

Education Across Borders: Teachers as Agents of Transborder Cooperation in the Construction of a Common Educational Identity

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Abstract

This article offers a critical analysis of schools located along the Portuguese-Spanish border, framing them as spaces of curricular invention and the construction of a transnational educational identity. Drawing on the analysis of the Bilingual and Intercultural Border Schools Project (PEBIF), it examines how teachers, as epistemic and political agents, build collaborative pedagogical practices rooted in the territory and oriented towards the common good. Through a qualitative and cartographic methodology, the study highlights formative episodes in which teaching emerges as a practice of listening, co-authorship, and intercultural mediation. The concept of the border is redefined from a logic of separation to that of a *borderscape* — a relational, ethical, and political space where bonds, belonging, and relational justice are forged. Emerging from a critical and situated pedagogy, the experience analysed challenges monocultural and securitization paradigms, proposing new educational grammars grounded in plurality, linguistic hospitality, and the making of a shared commons. The article argues that the teachers involved in PEBIF not only reinvent the curriculum but also reposition the school as a territory of resistance and transformation. By recognizing the role of teachers in constructing shared forms of belonging, the text suggests that this experience contributes to rethinking, beyond the educational field, transborder public policies, pointing to the urgency of cooperation practices centred on local actors as knowledge producers and mediators of intercultural justice.

Keywords: in-service teacher education, border as curriculum, emergent curriculum, intercultural and bilingual education, border pedagogy.

Introduction

When one speaks of borders, images of separation, containment, security, or dispute often arise. These are historically consolidated representations, reinforcing a geopolitical view of the border as a line of exclusion, sustaining nationalisms, surveillance practices, and mechanisms of identity segmentation (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Szary, 2015). This approach, embedded within the modern-colonial logic (Mignolo, 2007), tends to reduce the complexity of border territories, overlooking their potential as places of encounter, mediation, and creation.

However, various theoretical currents have been challenging this geopolitical model, proposing critical inflexions that understand borders not as fixed lines, but as zones of epistemic, political, and cultural negotiation. It is in this horizon that the notion of border epistemology (Lage, 2008; Mignolo, 2006), the concept of *borderscape* (Brambilla, 2015), the idea of mobile ontology (Szary, 2015), and the theory of *bordering* (Laine, 2017) are situated. These frameworks shift the focus from geographic delimitation to the dynamic processes that produce, contest, and reinscribe borders as landscapes of meaning and zones of encounter between knowledges and cultures. Nail (2016) further introduces the concept of *kinopolitics*, recognizing borders as kinetic and processual spaces where various flows — social, linguistic, and identitarian — are regulated and multiplied. This approach views of the border as a continuous movement of division and invention — an in-between space in permanent reinvention. Such a conception of the

border as a site of identity and cultural negotiation also resonates with Anzaldúa's (1987) vision of the *borderlands* as hybrid territories of resistance, where alternative knowledges, affects, and dissident practices are reinscribed.

In this light, the article mobilizes the idea of the border as an epistemic and educational space — a living landscape where shared belonging, plurilingual knowledges, and pedagogies-in-becoming are co-constructed. Accordingly, we propose to regard the border school as a site of curricular reinvention and of linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur, 2004), where teachers act as intercultural mediators and meaning-makers. Specifically, we are interested in understanding how teachers working in border regions — in this case, between Portugal and Spain — contribute to the emergence of a transnational educational identity, conceived not as a normative or administratively instituted category, but as a constellation of bonds, gestures, and enunciations that move cross both the territories and the subjects who inhabit them.

This approach calls for a situated and critical pedagogy, what Henry Giroux (1997; 2005) defines as *border pedagogy*, committed to listening to the margins, valuing local knowledge, and constructing educational practices that reject curricular and epistemic homogenization. It is a perspective that can take shape in formative processes that articulate in-service teacher education with practices of co-authorship, linguistic justice, and intercultural mediation, as proposed by the *Projeto Escolas Bilingues e Interculturais de Fronteira* (PEBIF),

a cross-border cooperation initiative and the focus of the present analysis, to be developed in the following section.

Our analysis is part of an ongoing qualitative and interpretive study at the University of Aveiro, investigating the potential of in-service teacher education in border contexts, understood in this study as a situated pedagogical practice and a political force for transformation (Giroux, 1997; Nóvoa, 2019). The focus lies on how teachers, grounded in their territories, constitute themselves as intercultural mediators, co-authors of curricular practices, and builders of shared educational belonging, challenging monocultural paradigms and contributing to the emergence of a transnational educational identity.

The research is grounded in the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1997), in dialogue with critical interculturality (Walsh, 2012) and with a border epistemology (Lage, 2008; Mignolo, 2006), which recognizes teachers as epistemic subjects and knowledge producers. It also draws on an ethical and political understanding of teaching as a practice of listening, authorship, and transformation, as proposed by Freire (2011) and Carinhas et al. (2022), framing teacher education as a space for reinventing the common through difference.

The reflection developed here is organized around five analytical axes, built from the dialogue between critical theoretical frameworks and formative episodes experienced within the scope of PEBIF. Prior to this, we present the empirical and methodological context of the investigation, with emphasis on the

architecture of the PEBIF, its formative dimensions, and the selected episodes from the empirical corpus that ground the analysis developed throughout the text.

PEBIF as a site for teacher education and the construction of a transborder educational identity

Conceived in 2020 under the framework of the Common Strategy for Cross-Border Development, at the initiative of the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), PEBIF aims to foster educational, social, and economic cooperation in Iberian border regions. Funded by OEI's own resources, with the support of the Portuguese and Spanish governments and with shared scientific coordination between the University of Aveiro and the Complutense University of Madrid, the project reached its fourth edition in 2025. Since 2021, it has involved over 160 teachers, 48 schools, and approximately 2,200 pupils across the border territories of both countries (OEI, n.d.).

PEBIF's core objective is to strengthen cooperation between Portugal and Spain in the educational, social, and economic development of border regions, through an educational model grounded in knowledge, competences, and values related to bi-/plurilingualism and interculturality — considered essential for citizenship, academic progression, and employability in both countries (OEI, n.d.). Within this framework, the project seeks to qualify teachers as intercultural mediators, recognizing their local engagement as an ethical and political practice; hence, continuous professional development constitutes the project's central axis.

Structured around four interdependent phases which are renewed for each edition, namely the identification of the participating schools, collaborative teacher training, joint pedagogical project development, and the dissemination of practices — PEBIF advocates a relational pedagogy that values teacher authorship, active listening, and the co-construction of educational resources. Phases two and three are devoted to teacher training via an action-research-education approach, with a focus on intercomprehension, critical reading of local contexts, and the collaborative construction of learning projects — hereafter referred to as Learning Plans (LP), to distinguish them from the broader institutional project, PEBIF.

In this context, cross-border mirror-school pairs — organized based on geographic proximity and/or prior collaborative experience — are established as communities of practice fostering knowledge exchange and the co-authorship of pedagogical proposals. Participating teachers take part in shared synchronous sessions, held online, in which the theoretical foundations of PEBIF are discussed and the co-design of LPs is collaboratively guided. These plans are developed jointly, based on themes arising from the specificities of each territory — whether social, cultural, linguistic, educational, or otherwise. Subsequently, the plans are implemented in a coordinated manner across both schools, maintaining constant dialogue between partners and with the broader network of trainers, researchers, teachers, and members of the educational community. Whenever possible, the implementation phase includes joint activities involving pupils

from both sides of the border, promoting intercultural encounters and shared learning experiences.

Beyond direct pedagogical outcomes, PEBIF aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals, notably Target 4.7 (education for cultural diversity, peace, and human rights), Target 4.c (qualified teacher training), and Target 17 (institutional partnerships). It also aspires to extend its impact beyond the border zones, promoting the social valorization of bilingualism and interculturality across the Iberian Peninsula (OEI, n.d.).

Affirming PEBIF as an educational territory-in-the-making entails understanding it not merely as a local public policy, but as an epistemic proposition: the border is not perceived as a limit to educational action, but as the place where the school is reinvented, regarding the to the territory and inscribing itself into the bonds that traverse it. By fostering mutual recognition, intercultural listening, and the construction of shared sense of belonging, the project intervenes in the cultural tapestry of place, cultivating practices of conviviality that challenge narratives of fragmentation and exclusion. In doing so, it sketches an alternative grammar of the possible for border regions — one that, without necessarily claiming such a status, contributes to the everyday construction of a culture of peace rooted in relational justice, recognition, and the valuing of difference.

This reinvention of the borderland school aligns with an educational model that promotes cultural diversity, human rights, and peaceful coexistence — values endorsed by international agendas such

as the Sustainable Development Goals, as noted earlier. However, what is observed in PEBIF is not the implementation of a pre-defined programme, but the emergence of educational practices rooted in the lived experiences of local actors and the specific challenges of their territories. By embracing linguistic and cultural plurality, fostering dialogue between neighbouring territories whose histories have been administratively divided yet remain culturally intertwined, and co-creating educational projects, PEBIF not only acknowledges diversity but inscribes it as a constitutive value of the educational experience. In this gesture, it helps to shift the grammar of the border — often associated with control, security, and exclusion — towards an ethics of hospitality, mediation, and the collective creation of meaning. It thereby affirms the possibility of a culture of peace built from the margins, where difference is not a threat but the founding potential of a new cartography of the common.

At the core of this architecture lie three key concepts: (i) plurilingualism, understood as the valorization of the languages present in the territory and their contact practices; (ii) interculturality, as ethical coexistence, negotiation of meaning, and shared signification; and (iii) intercomprehension, conceived as a strategy for communication between related languages, grounded in active listening and linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur, 2004).

Empirical Focus: The Bragança–Zamora Pair

This analysis focuses on the first edition of PEBIF, which took place between October 2021 and May 2022.

That edition involved thirty-seven teachers from ten Portuguese and Spanish educational institutions, organized into four pairs of mirror-schools along the Portuguese–Spanish border: Bragança–Zamora, Guarda–Miróbriga, Elvas–Badajoz–Cáceres, and Vila Real de Santo António–Huelva.

Figure 1. Location of mirror-schools – 1st Edition



Source: *Escuelas Bilingües y Interculturales de Frontera / Escolas Bilingües e Interculturais de Fronteira*. (n.d.) <https://reacampo.wordpress.com/>

The research presented here focuses exclusively on the Bragança–Zamora pair, which was closely and systematically accompanied by a team of teacher-educators and researchers engaged in the project.

The group under study was composed of eight teachers — four Portuguese and four Spanish — who participated in a 50-hour training programme, structured around two face-to-face sessions (opening and closing), synchronous online meetings, and collaborative work within their respective schools. The training aimed at the co-construction of a LP, developed from a shared theme and issue rooted in the sociocultural and linguistic realities of both contexts. This process required a situated understanding of the local contexts, the articulation between knowledge and curricular frameworks, and the joint implementation of pedagogical practices oriented towards plurilingualism and interculturality.

The monitoring of this training process, undertaken within the scope of the research, generated a broad and rich set of empirical materials — including the researcher's field notes, audiovisual recordings, photographs, digital exchanges between teachers, trainers, and researchers, teacher narratives, and pedagogical resources — which were subsequently systematized into a single document entitled *Multimodal and Polyphonic Narratives of a Cross-Border Investigation between Portugal and Spain* (NMP).

An exploratory analysis of this corpus made it possible to identify formative episodes of high symbolic density and analytical relevance. These episodes

offer valuable insights into how teachers construct shared meanings, co-create pedagogical practices, and contribute to the emergence of a transnational educational identity — one woven through difference, listening, and co-authorship. These episodes form the basis of the analytical axes that structure the reflection developed in the following section.

Between Listening and Analysis: Methodological Foundations for the Reading of Five Critical Proposition

The analysis that follows is grounded in qualitative, interpretive, and engaged research, guided by an ethical–political stance of listening and co-authorship with the participants involved. Inspired by the principles of cartographic research (Passos et al. 2020), this approach does not begin with predefined hypotheses but instead accompanies emergent meanings, conceiving teacher education as a landscape of relationships and the co-production of knowledge.

Researching *with* teachers, within this framework, requires a sensitive mode of listening — attentive to words, silences, gestures, and affects — and a form of writing that is permeable to experience. As Carinhas et al. (2022) suggest, this is an ethical attentiveness that transforms the act of inquiry into a gesture of recognition and restitution, in which lived experience is reinscribed as transformative potential.

As mentioned in the previous section, the empirical corpus analysed here was produced during the first edition of PEBIF (2021–2022), through the formative

accompaniment of the Bragança–Zamora mirror-school pair. The collected materials — including lesson plans, videos, presentations, recordings, visual narratives, mentoring records, and field diaries — were systematized in the document *NMP*, which forms the empirical basis for this analysis.

In the interpretative process, five formative episodes were identified and understood as genuine *theoretical events* (Kastrup, 2007): moments in which experience summons thought and reinvention. These episodes are not presented as mere illustrations, but rather as analytical devices that condense tensions, displacements, and gestures of shared creation. Their reading was

guided by conceptual operators (Passos et al. 2020), mobilized as critical tools for problematization.

From the analysis of these episodes, five critical propositions were constructed. These are understood as interpretive propositions sustained by the articulation between empirical material and critical theory, with the aim of unsettling established categories and illuminating displacements within the field of teacher education in border contexts. Each assertion offers a situated reading of how teachers constitute themselves as intercultural mediators and co-creators of transborder pedagogical practices.

Table 1. Relationship between formative episodes and critical propositions

Episode	Critical Proposition	Source	Actors Involved	Context
I	Territory as curriculum: recognizing to build belonging	NMP, pp. 36–44	Teachers, teacher educators, researcher	Session 6 – second moment: group activity with the Bragança–Zamora teachers
II	The border as shared experience: inhabiting the common	NMP, pp. 92–96	Teachers, teacher educators, researcher	Session 13 – restricted meeting with the Bragança–Zamora mirror-schools
III	Language as hospitality: listening and speaking with the other	NMP, pp. 11–15	Teachers from all participating schools, teacher educators and scientific committee	Sessions 2 and 3 – collective activity involving all mirror-schools
IV	Educating at the margins: bonds, visibility, and shared meanings	NMP, pp. 99–107	Teachers and researcher	Session 14 – restricted meeting with the Bragança–Zamora mirror-schools
V	Co-authorship as teaching praxis: recognition, continuity, and transformation	NMP, pp. 239–241	Teachers, trainers, researchers, institutional representatives	Final face-to-face session of the 1st edition. Venue: Ciudad Rodrigo – Spain

Source: NMP – *Author’s Systematization (2025)*

The table above presents the correspondence between the formative episodes identified and the five critical propositions analysed in this study, specifying the moments within the training journey (sessions) in which the episodes occurred, the actors involved, and internal references to the empirical corpus — notably the pages of the *NMP* document (restricted circulation). The inclusion of these references aims to ensure methodological rigour and traceability of the analysis. This systematization makes more visible the articulation between experience and reflection that underpins the analytical trajectory developed in the following section.

Five Critical Proposition

Critical Proposition I – Territory as Curriculum: Recognizing to Build Belonging

The first critical proposition stems from the analysis of the episode I, which took place during the sixth formative session of the PEBIF. It occurred when the mirror-school teachers co-constructed the theme of the LP to be implemented. The sharing of narratives about the places where they live and teach allowed for the recognition of shared concerns, values, and experiences — such as work, effort, and respect — deeply rooted on both sides of the border. This dialogic exercise led to the choice of the title ‘*O trabalho e o respeito que nos une*’ (*The work and respect that unite us*), which was understood not as a mere thematic coincidence but as the synthesis of a process of listening, negotiation, and shared meaning-making.

In order to identify teachers’ statements used in the analysis, an alphanumeric coding system was adopted to ensure participant anonymity and interpretative consistency. The code comprises three elements: PP or PE, referring respectively to Portuguese and Spanish teachers; G1, indicating the group associated with the Bragança–Zamora mirror-school pair; and a letter (from a to d), assigned based on the alphabetical order of the teachers’ first names within each group. This convention will be used throughout the five critical propositions presented below, allowing for ethical and traceable reference to participants’ contributions without compromising their individual identities.

The epistemic and symbolic power of this process became particularly visible in the public presentation delivered during the final session of the formative pathway. Representing the group, one of the Spanish teachers stated:

“El título del proyecto refleja la preocupación no solo por los aspectos culturales, obvios y tangibles, que unen ambos lados de la raya, sino también por algo menos tangible que une España y Portugal, el tratamiento que en ambos lados se ha hecho de pilares básicos para el desarrollo de la sociedad como son el trabajo, el respeto y el esfuerzo. A lo largo del proyecto se desarrollaron los puntos en común existentes entre los dos países y descubrieron cómo estos valores, trabajo, respeto y esfuerzo están presentes en las dos culturas.”

["The title of the project reflects concern not only with the cultural aspects — obvious and tangible — that connect both sides of the border, but also with something less tangible that links Spain and Portugal: the way both countries have addressed basic pillars for societal development, such as work, respect, and effort. Throughout the project, the commonalities between the two countries were explored, and it was discovered how these values — work, respect, and effort — are present in both cultures."] (PEG1d).

The centrality given to local knowledge and values was further reinforced by the teachers' decision to incorporate cultural traditions from both territories into the LP, such as Carnival and traditional masks. In a performative and affective inversion, Spanish pupils crafted Bragança-style masks, while Portuguese pupils created Sanabria-style ones. One of the teachers remarked: "*Isso é mesmo giro porque assim nos obriga mesmo ao conhecimento — nós de vós e vós de nós*" ["*This is really cool because it really makes us learn — we learn about you and you learn about us*"] (PPG1c). This practice — simultaneously aesthetic, identitarian, and epistemic — mobilized local cultures not merely as content references but as living subjects for the curriculum and a basis for intercultural encounters.

This episode clearly points to a conception of curriculum as a situated, relational, and ethical practice — a shared construction anchored in inhabited territories and in the ties that traverse them. By evoking intergenerational knowledge, vernacular languages, everyday practices,

and shared memories, teachers reject the logic of a normative, exogenous, and decontextualised curriculum. Instead, they assert a *situated pedagogy* (Freire, 2011; Nóvoa, 2019), one that recognizes subjects and their places as legitimate sources of knowledge and belonging.

The LP co-created between Bragança and Sanabria exemplifies this curricular shift, underpinning transborder pedagogical practices anchored in co-authorship and shared meaning-making. As Ulhôa and Araújo e Sá (2024) underscore, educating on the border means displacing the curriculum from its hegemonic centres and reinscribing it in the margins as an ethical and political gesture. By grounding the curriculum in lived geographies, teachers not only recognize their territories as epistemic landscapes, but also reaffirm educational practice as an act of implication, recognition, and shared construction of the common.

Critical Proposition II – The Border as Shared Experience: Dwelling in the Common

The second critical proposition emerges from the analysis of the episode II, which occurred during the implementation of the LP. One of the core activities involved crafting traditional masks associated with local festivities in each region — namely the *Entrudo* in Bragança and the *Caretos de Sanabria*. In a symbolic gesture of reciprocity, Portuguese pupils crafted masks typical of the Sanabrese culture, while Spanish pupils created masks inspired by Bragança's tradition. This intentional

inversion, more than an aesthetic exercise, functioned as a pedagogical practice of displacement and mutual recognition.

Through this gesture, the border was revealed as a lived and affective space, where learning occurred through the embodiment of alterity. Assuming the face of the other became an exercise in cultural listening and symbolic transgression, dissolving identity boundaries and giving rise to shared forms of belonging. This experience may be understood through the lens of Bhabha's (1998) notion of the *third space*, wherein identities are constituted through negotiation, translation, and intercultural creation.

From this perspective, the mask-making activity re-inscribes the border as a *borderscape* (Brambilla, 2015), a landscape of practices, affections, and gestures that traverse the visible and the symbolic. The manual work, the use of local materials, the storytelling, and the ritualized performance activated an ecology of shared meanings — learning *with* and *through* difference. In this context, performativity became a powerful pedagogical strategy, displacing the curriculum into zones of experience where body, aesthetics, and language intertwine (Larrosa, 2014).

As Lisovetc (2018) affirms, performative pedagogy values the body as a site of knowledge, and aesthetic experience as a condition for situated learning. In this sense, the activity did not aim to represent the other, but rather to inhabit their gesture — a movement of hospitality and reciprocity that inevitably evokes the notion of openness to the Other. For Derrida (2003), hospitality requires a radical openness to the other, even amid asymmetries. When

transposed to the educational field, this notion aligns with the idea of *cultural hospitality*, in which the school becomes a space of symbolic welcome, capable of listening to and legitimizing other cultures without assimilating them.

The border thus emerges as a relational zone (Laine, 2017), where difference is not an obstacle but the very engine of shared experience. As Walsh (2012) proposes, the aim is to promote a *critical interculturality*, one committed to confronting historical asymmetries and forging bonds grounded in listening, co-authorship, and transformation. Dwelling in the common, in this sense, does not imply the erasure of differences, but their mutual translation into practices that generate recognition.

Hence, the mask-making activity was configured as a situated curricular practice, capable of reinscribing the border as a space of collective creation. In inhabiting the gesture of the other, pupils experienced a pedagogy of reciprocity, in which aesthetic sharing became a common language. This experience reveals the formative potential of the common — not as the sum of differences, but as a practice of recognition and shared invention.

In this regard, this formative experience resonates with the studies of Araújo e Sá and Melo-Pfeifer (2018), which highlight the potential of intercomprehension as a plural and critical approach to teacher education — one that fosters epistemological shifts, pedagogical co-authorship, and the recognition of teachers' linguistic repertoires.

Critical Proposition III – Language as Hospitality: Listening and Speaking with the Other

The third critical proposition arises from the episode III, which unfolded across two formative moments of the PEBIF, articulated as a single expanded experience: an initial activity involving the listening and analysis of video excerpts in various Romance languages, conducted during session 2, and its reflective revisitation in the Intercomprehension Workshop held by invited experts in session 3, as recorded in the NMP.

In the first session, teachers were invited to listen to short video clips — between 20 and 30 seconds in length — featuring speakers of different languages (such as Romanian, Mirandese, Cape Verdean Creole, Guianese, Italian, among others), each associating a word with the idea of intercomprehension. The task consisted in identifying the language spoken, the highlighted word, and, where possible, reconstructing the general meaning of the message. This playful yet challenging exercise triggered spontaneous reactions that reveal the potential of intercomprehension as an intuitive and affective gesture. As one Portuguese teacher summarized: “*há palavras que se entende, parece que são comuns às línguas todas [...] é quase como ler um texto salteado e nós conseguimos entender o discurso*” [“*there are words one can understand; it feels like they’re common to all languages [...] it’s almost like reading a scattered text and still being able to grasp the message*”] (PPG1b).

This initial moment of practical exploration was resumed in the following session during the Intercomprehension Workshop, guided by experts who

connected the theoretical foundations of the approach to a critical listening of the prior experience. The teachers were then invited to reflect on the cognitive strategies activated, the emotions mobilized, and the formative meaning of the practice experienced. Among the testimonies, one teacher from El Puente de Sanabria remarked: “*Me di cuenta de que el idioma es solo una herramienta... lo que importa es tener ganas de comunicarse*” [“*I realized that language is just a tool... what really matters is the desire to communicate*”] (PEG1c). This statement reveals an understanding of language as a relational medium, subordinated to the desire for encounter, rather than as a mere technical or disciplinary tool.

The experience prompted both epistemic and affective shifts among the participants. Teachers laughed at themselves, welcomed linguistic deviations, and played with meaning, activating a form of situated listening that unsettled hierarchies and fostered critical conviviality. Language ceased to be assessed by normative parameters of accuracy or fluency and became inhabited as a space of openness and shared vulnerability. In this context, listening implied an ethical gesture — attentiveness to the other in their hesitation, incompleteness, or displacement — as theorized by Fricker (2007) in her discussion of epistemic injustice and the right to be heard.

The workshop also prompted the emergence of cognitive and affective strategies of reading and inference, aligning with the notion of *translanguaging* (García & Li, 2014). While interacting with documents in different Romance languages, teachers mobilized multiple semiotic resources and

cultural memories to construct shared meaning. As one Portuguese teacher remarked, the association of words, sounds, and previous experiences — including folk songs and familiar imagery — was one of the keys to comprehension, evidencing a mode of listening deeply rooted in lived experience and cultural imagination.

In this regard, intercomprehension is not merely a didactic technique but emerges as an ethical formation device. By redirecting subjects from their native language and inviting them to inhabit the language of the other, a movement of epistemic decentralisation is activated — one that aligns education with an ethic of hospitality.

As Ricoeur (2004) proposes, linguistic hospitality consists in ‘inhabiting the language of the other without renouncing one’s own’, thereby allowing for educational practices that value listening, vulnerability, and co-authorship as conditions for constructing a plural common. To affirm intercomprehension as a formative gesture is thus to displace linguistic boundaries and re-inscribe language as a space of relational justice — where encounter becomes possible precisely because no one is required to cease being who they are to communicate with the other.

Critical Proposition IV – Educating from the Margins: Bonds, Visibility, and Shared Meanings

The fourth critical proposition stems from Episode IV, which took place during Session 14, an autonomous working meeting of the teaching group from the mirror-schools Bragança–Zamora. On that occasion, a video produced by the

Portuguese team was shown, documenting the learning journey developed with pupils up to that point. While the material was initially intended as an internal tool for practice sharing and collective reflection within the group, the gesture also emerged as a symbolic manifestation of the shared commitment to a pedagogical endeavour that is situated, articulated and transformative affirming the border as a relational space.

This moment of sharing took place within one of the weekly meetings between the mirror-schools, foreseen in the pedagogical architecture of the PEBIF. These gatherings were part of the group’s internal organization and counted towards the autonomous working hours of the programme, with the presence of the teacher educators assigned to accompany each group. Designed to fine-tune implementation and define the next steps, these spaces sought to ensure coherence, continuity and shared responsibility in the development of the project.

The video showed Portuguese children singing in Spanish, recreating traditional costumes from Sanabria, parading to shared musical themes, and enthusiastically presenting the results of their community-based research — one of the activities included in the LP. Teachers on both sides watched, commented, laughed, and recognized themselves in the experience. One Portuguese teacher summed up the intensity of the process by saying: “*Isto é tudo muito trabalhoso, causa-nos stress e muita ansiedade (...), mas depois há um lado bom, que nos obriga a estar juntos e a conviver. Isto é uma parte boa deste trabalho*” [“*This is all very labour-intensive, it causes us stress and a lot of anxiety*”]

(...), but then there's a good side, which forces us to be together and to socialize. That's a good part of this work"] (PPG1c).

Although conducted in a setting limited to the teaching collective, this act embodied a political dimension of the training process by making visible a pedagogical practice that rejects isolation, activates bonds, and reinscribes the territory as a space of shared learning. The *raia* (borderland) thus emerges as a relational landscape, woven through listening, recognition, and collaboration.

Within this horizon, the school asserts itself as a political space of mediation: more than a reproducer of contents, it becomes a locus for reinscribing knowledge in territories and affective ties. As Giroux (1997; 2005) argues, a critical pedagogy

connects lived experience to social analysis and to the ethical imperative of transformation. This episode embodies that principle, highlighting teachers who refuse the technical neutrality of educational practice and take up the role of cultural mediators and socially committed agents.

The video initiative and the pedagogical gestures that followed—from the Carnival parade in El Puente de Sanabria (Figure 2), to the public presentation in the main square of Bragança (Figure 3), and the exhibitions in schools and museums (Figures 4 and 5)—illustrate how PEBIF's pedagogical commitment exceeds the confines of the classroom. The border is thereby reinscribed as an educational territory for constructing the commons, where the public visibility of teaching practices becomes a political and cultural force.

Figure 2. Carnival procession in El Puente de Sanabria / Spain



Figure 3. Student performance in the central square – Bragança / Portugal



Figure 4. Exhibition of materials at the Casa del Parque del Lago de Sanabria / Spain

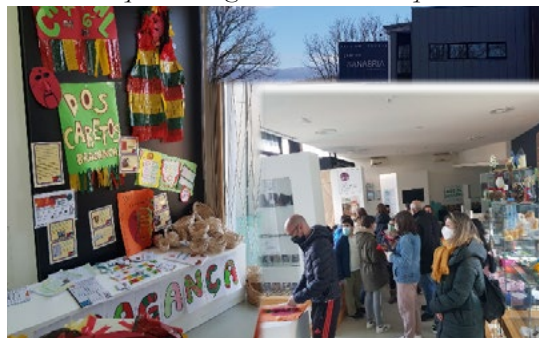


Figure 5. Exhibition of materials at the Primary School Centre – Bragança / Portugal



Source: Figure 1 was provided by the teachers from the Spanish school. The remaining images are from the researcher's personal archive.

The border thus becomes an educational and political space not by erasing difference, but by recognizing it as the very condition for relationality. As Walsh (2012) proposes, educating from the border requires the decolonization of the power–knowledge mechanisms that shape the curriculum, activating practices of listening, co-authorship, and recognition. What was expressed in Session 14—and which continues in the public-facing educational actions—does not constitute a mere isolated event or foreseen culmination. Rather, it represents a formative occurrence that reconfigures meanings and relations: a genuine theoretical and political event in ongoing transformation. There, in the sharing among peers and in the gestures that extended the school into public space, a pedagogy of the border is affirmed—one committed to listening, bonding and transformation. The school becomes a site of collective enunciation, where bonds are cultivated, borders are reimagined, and shared meanings are produced.

Critical Proposition V – Co-authorship as Teaching Praxis: Recognition, Continuity, and Transformation

The fifth critical proposition emerges from the episode V, experienced during the closing event of the PEBIF, in which teachers from the mirror-schools of Bragança and El Puente de Sanabria publicly shared the formative path they had undertaken. Far from being a mere final presentation, this moment became a symbolic act of restitution and a pedagogical and political gesture affirming

continuity — in which teacher education is seen as a relationship, and the project as an ethical, situated, and shared practice.

The teachers' contributions, recorded during the closing presentation of the training course, reflect a critical and situated appropriation of the formative experience. Rather than offering generic characterizations, the participants articulated the meaning of the process through the specificities of their educational contexts and pedagogical commitments. In their words:

“Fue un proyecto muy audaz, desafiante, innovador, laborioso”
[“It was a very bold, challenging, innovative, and labour-intensive project”] (PEG1b).

“Relativamente a Bragança, um dos eixos do Projeto Educativo é a internacionalização do Agrupamento em consonância com o plano de desenvolvimento europeu” [“Regarding Bragança, one of the pillars of our Educational Project is the internationalisation of the school cluster, in line with the European development plan”] (PPG1c).

“En cuanto al Puente, nuestro compromiso con el entorno ha sido constante [...] ampliándolo al ámbito rayano con todas las implicaciones socioculturales que tiene este marco fronterizo” [“As for El Puente, our commitment to the local environment has been constant [...] extending it to the borderland sphere, with all the sociocultural implications that this border context entails”] (PEG1b).

These statements reveal more than mere adherence to an institutional project. They embody critical and situated appropriations, in which co-authorship — forged through the interweaving of national curricula, local educational projects, and the sociocultural dynamics of the border region — demonstrates that difference is not an obstacle to cooperation, but rather a founding condition of a pedagogy of the commons.

In this horizon, co-authorship is understood as teaching praxis — not as a simple division of tasks, but as a formative experience of ethical, political, and epistemic engagement. As Freire (2011) argues, praxis is realized in the dialogical movement between action and critical reflection, transcending the dichotomy between doing and thinking. And as Nóvoa (2009) reminds us, teacher professionalism is built through sharing, listening, and co-responsibility, not in the solitude of technical execution. Thus, the episode analyzed embodies this perspective: the project is not narrated as a closed or completed process, but as an open-ended journey, in which teacher education projects itself beyond its institutional timeframe. In naming the work as challenging, the teachers do not close it off; rather, they view it as a continuous possibility — a seed germinating in schools, collaborative networks, and the territories of the border region.

This circle that does not close is not a sign of incompleteness, but of openness to reinvention — a device of continuity that resists conclusive endings and affirms teaching as a practice of ongoing reconfiguration. In returning the lived

experience in the form of collective testimony, teachers also become authors of their own practice — narrators of a profession in transit, shaped by listening, reciprocity, and the transformation of the school into a site of plural enunciation. In this sense, the project configures itself as a pedagogical ecology in motion — a dynamic and situated cartography, drawn through shared gestures, interwoven narratives, and the ethical commitment to collective creation.

Final Considerations

Throughout this article, we have sought to demonstrate how the teachers involved in the PEBIF project have been constructing a pedagogical practice that transcends the logic of the border as a barrier and consolidates it as a space of intercultural mediation, teacher co-authorship, and situated curricular reinvention. This is a practice that does not end in the technical execution of a project but is woven into the everyday tapestry of listening, commitment, and belonging — sketching out a transnational educational identity, forged from the margins and oriented towards the creation of the commons.

From the analysis, images of a teaching practice in motion emerge: perspectives that are constituted through relationship, that embrace the risk of symbolic translation, and that invest in listening as both an ethical and political gesture. In this process, in-service teacher education ceases to be a space for normative updating and becomes a territory for pedagogical invention, cultural negotiation, and critical commitment to the territories and the subjects who inhabit them.

Drawing on the set of episodes and critical propositions analyzed, five key ideas that may help us to envisage new educational cartographies for border regions emerge:

- The border as a territory of curricular invention and shared belonging, where the curriculum is reinvented through lived experience, drawing upon local knowledges, affections, and practices of co-authorship.
- Education as a space of listening, displacement, and the resignification of teaching practices, recognizing teachers as epistemic and political agents, protagonists of a situated educational praxis.
- The curriculum as a relational practice oriented towards the common good, woven through the interactions between margins, cultures, and plural experiences.
- Teachers as intercultural mediators and agents of symbolic justice, capable of building bridges between communities divided by geopolitical borders yet connected by educational ties.
- Cross-border teaching as a political and transformative practice, which reinscribes the school within the territory and affirms pedagogy as care, creation, and shared responsibility.

These ideas do not seek to close the investigative process but rather open pathways to continue reflecting on the role of teachers as builders of new educational

grammars — grammars that are more just, plural, and rooted in the affective and epistemic geographies of border regions.

In territories where the border might separate, teachers are building bridges: reinventing the curriculum, sharing knowledge, and expanding the horizons of the school. They are not merely constructing a cross-border education — ethical, situated, and committed to the common good — but also signalling the possibility of an educational action that resists the logics of fragmentation and exclusion.

Finally, this reflection extends beyond the strictly educational domain. What is inscribed in the PEBIF experience — and in the critical analysis here proposed — is the possibility of reimagining borders as spaces of creation and relational justice. This constitutes a contribution that may resonate with other dimensions of cross-border public policies, so often dominated by securitarian or logistical rationalities, yet lacking a rooted territorial pedagogy. By reframing teaching on the border as a practice of listening, mediation, and co-authorship, an ethical and political horizon is affirmed — one which aims to inhabit, care for, and transform borders in times of crisis and reinvention of the commons.

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