

## Teaching english for citizenship in rural areas of the Amazon region

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**Abstract:** This paper aims at studying the issue of Rural Education and more specifically the teaching of English as a foreign language in the Amazonian context and is developed as a bibliographical work which gathers experiences collected from documental sources of that specific teaching context. It promotes a better understanding of the trajectory of Education of the Rural areas of the Amazon, the public policies implemented, the advances and contribution of such policies and the teaching of English as a foreign language for citizenship within such specificities. It also analyses the impacts of this educational process on the subjects of that geographical and cultural domain.

**Keywords:** Rural education; English language; public policies; specificities; rural context.

### Introduction

One of the axis of the current discussions in the realm of education in our country and which has been frequently debated, is the education in the rural areas of the Amazon region. But why is it such a popular issue to be so intensely discussed in the educational context? Some possible answers concern the pedagogical factors that impact rural education such as: the lack of skilled professionals, poor physical infra structure offered by institutions, depreciation of the educator's work, the extensive workload, the excessive number of students and diversified level of the students' previous knowledge in each classroom (which consequently prevent the teacher from developing and executing effective lesson plans), lack of teaching resources such as books, appliances and technology, professional training for educators from the field or for those who intend to work in this area, among others. Considering the fact that no course curriculum or syllabus can ever reach and cater for all specificities of rural education in the Amazon and being foreign language teaching a considerably new field of study with very limited literature available, training professionals turns to be an essential factor. Another aspect we cannot refrain from

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noticing are the political and administrative circumstances that add to the previously mentioned difficulties. A crucial example is the issue of transportation of students to the centers of education.

Considering the views of local professionals on the persisting adversities for education within the Amazon we can cite the lack of consistent public policies in developing effective education in the rural areas. It does seem to be a very probable reason contributing for the current scenery of teaching in the rural areas, or at last it could be regarded as one the crucial factors along with the lack of a specific pedagogy reasonably planned to meet the needs of the individuals in the cultural and situational context.

The propelling motivation to develop this research was the concern with our surroundings. That is, the awareness of the fact that around us, lie immense areas of farmlands and plantation fields and that a significant number of children, adolescents, and young adults are enrolled in schools in these communities. Students enrolled in schools located in the outskirts of Amazon cities, in fact, outnumber those enrolled in the city centers.

Most language teachers graduated from the Federal University of Pará, in the campus of Bragança, for example, start their professional activities in the countryside, a place they need to understand well and that many times puts in dispute the knowledge acquired in the academy. To understand the rural reality is of fundamental importance to achieve a quality education and to ensure the success of a good process of teaching -learning, which may later be reverted to the benefit the students' own reality. We understand there is a necessity for schools to develop educational modes that articulate theory and practice, school knowledge and work, in an integrated manner in order to maintain the individuals in the field and avoid the high mobility of these people to the cities, where they most likely will remain on the fringes of society. Learning a foreign language seems, after all, an irrelevant purpose in this context if we do not consider the necessity for access to information and the contact with the external world where a great deal of scientific, cultural and political knowledge may count for the formation of a real and respected citizen. Thus, this study concentrates on adults who have spent most of their lives committed to the rural practice and have not had the chance to develop theoretical or formal scientific education in city centers. In this paper, we deal with both terms rural education and field education as equivalent concepts.

### **Historical notes on rural education in global and Brazilian contexts**

Rural education, officially recognized in the early twentieth century, has its history linked to the world of capitalist production of urban contexts. Such "political situation" brought in its essence the ideology of field education as a way to produce more capital. Projects, campaigns and slogans that came with its multifaceted intentions were marked by a desire to curb the rural population in their places of origin, though without decent conditions to survive.

France lived in that period between the two world wars, going through a difficult social situation, in which the basic challenge was its social and economic reconstruction. Within the educational sphere, specifically the education in rural areas, the existing framework during this period had, on one hand, a state of selfless problems of the peasant and his education, to the extent that the interest was teaching only the urban population and on the other hand, a church that had concerns for the peasants, but had not proposed systematically a policy of rural education, so the situation of the peasants was completely abandoned.

Young people had to choose between continuing studies - leaving the rural areas for urban centers and living away from their families, or staying close to family members and farming and consequently breaking their schooling process (SILVA, 2012).

Families, however, needed the presence and work of children and at the same time, could not afford to keep them in the cities. Discussing this issue with the local parish priest, families and church agreed with the fact that the practical knowledge was needed for those young people who wanted to stay in the farms. There should be a very specific education design to cope with that reality. They also realized that it was necessary to supplement general and technical training as a prerequisite to allow those who would one day be responsible for the property, to adapt themselves to technology.

According to Silva (2012), this discussion has favored the emergence of various ideas and propositions about a training model likely to respond to current and future needs of those young people who wished to practice agriculture. A consensus, then came up, that the learning of agricultural practice would be held on farms and completing this apprenticeship, the youth should follow a regular general education which involved not only the practical but also the theoretical knowledge. Field Education was born.

To Caldart, (2008) the concept of Field Education is new, but already in dispute, precisely because its basis is marked by very strong social contradictions. The author also claims that Field Education is a concept in motion like all other concepts, but especially because it seeks to apprehend a phenomenon under historical constitution, in turn, the conceptual discussion is

also part of this dynamic reality. Field Education in that sense, covers all educational activities developed with and by the people of the countryside, incorporating the people and the space of the forest, livestock, mining, agriculture, fishing grounds, caçaras, riverine and extractive activities (CALDART, 2008) and is based on the practical social constituent of these populations: their knowledge, skills, feelings, values, way of being and produce, to relate to the land and ways of sharing life.

Field Education also called Rural Education incorporates meanings and reasoning that are identified with the spaces of the forest, livestock, agriculture, extractive, the riparian and others, fostering relations between human beings and the conditions of social existence and with their accomplishments. Also, the concept of field education is primarily a discussion of peasants and supporters – church, universities, NGO's, among others – who intends to strip the current development model and especially forging a model of development for the field takes into account local specificities (cultural), the need for land reform, the valuation of family farming and its logic is not profit, but humanity.

The LDBEN 9394/96, in its first article states that the concept of education is not restricted to school education, defining that "Education should cover the formative processes that develop in family life, human relationships, at work, in institutions teaching and research in social movements and civil society organizations and the cultural domains.

The identity of field of education, recently built, reflects moments of confluence, debates and conflicts of ideas between social movements, public policy and other actors, as previously said in this introduction. The Rural education emerged in Brazil by 1917, when the rural migration began to be seen as a problem. Rural education was one of the instruments to contain this rural-urban migration, with great momentum during the Estado Novo, along with health campaigns.

The history of rural education in our country is marked by struggles and social movements seeking for the right for learning and information as to provide these populations the dignity of all citizens, this fights have shaped the peculiarities of rural populations, while respecting the specificities of each. Despite the fact that the educational policies did not meet the needs of these individuals, some authors claim that they could observe some political progress concerning educational in general and cultural education in the rural areas, thus consolidating the commitment of the state and society to promote education for all while respecting cultural and regional peculiarities. From the conception of education for all and the implementation of the

new Guidelines and Bases for National Education 9394/96, a great gain achieved was the recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of the field.

In elementary education for the rural population, school systems will provide the necessary adaptations to their suitability, the peculiarities of rural life and each region, especially those listed below:

I-curriculum content and appropriate methodology to the real needs and interests of students from rural areas;

II-Internal school organization, including the adequacy of the school calendar to the phases of the agricultural cycle and climatic conditions;

III-appropriateness to the nature of work in the countryside

Among the political advances concerning the history of education in rural areas, we can highlight the autonomy reached in those spaces in order to organize their calendars according to the activities and work of the community. But this measure has been performed only by schools working with the Pedagogy of rotation.

For several decades an adequate system applied to the field of education has been discussed, but along the way this topic has always been treated with contempt and placed in a lower level if compared to other educational systems. The rural areas with all its peculiar issues – sociopolitical, socioeconomic stereotypes among others, has eventually become a stigmatized space where there is no need for public investment in quality (with emphasis here education). Santos (2012) says that

For decades the professional training for the working classes of the field had been linked to <sup>4</sup>an imported model from urban education. This treatment showed a neglecting and subordinating background in regard of the the values present in the rural space and marked its inferiority when compared to the urban space. The stereotypes and other connotations multiplied themselves daily. (SANTOS, 2012.p.2).

In counterpart, the organization of movements with no ties or systematized parties, arose from the political sphere, defending the idea that the field was away beyond what many people imagine. It defined the field as being more than a geographical space of the peasant. Besides being an area surrounded by debates of political interests, the field is also characterized by its

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<sup>4</sup> “Tradução dos autores para o original: Durante décadas, a formação para as classes trabalhadoras do campo esteve vinculada a um modelo importado” da educação urbana. Este tratamento teve um fundo de descaso e subordinação dos valores presentes no campo e sua inferioridade acentuada quando comparado com o espaço urbano. Os estereótipos e outras conotações multiplicavam-se diariamente.

diversity, tradition, culture and agriculture. Santos (2012), citing Arroyo and Fernandes (1999) says that

within the National Articulation of National Basic Education for the Field Arroyo and Fernandes emphasized that the term 'field' is the result of a nomenclature proclaimed by the social movements and should be adopted by governmental agencies in their public educational policies, even when it is still reluctantly pronounced in some academic dimensions of rural studies " (SANTOS, 2012.p.2).<sup>5</sup>

As emphasized by Santos (ibden), although marginalized, the reality found in the countryside reflects political possibilities, critical education, identity and resistance against an imaginary society backward and undeveloped created on the field. This reality makes the role of education in the field even crucial. It has the commitment to deconstruct the prejudicial view of superiority that the city has always had over the countryside and to struggle against the image of countryside people's inferiority as they can not become subjects of the social exclusion and the victims or slaves of agribusiness that is a constant threat to the cultural identity, social life and the future of these people.

Regarding all this, the official political programs became a way of granting rights and policies to regulate the life and education of the rural inhabitants.

### **Government programs to encourage rural education in Brazil**

Field Education is a right for all and takes place in different territories and social practices that embody the diversity of the field. It is also a guarantee to extend the possibilities of creating and recreating the conditions of existence for the family farming and peasants. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the rural world as a territory of life in all its dimensions: economic, social, environmental and ethical policies.

Since education is a constitutional right and responsibility of the State, within the public policies that aim at the development of the field of education, we herein, present some federal government initiatives, developmental programs and strengthening of rural education;

- (i) **National Education Program in Agrarian Reform** (Pronera) empowers educators to work in schools in the settlements, and constitutes local coordinators, who act as multipliers

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<sup>5</sup>Tradução dos autores para o original: na Articulação Nacional de Educação Básica para o campo enfatizou que o termo 'campo' é o resultado de uma nomenclatura proclamada pelos movimentos sociais e deve ser adotado por políticas educacionais governamentais e públicas, mesmo quando relutantemente pronunciadas em alguns universos acadêmicos de estudos rurais.

and organizers of the communities' educational activities. The program supports projects at all levels of education, such as the education of youth and adults (EJA), high school, technical and higher levels. The Pronera Strengthens education in the areas of land reform stimulating, suggesting, creating, developing and coordinating educational projects in order to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development;

- (ii) **National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA)** has the mission of increasing the levels of formal schooling of settled rural workers. It acts as an instrument of democratization of knowledge in the field, to propose and support educational projects using methodologies focused on the development of the agrarian reform areas. Young adults settlements attend courses in basic education (literacy, primary and secondary), vocational technical high school and college courses and different expertise;
- (iii) **Support Programme for Higher Education: Degree in Rural Education (Procampo)** supports the implementation of regular courses in rural education in public institutions of higher education across the country, aimed specifically at training of teachers for the final years of elementary and intermediate levels in rural schools.
- (iv) **Active School Program** seeks to improve the quality of school performance in multigrade classes in schools of the rural areas. Among the main strategies are: deploy teaching resources in schools that encourage the construction of student knowledge and empower teachers.
- (v) **Projovem for the Field - Knowledge of Earth** offers professional training and education to young farmers 18-29 years who did not finish elementary school, aiming to tackle educational inequalities between rural and urban areas.
- (vi) **EducAmazônia Program** was born in 2005 with the aim of strengthening the foundations and actions of rural education in the state of Pará, seeking the implementation of public policies in the area. From the principle of education as an instrument of social change and development. The program served to strengthen the respect for diversity of the Amazon peasant and for the geographical, social, economic and ethnic people of the region.

As seen so far, the education has been treated rather generally and no mention has been made to course curriculum or subjects that are essential to the formation of the countryside people. In that sense we want to introduce, with this paper, the importance of language learning for the general education of any human being in an era of technological astonishing advances and where a great part of the educational process is performed by the access to the Internet, for

example. Education has changed immensely with such advances and the globalization has its benefits in terms of spreading information and making it accessible anywhere in the world. It also plays an important role in uncovering the law and the human rights for all and much of this information needs to be accessed through a global language.

### **Language Learning, Globalization and Pedagogy of Alternation**

The quick pace and the global dynamics of life in our days emerge as a contributing factor for the strengthening of English as a Global Language. This Global language that is infiltrated in international agreements, ads, commercials, television and why not say, in our everyday language. Industries, companies small, medium and large invest heavily in language skills; the tourism industry is also one of the most demanding for language qualification. It does not only invest in professional training but also in recycling of its professionals.

These actions are justified. The need to learn a new language, a global language, exposes individuals to other cultures; but according to Crystal (2003) the expansion of the English language also poses a threat to the dialects and linguistic identity of groups and societies. The individual to acquire a new language, should be responsible for keeping alive his values so their cultural identity does not disappear with it. This is a factor to be considered and respected when teaching a foreign language, for example in the countryside areas where people might be culturally affected by the feeling of inferiority provoked by their historical trajectory. But learning a foreign language may be powerful and freeing in a globalized world.

We define globalization as an economic and social process that establishes integration between countries and people around the world. Through this process, people, governments and companies exchange ideas, conduct financial transactions and trade, cultural spreading to the four corners of the planet. Globalization goes beyond the commercial and financial relations. People are increasingly finding a fast and efficient way to get in touch with people from other countries or even to meet social and cultural aspects of various parts of the planet. Along with television, the World Wide Web has been breaking barriers and, increasingly connecting people and spreading the ideas and the use of a common language is crucial. However, the language alone cannot achieve the status of a global language, the language does not become a global language because of their intrinsic properties or structural, or because it has been a vehicle of a great literature in the past, or because he was associated with a great culture or religion. These are all factors that can motivate someone to learn a language, of course, but none of them alone or in combination, can guarantee global spread of a language.



According to Crystal (2003) the language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role recognized in each country. This role is fulfilled when it reaches recognition as official, even if the community has little or no native speaker. To say that English is a global language is not to say that all the nations of the world speak English, so little that all countries recognize English as the official language, or acquire such status to become free of consequences that compromise its authenticity.

We understand that to face the reality of globalization around us, we must be prepared. For we know that the expansion of this phenomenon is continuous and it crosses barriers and reaches new territories every day and the field is not exactly inserted in this range. It is necessary to bring these people to a conscious state of their position and importance in the world, making them understand and adapt to this new reality.

The education in the field is a possibility of inclusion that can allow this consciousness, but in order to be well accomplished, the teaching in and for the field must also be adapted to the local reality, in a way that it is able to prepare the subject to this new reality and at the same time maintain their cultural identity. For this to happen, some scholars advocate the Pedagogy of Alternation, as a powerful means to reach this end.

Pedagogy of Alternation was created by French peasants in order 1935 to prevent the children from spending most of the day on the way back and forth to school or to prevent them from being sent from time to time to live in urban centers. In Brazil, the initiative came with a Jesuit mission in the Holy Spirit, in 1969. Soon it was spread to twenty states, in areas where school transport is difficult and most parents work in the field.

The Pedagogy of Alternation consists in the methodology of organization of school education that combines different formative experiences distributed over time and distinct spaces, having its purpose to the vocational training, reinforcing the idea that it was not necessary to use an educational system that encourages the rural exodus. Instead it intended to consolidate the bond of the individual with his environment, enhancing the identity of the man of the field (SANTOS, 2012).

Besides the regular courses of the curriculum of the Elementary and Secondary levels of schooling, students would have classes geared to the rural reality and the country life and when they returned home, this knowledge should be applied (the techniques in gardens, orchards and livestock) to improve family life. Rodrigues (2009), cited by Passador (2012), which advocates the

use of large-scale switching, understanding that the Pedagogy of Alternation values the work in the field says

Most schools stigmatize the farmer. Children are led to think that work in the fields is a task for those who have not studied. That is a mistake. The knowledge is useful in all areas. Especially in Brazil, there is a need for people who are well for this sector because 80% of the municipalities have a predominantly rural economy ". (PASSADOR apud RODRIGUES, 2009).<sup>6</sup>

The pedagogy of alternation is developed in spaces called Alternating Educational Centers (CEFFAs), which works as a teaching institution in rural areas, where the training takes place. In some states in the south region of Brazil, these centers of formation by alternation community and rural schools were created from social movements, led by farmers and other Local Representatives, with the aim of not unlink the students of the field, proposing an alternative model would be opposed to the neoliberal model and emerging capitalist system where schools promulgate the policies of exclusion of the man of the field.

Rodrigues (2009) cited, Neurilene Martins Ribeiro Master in Education from the University of the State of Bahia (UEB) who states that

The issue needs more debate before becoming a public policy. On one hand, our policies are very urban-centrist and need to appreciate the countryside. Secondly, this method can enhance the separation between town and country (RIBEIRO apud RODRIGUES, 2009).

It is easily concluded that the professionals supposed to work in Pedagogy of Alternation require a specific training, and these competences, which they need have not been considered in undergraduate courses. For this reason, the entities and organizations that have adopted a system of recruitment in which the monitors are preferably agronomists or agricultural technicians, but no observation has been made towards the learning of other abilities that are not directly related to the practical work in the fields. Language, therefore is left apart whereas it should be seen as an aid for building the citizenship identity.

## **Final remarks**

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<sup>6</sup> Tradução dos autores para o original: A maioria das escolas estigmatiza o agricultor. As crianças são levadas a pensar que trabalhar na roça é para quem não tem estudo. Um erro. O conhecimento é útil em todas as áreas. O Brasil, especialmente, precisa de pessoas bem formadas para esse setor porque 80% dos municípios têm uma economia essencialmente rural.

Generally students are questioned about learning English. “Why should I learn? What’s the purpose of learning another language?” These questions in the rural context would echo as “why learning English if I will never get out of here?” It is from these questions that the teacher should provide for what reasons and the student should have to study a foreign language, as we see below.

Explore the English language in all its aspects (social, structural, historical, geographical and cultural), opens the curtains of a new world. A huge and complex world that is reachable through education.

It is known that students from rural areas mostly unaware of the importance of the English language, which for many represents a difficult barrier to cross. But it is necessary for these students is to be shown show this language is present in our everyday lives and about increasingly diverse. Learning English cannot be seen as something too hard, tiring or boring, but rather it should be seen as a great opportunity to meet the world which has no boundaries or limits. The English language cannot be viewed as just another subject in the school curriculum, yet its potential as a freeing knowledge should be emphasized, in special for those who have endured historical isolation, exclusion and discrimination.

In the present survey, we could confirm there is little attention paid to the role of language teaching in the rural context, but it is noticeable that a search for effective means or tools to enhance the professional qualified teaching of the English language is underway. Also, we understood that educational policies have provided for rural education to privilege the permanence of the rural people in their social context.

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**RESUMO:** Este artigo tem como objetivo estudar a questão da Educação Rural e, mais especificamente, o ensino de Inglês como língua estrangeira no contexto da Amazônia e é desenvolvida como uma obra bibliográfica que reúne experiências recolhidas a partir de fontes documentais de que contexto de ensino específico. Promove uma melhor compreensão da trajetória da Educação das áreas rurais da Amazônia, as políticas públicas implementadas, os avanços e contribuição de tais políticas e do ensino de Inglês como língua estrangeira para a cidadania dentro de tais especificidades. Também analisa os impactos desse processo educativo sobre os temas desse domínio geográfico e cultural.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação rural; Língua inglesa; Políticas públicas; Especificidades; Contexto rural.