

APINAJÉ INTERCULTURAL BILINGUAL SCHOOL: FOR AN EDUCATION BEYOND THE ETHNIC FRONTIER

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ABSTRACT

We share in this paper the partial results of a research about the Bilingual and Intercultural Education in the Apinajé Indigenous Society, focusing on the Bilingual Teacher. In this approach, we identify its main characteristics and formulate concepts, distinguishing bilingualism from Bilingual Education, in view of the fact that these expressions are often seen as synonyms. We analyze the pedagogical practices of Apinajé Bilingual Teachers, emphasizing the importance of an intercultural curriculum for the provision of a differentiated education, considering mutual life in the ethnic frontier. For the concepts of Bilingualism, we used the theoretical bases of Megale (2005) and Flory and Souza (2009); about Bilingual and Intercultural Education, Maher (2005) and Grupioni (2006); about the Apinajé, Nimuendaju (1983); Da Matta (1976) and Albuquerque (2007). The methodological procedures are comprised of ethnographic research with participating observation, grouping semi-directed interviews as a technique that allows interaction. The corpus investigated is comprised of interviews with Apinajé leaders and teachers, journals and field notes. We concluded that the Apinajé Bilingual Teacher performs a pedagogy in which interdisciplinarity and bilingualism are present as practices that promote interculturality, which is deemed as the reason for the existence of an indigenous school.

Keywords: Bilingual Teacher; Bilingual and Intercultural Education; Bilingualism; Interculturality.

Introduction

Bilingual and Intercultural Education, Interculturality, and Bilingualism are common themes in the agendas and speeches given by governmental agents, from civil society, indigenous leaders, etc., aiming at an understanding an education that promotes social inclusion. The search for this education, which is proposed as "Differentiated, Intercultural and Bilingual", and which satisfies the needs of each particular people, is supported by a vast legal basis. Among other documents, we highlight the Federal Constitution of Brazil (CRF/1988); LDB - Act of Policies and Bases of the National Education (9394/96); PDE - National Plan of Education (1998) and National Reference for Indigenous Schools RCNEI (2002).

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In this sense, and considering that Brazil has 340 different indigenous peoples in its territory (Lidório, 2010:11), and that each group of people composes a distinct nation, with their own language, culture, political, social and economic organization; that each indigenous group has its educational systems socially and culturally acquired, and that education promoted in the center of these societies preserves identities, aggregates values and perpetuates cultures, the purpose of this article is to study the Apinajé Bilingual and Intercultural Education.

Analyzing these presumptions, and in view of mutual life in the reality of the ethnical frontier, when national society faces the need to dialogue with the other peoples that comprise the Brazilian Nation, and, believing that school education is in charge of favoring this interchange, we organized the text by discussing the following: 1) Bilingualism and Interculturality, presenting concepts and identifying their relation with Bilingual Education. 2) The Apinajé, making a retrospective about these people's history, since the times of Curt Nimuendaju – 1930 – until today. 3) The "Apinajé Bilingual Teacher", emphasizing the interculturality as a pedagogic practice.

From this perspective, we believe that teaching in the first years of elementary school, at the schools researched, acquires an interdisciplinary concept (Albuquerque, 2009), bilingual and intercultural, by promoting a frank dialogue between the subjects that are part of the different fields of skills, aggregating elements from the culture of national society and from the Apinajé in curricular contents.

1. Bilingualism and Interculturality: for an education aimed at mutual life beyond the ethnic frontier

Historically, bilingual teaching has been presented as fundamental of an intercultural education project. According to Collet (2006:118), the *Summer Institute of Linguistics* SIL the American body that came here to study/catalogue native languages, faced many barriers, mainly due to the novel character of the proposal, and, consequently, to the unpreparedness of the professionals to perform it. This occurred because, according to the author, the teachers were not indigenous, and, therefore, they did not know the language spoken by their students. Another problem was the fact that the indigenous language has always been seen as inferior, as an expression of primitivism, and also because there was no suitable material for bilingualism, such as spelling books and

books. We regretfully observe that this situation still persists in many Brazilian indigenous schools today.

Considering these presumptions, we can affirm that the imperious need to build a differentiated education is directly related to the emergence of an intercultural education not only for indigenous students, although their need has a "succumbed urgency", but also for students of our schools. In this sense, and in order that the work aims at building this "Intercultural, Bilingual and Differentiated" education, according to the wishes of Brazilian Indians and non-Indians, Lidório (2010:9) believes that the following is needed:

[...] To collaborate with the existence of good educational programs in the mother tongue itself, appreciating it and making it possible that its historic and social facts be recorded, preserved and conveyed by it in this context of fast external social influence that often invalidates the value of the mother tongue to a group. [...] To contribute to — in processes of integration with non-indigenous society being already developed — the collaboration with mechanisms of ethnic, cultural and linguistic appreciation, in order that the group is not diluted in greater society. As well as to collaborate with the group in its search for a respectful life with the others when out of their homeland.

We believe that the construction of this indigenous school that promotes a differentiated, intercultural, bilingual and high-quality education will only be possible by "rejecting models that defend assimilation" (Maher 2006:22). This means that one needs to fight for the implementation of school educational programs that serve indigenous communities, and not programs that are against them. However, implementation of new models for the education of indigenous peoples requires political and pedagogic changes. About this issue, Maher (2006) comments the following:

It is evident that any change of paradigm takes time, not occurring with the blink of any eye, because it does not involve only ideological realignment, but changes in speech: above all, one needs to find concrete ways of turning the wish effectively into reality. And to escape the traps that the earlier paradigm insists on placing for us... We have many projects of Indigenous School Education in the country involved in this complex and hard task, attempting to construct indigenous schools that are culturally sensitive and politically relevant for Indigenous communities (Maher, 2006:22).

The author states that the path to be tracked in order to conquer this differentiated education necessarily passes through the professional background of the teacher who will be directing this school. This teacher should speak the mother tongue, live in the community and have a simultaneous educational background in his/her original language and in Portuguese.

Therefore, the task of educating according to the principles of interculturality and bilingualism will be facilitated, because this teacher will have theoretical and practical

presumptions acquired in academic and cultural interchange in which he/she had been involved during his/her education. However, we cannot eliminate the possibility of a teacher that comes from our society performing such a function, but this will only be viable if there is an investment in interculturality and bilingualism in the education of our teachers as well. We believe, as well as Maher (2006) that this idea would solve many problems that affect inter-ethnic relations in our country, and an intercultural and multicultural education would be built.

Concerning bilingualism and Bilingual Education, it is important to explain some points, identifying conceptual convergences and differences as well, from the perspective of some theoreticians. Flory and Souza (2009) state that the definition of bilingualism at first may seem simple. Nonetheless, the complexity arises as soon as we think about the matter more carefully. For these authors, bilingualism has an infinity of different frames, which concern the social, political, economic and individual spheres; acceptance and appreciation of each spoken language and the cultures which they relate to; exposition and experience with the language, among other social and cultural factors.

Flory and Souza (2009) believe that researches have not agreed with a definition of bilingualism. The authors present some examples of diversity of possible definitions. A quite restrictive definition is the one given by Blommfield (*Apud*, Flory and Souza, 2009:29), according to which a bilingual person would be someone who "controls two languages like a native speaker". This definition, according to Flory and Souza (2009:29), in addition to only including a part of the people who master two languages, arouses some problems, as, for instance: which are the criteria to judge whether someone's proficiency is like the one of a native speaker? Or even what is a native speaker's proficiency? Furthermore, as Baker and Prys Jones (1998) (*Apud*, Flory and Souza, 2009) point out, how can we classify, for example, someone who understands what is said, but cannot speak a second language? Or someone who can speak and understand, but cannot write in the second language? Naturally, these people may be considered as bilingual, depending on the criterion adopted to characterize bilingualism, conclude the authors.

For Flory and Souza (2009:30) bilingualism may be defined as a complex psychological and social-cultural linguistic behavior with multidimensional aspects. However, a classification within the bilingualism field will depend, among other factors, on the dimension from which the issue is treated. From these authors' perspectives, there are at least four dimensions from which one defines criteria to consider someone as bilingual: the linguistic, the cognitive, the developmental and the social ones. "Each

criterion defining Bilingualism opens the possibility of pointing out different hypotheses to be researched referring to specific observation fields" (Flory and Souza, 2009:39).

These statements may be applied to Bilingual Education offered at schools implemented in Brazilian native villages, but in a broadened dimension. In this sense, we mention Lopez and Schira (2007:111), agreeing with them when they say that "bilingual education is not always an integral part of the organizational structure of the educational systems to whose model it is applied". We also agree when these authors state that "bilingual education relates to social-economical characteristics of the communities where this modality is offered, almost always being poor schools that still receive limited, even precarious, education by educational systems" (Lopes and Schira, 2007:112).

Then, Bilingual Education is not restricted only to a teaching practice in which two languages interact. Linguistic, economic, social, political, cultural and teaching/pedagogic aspects that involve indigenous communities, their schools and the other sectors of national society are crucial. Sociolinguistic factors and local culture will size the proportion and relevance of the acts to be implemented within the scope of public policies that will promote this Bilingual Education. Among these acts, we may highlight the production of teaching material that is appropriate and in conformity with the official curriculum, once the students from these schools will later be submitted to external evaluations that follow a national standard, based on a unified curriculum.

According to Megale (2005), Bilingual Education presupposes distinct concepts and differentiated contexts according to the original country, ethnic issues, educators themselves, legislators and social-political factors. Mackey (1972) says that:

Schools in the United Kingdom where half of the school subjects are taught in English are called bilingual schools. Schools in Canada where all subjects are taught in English to French-Canadian children are called bilingual. Schools in the Soviet Union where all subjects, except Russian, are taught in English are bilingual schools, as well as schools where some subjects are taught in Georgian and the rest in Russian. Schools in the United States where English is taught as a second language are called bilingual schools, as well as parochial schools and even ethnic weekend schools... [Consequently,] the concept of bilingual school has been used without a qualification to cover such a variety of usages of two languages in education (Mackey, 1972 *apud* Megale, 2005:7).

Is a complex typology of bilingual educational programs, covering from monolingual education in the language of the population with linguistic minority until Bilingual Education in both languages, and also monolingual education in the language of the dominating population.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Fishman and Lovas (1970) propose a definition of Bilingual Education based on three major categories: "intensity, purpose and status". In the category "intensity", four types of bilingual programs are identified. The first one is named "transitional bilingualism". In this case, the mother tongue is used only as a vehicle that facilitates transition to a second language. The second program is named mono-literate bilingualism. In this program, the school uses both languages in all activities, but the child is taught how to read and write only in the second language. The third program is the bi-literate partial bilingualism, in which both languages are used in writing and orally, but the subjects are divided in such a manner that the mother tongue is used only for the so-called cultural subjects, like history, arts and folklore, whereas the second language is used for the other subjects. The fourth program is the total bi-literate bilingualism, in which all skills are developed in both languages, in all cases. (Megale, 2005:8).

Hamers and Blanc (2000) highlight the multidimensional character of bilingualism and consider six criteria to define its presence in Bilingual Education: relative competence, cognitive organization, age of acquirement, presence of the second language in the community and in the environment, relative status of both languages, cultural identity and belonging to the group. Mackey (2006) points out that, when one defines bilingualism, four points should be considered: degree of proficiency, function and usage of the languages, alternation of code and interference between languages.

Regarding bilingualism practiced in the bilingual education of Apinajé indigenous schools, we believe that its concept is close to the transactional bilingualism proposed by Hamers and Blanc (2000), because the mother tongue is only used during initial years of elementary school. The other stages – the final years of elementary school and high school – have the Portuguese language (their second language) as the main one. But this occurs only at school, once in this social dominion the non-indigenous teachers interact only in the Portuguese language.

2. The Apinajé: a brief historic retrospective

The Apinajé are indigenous people belonging to the Macro-Jê Branch and to the Jê Linguistic Family. The history of these people started to be reported in the first half of the 20th century, in the 1930's, when Curt Nimuendaju wrote the first monograph about this indigenous group. According to Almeida and Moreira (2008), the ethnology of this

society is quite well documented, among others, by Nimuendaju and Da Matta, having in mind that any work about the Apinajé must refer to these true classics of the Brazilian ethnologic literature.

Although the timeline is a gap between these two publications – Nimuendaju wrote his monograph “*The Apinajé*” in 1939 and Da Matta wrote his “Mundo Dividido” in 1973 – both have substantial importance, as they are writings supported by the daily mutual living of the writers and the Apinajé. While Nimuendaju stayed in the native villages, even living in Bacaba, today São José, Da Matta stayed in Tocantinópolis, and, thanks to daily mutual living with these people, made a report full of sensibility and beauty, focusing on the Apinajé's social structure and their relations with non-Indians, identifying what he calls "A Divided World".

According to Albuquerque (1999), the Apinajé have lived at the northern end of the State of Tocantins since the 18th century, when Araguaia and Tocantins Rivers started to be navigated by the Jesuits and Pioneers. "These indigenous were considered as the most powerful in the region, owning very populated native villages, practicing agriculture and producing their own artifacts, such as, for instant, canoes” (Albuquerque, 1999:17).

Nimuendaju (1983.4) states that, in 1797, the government of Pará founded on the banks of Tocantins River some military stations, like Alcobaça, Arapary and São João das Duas Barras, the latter located at the mouth of Araguaia. The purpose of these stations was to avoid the deviation of gold, the escape of slaves from Camutá to Goiás, and to contain permanent aggressions by the Karajá and Apinajé to farmers of the region. Therefore, the foundation of these stations marked a permanent contact of the Apinajé with national society.

The history of the Apinajé, therefore, is the history of the occupation of the north of Goiás by the representatives of a cattle-raising group that used the Tocantins River and that was certainly comprised of the remaining people from the mining zones of the south of Goiás.

According to Da Matta (1976), the Apinajé, from the geographic point of view, are located in an area that represents the transition between the tropical forest and the inland vegetation, characterized by river-bank vegetation throughout smaller and voluminous rivers that issue into Tocantins River. Their houses form native villages distributed by the inland vegetation that separates each one of these smaller rivers, where they do not need to cut trees down to impose on the environment the stigma of their

culture: circular native villages with a square in the center, which is a typical characteristic of the Jê groups from the North.

The Apinajé villages, still according to Da Matta (1976:33), "have the advantage of being located in a land that is slightly high and close to a perennial watercourse between the river-bank forest and the inland vegetation". For this author, the Apinajé, like the other Jê peoples from the North, prefer locating their villages in the countryside, using the forest to hunt and for agriculture. Therefore, the native villages are at the top of mountains, and their agriculture is always on the slopes, besides the small river, where a part of the forest was domesticated. Besides the low-vegetation fields and the small rivers with the river-bank forests, this part of Brazil is covered by "*Orbignia Speciosa*", known as "Babassu Palms" (Da Matta, 1976:33-4).

In this sense, the Apinajé ecology mixes with the history of exploration for each one of these places, and this exploration, as Da Matta highlights, depends on the means by which society limits, stimulates, destroys or creates within the natural environment, inhabited by the group for centuries, products that can be explored by the Indians. This author describes the effects of this contact and the situation of conjugation with regional society as a part of the Apinajé ecologic environment; emphasizing the manners by which these Indians best benefit from their environment; also speaking about how these Indians survived contact with non-Indians; pointing out which social mechanisms that, from one end to the other one, were activated to create the situation of conjugation. "Seeing the Apinajé ecology from this perspective is to see the environment in a broad sense, as a point of conjugation and passage of the tribe's geography to its history" (Da Matta, 1976:34).

The study made by Da Matta about the Apinajé discusses these people's social structure, rites and customs, identifying the existence of "A Divided World", referring to the relationship of these Indians with the urban society of Tocantinópolis. For this author, the Apinajé admit that the Brazilians that live in the city do not like them, but the ones that live around the native village, in the backwoods, may like the Indians or not. Consistently with this opinion, "the Apinajé always refer to the whites of the city (Tocantinópolis) in an impersonal manner, as "the city or street people", seldom mentioning names. The backwood inhabitants, on the other side, whether they like the Indians or not, are always mentioned by their names (Da Matta, 1976:53).

In his study, Da Matta found out that the Brazilians that live close to the native villages have names and are known by the Indians. Many of them are *compadres* of the

Apinajé and even go with these Indians to their hunting, and constantly visit them. "In Tocantinópolis, with its population of five thousand inhabitants, there is only a dozen of people whom the Apinajé classify as the ones that like us (i.e., the people who like to talk to the Indians and always offer a coffee or a gift)" (Da Matta, 1976:54). The city, therefore, is a social unity that is corporately seen by the Apinajé and this is undeniably a consequence of the community character of the relations that the inhabitants of Tocantinópolis have with each other.

Visibly affected by his relationship with the Apinajé, Da Matta expresses himself as such:

I want to defend the Apinajé based on my knowledge of their ceremonial richness, of the notable balance between their internal divisions, the depth of their ways to judge and notice men's comedy and tragedy. We cannot let this society disappear, because it expresses a legitimate alternative to human problems. In fact, it often expresses a superior alternative, as it is capable to preserve a genuine form of balance between men and social groups (Da Matta, 1976:10).

It is important to resume this author's thought in order to make a more grounded reading about these people's social relations, considering that this is a society that, for more than four centuries, has remained anonymous, suffering all types of killings, being systematically and dramatically devastated in its ethnic, linguistic and cultural compositions, which was prophesized by Da Matta (1976:3) as "subject to a complete cultural uncharacterization and imminent extinction".

Advocating in favor of this indigenous society, Da Matta calls us to review our position before the acculturation processes to which these people, as well as other Brazilian indigenous groups, have been subject to. This situation is evidenced in the most recent studies developed by researchers, especially highlighting the work made by Professor Francisco Edviges Albuquerque, from UFT – Federal University of Tocantins – which has been developed for 14 years. Currently, this professor dedicates himself to the school education of the Apinajé, coordinating the "Apinajé School Education Project from the Bilingual and Intercultural Perspective of the Observatory of Indigenous Education Program ", and maintaining a "Lab of Indigenous Languages" in this same university. This work allows Professor Albuquerque to identify a growing loss of the linguistic culture and identity of the Apinajé from Mariazinha native village.

Education for the Apinajé started in the 1960's with Patrícia Ham, who also produced the first teaching material to teach how to read and write, which is still used by teachers in the native villages. Meanwhile, with the "Project of Pedagogic Support to the

Apinajé School Education", Professor Albuquerque, in 2007, responding to the request made by Apinajé teachers and leaders, coordinated, organized and published an expressive material of pedagogic support that has been used in the schools of native villages, with students in the first years of elementary school. The material, written in the mother tongue, covers the fields of Mathematics and Apinajé Sciences; Apinajé History and Geography; Book of Apinajé Stories and Songs; Magazine of Apinajé Traditional Medicine and a Book for Teaching Reading and Writing. In addition, there is an Apinajé Dictionary and a Pedagogic Grammar.

The studies developed by Albuquerque (1999; 2007) are also expressive, focusing on the phonetic and phonological aspects of the Apinajé language, documenting, recovering and revitalizing the language and culture of these people, once an imminent process of acculturation is evident, resulting from the inevitable situation of contact which the members of this society have been submitted to. From the 19 Apinajé villages, Albuquerque's works are centered in two of them: São José and Marianinha villages. For Albuquerque (2007), Mariazinha village is the one that requires more attention in its social-linguistic aspects, once there is a strong tendency for ethnic and cultural loss, considering that a significant number of mixed marriages, i.e., Apinajé Indians with non-Indians, and Apinajé with Indians of other races, for instance, Xerente and Guajajara, have been occurring.

As we highlighted, the Apinajé currently suffer interference in their ethnic and cultural composition due to intense and inevitable contact with our society and other indigenous groups. One of the most serious challenges to their leaders is to maintain the group united around cultural and linguistic cohesion. However, we believe that in order to face the resulting linguistic and cultural conflicts, it is necessary to invest in intercultural education in which bilingualism is privileged. In this sense, the original language should be the one that promotes interaction in their social areas, and Portuguese should be a second language that should be learnt at school, and which will facilitate social relations, favoring mutual life in the ethnic frontier.

As for the territorial situation of the Apinajé, the lands where they live, with an extension of 141.904 ha, they were limited by a decree in 1985ⁱ, and they are located at the northern end of the State of Tocantins, in a region known as Bico do Papagaioⁱⁱ. According to Albuquerque (2007:28), today the Apinajé indigenous lands suffer direct interference from TO 126 public road, which connects the municipalities of Tocantinópolis and Maurilândia, crossing the whole reservation from North to South; TO

134, the stretch of Angico intersection; BR 230 and Transamazônica, which, along its axle, crosses nine native villages: São José, Patizal, Cocalinho, Buriti Comprido, Palmeiras, Prata, Serrinha, Cocal Grande and Boi Morto. In the perimeter of BR 126, another six native villages are located: Mariazinha, Riachinho, Bonito, Brejão, Girassol and Botica.

This same author also assures that, before limitation of the Apinajé area, these Indians were distributed only into two villages, São José and Mariazinha. However, after limitation of their lands, they spread throughout the territory, forming new villages and, therefore, they acquired greater control of the reservation, which is located in the region located in the confluence of Tocantins and Araguaia Rivers.

Apinajé society lives at a place where farmers and buyers of babassu coconut interact, and the interests of the latter always tend to blur those of the Indians. Nevertheless, they organize themselves in order to negotiate the sale of the product. This organization is the result of an awareness built by means of school education, as many leaders of the community are teachers with an intercultural academic education, which favors the contact situation. School education has been fundamental for the Apinajé to become aware of their rights, as it allows for mutual living with our society without losing their identities, cultural references, values and subjectivity.

Regarding economic development, the group survives by means of family agriculture, negotiating the exceeding produce in fairs of neighboring towns. Babassu coconut - *Orbignya Speciosa* - is an important product cultivated in native villages, and which is accepted in all seasons, as there is a factory of derivatives of this typical product of the Brazilian inland vegetation in the urban center of Tocantinópolis. Hunting and fishing are still part of these people's lives, however scarcely, due to the advancement of agricultural and cattle activities and the predatory way by which they have been practiced through time.

Apinajé culture, evidenced by means of body painting and handicraft, is still found in some villages, for instance, in São José. These practices express rites and customs of these people and identify significant traces of their cosmologic universe, with quite significant symbols that are reflected in their social system. The Apinajé social group, according to Da Matta (1976:95), is divided into two complementary fields, with one being the field of domestic relations - which unite their relatives - and, another one, the field of social or ceremonial relations, which involves ritual and political obligations relating to the community. For Albuquerque (2007:39), in the Apinajé daily life these two

fields cross themselves. However, the conception of these fields as divided and separated areas is fundamental to interpret the Apinajé social world.

The Apinajé currently promote internal politics aiming at the group's cohesion in social, cultural and economic terms. In this scenery, it is important to highlight the strength acquired by schools located in the native villages, because, by providing an education that promotes interculturality and bilingualism, this school is crucially contributing to the Apinajé awareness of their status as people who fight for preservation and maintenance of the social-cultural and linguistic aspects of their society, and who actively participate in the construction of a nation, which these Indians are an integral part of, the Brazilian Nation.

3. The Bilingual Apinajé Indigenous Teacher

Laws Guidelines and Base of Education of Brazil (LDB 9394/96) determine in their Article 78 the provisions about Indigenous Education, and provide that the programs included in the National Educational Plans should have the following purposes:

- I) To strengthen social and cultural practices and the mother tongue of each indigenous community;
- II) To maintain programs for the education of a specialized staff for school education at indigenous schools;
- III) To develop specific curricula and programs, including in them the cultural contents corresponding to the respective communities;
- IV) To elaborate and publish, on a systematic basis, specific and differentiated teaching material (BRAZIL, 1996:34).

It is important to resume the text of the current LDB in order that we may think about the Indigenous bilingual teacher of Apinajé schools. The purposes of said Act are clear when determining that, in order to implement an intercultural and bilingual education that satisfies the wishes of each indigenous community, it is essential to promote practices that aim at educating, qualifying and improving bilingual teachers that teach how to read and write. "To maintain programs for the education of a specialized staff for school education at indigenous schools", provides item II. We insist on this point because we believe that one of the most serious problems faced by the Apinajé schools concerns this "specialized teacher". Except for the initial years of elementary school, in which teachers are Indians with intercultural education, and, therefore, bilingual, the other stages of elementary education of Apinajé students have non-indigenous teachers

who are not qualified to teach. In these classes, students have the mother tongue as their instructional language, but it is not spoken, written or comprehended by these teachers.

According to Grupioni (2006:16), in order to deal with this situation, the proposal is to educate members of the community itself as teachers who may work at the schools of the native villages. We found out that this is a tendency at the schools of Apinajé villages. Many members of the community are going to the urban center of Tocantinópolis to have an intercultural and bilingual academic education. Among them, we find the teachers who are the subject of our research. Some have studied in an educational course for indigenous teachers provided by SEDUC – Educational Department of the State of Tocantins. Others have graduated or are studying at UFT – Federal University of Tocantins. Nonetheless, there is a great demand, but teacher graduates are few. But that's a good start.

Regarding non-indigenous teachers, Grupioni (2006a) believes that the work developed by them, without specific training, was a model that did not work for the majority of native villages in the country. As these non-Indian teachers left schools, the indigenous teachers started to go to classrooms and teach. For Grupioni, the bet on these new teachers is explained by the fact that they already live in the community, share the language and the way of life of the group, and satisfy the demand of many communities for educating their members.

Considering these facts, the Apinajé bilingual teachers that work at *Mãtyk* and *Tekator* schools in São José and Mariazinha villages are a reference for other ones that teach in other Apinajé schools. By using specific learning for education according to the principles of interculturality and bilingualism, they work in partnership to plan the classes, and prepare a content based on teachings that incorporate bilingual pedagogic supporting material containing elements from the Apinajé culture, and from the culture of our society. A common procedure concerns the field-classes, when teachers and students leave the room where classes are normally given, and, in an interdisciplinary exercise (Albuquerque, 2009), they create classes by using everything made available by the village and its surroundings.

In these classes, teachers teach science, geography, history and mathematics, with contents in the mother tongue, and, every time they meet a non-Indian, Portuguese as a second language is also practiced. The most important of all is the interaction between school and community, because, while the group is outdoors, other people from the village often come and participate as well. Both situations are relevant for the proposal of

learning according to the presumptions of interculturality, with this characteristic being seen as the reason itself for the existence of a school at indigenous social areas.

Final Considerations

In this article, we shared the partial results of an ongoing research, whose purpose is the study of Bilingual and Intercultural Education in Apinajé society, emphasizing the acts of bilingual teachers. The work plan attempts to develop a study at *Mãtyk* and *Tekator* schools, at São José and Mariazinha native villages, considered by their leaders as the most important ones, and also because these schools operate as "head schools" for schools of the other native villages.

Considering that the conquest by the Brazilian Indians of a Bilingual and Intercultural Education is a legitimate right guaranteed by the Brazilian Federal Constitution (CFR/88), we investigate how this process occurs at Apinajé schools. Besides, we analyze how work with the mother tongue is performed in classes during initial years of elementary school, especially concerning teachings transposition and pedagogic planning in the bordering region of Apinajé and Portuguese languages.

As methodology, we use the principles of qualitative and ethnographic research with participating observation, grounded on the studies by Brandão (1982) regarding participating research, Zpeleta and Rockwell (1989) and André (2000), who treat ethnography from the educational perspective. The procedures include visits and permanence at the native villages, using questions and interviews.

Therefore, we consider our methodological proposal as a transdisciplinary conception, as Nicolescu (2008:53) defines transdisciplinarity as something that, at the same time, is between disciplines, through different disciplines and beyond any discipline, with its studying purpose being the comprehension of the present world, to which one of the orders is the unity of knowledge.

We conclude, on a preliminary basis, that the acts by bilingual teachers that work at schools of the Apinajé villages of São José and Mariazinha are important. As some of them are still studying, they use their best efforts to teach with quality and, in a coordinated action, they search for forms of teaching transposition, in view of the absence of a pedagogic material that is suitable for bilingualism, particularly in the second cycle of elementary school and during the period of time that comprises high school.

However, with the "Apinajé School Education Project from the Bilingual and Intercultural Perspective of the Observatory of Indigenous Education Program" coordinated by Professor Albuquerque and his staff, which is being performed, we believe that this blank tends to be filled out, because the staff of researchers has two Apinajé teachers who, because of their practical experience with daily life of their schools, may, in conformity with the other components of the project, come to important conclusions regarding the elaboration of a supporting pedagogic material that frankly dialogues with the official curriculum and its main knowledge fields, as it already happens during initial years of elementary school.

In this sense, we believe that the advancements shown by the Apinajé society in conducting the school education process are relevant. We notice that the community is moved, showing a collective effort in order that this education be differentiated, bilingual and intercultural. By investing in the intercultural education of teachers that live in the native villages where the schools are located, the Apinajé are in search of excellence in the quality of the education provided to their children. And this education will certainly allow valuable forms of mutual living in diverse environments, favoring relations between the Apinajé and the other Brazilians, creating solid bases for mutual living beyond the limits of the ethnic frontier.

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ⁱ In February of 1985, by Decree n° 90.960, the Apinajé Indigenous lands were limited.

ⁱⁱ Northern region of the State of Tocantins, with a total of 25 municipalities, including Tocantinópolis, Maurilândia, São Bento and Cachoeirinha.