

Other articles

Parental involvement in the development of literacy

MARIA ADELINA VILLAS-BOAS

mariadelinavb@gmail.com

University of Lisbon, Portugal

ABSTRACT:

The subject of this article was chosen for its relevance in the present day, when the acquisition of literacy occupies a central place in the development and learning of students, and for certain immigrant populations is crucial. The principal objective of this article is to examine perspectives on the development of literacy as a process in relation to the role that the adults close to the child can play in this development.

Two crucial aspects, therefore, will be examined. The first section takes the form of a theoretical analysis of the concepts and characteristics which shape perspectives on the emergence of literacy in children, and proposes that the so-called “roots of literacy” are to be found in the quantity and quality of the written media to which children are exposed in their family environments. The second section looks at the application of the theories examined in the first, with an emphasis on differentiated parental involvement in literacy practices in the home, and their implications for education in the school.

KEYWORDS:

Literacy, Emergence of literacy, Parental involvement, Teaching practices.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this article was chosen for its contemporary relevance, at a time when recent scientific contributions on the development of literacy force us to view the teaching of reading from different, and in a certain way innovative, perspectives. Not only does literacy — here understood as a continuum articulating the most basic reading and writing skills with interpretative and compositional abilities that require high cognitive skills — occupy a central place in the development and learning of students, it is crucial for students from ethnic minorities. Besides factors which affect all children, such as cognitive ability and linguistic skills (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005), one factor — their knowledge of the language and the culture of their school — is of especial importance (Heath, 1989). The issues affecting the development of literacy have been the subject of several master's dissertations in Educational Science (Intercultural Education).

Many of these, including Durkin (1966), Barratt-Pugh (2000), Heath (1982), Teale and Sulzby (1987) and Villas-Boas (2001) — among others — underline the positive effect of parental involvement in the development of literacy. According to these studies, one of the most widespread and acceptable forms of cooperation between school and family is that in which the parents help their children, at home, in their initial linguistic development (oral and written).

Thus an examination of the effects of parental development in the development of literacy and the reasons underlying this phenomenon — reasons which are inherent to the nature of the reading and writing process itself, or which are related with the way exposure to written media evolves in the family environment — would appear to be crucial at a time when efforts are afoot in Portugal to combat high levels of illiteracy with the creation of a national reading plan.

In this article, therefore, I will examine perspectives on the development of literacy as a process in relation to the role that the adults close to the child can play in this development. For purposes of clarity this article is divided into two parts. In the first part I will examine, from a primarily theoretical point of view, the relatively new concept of literacy and how context can contribute to its emergence. In the second part, I discuss a number of studies conducted in Portugal in an attempt to show how parental involvement in the home, and certain teaching practices in the school, can contribute to the development of literacy.

LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCHOOL LEARNING PROCESS AND THE SOCIAL INSERTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

(...) children participate in experiments which involve literacy and gradually build knowledge, abilities and comprehension of a wide array of literacies.

Barratt-Pugh, 2000, p. 17

The domain of written code and social advantages seem to go hand in hand, the one influencing the other.

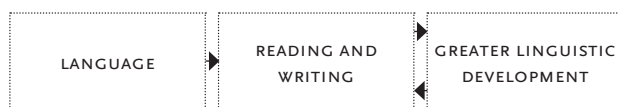
Sim-Sim, 1995, p. 203

The relation between linguistic development (in its oral and written facets) and school learning processes has been well documented in scientific research, and there would seem to be no disagreement with regard to the fundamental role played by language in the whole educational process.

To illustrate the interaction between linguistic development and learning, Menyuk has consistently employed (first in 1995 and again in 2005) the same graphic representation (Fig. 1), which clearly shows how linguis-

tic development contributes to the school learning process, while learning contributes in turn to the development of language.

FIG. 1. RELATION BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE, DEVELOPMENT OF READING AND WRITING, AND LEARNING



From Menyuk, 1995, p. 47; Menyuk & Brisk, 2005, p. 82.

Conversely, where a reading deficit exists, students will increasingly suffer from it as the language of their text books becomes more complex semantically and structurally. In the short, medium and long terms, then, literacy acts as a catalyst in the entire educational process: “the effects of poor reading skills can easily be seen in terms of failure in other subjects” (Sim-Sim, 1995, p. 97).

But low levels of literacy have other consequences besides lack of success at school: there are negative social effects too, and discrimination. The findings of the study *Literacy in Portugal* (Benavente *et al.*, 1996) not only revealed very limited literacy in general (10% of the population is situated at literacy level 0 and 37% at level 2, from five possible levels), they also exposed regional asymmetries, with unequal distribution of literacy across social classes and gender.

The importance of acquiring literacy is effectively expressed by Adams (1998, p. 13), who writes that successful initiation in reading “is the key to education, and education is the key to the success both of individuals and of democracy”. Meanwhile, new research is unveiling new findings.

CONCEPTS AND CHARACTERISTICS IN THE EMERGENCE OF LITERACY

...a new perspective for understanding the nature and the importance of the development of reading and writing during the child’s earliest years

Teale & Sulzby, 1987, p. VII.

As generally used, the term “literacy” expresses a concept which can be defined quite simply as “*the ability to read and write*” (Morais, 2002, p. 48). Other researchers, however, prefer to underline the functional character of literacy, which they define as “the capacity for processing written information” (Benavente *et al.*, 1996, p. 3). The concept, therefore, encompasses both ability and usage.

In keeping with the objectives of this article, I will focus on a functional interpretation of literacy according to which the ability to decode information, and the ability

to extract meaning from the decoded matter, is essential (Sim-Sim, 1995). This interpretation involves active construction of knowledge, and is based on lived experience, prior experience, and values.

I will concentrate, above all, on a perspective of the emergence of literacy as articulated in Teale and Sulzby (1987), a perspective which is informed by the notion of lived experience. And as research findings in the last twenty years have shown, “literacy begins with the experience of the child during its infancy” (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005, p. 70).

This perspective is supported by correlational empirical and experimental studies, but also and above all by longitudinal studies and case studies on avid young readers (Durkin, 1966), precocious readers (Bissex, 1980) and deaf children (Soderberg, 1977), which have given fuller articulation of the way children act during the literacy development process. I would point out three important contributions to the formation of this perspective.

The first is that the term “emergent” itself underlines the fact that children belong to a process of development — for the present purposes, of literacy — whose initial point is impossible to determine. We only know, as the authors mentioned above stress, that it is situated at an extremely early stage in the child’s development.

A second contribution, made among others by Ferreiro (1987), on the basis of case studies conducted according to the precepts of Piaget, and Sulzby (1987), in the form of a longitudinal study, is that writing does not necessarily follow reading but rather that there exists between the two a dynamic which encourages the development of both.

The third contribution is that linguistic consciousness, stimulated by exposure to writing (reading stories or anything else) develops naturally (Strickland and Cullinan, 1998).

This last contribution is controversial, as some authors (Adams, 1998; Cary, 1988; Morais, 2002) argue that the correspondence between letters and phonemes arises as a consequence of learning to read and write. However, other studies cited in Menyuk (1995) and Cary and Verhaeghe (n. d.) show that it is possible to stimulate the development of the linguistic consciousness in children who have not reached school age. Without wishing to dismiss either set of theories, what seems to emerge is a notion of complementarity which allows us to conclude that while school education plays a crucial role in the development of literacy, it does not play that role exclusively.

These factors in the emergence of literacy (a socially interactive activity which depends on social context and which belongs to the emotional sphere) reveal the fundamental role played by the family environment, by the community and by the teaching practices encountered by the child in school (Barratt-Pugh, 2000).

For Teale and Sulzby (1987), it is the conception that oral communication, reading and writing develop concomitantly, each influencing the other, that the development process begins long before school age and formal education, and that reading and writing can take extremely diverse forms, which justifies the inclusion of “emergence of literacy” in the terminology.

FROM THE ROOTS OF LITERACY METAPHOR TO THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF EXPOSURE TO WRITTEN/PRINTED MEDIA IN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

As the child explores the written environment which surrounds him, he develops his roots of literacy.

Goodman, 1987, p. 6.

The findings of five ethnographic studies on the nature of the emergence of literacy, in which there participated 78 children aged between two and seven, led Goodman (1987) to identify five factors which make a decisive contribution to the development of literacy. Goldman collectively designates these factors *the roots of literacy*. We shall now examine each factor, or root, in turn.

1st Root — *Consciousness of writing in situational contexts*

This denotes a process of reception whereby the child sees writing: literacy is considered to have its origins in contact with writing. This world of letters and numbers leads the child to make three types of discovery: writing has a meaning; it's possible to find out how it has this meaning; and it's possible to make sense of writing by writing for oneself.

2nd Root — *Consciousness of organized discourse*

This is the type of written language discourse which the child encounters in books, newspapers, magazines, letters etc. The question is, in this case the quantity and variety of such materials will depend on the family, social and cultural environment in which the child finds himself; unlike the previous root, we are not here talking about a universal situation. Access to books, and the reading habits of other family members, are determining factors.

3rd Root — *Consciousness of the function and form of writing*

For the author, function precedes form. Durkin (1966) had observed that children identified as precocious readers were at the same time capable of scribbling words, and suggested that an interest in learning to write developed before, or in parallel with, an interest in learning to read. Goodman observed that the various forms and functions of writing developed in accordance with the quantity and quality of the child's functional experience

of writing, and that the learning of symbols in family situations increased children's self-confidence.

4th Root — *Use of oral language in speaking of written language*

Many authors, including Heath (1982), Jacob (1984), and Snow and Ninio (1987), argue that this type of oral language is a specific type of discourse which may vary from one culture to another.

In her article *What No Bedtime Story Means*, Heath emphasized the role of reading stories, pointing to the importance of the practice of decontextualization and the type of questions which should accompany these reading sessions. What happens while we read a child a bedtime story, i.e. the linguistic, social and emotional interaction which takes place, seems to be more important than the mere act of telling the story. According to Assim, what happens while we read a child a bedtime story, i.e. the linguistic, social and emotional interaction which takes place, seems to be more important than the mere act of telling the [repeated — cut paragraph]. In fact, according to Kong (2006) and Phan (2006), this interaction adds to the text as a language beyond the text (conversation, comments, questions), while the dialogue between written and spoken language permits the child to:

- absorb principles and concepts on the function of written language;
- establish relations between written language, oral language and ideas;
- become aware of the structure of text and the organization of discourse;
- acquire the habit of formulating hypotheses and making forecasts;
- build a vocabulary;
- understand the fun and aesthetic aspects of language;
- develop the abilities essential for reading, such as motivation, attention span and memory.

The importance of *storytelling* lies in the fact that exposure to writing provides a bridge between the linguistic strategies used for interpreting oral communication (which takes place on a face-to-face basis) and the linguistic strategies used for interpreting the decontextualized texts of stories. Thus, the child who has stories read to him acquires experience with a more decontextualized language and increases his knowledge of the characteristics of written language — aspects which contribute both to the acquisition of literacy and the ability to learn at school. Teale (1984, p.120) explains this phenomenon by pointing out that having stories read to him helps the child to “master reflexive and detached thought which is so necessary for success at school”.

The fact is, however, that many children have their first encounter with decontextualized, situation-

-independent language when they enter school, which according to Heath is a decisive obstacle to the subsequent educational progress of these children.

5th root — *Linguistic consciousness of written language*

Linguistic consciousness can be defined as the individual's knowledge of his own language and his ability to regulate and evaluate it. As the child's linguistic consciousness grows, he becomes increasingly capable of judging, analyzing and correcting phrases. Evidence of metalinguistic processes manifests itself in different ways, evolving from one stage to another and ranging from awareness of error to its correction.

However, if linguistic consciousness evolves over time with regard to all spheres of language, this evolution does not occur in the same way for all children (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005). Phonological awareness, especially, plays a determining role in learning to read (Cary, 1988; Morais, 2002). Familiarization with the use of linguistic categories such as *word*, *letter*, and *phrase* allow the child to master concepts with greater ease, and knowledge of these concepts in turn allow the child to converse, think and begin to construct its own theory of the linguistic system.

DIFFERENTIATED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LITERACY PRACTICES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEARNING

Exposure to reading and writing can occur in the school environment independently of practice in the family environment, although the encouragement to read may also come from the family.

Menyuk & Brisk, 2005, p. 27.

Family involvement has to be seen in a new light once we appreciate that the development of literacy begins long before the child enters school. And even more so when we consider that this development occurs via participation in social and cultural experiences which involve literacy practices which are seen as the *roots* of literacy. Evidently, both the quantity and the variety of these experiences, such as the way parents (or other adults close to the child) stimulate the child's attention or answer his questions will condition the process.

Children who sit on a parent's lap, or beside an older brother or sister, listen to a story and talk about the story; and they hear and understand words such as *read*, *page*, *story*, *book*. They learn how to handle the book (which involves knowing what books are, what direction they're read in, how to turn the pages, the respective functions of the written part and the illustrations). In this way these children, at ages between three

and five, begin to understand that writing conveys a message, and this makes them ask themselves "what's written". It's their induction into the magic of reading...

Exchanging correspondence and other functional situations of writing will also contribute to the simultaneous development of an understanding of the function and form of writing.

Delgado-Martins *et al.* (1991) maintain that if the family members of children (aged 5-6) play word games with them, give them riddles, teach them nursery rhymes, words with double meanings, muddled stories etc. they will help encourage the development of their linguistic consciousness on the phonological, lexical and grammatical level.

We can infer from the above the importance of exogenous conditions for the development of the child's linguistic skills. Such conditions include not only the written materials available to the child, but also the role of the adult, the amount of time the adult has and the contextual conditions in which interaction unfolds. In this regard Leichter (1984) identifies three "climates" of paramount importance: the physical climate, the interpersonal climate, and the emotional climate.

The decisive role of the adult as mediator between writing and the development of literacy has been cited by countless authors (Delgado-Martins *et al.*, 1991; Heath, 1982; Teale & Sulzby, 1987) since Vygotsky (1988). However, the time available to the adult for the pursuit of individualized dialogue has also led the so-called "one-to-one relationship" (Hawkins, 1984) to be recommended by a great number of specialists. And it is this type of relationship which is found in the families of precocious readers and voracious young readers. Three essential aspects are found here: the model, direct interaction and the practice of "scaffolding"¹.

But these factors which favour the emergence of literacy are not by any means widely available. For Menyuk and Brisk (2005) they constitute the principal source of the literacy gap, and their origins are to be found in differences in family environments.

This led, in the 1990s, to the growing influence of socio-cultural perspectives on the emergence of literacy (Barratt-Pugh, 2000; Goldenberg, 2006). These perspectives stem from the notion that literacy is a form of cultural capital, and that "knowledge and skills differ in accordance with the socio-cultural context in which they are acquired" (Luke, 1993, p. 7).

Even literacy practices which at first glance appear similar, such as storytelling, can in fact be accomplished in very different ways, as Heath (1982) demonstrated. We can conclude, therefore, as Barratt-Pugh (2000, p. 7) did, that "literacy practices are not only socially constructed but are also culturally specific"².

If family involvement is to be a determining factor in the development of literacy, therefore, it becomes

necessary, on the one hand, for families to be aware of how literacy practices effectively contribute to the development of literacy (Bales *et al.*, 2006) and thereby to increase their cultural capital (Lin, 2006). On the other hand, regardless of the knowledge the child acquires in the family environment, or in the community to which its family belongs, this knowledge must urgently be recognized and put to good use in other contexts — namely, the school (Schneider, 2006).

Luke (1993) contested that where teaching practice, texts and evaluation do not take the experiences of the child into account, it becomes very difficult for the child to understand the demands placed upon it by formal education, and this will certainly compromise his or her chances of success at school. Thus the nature of socio-cultural perspectives and of the emergency of literacy have distinct implications for the roles of family context and school context.

One of these implications is related with the fact that discrimination on the level of acquisition of literacy can begin very early. If children learn to read through interaction with written matter, those whose experience is more limited or acquired in differentiated socio-cultural contexts are necessarily going to find themselves up against difficulties when they begin to receive formal education in reading at school.

And the deficit, assuming that it exists, will be difficult to close (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005) if the teaching strategies of the school are not sufficiently diversified to create the conditions for the development of the roots of literacy.

Equally worrying is what appears to be happening with storytelling in pre-school education. Veloso (2002) noted that in addition to a serious scarcity of books, the storytime ritual was practically non-existent in a universe of 52 schools. As for the conditions necessary for building on different cultural knowledges, the situation may be even worse. Since they are not sensitive to family values and cultures, it is difficult to see how they can complement experience lived in the family environment or discuss forms of collaboration (Schneider, 2006). It is similarly worrying to observe that children whose family environment is not propitious to the development of the roots of literacy come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, with limited education, and belong to ethnic minorities, factors which obviously help perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

The implications are not all negative, however. Once the *roots of literacy* have been identified and the socio-cultural nature of the phenomenon recognized, it seems possible to successfully intervene in both contexts. This was the case with three studies with which I was closely involved, held in the three contexts which are decisive for the development of literacy: family, kindergarten, and school proper.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT...

The findings presented here are taken from a study I conducted on two samples which were similar in every way (disadvantaged socio-economic situation, low level of education of parents, immigrant families, limited skill in the language of school) except ethnicity (one family was of African origin the other of Indian). This study involved changing the nature and the quantity of exposure to written media in the family environment (Villas-Boas, 2001).

Each of the samples was selected from two different schools and constituted the totality of the students from the four classes of the first year, classified by ethnic group. In each school and in agreement with the teachers, students from two classes and their respective families constituted the experimental group, while the students from the remaining classes constituted the control group. At the beginning of the study, the literacy of the students was tested using my Literacy Development Test (LDT) (Villas-Boas, 2002) and the parents of the students in the experimental group were interviewed.

The study took two years and involved four types of intervention: (a) meetings with the parents in the school; (b) storytelling sessions in the family context, using a book provided by us and conducted by visitors with previous preparation, and who sought to exemplify the typical discussion of the history, with contextualized and decontextualized stories; parents and elder brothers and sisters were then encouraged to repeat this type of interaction; (c) specific homework tasks requiring the involvement of the family; and (d) short outings in which the children were accompanied by their visitors and, wherever possible, by family members.

The meetings between parents and teachers (a) enabled discussion of ways of interaction with written/printed media in situational contexts (1st root), (b) revealed the function of writing via the exchange of correspondence (3rd root), and (c) identified ways of supporting homework activities consisting of rhymes, alliteration, word games, riddles, phrase completion, identification and correction of errors (5th root). Thus these meetings addressed the 1st, 3rd and 5th roots of literacy.

Home visits for the delivery of books and the actual storytelling sessions addressed the 2nd and 4th roots. Furthermore, visits to museums and other cultural attractions, to workplaces and to leisure facilities allowed the children and their families to enrich their “knowledge of the world”.

After one year of these activities, the findings indicated significant differences in the evolution of literacy among children aged 6-7, in comparison with the respective control groups.

FIG. 2 — PROGRESSION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AFRICAN SAMPLE

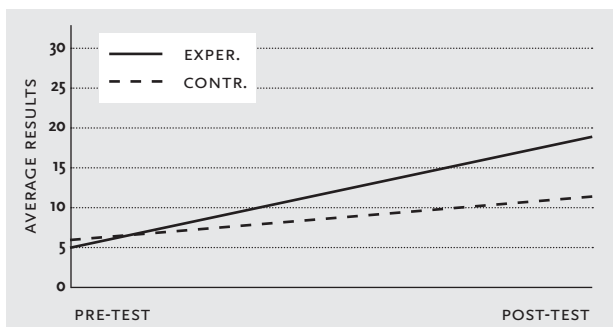
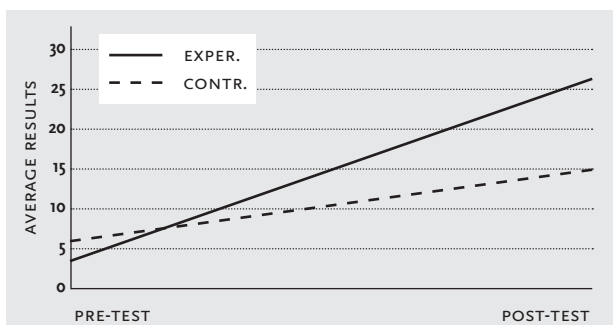


FIG. 3 — PROGRESSION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE INDIAN SAMPLE



This study is cited in Menyuk and Brisk (2005), who observe that it has “enriched the previous knowledge of children and given them practice in reading and in language” (p. 113), while also noting that similar results can be obtained “via interaction between teachers and parents, sharing written materials and discussing the ways in which reading can take place in the family environment” (p. 27). They conclude that intensive exposure to written matter and reading practices based on texts which mean something to children, in the family context, encourage the development of literacy both at home and in the school.

THE CASE OF “INTENTIONALITY” IN KINDERGARTEN EDUCATORS...

Situations similar to the family environment, in which the quality and quantity of exposure to written matter is increased, can also be recreated in the pre-school context with benefits for the development of literacy — a process which, it can never be emphasized enough, is in constant evolution.

It was with this objective in mind that Espada (2004) devised a study, under my guidance, comparing the development of literacy in three groups of children from the perspectives of their educators. Interviews with the three educators revealed the existence of fundamental

differences in the concerns they articulated and the activities they described.

Thus, while Educator A never cited the development of literacy as an objective, revealing merely a concern with the “global development” of the children in her charge, Educators B and C clearly considered development of literacy to be an objective. However, while Educator B held activities specifically geared towards the development of literacy on only an occasional and sporadic basis, Educator C declared that she had that “intentionality”, conducting specific activities and drawing on other activities to stimulate the development of literacy. In this way she created a context far more favourable to its development.

Application of the LDT (Villas-Boas, 2002) to the three groups of children revealed significant differences ($p > .001$) both in the test rating as a whole and in each of the three dimensions of the test (grapho-phonetic awareness, awareness of writing conventions, and awareness of semantic information), with the highest average scores being obtained by the children of Educator C and the lowest by the children of Educator A. The findings indicate that the development of literacy can be significantly influenced in the positive sense in cases where intentionality exists on the part of the educator.

THE CASE OF READING IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT...

The third study, this time in a school context, was conducted by Leonardo in 2005, in a primary school with an extremely heterogeneous and multicultural population. The study sought to promote intercultural transition using a teaching strategy in which storytelling was followed by exploratory (contextualized and decontextualized) activities. The sample comprised 34 pupils with average age of eight and a half, belonging to two primary 3 classes. One class was the experimental group, the other the control group. Besides evaluating the development of literacy, this study also sought to determine whether changes occurred in the way the children related to one another, and so in addition to tests designed to evaluate the development of literacy, psychometric tests were also conducted at the beginning and the end of the study.

The duration of the study was two school terms. The experimental group followed a systematic (weekly) programme of storytelling, conducted by the author, who attempted to ensure that strategies were deployed in a specific context taking into account the “three climates” cited and recommended by Leichter (1984): physical, social and emotional. To recreate the first climate we fashioned a cosy and homely corner in the school library, with blankets and pillows; for the second, we made sure intervention occurred in small groups by dividing the

class into two variable groups, while not forgetting the cultural dimension — we attempted to promote multicultural approximation by using 20 stories originating in the different cultures present (Soares & Tojal, 1997); and we simulated the appropriate emotional climate by trying to ensure that the activity was as much fun as possible.

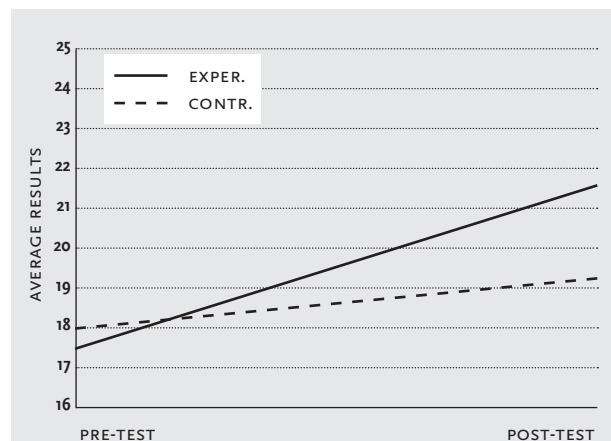
Here too our findings were extremely positive, with the tests³ indicating significant differences in the progress made both in oral language skills (Fig. 4), which constitute “a powerful indicator of the linguistic maturity of the child” (Sim-Sim, 2001, p.16) and in reading skills between the experimental group and the control group.

The influence of these strategies also seems to have contributed to a positive evolution in the relations between pupils, as an analysis of the data revealed a class in which the Portuguese pupils continue to be most frequently chosen, although less so than in the first application of the sociometric test; while a similar evolution was observed with failures which, although occurring mainly among non-Portuguese pupils, fell in relation to the first application of the test.

In this article I have attempted to show that the development of literacy is a complex and multifaceted process, addressing aspects related with (a) the relation between linguistic development and school performance, (b) the theoretical perspectives on the emergence of literacy and (c) their implications for the role of the

parent/family, and ending with (d) a brief summary of sociocultural diversity in family practice and its incidence on teaching strategies in the school and pre-school contexts.

FIG. 4 — PROGRESSION IN GLOBAL PERFORMANCE OF GROUPS



To conclude, I believe I have shown that it is not only necessary, but also that it is *possible*, for teachers to intervene in the socio-emotional context, and in school and pre-school practice, in a way that makes a positive contribution, as the family environment can, to the acquisition of literacy.

ENDNOTES

1. A practice according to which the adult presents the child with a pre-established edifice of meaning whose structural integrity depends at the outset on the support given by the adult. As the child's contribution to this meaning becomes progressively more active, the adult's role becomes less important — s/he “removes the scaffolding”, metaphorically speaking.

2. Hence the proliferation in the US of studies on literacy practices in different cultures.

3. The tests applied were: Phonemic Segmentation, Phonemic Reconstruction, Comprehension of Complex Structures and Phrase Completion, as developed by Sim-Sim (2001), and the Portuguese Language Test — Part B (adapted), applied by the Instituto de Inovação Educacional.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- ADAMS, M. (1998). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- BALES, S. *et al.* (2006). Evaluation of a Statewide Early-Intervention System: Family-centered practices related to family and child impacts. Comunicação à *AERA Annual Meeting*. S. Francisco, CA.
- BARRATT-PUGH, C. (2000). The sociocultural context of literacy learning. In C. BARRATT-PUGH & M. ROHL (eds.), *Literacy learning in the early years* Buckingham, PH: Open University Press, pp. 1-26.
- BENAVENTE, A. *et al.* (orgs.) (1996). *A literacia em Portugal*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian/CNE.
- BISSEX, G. L. (1980). *GNYS AT WRK: A child learns to read and write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- CARY, M. L. (1988). *A análise explícita das unidades da fala nos adultos não alfabetizados*. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa — FPCE. PhD thesis.
- DELGADO-MARTINS, M. *et al.* (1991). *Documentos do encontro sobre os novos programas de portugueses*. Lisboa: Colibri.
- DURKIN, D. (1966). *Children who read early*. New York: Teachers College.
- ESPADA, C. (2004). *A emergência da literacia na educação pré-escolar*. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa — FPCE. Master's dissertation.
- FERREIRO, E. (1986). The interplay between information and assimilation in beginning literacy. In W. TEALE & E. SULZBY (eds.), *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 15-49.
- GOLDENBERG, C. (2006). Sociocultural contexts and literacy development. Comunicação à *AERA Annual Meeting*. S. Francisco, CA.
- GOODMAN, Y. (1986). Children coming to know literacy. In W. TEALE & E. SULZBY (eds.), *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 1-14.
- HAWKINS, E. (1984). *Awareness of language: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HEATH, S. B. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. *Language and Society*, 11, pp. 49-77.
- HEATH, S. B. (1989). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JACOB, E. (1984). Learning literacy through play: Puerto Rican kindergarten children. In H. GOELMAN *et al.* (eds.), *Awakening to literacy: The University of Victoria Symposium on Children's Response to a Literate Environment*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational, pp. 73-83.
- KONG, A. (2006). “I don't think my Mom is right”: Opportunities to explore intelligent beliefs/unbeliefs in book discussions. Comunicação à *AERA Annual Meeting*. S. Francisco, CA.
- LEICHTER, H. (1984). Families as environments for literacy. In H. GOELMAN *et al.* (eds.), *Awakening to literacy: The University of Victoria Symposium on Children's Response to a Literate Environment*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational, pp. 38-50.
- LEONARDO, M. C. (2005). *Contributo das histórias para a melhoria da leitura e da integração de grupos étnicos ou culturais: Relato de uma experiência intercultural numa Escola do 1º ciclo do Ensino Básico*. Master's dissertation. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa — FPCE.
- LIN, Q. (2006). Beyond cultural deficit approach: Disentangling language-minority parents' involvement in the early grades. Comunicação à *AERA Annual Meeting*. S. Francisco, CA.
- LUKE, A. (1993). The social construction of literacy in the primary school. In L. UNSWORTH (ed.), *Literacy, learning and teaching: Language as social practice in the primary school*. Melbourne: Macmillan, pp. 1-92.
- MENYUK, P. (1995). Language development and education. *Journal of Education*, 177, 1, pp. 39-62.
- MENYUK, P. & Brisk, M. (2005). *Language development and education*. Basing Stoke (R. U.): Palgrave Macmillan.
- MORAIS, J. (2002). Influência da literacia e da escolaridade sobre a linguagem e a cognição. In F. VIANA; M. MARTINS BRAGA & E. COQUET (coords.), *Leitura, literatura infantil, ilustração: investigação e prática docente*. Braga: Univ. Minho, Centro de Estudos da Criança.
- PHAN, T. (2006). Parental involvement: Vietnamese parents use of storytelling as a means of academic socialization for their children. Comunicação à *AERA Annual Meeting*. S. Francisco, CA.

- SCHNEIDER, S. (2006). Managing the tensions between sociocultural perspectives on literacy and traditional schooling practices. Comunicação à *AERA Annual Meeting*. S. Francisco, CA.
- SIM-SIM, M. I. (1995) Desenvolver a linguagem, aprender a língua. In A. Dias de Carvalho (org.), *Novas metodologias em educação*. Porto: Porto Editora, pp. 198-226.
- SIM-SIM, M. I. (2001). *Avaliação da linguagem oral: Um contributo para o conhecimento do desenvolvimento linguístico das crianças portuguesas*. Lisboa: Fundação C. Gulbenkian.
- SNOW, C. & NINIO, A. (1986). The contracts of literacy: What children learn from learning to read books. In W. TEALE & E. SULZBY, *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 117-138.
- SOARES, M. L. & TOJAL, M. O. (1997). *Histórias de longe e de perto: Histórias, contos e lendas de povos que falam também português*. Lisboa: Secretariado Coordenador dos Programas de Educação Multicultural.
- SODERBERG, R. (1977). *Reading in early childhood: A linguistic study of a preschool child's gradual acquisition reading ability*. WashIngtton, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- STRICKLAND, D. & CULLINAN, B. (1998). Afterword. In M. ADAMS, *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 425-435.
- SULZBY, E. (1986) Writing and reading: Signs of oral and written language organization in the young child. In W. TEALE & E. SULZBY, *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 50-89.
- TEALE, W. (1984). Reading to young children: Its significance for literacy development. In H. GOELMAN et al. (eds.), *Awakening to literacy: The University of Victoria Symposium on Children's Response to a Literate Environment*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational, pp. 110-121.
- TEALE, W. & SULZBY, E. (1986). *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- VELOSO, R. (2002). "Curtir" literatura infantil no Jardim de Infância. In F. VIANA; M. MARTINS BRAGA & E. COQUET (coords.), *Leitura, literatura infantil, ilustração: investigação e prática docente*. Braga: Univ. Minho, Centro de Estudos da Criança.
- VERHAEGHE, A. & CARY, L. (s.d.). *Treina Metafonológico em crianças pré-escolares* (to be published).
- VILLAS-BOAS, M. A. (2001). *Escola e família: Uma relação produtiva de aprendizagem em sociedades multiculturais*. Lisboa: ESE João de Deus.
- VILLAS-BOAS, M. A. (2002). *Avaliação do desenvolvimento da literacia*. Lisboa: ESE João de Deus.
- VYGOTSKY, L. (1988). *Thought and language*. Tradução e revisão de Alex Kozulin (ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Translated by Mark Ayton