after all, really enjoy school. Because it is playing that young toddlers learn and develop interest on things.

In the initial contacts it is not easy to find out what a kid likes. Most of them do not have a well-developed speech that we could understand what they want, what they like or not, etc. So, the most effective way of knowing better about children is letting them explore, find things out by themselves. The teacher is there to provide the material, to mediate and, more than everything, play and have fun with them. This is how the teacher will develop strategies for the kid that does not like books, so the teacher can bring a book that brings something about his/her favorite animal, for example. Or the kid that does not like getting dirty with paint during artistic activities until the teacher can provide something different for him/her to color, like a toy or a fruit he/she likes. In the process of immersion in education, becoming bilingual is a consequence of a teaching methodology that involves much more than another

language in it, because we are trying to understand how the kids learn, how their development work and how to make them enjoy every step they are doing and it goes beyond language.

In the daily planning that the head teacher is responsible for, that are activities that stimulate fine, large and gross motor skills that can also help in the students' intellectual development. For the students that spend only one shift, most of them, the day in school lasts four hours. Our day starts with an arrival routine, in which the teacher waits the students in the classroom and the teacher assistant leads the students to the classroom one by one as they arrive. Around the classroom, before the students arrive, the teacher spreads the material that is going to be used during the day and gets ready to receive the students. Usually, activities begin with a free play in which the students can choose between blocks or play dough, for example. After this, there is a "coming together" moment that the children and the teachers sing songs and make the attendance. After this, the kids are stimulated to explore the material that is spread around the classroom and the teachers guide them, playing together. The kids are not necessarily obligated to be at the same place the teachers are. If there is not any risk for the kid, he/she can explore alone, without any adult guidance, the other places in the classroom. There are also moments, normally executed outside the classroom, that explore the large motor skills of the students, and moments that also explore fine motor skills, like play dough or painting.

Music is another element that is present in our routine. Even though there are music classes twice a week, and there is also a specific moment of the day dedicated to the music and movements, it is present during all the moments of the toddlers' day in the school. Music is used to greet them, to signalize transitions, like, for example: "it is time to stop here and move to another place", so the students got to clean up the toys to move, and then there is a "clean up" song. After cleaning up, there are other songs that might indicate where we are going to without the need of using the imperative or to use physical contact with them to do so. Another example would be the time to wash hands, instead of saying "let's wash hands", the teacher can sing "this is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands (…)", do the gesture using the hands and the children just move to the sink. Music helps to turn the teaching more ludic and less dictatorial. The kids can simply enjoy what they are doing when the teacher sings a song for it instead of feeling "forced" to do something.

The children can explore the classroom freely, and they feel comfortable to interact between them all the time. In these moments we are more likely to notice the mixing of the languages. As they live in Portuguese environments outside school, they tend to speak Portuguese to each other. But, as they are learning to speak both English and Portuguese,

there are cases in which they only know how to address something in English. Like, for example, there is every day in school a moment of music and movements in which the teacher sings a song that talks about bubbles and, while singing, the teacher blows bubbles in the classroom. The student A learned that it is called "bubbles", not "*bolhas*", because he/she has more contact with it in school, where it is addressed in English, and, even in the interaction with the other kids, he/she would say "bubbles" instead of the word in Portuguese.

During the interaction with the teachers, the toddlers tend to switch languages with a higher frequency. It starts in the beginning of the semester, during the adaptation time, with greetings: "Hello", "Bye, bye", etc. and as time passes, we can notice daily changes in their interaction with the adults. In the beginning of the semester there is a very common example that is frequent to hear: "*eu quero* water". As we saw with Centeno (2013) about code switching and mixing, it is an example that the kid is feeling comfortable enough to, even knowing how to say "water" in Portuguese, chose English to express himself/herself. It it becomes frequent with time, in bigger sentences, because when talking to the teachers or to people that address to them in English, the children try to communicate in English too and they start feeling familiar with the language as time passes. The children, also, even knowing how to say "water" in both languages, are not translating. For them, it is the same thing and they can picture it in the two languages.

As time passes, the code switching becomes clearer among the bilingual children. From smaller sentences, like the example of the kid asking for water, it turns, progressively and naturally, into bigger sentences, like "look at the *pássaro*!" and then, the forth and back really happens in examples such as "*podemos brincar* outside *agora,* please?". It is apparent that the child is aware of the structure of the sentence, using the words in the appropriated places.

According to Centeno (2013), the code switching and mixing is more likely to happen in the school, because an immersion environment is created for that and they feel the need and, more than that, feel confident and comfortable to do it there. But it does not mean that the code switching and mixing cannot happen at home, where the main language is Portuguese. As the example of the bubbles, when the kids do not know yet how to address something in Portuguese, it is common to listen to them speaking English too. It happens because the kids do not separate languages as the adults do. One example that we heard from one mother was that her kid, playing at home, finished playing and the mother told him/her to clean up the toys in Portuguese, and the child did not even move, but when the mother said to "clean up" in English, the boy/girl immediately organized all the toys. It happened because it

is taught everyday in school, collectively, in a very ludic way, in which the children sing the "clean up" songs and put the toys away together, being praised by the teachers after that. So the picture that the kids created of "clean up" is different from the imperative way that the mother would say at home in Portuguese "*arrume* ".

An important point to highlight during this process is the correction that can happen when a kid is trying to communicate something switching or mixing languages. We could witness situations in the school in which the child spoke something in Portuguese and the adult immediately corrected saying the same word/sentence in Portuguese or the opposite. Like a case in which the babysitter of the child was in the classroom, the boy/girl said a color in English, like "blue" and his/her carer said, in Portuguese "*Não. É azul*", "No, it is blue". We can understand that it is a situation in which a lack of knowledge of the other language might happen from the part of the carer. But the adults that have close contact with bilingual kids must be aware of it. Understanding that the child can speak both languages, the parents, teachers or carers should respect the use of both of them. And, instead of saying "no, it is not like that", just use the other language normally, without regulating the child's way to express himself/herself.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this paper we had the opportunity to provide definitions, experiences and reflections about how the children's linguistic behavior can work in a bilingual education system. We could realize that the children learn to speak and improve their vocabulary through interaction that can be with adults and also with other kids. As we mentioned in our theoretic basis, in Centeno's (2013) researches, children use the languages according to when or where they feel more confident to do so. So, in our study, we could notice that, when the toddlers are interacting with adults that address to them in English, they try to use English to answer to it and when interacting with other toddlers, they tend to use the language that is used by their parents or carers in other environments besides school. However, there are exceptions, like in cases in which they do not know how to address to something in Portuguese, so the interaction would happen in English. What would become constant to happen throughout the year, with the massive contact with both languages that would implicate in really bilingual children.

We can also notice that there is no effort from the children to switch or mix codes, it happens naturally. They are clearly aware of what they are trying to communicate and no

confusions are noticeable during this process. It is important to comprehend that code switching and mixing are part of a bilingual education and it is common to happen even when these children turn into adults. Code switching and mixing are ways for maximizing the efficiency of the speech when a bilingual person is willing to express himself/herself.

RESUMO

Estudos recentes provam que o bilinguismo promove comportamentos linguísticos distintos em crianças em idade pré-escolar. Os estudos revelam que é incidente e natural que ocorra comutação ou mistura de código na fala de crianças pequenas. Neste trabalho, encontraremos discussões sobre definições a cerca de comutação e troca de código, bilinguismo e como o sistema de imersão funciona para dar base às experiências que serão mostradas através de exemplos tirados de vivências e discussões a respeito do comportamento linguístico de crianças pequenas.

Palavras-chave: Comutação e troca de códigos. Bilinguismo. Crianças em idade pré-escolar.

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