LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE IN BILINGUAL CONTEXTS. A STUDY AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME WITH INDIGENOUS QOM COMMUNITIES IN ARGENTINA

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Abstract

This paper presents a bilingual and intercultural programme carried out with young children from indigenous Qom communities located in different areas throughout Argentina. The programme seeks to promote learning and avoid the problems that these children often meet throughout the literacy acquisition process. Within a theoretical framework that combines psycholinguistic theories that recover the central tenets of the sociocultural perspective (Nelson, 1996, 2007), and literacy approaches from an intercultural perspective (Rosemberg, Borzone & Diuk, 2003) we developed a series of educational materials to promote the learning of literacy in Qom and in Spanish to Qom children. The study articulates collaboration between researchers, teachers and community members, who selected community situations to be observed and carried out observation records. These records were used to write "ethnographic reading books", intercultural storybooks that are used in the literacy settings. These "ethnographic books" reflect the children's knowledge of their own dialect and community while integrating these with the standard language variety and other types of knowledge.

Key words: bilingual and intercultural education, literacy acquisition, indigenous communities, ethnographic reading books.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

This paper present a bilingual and intercultural programme carried out with young children from indigenous Qom communities located in different areas throughout Argentina. The programme seeks to promote learning and avoid the problems that these children often encounter throughout the literacy acquisition process.

The difficulties that children from Qom communities experience in the initial stages of the literacy acquisition process are similar to the difficulties that children from other minority communities face, as their culture, language, and linguistic variation are different from those that are taught in school. These problems in the literacy acquisition process are a major source of concern for families, teachers and researchers.

The data on dropout and repetition in the first years of schooling shows the magnitude of this problem, which often leads the children to school failure (32,07% of the children from 5 to 13 years old repeated a year of study or left primary school (INDEC, 2006). Traditional teaching methods have not proven useful in helping children from these groups overcome their learning difficulties. Several papers on rural communities and marginalized urban populations (Cook-Gumperz, 1988; Wells, 1988; Michaels, 1988; Simons & Murphy, 1988; Álvarez, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Tharp & Yamauchi, 1994; Rosemberg & Borzone, 1998) have shown that a lack of incorporation of knowledge of the activity systems and linguistic variation utilized in the children's communities into the school teaching situations has made the literacy acquisition and learning process more difficult for these children. This problem can be compounded when children do not become literate in their first language.

This paper presents the conceptual framework for the intercultural and bilingual literacy acquisition programme as well as a series of materials created to promote reading and writing skills in Spanish and Qom. It also illustrates the implementation of these materials in various contexts.

1.1 Qom Communities: a brief description of their sociolinguistic characteristics

Toba or Qom L`aqtaqa is part of the Guaycurú family and is spoken by approximately 60,000 people who live in the Gran Chaco region in Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay as well as in settlements in the cities of Resistencia, Roque Saenz Peña, Rosario, Santa Fe, Buenos Aires and La Plata, in Argentina (Censabella, 1999; Messineo, 2003).

The Qom language is an agglutinative language. In these languages, a word may consist of more than one morpheme, each one clearly expressing a different meaning, whereas fusional languages, as Spanish or English, are those in which a morpheme can simultaneously encode several meanings (Censabella, 1999). In Qom, the tense is not codified in the verb, as in Spanish or English. Another feature of the Qom language is the presence of certain particles coming before nouns. They indi-

cate, on the one hand, the characteristics associated with the shape and position of the reference and, on the other hand, express motion and temporal or spatial distance with respect to the speaker (Messineo, 2003).

The Qom communities that are a part of the schools and community centres included in this project are located in four different areas in Argentina, three of which are located in Chaco Province: Resistencia, Pampa del Indio, and Villa Río Bermejito. The fourth community is in Presidente Derqui, located in Buenos Aires Province. Great differences can be found between these areas, as they vary from urban to semi-urban to rural. This implies that the activities, occupations, means and quality of life of the people who make up these communities also vary greatly (Censabella, 1999).

People living in the aforementioned areas interact in either Qom or Spanish, depending on their group of origin, possible speaking partners, and the different communicative situations in which they regularly or occasionally participate. The communities located in urban centres (Presidente Derqui, in Buenos Aires Province and Resistencia, in Chaco Province) are characterized by a greater level of contact with the non-indigenous population and the Spanish language. This leads to a marked shift from the vernacular (Qom) towards the national language (Spanish). Qom is thus a minority language, whose intergenerational transmission is being interrupted. Almost no children in these communities speak their native language and instead learn Spanish as their first language.

Those communities located in urban centres are also characterized by dialectical diversity in both Qom and Spanish. With regards to Qom, dialect differences are observed due to the mixing of families from different sectors of the province, a product of internal migration due to lack of work. This creates the coexistence of diverse dialectic varieties of Qom. In Spanish, the standard dialect coexists with a regional standard also used in local oral means of communication, and variations of Spanish marked by their contact with the Qom language and other indigenous languages. While these communities may be characterized as Qom-Spanish bilingual, characterization of speakers according to their language proficiency is varied, with age being the determining factor. In effect, the majority of the elderly are bilingual, with a greater command of Qom than of Spanish. While there is an older generation of bilingual, fluent speakers of Qom and Spanish, most young adults (age 25 to 40) do not speak the native language but do understand when spoken to. Meanwhile, adolescents are the most affected by the loss of the language, as most are monolingual in Spanish, and with the passing of time some have even generated an attitude of rejection and resistance to the Qom language. With respect to young children, most have Spanish as their first language; they do not speak and in many cases do not understand Qom. The very few children who speak Spanish and Qom typically come from rural zones in Chaco (Messineo, 2003).

In the case of the rural communities (Pampa del Indio and Villa Río Bermejito, in Chaco Province) Qom is the primary language, and it has greater prestige and vitality. It is used in every aspect of family and community life (daily conversations, legal

and political matters within the community, and worship). Spanish is usually only used to communicate with non-indigenous people in work situations or business transactions.

While the adults speak both Qom and Spanish fluently, most of the small children only speak Qom. They have their first contact with Spanish when they start nursery school, although they sometimes rely on their relatively limited command of Spanish when they play with non-indigenous children outside of school (Censabella, 1999).

2.   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the sociocultural perspective of human development, it is assumed that oral and written language learning and knowledge acquisition take place in the joint execution of activities. Interactions with other people generate a matrix for development, i.e. a "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Nelson, 1996, 2007; Álvarez, 1990) in which the child, with the collaboration of others, can make use of cultural instruments to be able to use them later in an independent way. The learning is not the direct result of the transfer of knowledge from the adult to the child, but a gradual process that is produced through the child's participation in these activity systems with the scaffolding of more expert members of the culture (Bruner, 1986).

Studies conducted in the past 30 years have shown several important differences between social and cultural groups in terms of the activity systems that shape children's daily lives (e.g. Rogoff, 1993). Each activity system is comprised of a wide range of knowledge of its resources and of the methods and techniques used as a part of the system. As a result, the child will access the system in a particular way. These "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2005; González, Wyman, & O´Connor, 2011; Moll, Soto-Santiago & Schwartz, in press) are important for the child in three ways. First, they involve an identification with the social environment since they are practices that have been developed over the course of a historical process. Second, they are transmitted and communicated to the child within the context of the activities system that shapes their lives. Third, the goals of the system are previously known to the child.

Several studies have also shown important cultural and social differences in the social relationship networks that the children have been a part of since birth (Rogoff, 1993; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 2004; Volk & de Acosta, 2004). Differences can also be seen in the patterns and forms of the verbal and nonverbal interactions that characterize the children's communicative exchanges (Simons y Murphy, 1988; Rosemberg & Borzone, 1998).

Other studies have focused on the differences between home and school. Some of them have indicated that there is a discontinuity between the phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical characteristics of the dialects spoken by the children of minority communities and those usually privileged in the school envi-

ronment (Adger, Wolfram, Detwyler & Harry, 1992; Cazden, 1991; Martinez, 2003). Additionally, differences have been identified between the discursive and contextualized informal register typical of the oral tradition that characterizes communication in families with a low literacy level and the decontextualized style of discourse that characterizes writing at school (Snow, 1983; Michaels, 1988; Simons & Murphy 1988; Rosemberg & Borzone, 1998).

In response to this issue, and considering that knowledge is inseparable from the language that embodies it, the Council of Europe's "Languages in Education – Languages for Education" project (2009) emphasizes the need for all teachers to take into account the specific language demands of their subjects. The aim is for all students to master the language not only as a form of communication, but also so they can participate in cultural, political and social life. As Thürmann, Vollmer, and Pieper (2010) state, learning academic language is not just acquiring technical terms from the curriculum material; it means moving from the contextualized language to the construction of a written form.

Several studies with different groups have shown the need to create an intercultural and multilingual curriculum that addresses the diversity present in schools (Saldivar, 2006; Rosemberg & Ojea, 2010; Brown, 2011). For example, Noguerol (2001) argues that in order to create intercultural and multilingual education, the curriculum must be structured so that it seeks to develop positive attitudes and representations of the native culture and language, and other languages, as well as an improvement in the ability to reflect on language and communication and the development of the knowledge necessary to deal with linguistic diversity.

The Council of Europe Publication "Plurilingual and Intercultural Education as a Project" (Cavali, Coste, Crisan & Van de Ven, 2009) initiative states that education should develop plurilingual competence, defined as the

> "capacity to successively acquire and use different competencies in different languages, at different levels of proficiency and for different functions."

Education should also develop intercultural competence, which is the

> "combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors which allow a speaker, to varying degrees, to recognize, understand, interpret and accept other ways of living and thinking beyond his or her home culture. This competence is the basis of understanding among people, and is not limited to language ability" (ibid: 8).

Cenoz (2011) points out the dynamic nature of plurilingual competence, as people have varying degrees of competence in the languages they speak, based on their life experiences and their interactions. For example, as indicated above, in Argentina's Qom indigenous communities a person's level of competence in Qom varies depending not only on their geographic zone, but also their age group and the communicative situations that they are involved in.

On the other hand, it is important to note that in "Plurilingual and Intercultural Education as a Project" although the term "plurilingual" is used to refer to linguistic competence, cultural competence is called "intercultural", not "pluricultural". With

this in mind, Byram (2008) notes the importance of distinguishing between the two terms. "Pluri/bicultural" refers to the possibility of identifying with and being accepted by more than one social group. On the other hand, "intercultural" refers to the ability to compare and establish similarities and differences between social groups. While bi/pluriculturalism is a phenomenon that occurs in some societies, interculturalism is a pedagogical objective that should always be taught. Argentina's indigenous Qom communities represent a case of biculturalism, as their members are part of both the indigenous Qom community and the non-indigenous national culture. Schools must address both this bicultural situation and the issue of intercultural competence in society as a whole. Literacy should always be an intercultural process because writing not only allows access to knowledge and knowledge production within the social and cultural group itself, but also allows for access to knowledge produced by other groups and dialogue between cultures.

The intercultural and bilingual literacy programme that we present in this paper aims to respond to the issues mentioned: the teaching of plurilingual and intercultural competencies in a bilingual and bicultural community that does not have the same culture, linguistic variation, and academic register as the school.

3.   ETHNOGRAPHIC READING BOOKS:
AN INTERCULTURAL LITERACY STRATEGY

As has been extensively pointed out in other studies (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991; Moll, 1992; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Saldivar, 2006; Comber, 2011, among others), all language learning that the children do within the school must be based on the children's linguistic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979). In some communities, as in the Qom community, these language and cultural dimensions can be very different from those that are prioritized in school. If the school uses the children's language varieties, communication and learning strategies as a starting block for teaching, and cultural continuity is safeguarded as the children move from the home environment to the school. Additionally, in moving "beyond" initial learning to a real cultural exchange, the school complements the family's actions by providing tools to interpret and recreate their reality and creating "bridges" (Gasché, 2001; González, Andrade, Civil & Moll, 2001; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 2005) with other forms of experiencing, interpreting, and representing reality. In order to establish bridges between the knowledge and language that children develop at home and in the community and that which is acquired at school, a pedagogical strategy has been designed: ethnographic reading books[1] (Rosemberg, Stein & Alam, in press).

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[1] *We have developed other ethnographic reading books for several groups in Argentina: Las aventuras de Ernestina [Ernestina's Adventures] for the Colla communities (Rosemberg, Borzone & Flores, 2002); Las aventuras de Tomás [Tomás's Adventures] for children that live in urban-marginalized neighborhods in Buenos Aires (Borzone & Rosemberg, 2000); Las aventu-*

These books provide a socio-cultural anchor for the literacy of rural and impoverished, indigenous communities and children of urban-marginalized populations of Argentina (Rosemberg, 1997; Rosemberg & Borzone, 1998). The books do not simply repeat local knowledge and issues. They attempt to capture children's points of view as actors in their own reality and in that sense they are strictly ethnographic. Ethnographic reading books try to represent the children's subjective experiences and, in this way, allow them to experience the functionality of writing as an external support system that is used to represent information, ideas, and feelings. The work of Amado and Borzone elsewhere in this volume also illustrates the way in which ethnographic books can build bridges between the knowledge that children build in their community and that which is acquired in school.

In the framework of the intercultural and bilingual literacy project that we are carrying out with Qom communities[2], we have developed a reading book in Spanish, *Las Aventuras de Huaqajñe* [Huaqajñe's Adventures] (López, Silvestre, Rosemberg, Gutiérrez, Ojea, Díaz, Codutti, Zalazar, Vallejos, Suarez, García, Zenón & Fernández, 2010)*, which includes an activity book, and a reading book in Qom, *Aso nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A Girl Named Cintia] (Silvestre, Gutierrez, García, Romero, Inderecio, Sánchez, López, Maidana, Rosemberg, Ojea, & Fernandez, in press), as well as an accompanying activity book.

The books are the result of fieldwork performed by community members. The fieldwork consists primarily, but not exclusively, of observations of the children's daily life, recordings, and audio transcriptions of the language used in interaction situations. Observations have an advantage over the information provided by other sources such as interviews and stories. Observations allow us to see the child, and those who interact with them, not just as mere relaters of knowledge and stories, but also as actors in their own reality, be it individually or cooperating socially with others. As the children participate in the activities, they reveal their knowledge, skills and interests, feelings, and reactions in relation to the objects, actions, and other people that are part of their lives. In a second stage, the community mem-

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ras de Anita [Anita's Adventures] for children in the rural areas of La Rioja (Diuk, Borzone & Rosemberg, 2003); En la casa de Oscarcito [At Oscarcito´s Home] for preeschool children that live in urban-marginalized neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires (Rosemberg, Brozone & colab., 2008) and Antonio y Romina [Antonio and Romina's Adventures] for children from the Mocoví communities of Santa Fe (Gómez, Sánchez, Rosemberg & Ojea, not yet published).

[2] *Un estudio diagnóstico de los marcos culturales y sistemas de actividad para la actuación educativa en poblaciones tobas de Argentina. [A Diagnosis Study of the cultural frames and activity systems for educative intervention in Tobas populations in Argentina] AECID – Universidad Carlos III de Madrid – CIIPME-CONICET. Directoras: C.R. Rosemberg, and A. Álvarez (2009-2010) y Promoción de iniciativas educativas interculturales para el desarrollo integral de niños, y niñas de las comunidades Tobas de la Provincia de Chaco. [Promotion of intercultural educational initiatives for the comprehensive development of children in Toba comunities in the Province of Chaco] Save the Children- Embajada de Finlandia de Buenos Aires- CIIPME-CONICET. Directora: C.R. Rosemberg (2011-2012)*

bers and teachers together with the researchers, read through the observation logs and identify situations that characterize the children's lives in that particular sociocultural environment. The selected events are then fictionalized and turned into storybooks. Finally, the book is revised and corrected by teachers and members of other communities.

Las aventuras de Huaqajñe [Huaqajñe's Adventures] was created based upon the observations of the daily life of a 6-year-old girl named Huaqajñe, who lives in Resistencia and speaks Spanish as her first language. On the other hand, *Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A Girl Named Cintia] was written based on observations of Cintia, a little girl who lives in Pampa del Indio and whose first language is Qom.

Children's spontaneous concepts are reflected in the activities, which are ethnographically recorded and textualized to provide the conceptual fabric in which other scientific concepts, which are introduced over the course of the book, acquire meaning. In this way, knowledge of the local physical, social, and spiritual world is juxtaposed with scientific knowledge and school curriculum (Gashé, 2001).

For example, in the book titled *Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A Girl Named Cintia], Cintia and her friends from school interview the elderly in their community to find out information about alligators. The elders tell them what each part of the animal is used for. Then they work with the teacher to compile this information together with information taken from other sources and organize it for the science fair. The new information describes specific variables such as height, size, weight, body characteristics, habitat, and diet. This allows children to learn conventional scholastic information and scientific thinking skills, while also giving greater importance to local society and culture. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Information about alligators in Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia [A Girl Named Cintia].

LE'ENAXAT: RA'AILO'OC

Na lo'oc:
Ye lca: lta'araic
Lalogaxa: 60 cm
Ra lsallaxa: 150 kg.
Logoraic: 2 - 3 metros
Lcategue: 70 cm

Ra lo'ogoy̆axac na mayepi.
Lairaxaic, rarala qataq lapagaxaic.
Ra lataxac:
4 na lapia'ate qataq saqaloc.
5 naua llaxaata, añe pa'achingui na laiñe logorai.
Ñe lqaic lta'araic, 60 cm.
Na lhue logoraiqa.
Lta'al na la'aite qataq huo'o añe napa.
Na la'araxashet logoraic huo'oi na le.

¿Hua'aguet ca netaguet?
Netangui na 'etaxat qataq na aviaq.
Saqy̆et ra nataxau'qataq huo'o ra ntalec na lqaxay̆axa.
Ana ra'ailo'oc 'alo ra rco'o nache ivi' ra 30 na lco'oue'pi ye vi'i, na lco'oichaxaqui y̆anaigui na cotaquesat, ime nache imejlec. Saishet ra tatec ra nvittegueta ra nqapaxalec. Lvira ye 'oonolec ca'agoxoic qataq huo'o ra y̆achaigui na 'alap nache iraxama y̆e'etaxat.

¿Ne'eguet na'aloq?
Chec na: ny̆aq, potai 'etaxat lashe, nashiy̆o, qoyepe, altolec, hualliquiaxai qataq huo'o ra chec na shiguiy̆ac.

¿Ca 'eetec ra qay̆aconhua'a?
Ra qay̆aconhua'a nache qay̆auota'a naleguec, checna qataq ishet ra qaicoñerat qay̆auota'a na peraxanaxa lo'oc.

¿Ca 'eetec ra qanallec?
Qay̆auot qataq qaiton na lapat ra qanallec.
Na la'araxashet qay̆a'an, qay̆acagaxat, qaiuata'a ra rqaqta nache qay̆auot ime nache qaiquiaaxanec na pagaxaicatoc.
Taqa'en aso nnaishte qanqat, qaiqaxay̆axat, ra rqaqta nache qoy̆anem na nogotolec qataq nsoqolec ra inaigui yaqto ivira'a ra y̆a'axaiquiolec nache saishet ra lto ana lhuepi.

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 In this way children can understand that writing is not only an instrument of exter-nalization that allows for the representation and production of one's own knowledge but it also serves as a means of accessing knowledge produced in other social and cultural groups. Therefore, in the narrative contexts created, the knowledge and objects from the child's culture are interwoven with other knowledge and other cultural norms, trying to account for an intercultural perspec-tive.

A similar example can be seen in one of the chapters of the book "Huaqajñe's Adventures", in which the girl travels to Buenos Aires (the capital of Argentina). Huaqajñe learns what life is like in a big city; she learns about the machines and apparatuses that they use such as the traffic light to cross the street, the ticket machine on the bus, the elevator, the escalator. Throughout the book her parents and other adults explain the things she is seeing in the city:

> "¿Qué es eso?", le preguntó Huaqajñe. "Vení que te muestro", le respondió Cristina (...) "el ascensor puede subir y bajar. El edificio es alto, tiene dos pisos. Si querés ir al primer piso, apretás el botón con el número 1 y si querés ir al segundo piso, apretás el botón con el número 2" (2010: 109).

> ["What is that?" asked Huaqajñe. "Come over here and I'll show you", responded Christina (...) "the elevator can go up and down. The building is tall, it has two floors. If you want to go to the first floor you press the button with the number 1 and if you want to go to the second floor you press the button with the number 2"]

"Huaqajñe's Adventures" also introduce other cultural forms as part of episodes in which the child reads books from Western culture. For example, in one of the epi-sodes, the little girl brings home several books from the school library: *Gulliver*, *Sandokán* and *Peter Pan.* In this episode she reads sections from these books in which she becomes the protagonist:

> "Abrió el libro y... se encontró en una tierra extraña. Era una playa de arenas y rocas. A lo lejos, en la orilla del mar, se veían restos de un barco destrozado..." (2010: 88).

> ["She opened the book and… she found a strange land. It was a beach filled with rocks and sand. Far away, on the seashore, she could see the remains of a shipwreck…"]

Moreover, the introduction of these fictional stories allows the children not only to learn about new worlds, but also gives them access to the literary genre. Similarly, the journalistic genre is introduced in other episodes through an article that one of the characters, Huaqajñe's uncle, reads in the newspaper. In this case, not only is the linguistic form reproduced, but the layout of a newspaper is also shown (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The journalistic genre in Las aventuras de Huaqajñe [Huaqajñe´s adventures].

The epistolary genre is included in the books through letters that the children write and receive. In *Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A Girl Named Cintia] Huaqajñe and Cintia send letters to each other in which they tell about something that has happened. In this case the children get used to the specific textual format. In the letters, the girls alternate between their first language and the language that they have mastered to a lesser extent; Qom in the case of Huaqajñe, and Spanish in the case of Cintia. Thus the Qom community's bilingualism is highlighted. Finally, it is important to note that the girls narrate in the letters experiences that were already presented in the book, but as they were "in the situation" the register used was more contextualized. In one example, Cintia tells about a time that they went to pick fruit on the mountain and saw a monkey. While the characters use direct speech in the episode narrated as part of the fictionalized story, they use a decontextualized language register in the letters to retell the experience, resorting to an indirect style of discourse.

(Insert image 3)

Figure 3: Huaqajñe´s and Cintia´s letters in Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia
[A Girl Named Cintia].

Pampa del Indio, 29 de septiembre de 2010

Hola, Huaqajñe:

¿Cómo estás? Nosotros todos bien, ¿y ustedes?
Shecailla Julián, Loyin qataq Dana so naqtauga añe come
Victoria, ¿antouetac ye lma'?
Qaq so siviraxauxa nache selaqaique amap saxaigui ye
aviaq.
Qaq so ñe'eguelaxasoxouo nache so Julián qataq Loyin
nqomirat. So Loyin poxolaxañe nache na lo'ot aso 'epaq
ratacheguem tangui na lashec ana 'epaq ala. Nache so
Julián ŷamato'ot aso 'epaq qaq ila'a so huoŷem, ñi'i qataq
ŷa'alaq 'eeta': "Loyin maxatchaxa ŷasaxangui ana anmilo
ca la'atec nache qui'itangui ana anmilo". Qaq nache
'enauaque ra tarec ŷaguec ra lli'iŷaxa. 'Enauac omi
ñi'inaqtega't cha´aye ŷaguec ra ñi'iŷa so huoŷem.
Ra ŷoltaxa anvira na Pampa nache saxauga añe come
sachaxanaxa ca 'anfoto.
Qataq saxaigui ye aviaq selaqaique amap qalaxaye
maxatchaxa ca huoŷem.

Nale´en. Ñachec.
Cintia

Fontana, 22 de septiembre de 2010

La' Cintia:
¿Ca 'eetec 'am naxa? ¿Qaq ca qarhuo? ¿Qaq ca arta'al
tesoqo'lec Toli qataq aca soro'le Mirian?
Fui con mi papá, mi mamá y mi tía Ofelia a Buenos Aires. El
viaje es muy largo. Dormí casi todo el tiempo y me desperté
cuando llegamos a la terminal. ¡Qué grande! ¡Había muchos
micros enormes y escaleras mecánicas! No tenés que caminar.
Te quedás parada y la escalera te sube. ¡Qué onaxai!
En Buenos Aires hay muchas plazas muy grandes que están
llenas de palomas. También hay muchos edificios muy altos.
Conocí el Cabildo y el Congreso. Mi papá sacó muchas fotos.
La próxima vez que vaya a Pampa te las muestro y te llevo un
regalito de sorpresa.

Nale'en
Huaqajñe

Furthermore, the books are multi-dialectical. In *Las aventuras de Huaqajñe*
[Huaqajñe´s adventures] the narrator uses standard dialect, while the book's char-
acters employ their community's linguistic variation in their dialogue. In the follow-
ing example Huaqajñe and her cousin Agustina use forms that are specific to the
variant of Spanish that is spoken in Chaco, which differ from the standard variant
used by the narrator of the text.

> Al rato, Huaqajñe se cansó de limpiar
> Huaqajñe: Vos cuida*le* al bebé. No le pegues.
> Agustina: Yo le pego *nunca.*
>
> [After a while, Huaqajñe got tired of cleaning.
> Huaqajñe: You watch him the baby. Don't hit him.
> Agustina: I hit him never.]

There is no language variety in Qom that can be considered to be standard. There-
fore, *Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A Girl Named Cintia] includes Qom's four dif-
ferent linguistic variants. The importance of this characteristic can be appreciated if
one considers that the dialects, like the language itself, are an important source of
identification through which the children construct their identities (Arnoux & Bein,
1995).

4.   THE INTERVENTION:
USING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC BOOKS IN TEACHING SITUATIONS

4.1 Ethnographic books as a means to bilingual literacy

As indicated in the sociolinguistic description earlier, the Qom communities situated in different regions of Chaco and Buenos Aires differ according to their degree of urbanization, the hybridization of their cultural practices and their sociolinguistic situation. The intercultural and bilingual literacy programme seeks to address the cultural and linguistic differences between these distinct communities. The books *Las aventuras de Huaqajñe* [The Adventures of Huaqajñe] and *Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A Girl Named Cintia] are used so that the children can first begin to become literate with a reading book that is written in their first language, be it Qom or Spanish, while they learn to communicate orally in their second language, Qom or Spanish. Once the literacy process has started, the children can begin to learn to read in their second language by using the corresponding reading book. Activity books that recreate the episodes from each of the two reading books were designed and developed in order to facilitate teaching the writing system. The activity books focus on grapheme-phoneme correspondences, phonological awareness, reading and writing words, the acquisition of new vocabulary by building on the words that are already familiar to the children, reading comprehension skills, and the production of short texts.

Starting to teach literacy through using full texts, like those included in the reading books, rather than decontextualized words, has an important advantage: it makes the activity more meaningful to the children, as they realize that writing is used to convey meaning. Moreover, as the majority of the events that appear in the text, particularly the initial events, represent the child's experiences and everyday situations in their life, reading comprehension issues are reduced to a minimum, at least in the first stage of literacy acquisition, and the child can focus all of their attention on trying to understand the writing system. The children are not expected to be able to read the initial chapters on their own. Intervention focuses on shared reading situations in which the teacher initially reads the text and then actively involves the children by using comments and questions designed to establish relationships between the information presented in the text and the children's previous knowledge and experiences.

In the exchange presented below, the teacher gives an initial reading of a chapter from *Las aventuras de Huaqajñe* [The Adventures of Huaqajñe] in which Huaqajñe and her friend Agustina build a fort with chairs and sheets, and play house. After the initial reading of the event, the teacher talks with the children about household chores and thus provides them with a framework for understanding their own knowledge and experiences.

> Maestra: (...) Al rato huaqajñe se cansó de limpiar [Detiene la lectura] Miren acá a Huaqajñe [Señala la imagen del libro] ¿Qué está haciendo ella ahí?

Niño: Está limpiando.
Maestra: Sí está limpiando, ¿y qué tiene en la mano?
Niño: La escoba
Maestra: Muy bien, ¿y para qué sirve la escoba?
Niño: Para barrer la casa
Maestra: ¿Y quién barre la casa de ustedes?
Niño: Mi tía Ale
Maestra: ¿Y qué más hace tu tía Ale?
Niña: Barre, lava la ropa, me lleva al pueblo a comprar comida
Maestra: Muy bien.
Niño: A veces hace tortas.
Maestra: ¿Hace tortas? ¿Cómo hace la torta?
Niño: No la torta para comer, la torta de cumpleaños.
Maestra: ¿Quién hace la torta en la casa de ustedes?
Niña: Yo.
Niño: Mi mamá.
Maestra: ¿Y cómo hace la torta?
Niña: Con harina.
Maestra: ¿Con harina y qué más? ¿Ustedes saben cómo se hace la torta?
Niña: Con harina.
Maestra: ¿Con harina y qué más?
Niño: Huevo, aceite.
Maestra: ¿Y cómo hacemos después?
Niño: Amasas.
Maestra: La amasamos con la mano, ¿y qué le echamos después?
Niño: Toue (Sal en qom)
Maestra: Sal, le ponemos sal ... ¿Y el chipá? (comida tradicional) ¿Cómo se hace el chipá?
Niño: Con la grasa y la harina.
Maestra: ¿Después dónde ponemos?
Niño: En la fuente.
Maestra: ¿Y después?
Niña: Hay que poner la parrilla con mucho fogón y darlo vuelta.
Maestra: ¿Y para qué hay que darlo vuelta?
Niña: Para que se cocine.
Maestra: Para que se cocine y salga rica, ¿y después?
Niño: También comemos poqo (comida tradicional qom).

[Teacher: (...) After a while Huaqajñe got sick of cleaning [Stops reading] Look at Huaqajñe here [Points to the picture in the book] What is she doing here?
Boy: She's cleaning.
Teacher: Yes, she's cleaning, and what does she have in her hand?
Boy: A broom.
Teacher: Very good. And what do we use a broom for?
Boy: To sweep the house.
Teacher: And who sweeps your houses?
Boy: My aunt Ale.
Teacher: What else does your aunt Ale do?
Girl: Sweeps, washes the clothes, brings me into town to buy food.
Teacher: Very good.
Boy: Sometimes she makes cakes[3].
Teacher: She makes cakes? How does she make the cake?

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[3]   Here "cake" refers to a type of fried or grilled bread typical to the area.

Boy: Not a cake to eat, a birthday cake.
Teacher: Who makes the cakes in your houses?
Girl: Me.
Boy: My mom.
Teacher: And how does she make the cake?
Girl: With flour.
Teacher: With flour and what else? Do you all know how to make a cake?
Girl: With flour.
Teacher: With flour and what else?
Boy: Eggs, oil.
Teacher: And what do we do after that?
Boy: You kneed it.
Teacher: We kneed it with our hands, and what do we add in then?
Boy: Toue (Salt in Qom)
Teacher: Salt, we add in salt… And "chipá"? (traditional native food) How do we make chipá?
Boy: With fat and flour.
Teacher: Then where do we put it?
Boy: On the cooking sheet.
Teacher: And then?
Girl: You have to put it on the grill with a big flame and then you flip it.
Teacher: And why do we flip it over?
Girl: So that it cooks.
Teacher: So that it cooks and it turns out yummy, and then?
Boy: We also eat "poqo" (traditional Qom food).]

As can be seen in the exchange, the teacher provides a scaffold (Bruner, 1986) for the children through questions designed to activate their knowledge. When the children provide information the teacher takes it, reformulates it, and tries to get the child to expand on the information that they have just provided, e.g. when the boy says, "you kneed it", and the teacher responds, "we kneed it with our hands. And what do we add to it then?" These "weaving" strategies, previously identified in other studies, (Goldenberg & Patthey Chavez, 1995; Lemke, 1993; Sánchez, 2001; Rosemberg, Borzone & Diuk, 2003; Rosemberg & Silva, 2009) allow for the inclusion of the children's knowledge and native language in the teaching process in cases where the children have a large sociolinguistic and cultural discontinuity with respect to the school's teaching contents and methods. Such strategies create "bridges" (Gasché, 2001; Gallegos, 2001; González, Andrade, Civil & Moll, 2001; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 2005) that link their previous knowledge and linguistic experience with other forms of representation and communication. For example, in the exchange presented above, the children identified some objects in Qom. The teacher accepts the children's words and also provides the word in Spanish, as in the case when the boy says, "toue" (salt), and the teacher says, "we add in salt". In this way, the interaction creates a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) that may facilitate the other language learning.

The task proposed is initially very contextualized, both for its subject and by the teacher and students' degree of involvement. However, when the children add their specific experiences to the development of the task, the teacher collaborates with them to teach the children more decontextualized uses of the language (Snow, 1983) and other discursive genres, drawing on the children's experiences. In effect, through the use of her questions and interventions, the teacher shows the children the format of instructional discourse: the mentioning of the necessary elements and the temporal order of the instructions. The teacher says, "Do you all know how to make cake?" and a girl replies, "With flour". Then the teacher prods further, saying, "With flour and what else?" and a boy responds, "Eggs and oil". Next the teacher asks, "And what do we do next?" and a boy replies, "You kneed it". The teacher says, "We kneed it with our hands".

After the text has been read several times by the teacher and the students, they complete reading and word-writing activities based on what they have just read. The children become increasingly incorporated into the situation and begin sharing the tasks of reading and writing with the teacher until they reach the stage at which they can independently read and write.

In the following example, after reading an episode from *Aso Nogotole le`enaxat Cintia* [A girl named Cintia] in which Cintia and her siblings go pick fruit on the hill, the teacher repeats the vocabulary introduced in the episode and expands upon it.

Maestra: ¿Neguet ana ´alapi ishet da qanallec qaxuahuattoni qami´?
Niño: Qaỹaigui.
Maestra: Qaỹaigui.
Niño: Amap.
Maestra: Amap qaỹaigui.
Niño: L´huaxai ala.
Maestra: L´huaxai ´ala na´ la ciudad nataqa´en huo´o ana ´ala.

[Teacher: What fruits can we eat?
Boy: Pineapple.
Teacher: Pineapple.
Boy: Carob.
Teacher: Carob Pineapple.
Boy: Quince
Teacher: Quince, they also have that fruit in the city.]

Once the children have mentioned several fruits the teacher hands each child a drawing of a different fruit, and tells them to look for those fruits around the school, just as Cintia did with her friends in the story. Thus, the teacher tries to promote reading comprehension in the teaching situation by anchoring the new vocabulary in the children's knowledge and experiences (Moll, Gonzales & Amanti, 2005; Rosemberg & Silva, 2009; Rosemberg & Stein, 2009; Alam, Stein & Rosemberg, 2011). When the children return with the fruit, the teacher expands upon the information that the children already have about the fruit by talking either about

its physical properties or the different means of cooking it. In the exchange presented below the teacher talks about how to cook a certain type of fruit:

> Niño: [Muestra la imagen de una fruta] Tacala.
> Maestra: Tacala. Da qanallec huauñi da qaŷahuot qaŷasaxangui na ´alo da qanqat na l´cha´q cha´ayee deshiqui na ´alap.
>
> [Boy: [Shows the picture of a fruit] tacala
> Teacher: [While hanging the picture up on the blackboard] tacala. If you want to eat it, first you have to roast it in ashes to take the juice out of it, or else it will make your mouth itchy.]

Next the teacher creates a writing situation. Each child writes the name of one of the fruits on the blackboard, using the teacher's scaffolding for support. The writing task is simple because it is based on words that are either included in the episode they have just read or in the oral exchange. When the children have difficulties writing a word the teacher sounds it out to help promote the development of analytical writing strategies.

> Girl: [Shows the drawing of a fruit whose name is "naala" in Qom and writes "ala" on the board]
> Teacher: n::::a:::ala
> Girl: Oh! [Erases what she has written and writes "naala"]

Once they have written the names of all of the fruits, the teacher and students slowly re-read them. In this way, she helps the children to appropriate and master the writing system, recognizing its value as a tool that will not only allow them to access knowledge generated in other sociocultural groups, but also to represent their own reality.

4.2 Ethnographic books as a means to regain socio-cultural knowledge

Unlike what happens in the Qom communities located in Chaco, in the Qom community of Pte. Derqui, in Buenos Aires, the children do not attend one school that is embedded in their community, but rather several schools that do not teach from a perspective that integrates Qom knowledge and history into the learning process. Therefore, intervention activities are carried out in a community centre that holds after-school activities for the children.

These activities promote learning reading while providing them with the opportunity to recover their group's socio-cultural knowledge. As the first language that children learn to speak in this community is Spanish, in the intervention programme they read *Las aventuras de Huaqajñe* [The Adventures of Huaqajñe"]. By reading this book the children learn about the way of living in Chaco, and during the programme they are asked to compare that way of living with the one they experience in their own community. Also, they are encouraged to ask their parents and grandparents about their life in Chaco.

In this community, as in other indigenous communities and minority groups, siblings and older children play an important role in the care of the young children

and guide their participation in games and other activities (Rogoff, 1993; Stein & Rosemberg, in press; Rosemberg, Stein & Alam, in press). In order to capitalize on this socio-cultural characteristic, we implemented a tutoring programme in the community centre.

The child tutor literacy programme (Rosemberg & Alam, in press) aims to capitalize on the interactions between children of different ages to form a matrix that scaffolds the beginning of the literacy process for the younger children. At the same time, the programme aims to generate meaningful reading and writing situations in which the older children develop a deeper understanding of the writing system, improving their abilities both as readers and writers.

The older children are trained in weekly workshops led by pedagogical coordinators and members of the research team. They read the stories that they will later read with the younger children, discuss strategies to keep the small child's attention, and work on formulating different kinds of questions. They also reflect on the vocabulary used in the texts and how to explain the meaning of unknown words to a young child. Tutors are encouraged to retell personal past experiences linked to the texts and to provide decontextualized descriptions of objects and scenes that appear in the book. The children learn to formulate clear and precise instructions for activities and games as well as strategies to help a small child write their name and other simple words. They also learn sound games to promote the development of the young child's phonological awareness. The tutoring sessions take place after the tutors complete training.

The exchanges presented below illustrate the child-child tutoring situations in which *Las aventuras de Huaqajñe* [The Adventures of Huaqajñe] are read.

One chapter of the book recounts a situation where Huaqajñe and her friends went out one afternoon when it had rained to collect tadpoles. The fact that the narrative is anchored in a situation that is familiar to the children allows them to identify with the characters, thus creating a meaningful reading. In the exchange presented below, Valeria (9 years old) starts to read the episode to her cousin Mariela (5 years old). The little girl starts to link the subject of the text to her own experience.

> Valeria: [Lee el título de forma pausada siguiendo con el dedo la lectura] Sapo y ra-nas
> – ranitas [Levanta la mirada y mira a Mariela] sapos y ranitas
> Mariela: A mi me gustan los sapos. A mis hermanitos también.
>
> [Valeria: [Slowly reads the title following the reading with her finger] Toad and Fr-og –
> froggies [Raises her head and looks at Mariela] toads and froggies.
> Mariela: I like toads. My little brothers do too.]

In this way, through the reading of a contexualized book in Chaco, the children have access to the way of living that comes from their parents or grandparents, and can compare it with their own, as Mariela and Valeria do.

In this chapter of the book, Huaqajñe and her friends collect tadpoles and bring them back to their house. The next day at school they tell their teacher and classmates about the tadpoles that they found and how they will turn into frogs.

Huaqajñe's teacher introduces a fable based on the girl's story. In the exchange presented below Ezequiel (11 years old) reads the fable to his sister Nayelí (6 years old). As he reads, the comprehension process is anchored in the situation's context. Both the tutor and the younger child return to the images to give meaning to the story's content.

> Ezequiel: [Lee] El enorme buey se- se paseaba por el campo y pasó junto a un pequeño sapo, éste quedo adormecido de tanta grandeza y sintió envidia ¿Por qué él era tan pequeño si otros animales podían ser tan grandes? [Incomprensible] Y se dispuso a hacer la prueba, abrió cuanto pudo la boca y aspiró profundamente inflándose ¿Soy tan grande como el buey? Preguntó. Entonces otros sapos le contestaron, "te falta mucho" [Detiene la lectura y señala la imagen en el libro] Mirá acá se está inflando.
> Nayelí: Sí.
> Ezequiel: [Continúa la lectura] Volvió a intentarlo otra vez y se hinchó un poco más ¿ahora? Te falta mucho más respondió su hermano. Por tercera vez intentó la prueba al estirarse la piel nuevamente el sapito, el sapito-
> Nayelí: ¿Cuál? [Señala la imagen del libro] ¿Este es el sapito?
> Ezequiel: [Asiente] Sí [Continúa leyendo] Se infló tanto como un globo que salió volando por el aire y quedó colgado de la rama de un árbol. Antes de caer el sapito aprendió que no es bueno aparentar lo que no es. [Detiene la lectura y señala la imagen]. Este sapito se quedó colgado acá y después cayó.
> Nayelí: Sí, ¡cayó re mal encima!
>
> [Ezequiel: [Reading] The huge ox he- he walked through the field and passed by a small frog, the frog was shocked by his size and felt jealous. Why was he so small if the other animals could be so big? [Incomprehensible] and he set out to try to do it, so he opened his mouth as wide as he could and took a deep breath filling himself up with air. Am I as big as the ox? He asked. Then the other frogs responded, "Not even close." [Stops reading and points to the image in the book] Look here he's filling himself up with air.
> Nayelí: Yea.
> Ezequiel: [Continues with the reading] He tried it again and he got a bit bigger, now? Not even close responded his brother. The frog, the frog tried to stretch his skin for the third time.
> Nayelí: Which one? [Points to the image in the book] Is this the froggy?
> Ezequiel: [Nods] Yea [Keeps reading] "He blew himself up so much that he was like a balloon and took off flying through the air and got stuck on the branch of a tree. Before he fell the little frog learned that it is not good to pretend to be something that you aren't [Stops the reading and points to the image] The froggy got stuck there and then he fell.
> Nayelí: Yea, he fell down hard!]

Ezequiel in his scaffolding, uses the images as a base upon which to reformulate the content in the text that can be relatively inaccessible to the little girl. In doing so, he utilizes deictic terms and gestures contextualized in the situation such as "here" and "this" to facilitate comprehension of the written text. Thus, for example, once the initial situation of the story is introduced, Ezequiel turns to the illustration to refer to the character's action – "Look, he is filling himself up with air" – and, based on that, reformulates the mode of presentation of the action. In fact, whereas in the text, the action of filling himself up with air is presented as a conse-

quence of a previous action – he opened his mouth as wide as he could and took a deep breath filling himself up with air – Ezequiel focuses on the action of the frog filling itself with air, which is exactly what leads to the subsequent conflict: the frog taking off flying. Since the older children in the tutor programme first work with the text, they can appropriately scaffold its comprehension to the younger children through explanations, references to the images, or reformulations of the text, as Ezequiel does.

Furthermore, the frog's fall, at the end of the story, might not be clear, as the action is not explicitly formulated but is referred to by the phrase: "*before he fell*". The older child reformulates the sentence using a temporal connector, "*after*", which marks the precise sequence of events and uses the verb in the past tense, stating, "*he fell*". He accompanies this reformulation with a gesture, pointing to the image. In this way the narrative sequence "*the frog got stuck there and then he fell*" is easier for the small child to understand. As a result, Nayelí intervenes in the explanation, picking up the situation where her brother left off and adding the final evaluation, "*he fell hard*". This exchange highlights the fact that mutual understanding involves linguistic resources as well as resources from other semiotic systems. In these reading situations the gestures and references to the illustrations juxtapose the linguistic information and, as Goodwin (2000) notes, give rise to a particular configuration of context in which meaning is constructed in a shared manner.

In this way, the children´s tutor programme carried out in the Qom community of Pte. Derqui generated opportunities to promote learning for the older and younger children. Both groups of children expand their knowledge of the writing system, refine their vocabulary, and develop discursive strategies: the older children, through repeated reading of the episodes and the necessity to reflect on the text and reformulate it and expand it to be able to approach it to the younger children; the younger children, in turn, by participating in the story reading and explanation of new terms, acquire new words, learn the functions of writing, begin to master the system and familiarize themselves with the style of the written language.

At the same time, since the book read in the programme is contextualized in Chaco, the children of this community in Pte. Derqui have the opportunity to get to know the way of life of the place where their parents or grandparents came from and where part of their family still lives and they can compare it with their own way of living. Knowing and being able to reflect on the place of belonging gives the children the opportunity to identify with the two cultures that they belong to: the indigenous Qom and the non-indigenous.

5. CONCLUSION

The intercultural and bilingual literacy programme capitalizes on the children's primary socialization experiences by utilizing them in the design of the programme

tools (the ethnographic reading books), and of the activities (the tutoring sessions) that affect the child's first experiences with reading and writing. The activities and tools are designed to facilitate the child's learning within their own linguistic and cultural universe in a manner that is congruent with historical and cultural educational principles. They generate teaching situations that create a "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978), in which new contents become more proximal to them (del Río & Álvarez, 2007). In this way, the children can advance in the literacy acquisition process through experiences in which they "collaboratively construct" (Nelson, 2007) knowledge about written texts.

The developed programme examines the socio-cultural and linguistic differences within the Qom population and generates different activities and instruments to address these differences. That is why books in Qom and books in Spanish have been developed that include these linguistic variations from each of the languages. Moreover, it is because of this that tutoring situations have been designed to promote the cultural recovery of urban migrant populations.

Interculturalism becomes possible in teaching situations when the teacher or the tutor uses the reading books to "open" a broad communicative space in which the young children actively participate in the exchange. Teachers' or tutors´ strategies make use of various discursive resources to "intertwine" the children's language, the linguistic variant that they use, their traditional oral discursive strategies, and the primary genres they command with other uses of language, a written language style and register, and more elaborate discursive genres.

The ethnographic reading books and the strategies employed by teachers while using the books in teaching situations lead to the integration of children's knowledge, which is mainly acquired through direct experience, with other conceptual categories. The importance of re-evaluating the role that knowledge developed by minority groups can have in school teaching, even when it differs greatly from what is traditionally the focus of school teaching practices, has been shown in studies by Moll and his collaborators through the "funds of knowledge" perspective (Moll, 1992; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005) and through studies on the subject of "instructional conversation" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Tharp & Yamauchi, 1994).

Designing ethnographic reading books, which reinforce knowledge from the children's culture and social group, is only possible in the context of intercultural and collaborative work between community members, teachers, and the research team (Rosemberg, 2004). Indigenous teachers and other members of the community play a crucial role in establishing the social fabric and in the exchange between the community and the school. They can promote a dynamic of positive interaction between community members and the school so that the community participates in the educational process by providing information on the sociocultural group's language and knowledge.

The community can also participate in the educational process by providing learning opportunities such as those offered by tutoring situations. In this way, the cultural community's instrumental and social fabric can benefit school restructur-

ing, leading to the design of resources that allows to address the real issue: children's literacy.

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