

The Bilingual and Intercultural Border Schools Project (PEBIF) as a Strategy for Linguistic Integration and Cross-Border Cooperation: An Example of an Educational Project Between Northern Portugal and Galicia

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Research Objective

To investigate the situated pedagogical practices developed within the Bilingual and Intercultural Border Schools Program (PEBIF), with a focus on the discourses and actions of teachers from two “mirror” schools located between Galicia (Spain) and Northern Portugal.

The study analyzes how these concrete initiatives contribute to overcoming symbolic borders, valuing local plurilingualism, and fostering the construction of a cross-border citizenship that is sensitive, real — and still contested.



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The PEBIF between the physical and symbolic border

“Entonces sí que creo que la educación debe romper eso (barreiras mentais e sociais). Podemos hacer más cosas que simplemente ir, usar la piscina, volver, secarnos, y no interaccionar con los niños que están con nosotros. Y decir “me hablan portugués”, no entiendo, o “no podemos comunicarnos”. **Entonces esa parte social... Vamos allí, pero no hay un vínculo social, y al final estamos muy cerca. Muy, muy cerca. Es una frontera muy próxima.**” (Testimony of a teacher participating in the project)

“So I really believe that education should break that (mental and social barriers). We can do more than just go there, use the pool, come back, dry off, and not interact with the kids. And say ‘Ah, they speak to me in Portuguese, I don’t understand,’ or ‘we can’t communicate.’ **So that social part... We go there, but there’s no social bond, and in the end we are very close. Very, very close. It’s a very nearby border.**” (Testimony of a teacher participating in the project)

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What is PEBIF?

A PROJECT ON THE PORTUGAL-SPAIN BORDER FOCUSED ON BILINGUALISM AND INTERCULTURALITY

Promotes cooperation between Portugal and Spain in border regions.

It operates in peripheral areas, affected by depopulation and the disappearance of local languages..

Partnership between:

Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI);

Ministries of Education of Portugal and of the Autonomous Communities of Spain (Castile and León, Extremadura, Andalusia, and Galicia);
Complutense University of Madrid and University of Aveiro.

Common Strategy for Cross-Border Development (ECDT 2020)



Participating schools in 2024: 48 schools: 25 in Portugal, 23 in Spain
(Fonte: OEI, 2025)

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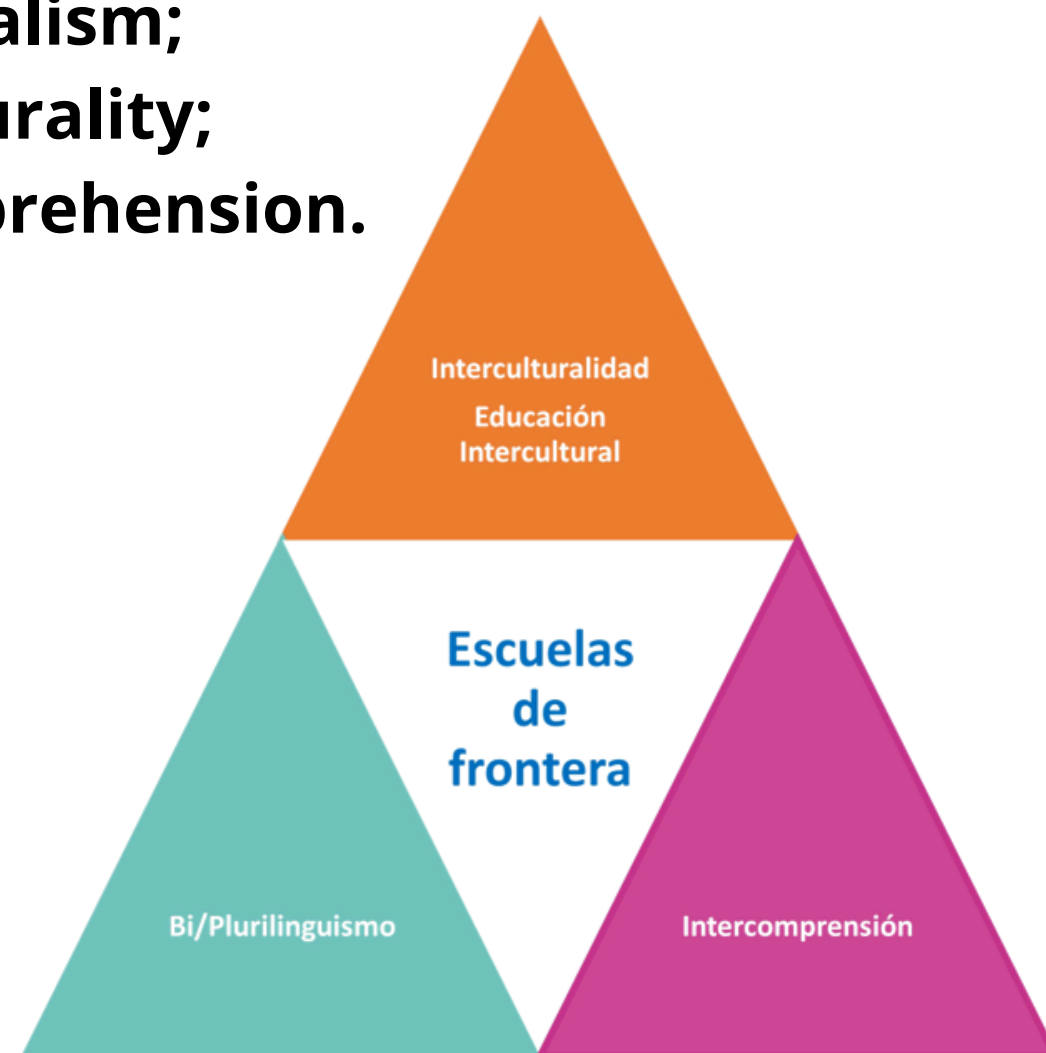



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Structuring concepts and Phases

- **Plurilingualism;**
- **Interculturality;**
- **Intercomprehension.**



(OEI, 2025)

<https://oei.int/pt/escritorios/secretaria-geral/programa/escolas-de-fronteira-portugal-espanha/>)

Phase 1: Identification and Selection of Schools

Schools distributed along the Portuguese-Spanish border, facilitating teacher interactions.

Phase 2: Ongoing Teacher Education

Online training focused on plurilingualism, interculturality, and intercomprehension.

Phase 3: Learning Projects

collaborative development of projects integrated into the national curricula of Portugal and Spain.

Phase 4: Expansion and Sustainability

Dissemination of results and practices to other border regions.

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The case: the mirror schools Filipe de Bourbon and Monção



Framework: Eurocity

Shared services

Advanced institutional cooperation

Fragile social bonds

Case study in 2024 and 2025:

Participant observation

Focus group

Document analysis

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Project “Poetry at the Border”

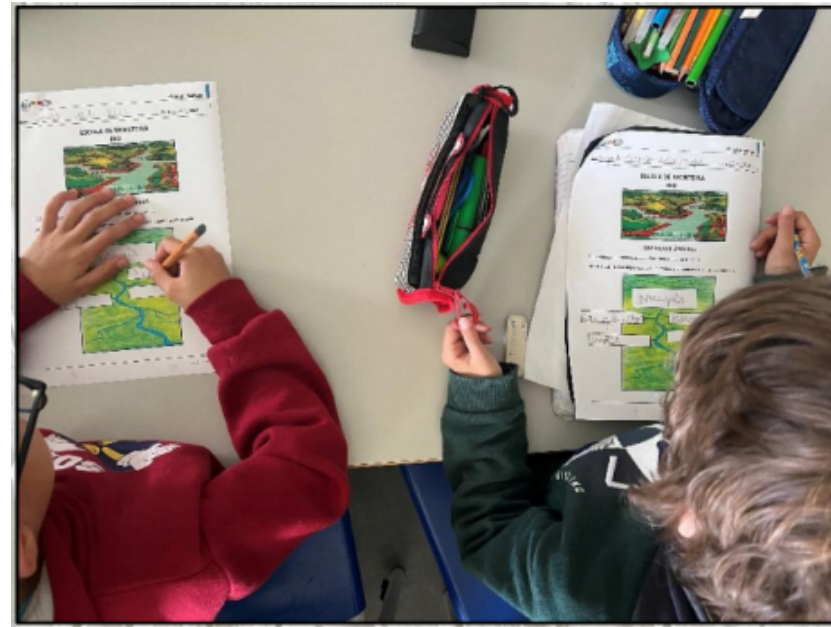


(Source: Poetry at the Border Project, 2024.
<https://escoladefronteira.blogspot.com/>)

- **Linguistic biographies:** recognizing students’ plurilingual repertoires through the metaphor of the river.
- **Collective poetry creation:** writing the border with shared words, inspired by local authors.
- **“Traveling backpacks”:** circulation of books and materials between schools and families, promoting reading and cultural exchange.
- **Plurilingual activities:** spaces of interaction where Portuguese, Spanish, and Galician intertwine in daily school life.
- **Family participation:** active presence through stories, legends, and emotional memories, with special emphasis on immigrant families.
- **Final gathering:** a symbolic event celebrating coexistence and mutual listening between both sides of the border in a city park.

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Linguistic biographies: recognizing students' plurilingual repertoires through the river metaphor.

(Source: Poetry at the Border Project, 2024.
<https://escoladefronteira.blogspot.com/>)

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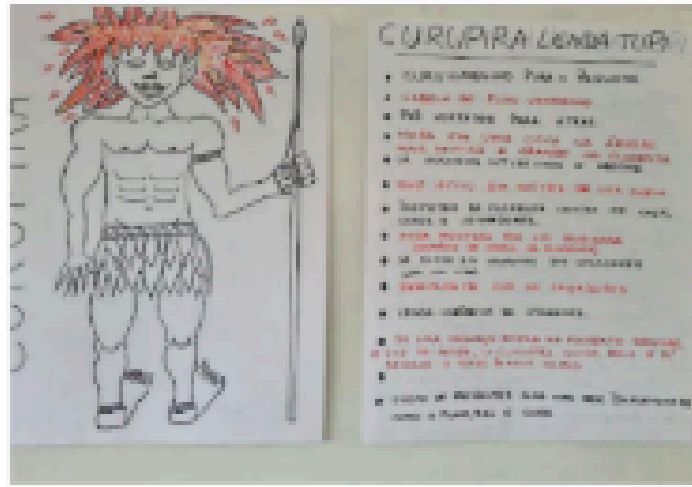
Travelling backpacks:
circulation of books and
materials between schools
and families, promoting
reading and cultural
exchange.

(Source: Poetry at the Border Project, 2024.
<https://escoladefronteira.blogspot.com/>)

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Family participation: active presence through stories, legends, and emotional memories, with special emphasis on immigrant families.

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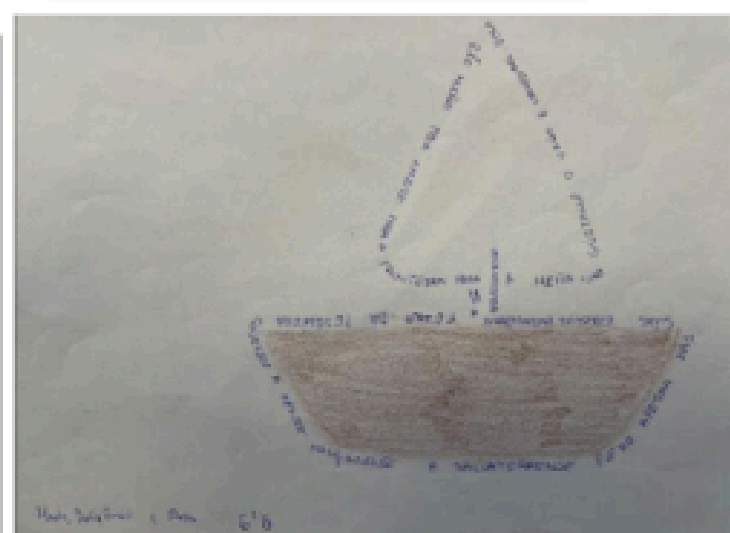
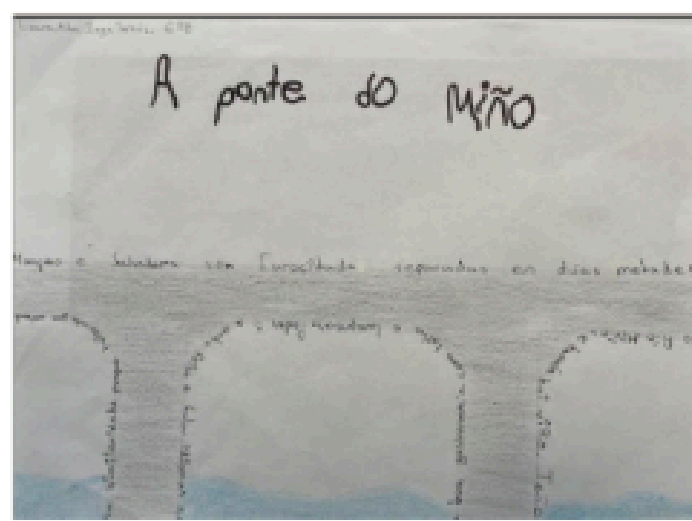
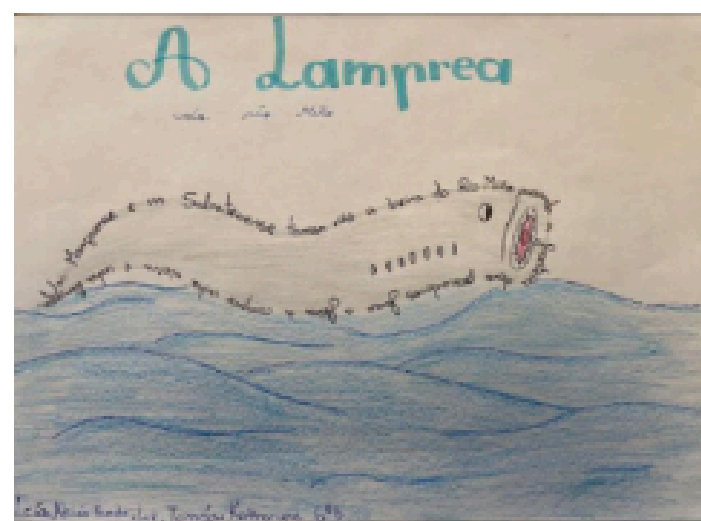



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Collective poetry creation:
writing the border with shared
words, inspired by local
authors (João Verde e Amador
Saavedra).



(Source: Poetry at the Border Project, 2024.
<https://escoladefronteira.blogspot.com/>)

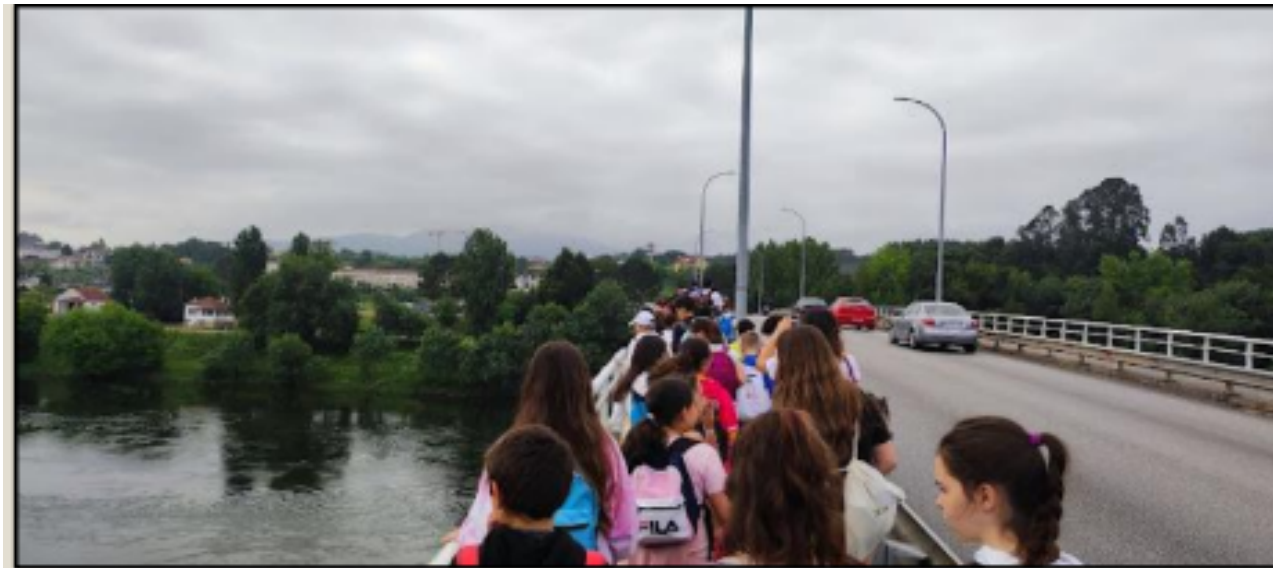
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Final Encounter



(Source: Poetry at the Border Project, 2024.
<https://escoladefronteira.blogspot.com/>)

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Final Reflections

“ Entonces para mí, el año pasado, cuando llegó el proyecto, fue de las primeras veces... me gusta mucho mi trabajo, pero el año pasado mi trabajo, por primera vez, era parte de mi vida. Y me gustaba muchísimo.”

(Testimony of a teacher participating in the project)

“So for me, last year, when the project arrived, it was one of the first times... I really like my job, but last year, for the first time, my job felt like a part of my life. And I truly loved it.”

(Testimony of a teacher participating in the project)

Responds to the challenge of physical proximity vs. symbolic distance in European borderlands.

(Re)construction of border stories, languages, and shared memories.

A concrete Strategy for Linguistic Integration and Cross-Border Cooperation.

Empowerment of teachers in managing plurilingualism.

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Thank you!

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