
**Workshop on Teaching and Training of Bilingual Speakers between China and
Portuguese-speaking Countries**

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In Portuguese, it is common to say: “secrets are the soul of business”. The truth, nevertheless, is that the soul of business is also to communicate, as it was mentioned by one of the participants in this Workshop.

It was thinking of this principle – the communication principle – that MPI (Macao Polytechnic Institute) and the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries have gathered here, for two days, dozens of representatives from several countries and institutions: six Portuguese-speaking Countries and the People’s Republic of China, including Macao; six universities from Mainland China; three Portuguese tertiary education institutions, two from Brazil, one from Cape Verde; representatives from the education sector from Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and East Timor; and, in an unusual dialogue, four business associations from Macao. In addition, many other entities, teachers and businessmen have joined them.

For two days, academics, representatives from several economic sectors and business associations have discussed the importance of communication. In other words, they have discussed the importance of bilingualism (Chinese and Portuguese) in the communication used in the economic and business fields.

The institutional representatives gathered here have stressed all this. They have also stressed the dimension of the Portuguese-speaking community, as well as the growing importance of that community in the economic dialogue with the People's Republic of China. On the other hand, they have also highlighted the need to take into account the bilingual experience of several Portuguese-speaking Countries in which the Portuguese language lives side by side with multiple native languages. That experience should be seen as an advantage for the development of bilingual education.

The Workshop has recognised the exponential growth in teaching of Portuguese in Mainland China and has discussed the strategic role of the Macao SAR in supporting that growing process – the training of teachers and the production of teaching materials have been particularly highlighted, as well as the welcoming of students for short courses and the developing of efficient co-operation projects.

But this bilingual training implies two languages: Portuguese and Chinese. And the Workshop has also addressed the development of the teaching of Mandarin in Portuguese-speaking countries, especially in Portugal and Brazil.

Two aspects have deserved special attention. On one hand, there is the importance of culture – or of several cultures – in the process of training bilingual talents. If communication is a form of dialogue between identities, culture – an essential element of a people's identity – should integrate the process of language teaching and learning.

Taking this into account, the cultural exchanges and experience benefits students and is an excellent tool in bilingual training. On the other hand, in the case of Portuguese language, the cultural issues are related to the linguistic variety. It is, hence, fair to ask about what kind of

Portuguese is to be taught; and the answer would have to be that teaching should take into account the diversity of Portuguese variants – from Portugal, Brazil, African countries, as well as other Portuguese-speaking Countries.

Business associations have engaged with tertiary education institutions. This was the most innovative, pioneering aspect of this Workshop. Representatives of the Macau Association of Banks, the International Lusophone Markets Business Association and the Macau Society of Registered Accountants have stressed some crucial points from a business perspective: the role of Macao, due to its multicultural environment; companies' demand for translators and, hence, bilingual talents; and the advantage of introducing some curricular changes in training programmes. One innovative suggestion presented in the Workshop was to introduce a multidisciplinary approach in the curricular programmes of institutions: for example, having language and culture subjects in Law and Economy programmes; as well as having economy subjects in Language and Culture programmes. Additionally, companies have shown how useful it is to have Tertiary Education Institutions offering continuing language training to professionals.

Finally, there was a consensus: the feeling that Macao is the ideal place to organise this kind of debates, due to its cultural, geographic, historical and social identity; and that Macao has a crucial role to play as a bridge for dialogue between tertiary education institutions and business entities, having as a background the relations between China and the lusophone world.

The debate with representatives from five higher education institutions – one from Macao, two from Portugal, and two from Mainland China – has focused on the need to introduce adjustments in order to value courses of Portuguese as a foreign language. Regarding the latter, one is aware of what is needed: 1) great curricular flexibility; 2) seeking a

multidisciplinary approach; 3) adjusting subjects' contents to the reality of professional practice; 4) interacting with companies and employers; 5) outlining programmes having into account the needs of the market; 6) training teachers of Portuguese as a Foreign Language.

Also, the advantage in taking the best out of the specific characteristics of each institution, as well as of its specific geographic, physical space, has been highlighted. And it allows one to stress the importance of Macao as a platform and a bridge between China and the lusophone world, due to Macao's geographic, historical and cultural identity.

In conclusion, the Workshop on Teaching and Training of Bilingual Speakers between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was an innovative, pioneering initiative, as it opened up, in Macao, the dialogue between tertiary education institutions involved in training bilingual talents and companies that welcome those talents within the labour market. It is clear that this is a dialogue that is necessary and that it has to be further developed through similar activities.

In addition, other points have been made clear: a) that the teaching of Portuguese in China and the teaching of Mandarin in Portuguese-speaking Countries are going through an enormous, never before seen growth; b) that the world of economy and trade needs, more and more, workers that are fluent in both languages, Chinese and Portuguese. It has also been made clear that initiatives such as this Workshop have to be repeated, intensified and valued.

The Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries and the Macao Polytechnic Institute hereby publicly express their pride regarding the results of this activity.

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