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Promoting a Teacher Education Research-Oriented Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training in English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract | Research-oriented programs related to pre-service teacher education are practically non-existent in many countries. Since in Portugal we now have a stable legal system for initial teacher training, how can we help these countries to respond to their teacher training needs and accomplish these same standards? How can we create an international program at MA level that could serve such an objective? What are the research priorities for teachers in primary and secondary education? I will claim for a new general research policy using small-scale research projects in foreign language teaching (FLT), which illustrated a turning point in advanced research in foreign languages teacher training. Presently, researchers no longer narrow their inquiries into linguistic questions or school and student-centered actions. Instead, they focus on a range of issues such as teacher-centered actions, beliefs and policies, and aspects of FLT such as literacy education, special educational needs or methods for teaching gifted students. Despite a lack of funding at all levels, many research projects in teacher education have been undertaken, and new areas have been explored, such as didactic transposition, literary and information literacies, intercultural learning, corpora in FLT, new information and communication technologies in FLT, interlingual inferencing, national standards for foreign language education, FLT for specific purposes, digital narratives in education, CLIL, assessment, and language learning behaviors. This small sample of the many areas covered proves that advanced research in teacher education can also be very useful to promote the growing interest in further internationalization in other sciences (beyond human and social areas) traditionally linked to politics, business and industry (computing, chemistry, biology, medicine, etc.), something that can only be attained by focusing on multilingualism, multi-literacy and lifelong learning.

Key words | Initial teacher education, research-oriented curriculum, professional knowledge, small subjects

Pre-service teacher education is still dominated by pedagogical knowledge-oriented programs around the world. That trend is reasonable up to the point that it tends to disregard the importance of research for someone who will become a trained teacher in a specific subject. In a recent book by OCDE Publishing, *Pedagogical Knowledge and the Changing Nature of the Teaching Profession* (Guerriero, 2017), it is concluded that teachers are trained mostly in *knowing how to teach* and an urgent update of such knowledge is required for almost every country (I argue that we must develop, at least in similar scale, a strong training in *knowing what we teach*, which should include critical research about the taught contents). A combination of both knowledge policies (pedagogical and content-oriented) in teacher education programs is urgent. This derives from the awareness of a decrease in content knowledge acquisition and training for a large part of teachers in pre-university levels, what seems to be a consensus in many countries which do, in fact, highlight the importance of content knowledge training in any teacher education program. But, since the Bologna process implementation in many other European countries and many other western countries, the trend has been a different one. In fact, we should note that a general political agenda has been in operation in Europe since the 2005 report on the implementation of the Lisbon agenda, which underlines the urgent need for quality in initial teacher education combined with in-service training due to the age(ing) profile of the existing workforce (European Commission, 2005).

In Portugal and Spain, introducing a more reflexive and analytical curriculum in such programs can be a great challenge; in these educational contexts, the focus is still a strong training in pedagogical knowledge (training how to teach only), and the word 'knowledge' is many times underrated over the word 'competence' and its pedagogical lexicon. That can be seen even in the general adoption of the phrase "teacher education" over the more consistent "teacher training", as observed by Caena and Margiotta (2010):

'Teacher education' – the term that is increasingly predominant in European discourse, replacing the allegedly narrower idea of 'teacher training' with the holistic concept of a broader preparation of

teachers as learning individuals – actually occupies a rather controversial position within the Bologna European Higher Education Area, for several reasons. . . . The activity of teaching, inasmuch as it is socially and contextually based, naturally reflects ideas and priorities about the aims and desirable outcomes of education and schooling, with underlying values and cultural traits, which are deeply rooted in national histories and traditions. Conceptions and beliefs about the ideal teacher, the ideal citizen and the ideal institutions for student and teacher preparation usually go hand in hand, complementing each other. (320)

If we refer to the different frameworks at stake when we reflect on teacher *education*, we tend to find that most relevant political actions are focused on competence and qualifications frameworks rather than knowledge frameworks, as if the term *education* were to be confined to training in its exclusive pedagogical meaning. In pre-service programs, knowledge training is assumed to be present in any curriculum as something already pre-given by default or it is believed to be the teacher's responsibility during his/her coming-of-age as a professional in the transmission of knowledge. Specific content knowledge is the most learnable and it is assumed that a first degree is the adequate moment for that education; a core curriculum in this moment is always designed as a content knowledge-related curriculum, with little or no attention to pedagogical knowledge. A future teacher will learn pedagogical content and all the secrets of the profession in a separate curriculum, after their first degree. There are integrated courses that change this recipe, but the result is not different due to the supremacy of the pedagogical training factor. If it is assumed that pedagogical knowledge can only be learned in a pre-service environment, curriculum developers and evaluators will go with this presupposition and make it a general rule for all policies.

Research-oriented programs related to pre-service teacher education are practically non--existent in many countries, although there is no lack of policies and theories on research-based teacher education to implement them in every country, from Healey (2005) and Zgaga (2006) to Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005), who project a different model for North-American teachers urging the creation of an informed teacher education curriculum which should include

more research-based training. But the quest(ion) remains at least in countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, making a personal reference to the Portuguese-speaking world, to explain that we lack both theoretical and the political actions when we talk about research-based teacher education.

Since in Portugal we now have a stable legal blueprint for initial teacher training, how can we help these countries to respond to their teacher training needs and accomplish these same standards? How can we create an international program at MA level that could serve such an objective? What are the research priorities for teachers in primary and secondary education? I make the claim for a new general research policy using small-scale research projects in FLT, which has worked as a turning point in advanced research in foreign languages teacher training for the past decade in my University at least. Presently, researchers no longer narrow their inquiries into linguistic questions or school and student-centered actions. Instead, they focus on a range of issues such as teacher-centered actions, beliefs and policies, and aspects of FLT such as literacy education, special educational needs or methods for teaching gifted students. Despite a lack of funding at all levels, many research projects in teacher education have been undertaken, and new areas have been explored, such as didactic transposition, literacies, intercultural learning, corpora in FLT, new information and communication technologies in FLT, interlingual inferencing, national standards for foreign language education, FLT for specific purposes, digital narratives in education, CLIL, assessment, and language learning behaviors. This small sample of the many areas covered proves that advanced research in teacher education can also be very useful to promote the growing interest in further internationalization in other sciences (beyond human and social areas) traditionally linked to politics, business and industry (computing, chemistry, biology, medicine, etc.), something that can only be attained by focusing on multilingualism, multi-literacy and lifelong learning. A diverse range of technological tools will be used to enhance learning and teaching situations using the Internet, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, podcasts, webinars, Skype classroom, etc. - tools that have changed the way language is taught. These will be combined

with high-quality databases for research. These tools will help redirect initial teacher education towards cooperative and autonomous learning, including reflection on the role of the EFL teacher.

In the three decades leading up until 2014, Portuguese legislation promoted almost exclusively the study of pedagogical issues throughout the period of initial teacher training. Besides, the research-based and related bibliographical references of all curricula produced were almost unchanging and rarely updated and related to international innovations. The practicum focused on classroom teaching methods and the display of classroom management techniques with little or no research included. In May 2014, a new law (Decree 74/2014) was issued which requested the restructuring of all higher education programs in initial teacher education to include a more research-oriented study plan. Because of this, the Bologna process in 2007, and several recommendations made from the beginning of the century by the European Commission claiming, quite rightly, that research and evidence-based practice is relevant to teacher education, all courses at master's level were redesigned. This important shift in the way we train teachers for basic and secondary education resulted in better research-oriented dissertations related to the profession of teaching, instead of the more standardized dossier of practicum activities which had been the general methodological requirement for decades, where critical reflection and scientific inquiry related to educational topics were not required. The need for independent thinking skills and reflection in the work of teachers (Niemi, 2008) should lead to training future teachers to reflect critically on all their actions, the curriculum they are expected to master and their own identity as educators. Consequently, researchers also need to change and do more to reach out to practitioners. This new research paradigm should co-exist with an environment like that found in other countries, in which teachers are regularly confronted with practical core questions such as "What is good for these children?" or "What is in the student's best interest?". As argued by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), "high quality educational research and enquiry has a key role to play. It can enable practitioners to distinguish myth from reality and help identify strategies that have the best chance of success

in the contexts in which they work" (BERA 11). This distinction plays a key role in a move towards quality teaching that is needed in initial teaching education and that is not being fully embraced by national policymakers.

In recent years, Portuguese universities have welcomed many students from Brazil, Angola and Mozambique (many of whom are already qualified teachers in their own countries), onto both PhD and MA courses in education, although not initial teacher education courses. For this reason, we in Portugal are familiar with the needs of these trainees. The status and recognition of the teaching profession in countries such as Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique is at stake today – we have large restructuring procedures going on – and we can find very different needs in Brazil when compared to the other African countries. In Brazil, where a huge system of education for a population of more than 200 million people exists, a different pre-service teacher qualification needs to be introduced to replace the first general degree qualification in pedagogy of most teachers; Fagundes (2016) showed how the appropriation of the concept of reflective teacher seen in several national guidelines is far from a true research- -oriented policy in teacher training and in the current system, graduates do not need to take a specialized postgraduate teaching course before becoming a teacher in primary or secondary education. In Angola and Mozambique, the educational systems provide very few opportunities for pre-service teacher training courses at university level and the few which are on offer are of doubtful quality, never having been submitted to external (national or international) evaluation. In these countries, there is a recognized need for an urgent reform of initial teacher education programs, although it seems that there is no political initiative to promote that reform. In these situations, research-oriented programs related to pre-service teacher education are practically non-existent.

In Portugal, we have extended our postgraduate programs to students from the Portuguese-speaking world; we have included Portuguese EFL teachers in special international conferences; we have integrated junior and senior EFL teachers in European research projects such as PETALL (Pan European Task-based Activities for Language Learning), C4C – CLIL for Children, The Language Rich Europe network, Mundus at Crossways – (in)visible paths to

intercultural learning and a Tempus project: LAPIS Language and Pedagogic Innovation in Schools; we have managed to change the general scope of evaluation of initial teacher education programs in order to embrace reflective practice to make sense of pedagogical experiences, thereby moving far beyond the passive description of training activities previously employed, but not forgetting that Dewey's legacy for the globalization of the idea of a reflective teacher needs a cautious approach. That can be done if we accept that "the place to develop the skills of reflective practice is in the practicum classroom as a novice teacher, not in the halls of the university as a student" (Russell 88).

Action research is being argued for as a crucial element in a new approach to in new pre-service teacher education courses, claiming that the curriculum should be redesigned per that methodology (Vieira, 2016). Though action research is important because it leads the teacher to his/ her own teaching actions so that they can be improved in view of what can and should be learned by students, it lacks another important dimension: each action in an individual classroom has only a very specific value and, in education, a single action can never create everlasting value since it cannot be held to be applicable as general practice. We teach because others teach as well and that interconnection has a greater significance than single actions. Action research is very helpful in identifying what a unique group of students do as learners, their results and interests. Adjustability is a key aspect of this methodology, but, in my view, not enough to cover the whole question of inquiring about the nature of teaching. Action research tells us what happens in our classroom and, eventually, we can conclude about what we need to do to provide better-informed training, but we will never go beyond the comfort zone we have worked within. As teachers, we can benefit easily from this perspective because we are closer to our students' interests, problems or goals. And we can share our private experiences with others, nonetheless we are still missing our own reflection about what is our profession, what we need to know prior to the next class and beyond, something that we can only attain with solid scientific research. I am not referring to that dimension of action research for the teacher's professional self-development, but to a rather philosophical solitude that is

implied when we claim for scientific research in teacher education programs. It is that precise moment when we discovered why we are teachers, why we teach in a certain manner, how can we survive any doubt about what we teach, and how can we become better professionals in this business of teaching others what we must know in the first place. The collaborative action research approach, which we can trace back to the pragmatism advocated by Dewey, is already an alternative if the action researcher wants to discuss his/ her findings with a wider community. But he/ she needs to use the methods of scientific (philosophical) research to completely succeed as a teacher.

I believe the right policy should result in the creation of international master's degree courses, or similar postgraduate courses, using the wealth of resources offered by e-Learning platforms. We know how difficult it is for African teachers to travel abroad to improve their educational skills and, in Brazil, it is impossible to provide training abroad for the massive numbers of teachers who require better qualifications in specific subjects. This way, an e--Learning course is a partial solution that can be replicated in other university contexts. Presently, the Open University in Portugal and NOVA University are working together to combine the best practices in distance education of the former with the wealth of resources of the latter to offer postgraduate programs in language teaching, namely an e-Learning MA in English Teaching, without a practicum. Together we have been working with international students from the Portuguese-speaking world and our academic results have been most successful. We hope to strengthen these ties to organize other global courses to train better qualified teachers in different areas, starting with FL teachers.

It should not be forgotten that "[t]he promotion of public understanding and impact of research in the social sciences must continue to pursue the argument for taking account of situational complexity, the fallibility of methods and the possible contestability of interpretations" (Winch 212). This philosophical mode of teaching education awareness is a major challenge in any context, it was somehow what was at stake in the Decree-Law no.79/2014, when pre-service teacher education was revised, and it will be assumed as the paramount goal in any future policy agenda related to initial teacher training.

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Early Bilingual Education and Content and Language Integrated Learning Assessment in Primary Education: Assessment Beliefs, Knowledge and Practice in Portuguese State and Private Schools

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Abstract | Educational provisions, such as Early Bilingual Education (EBE) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where curriculum content is learnt, taught and assessed through the means of an additional language, are not yet widespread in general primary and secondary education in Portugal. Knowing how to assess in such provisions, which have a dual focus on the mastering of language proficiency and content knowledge and skills, can be intricate. The first step towards building a rationale for soundly assessing language and content at early primary level in Portuguese schools needs to first understand how teachers working in EBE and CLIL education settings view assessment and what they do with it in the classroom. This article analyses the research findings of a small scale national research study conducted in Portugal in 2013/2014 on EBE and CLIL assessment beliefs, knowledge and practice on the part of teachers working in a national pilot on early bilingual education – the Bilingual Schools Project teachers (BSPT) and teachers working in similar provisions in private schools – the Non--Bilingual Schools Project teachers (NBSPT).

Key words | Assessment, formative assessment, assessment for learning, learning-oriented assessment, bilingual education, CLIL, primary education, teacher education

Background and Context

Unlike the European trend whereby CLIL provision is common in primary and secondary schools, Portugal is only known for having small-scale CLIL pilot projects in primary and secondary education (Eurydice 40). One of those pilot projects was the Bilingual Schools Projects, a national pilot jointly implemented by the Directorate-General for Education/Ministry of Education and the British Council Portugal in a number of primary schools in Portugal in 2011/2015, targeting 6-10 year-old children.

This pilot project came to an end in 2015 and currently there is a national programme with a wider scope, from preschool education to upper primary (ISCED[1]), to which Portuguese schools can apply every year[2].

Within the former pilot project in primary education, content teachers taught part of the curriculum of *Estudo do Meio* (a combination of Science, History and Geography) and *Expressões* (Self-expression skills such as Music, Art and crafts, etc.) through the medium of English using a CLIL approach and in this they were assisted by their English language colleagues who also taught English as a Foreign Language.

Since this was an innovative project in the Portuguese educational context at the time, there were practical challenges for the classroom, notably as to how to cope with assessment in a specific setting where content was learnt and taught in a foreign language.

Furthermore, as a Masters student, at the time, I had also grown to understand the importance of the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment and the benefits of knowing more about assessment approaches that support learning and teaching. This was particularly relevant in a national context where summative assessment has traditionally been highly valued in practice, there were no guidelines to support teachers in classroom assessment let alone CLIL assessment and where English language teaching (ELT) had recently gained higher status in the Portuguese education system. English, for example, became the first foreign language in the curriculum, starting in year 3, and specific learning outcomes[3] and Common

European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels were set for the development of English language ability according to each school year.

Consequently, all this has motivated me to think something was needed to help the teachers working in this context and I turned my focus to CLIL assessment at early primary level, notably the assessment of English language skills and curriculum content.

Introduction

This article refers to the findings from one of the methods used in an action research project conducted in the scope of a Master's thesis on ELT at Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas – NOVA Lisbon in 2013/2015[4]. The purpose of this action research was to understand what teachers working in an EBE/CLIL context at early primary level in Portuguese schools think, know, do and need as regards assessment. This particular method consisted of a questionnaire (Appendices 1a and 1b) applied to teachers working in state and private schools which aimed at investigating the following research questions:

- What are these teachers' beliefs, knowledge and practices towards assessing young learners' language ability and content knowledge?

- For what purpose, how and how often do they assess language and content?

- Is assessment an integral part of the lesson? Is it planned? Does it inform teaching practice? Does it inform learners on their progress? How is it carried out? How does it view error?

- What uses are being made of feedback? In what forms are these teachers involving learners in self- and peer assessment so as to support them in taking greater responsibility for their learning?

- Are tests built according to the general assessment criteria (validity, reliability, impact and practicality)?

- Do they reflect planning of how to assess all language ability and include a variety of test focus sub-skills and test techniques?

The findings from the questionnaire attempt to provide a reference point for establishing a comparison between teachers working in different EBE/CLIL settings in Portugal at early primary level.

Methodology

Profile of Respondents

The respondents are of two kinds: teachers (the Bilingual Schools Project Teachers – the BSPT and the Non-Bilingual Schools Project Teachers – the NBSPT. The BSPT group consisted of 19 teachers (7 language teachers, 11 content teachers and 1 language and content teacher) teaching year 3 in 2013/2014, which represents almost 40% of the teachers implementing the BSP at national level in this school year. Most teachers were in the 31-40 age range, followed by fewer aged 41-65. In 2013/ 2014 they taught or co-taught *Estudo do Meio* and *Expressões* through the medium of English (data from part A of the questionnaire).

The NBSPT group involved 46 teachers (41 language teachers, 3 content teachers, 2 language and content teachers) mostly aged 31-40 (43.5%) and 41-50 (34.8%). In 2013/ 2014 they taught a variety of subjects through the medium of English: *Estudo do Meio* (65.2%), *Expressões* (41.3%), *Educação para a Cidadania* (Citizenship Education) (30.4%), Maths (21.7%) or *Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação* (Information and Communication Technology) (13%) in early primary in state schools (56.5%), private schools (32.6%) or in both (10.8%). Most of these teachers had in-service training in this field (58.7%) and had taught in an EBE/CLIL setting for more than three years (60.9%) (data from Part A of the questionnaire).

Piloting, Anonymity and Sending out the Questionnaire

Three Survey Monkey collectors were used to collect data: one for piloting purposes whereby a group of 14 colleagues working in foreign language teaching were asked to pilot the questionnaire before it was sent out to the subjects under study. Two different collectors were used to collect data from the two groups of respondents: the BSPT and the NSBT groups.

The anonymity of respondents was always preserved as the online answers via Survey Monkey did not collect personal data or IP addresses.

The data collection from the BSPT group of subjects was authorised by the Directorate-General for Education/ Ministry of Education and the British Council Portugal, as coordinators of the Bilingual Schools Project, by the *Monitorização de Inquéritos em Meio Escolar* – MIME[5] (Monitoring Surveys in School Settings) and by head teachers of the bilingual schools.

The *Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Inglês* (the national association of teachers of English as a foreign language) and *Associação Portuguesa do Ensino Particular e Cooperativo* (the Portuguese association of private schools) kindly agreed to send out the questionnaires to the NBSP group of subjects.

Questionnaire Design

The data collection comprised four parts (A, B, C and D) and a total of twenty closed questions on the following topics: professional data (Part A), aiming at understanding what kind of background these teachers had as far as EBE/CLIL at primary levels are concerned; their views on learning, teaching and assessment, which was intended to understand these teachers' beliefs (Part B); their degree of confidence on the topic of assessment (Part C), so as to know how literate or knowledgeable of assessment these teachers were; and their assessment practice (Part D), in order to come to understand how these teachers actually tackle classroom assessment in this context.

Findings

The analysis of the data from the questionnaire answered by the BSPTs and the NBSPTs will be presented according to the foci of parts B, C and D of the questionnaire and the corresponding items surveyed and rated on a Likert rating scale of 1 to 4. The following tables will show the rating average of results from both groups.

Bilingual Teachers' Beliefs (Part B of the Questionnaire)

In Part B, which aimed at gathering data on the teachers' view about learning, teaching and assessment in an EBE/CLIL setting at early primary level, questions 9 to 14 (Q9-Q14) were surveyed according to a rating scale of 1 to 4, whereby subjects had to rate a number of statements per question, according to their degree of agreement, where 1 – *Strongly Disagree*; 2 – *Disagree*; 3 – *Agree;* and 4 – *Totally Agree*.

According to Q9, learning and teaching are clearly valued, whereas assessment is more undervalued by both groups. Even so the rating average score for assessment is higher in the BSPT than in the NBSPT group showing that the first group value assessment more (3.24) than the latter (2.98).

Figure 1 – Q9 – *In my Teaching Practice what I Value Most Is …*

Rating Average

■ BSPT ■ NBSPT

learning	4.00 / 3.85
teaching	3.47 / 3.58
assessment	3.24 / 2.98
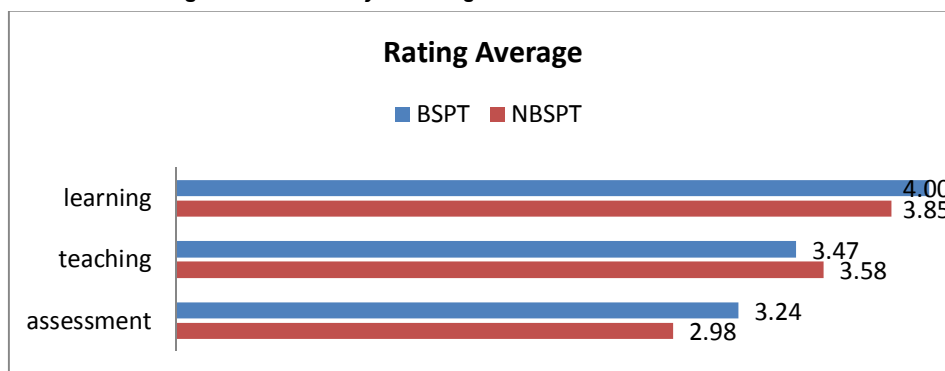
On the topic of their views on learning, both groups think it involves learners being aware of learning goals, thinking about and organising their work, self- and peer correct as well as self- and peer assess. The BSPT group also agrees that learners should be involved in lesson planning (3.06) whereas the NBSP group does not agree with this item as expressively (2.88).

Figure 2 – Q10 – *Learning Is about Having Learners …*
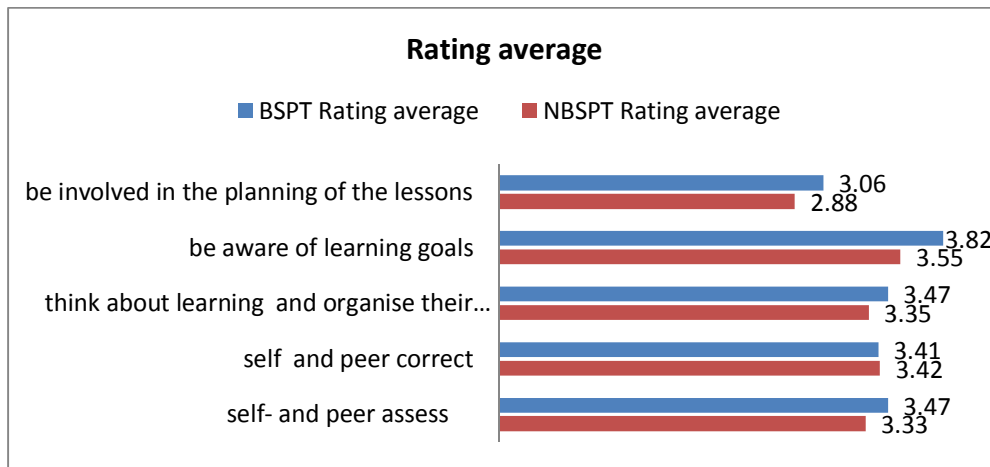
As regards Q11, the scores are very high (over 3.50 in the overall items) for the two groups of teachers, which shows that they all agree that teaching is about guiding learners to be autonomous and motivated, encouraging learner reflection and combining learning and assessment opportunities in an integrated way. The two tables also substantiate the rating average scores in Q9 showing that both learning and teaching are highly valued by both groups of teachers.

Figure 3 – Q11 – *Teaching Is about Teachers …*
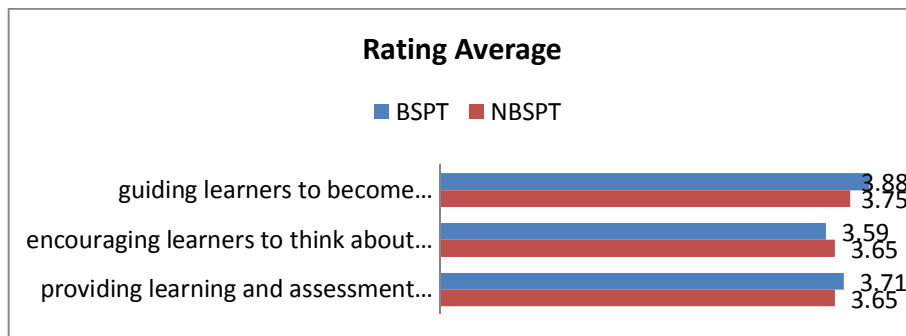
The highest rating average scores in Q12 rate assessment as being able to monitor and aid learners' progress, performance and achievement by providing feedback, as being important for the teachers so to know their learners' progress, performance and achievement and to plan future work and it enhances learner motivation.

Figure 4 – Q12 – Assessment…

Rating Average

■ BSPT ■ NBSPT

	BSPT	NBSPT
can monitor and aid learners' progress, performance and achievement by providing feedback	3.82	3.63
enhances learner motivation	3.06	3.05
is mostly about certification of learners' learning	2.76	2.65
is important for myself as a T to know my Ls' progress, performance and achievement and to plan future work	3.82	3.58
improves teaching and learning	3.24	3.13
is irrelevant to the work of the teacher and learners' learning	1.24	1.65

In Q13 learners and teachers are the ones who can learn more from assessment according to both groups of teachers, even if this is more strongly acknowledged by the BSPT group. Conversely, the NBSPTs rate the educational community as being as an important stakeholder in assessment as the previous ones.

Figure 5 – Q13 – *The Following Can Learn from Assessment …*
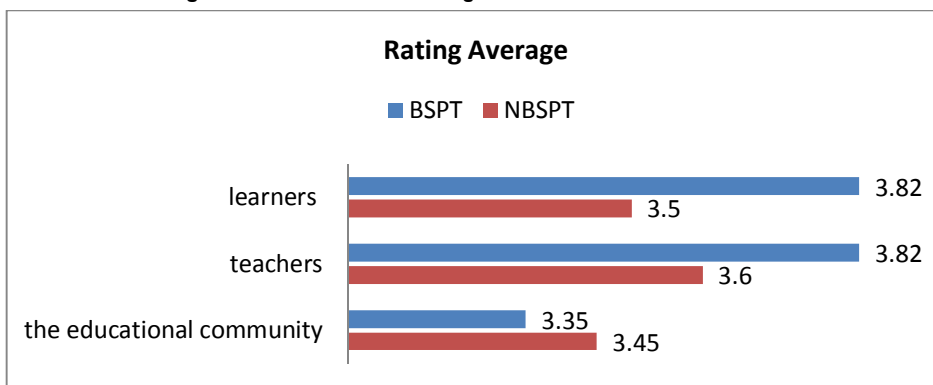
In Q14 both groups – the BSPT and the NBSPT considered that the language and the content teacher can assess together (3.59 and 3.13, respectively) rather than separately (2.06 and 2.70, respectively). Learners are also regarded as being able to assess themselves and their peers.

Figure 6 – Q14 – *The following can assess*
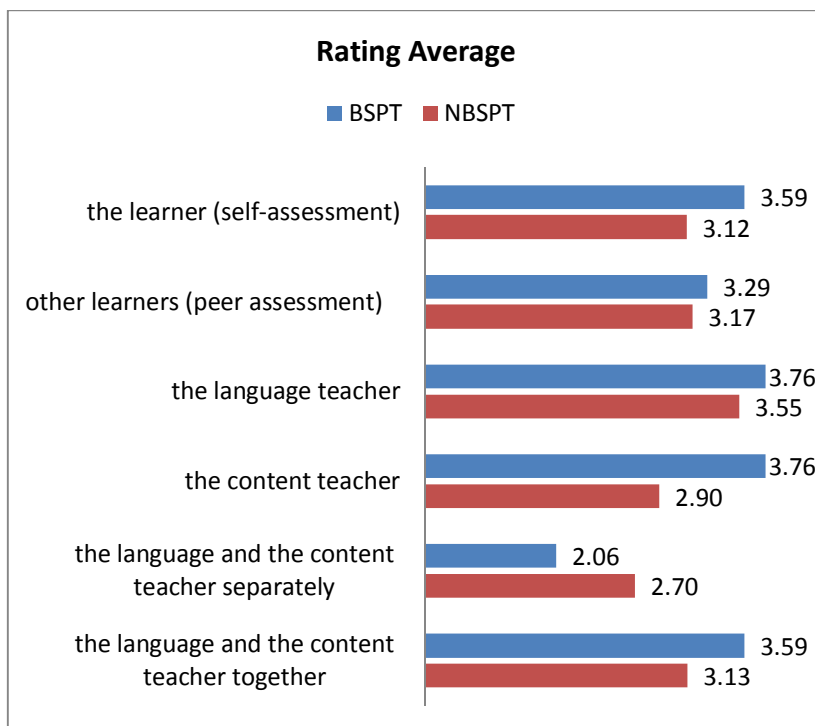
Bilingual Teachers' Knowledge (Part C of the Questionnaire)

In Part C, which aimed at gathering data on the teachers' degree of confidence on the topic of assessment in an EBE/CLIL setting at early primary level, questions 15 to 17 (Q15-Q17) were surveyed according to a rating scale of 1 to 4, whereby subjects had to rate a number of statements per question, according to their degree of confidence, where 1 – *Not Confident at all*; 2 – *Not very Confident* 3 – *Confident;* and 4 – *Very Confident.*

In Q15 the two groups rate themselves as confident when they assess language skills, curriculum through English, learning skills and behaviour/attitude as the rating average in all these items was above 3. Intercultural awareness is where the BSPT group feels less confident (2.88), whereas behaviour and attitude seems to be where both groups feel more confident (3.65 for the BSPT and 3.46 for the NBSPT).

Figure 7 – Q15 – *How Confident Are You When You Assess your Learners' …?*
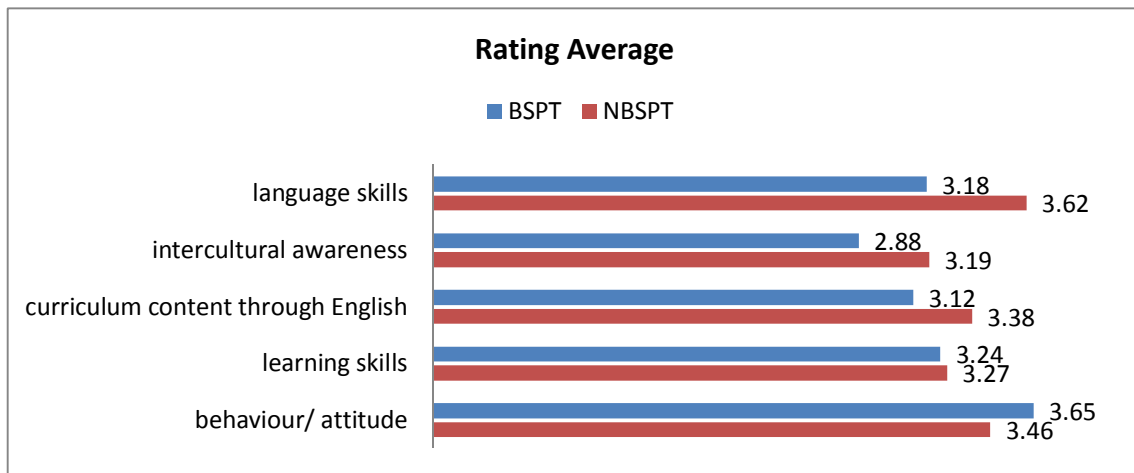
As to Q16, both groups are confident in most types of assessment, particularly formative (3.35 for the BSPT and 3.48 for the NBSPT) and summative assessment (3.24 for the BSPT and 3.38 for the NBSPT). Portfolio assessment is the type of assessment where both groups feel less confident as it shows a rating average below 3. The slight differences in

the rating average scores as to formative assessment, assessment for learning and learning-
-oriented assessment, may suggest they are not regarded as the same. This also happens
with summative assessment and assessment of learning.

Figure 8 – Q16 – *How Confident Do You Feel Regarding the Following Types of Assessment?*

Rating Average

■ BSPT ■ BSPT

Assessment type		
Formative assessment	3.35	3.43
Assessment for learning	3.06	3.16
Learning-oriented assessment	3	3.03
Portfolio assessment	2.65	2.81
Self- and peer assessment	3.06	3.30
Task-based assessment	3.00	3.30
Summative assessment	3.24	3.38
Assessment of learning	3.18	3.16
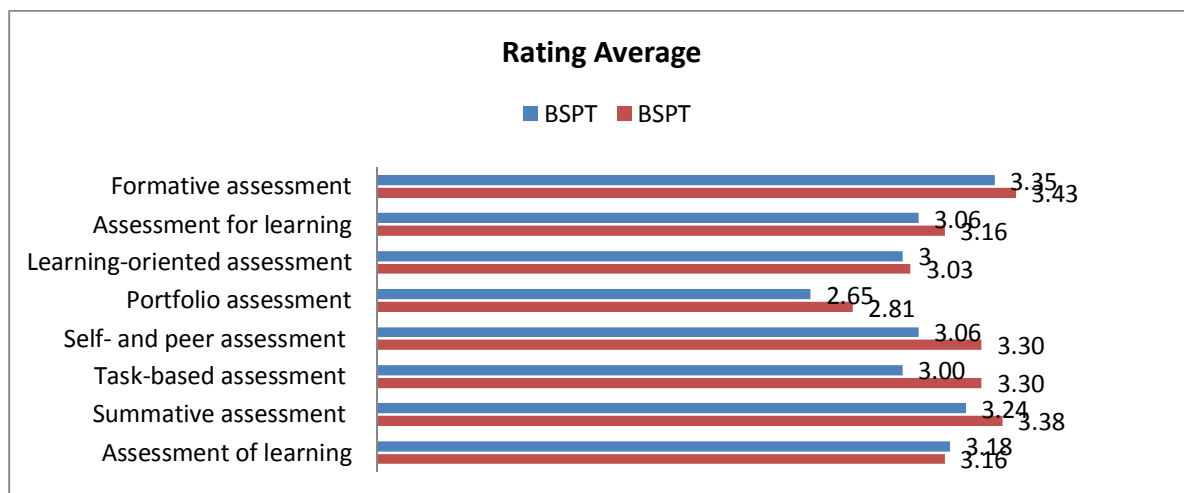
It is only regarding national curriculum reference documents that the two groups feel
equally confident (3.00). The NBSPT are also confident as to their level of knowledge of the
CEFR, whereas the BSPT are not (2.41).

Figure 9 – Q17 – *How Confident Do You Feel When You Come across the Following?*

Rating Average

■ BSPT ■ NBSPT

	BSPT	NBSPT
The CEFR	2.41	3.03
The ELP for primary level	2.24	2.73
National curriculum ref. docs	3.00	3.00
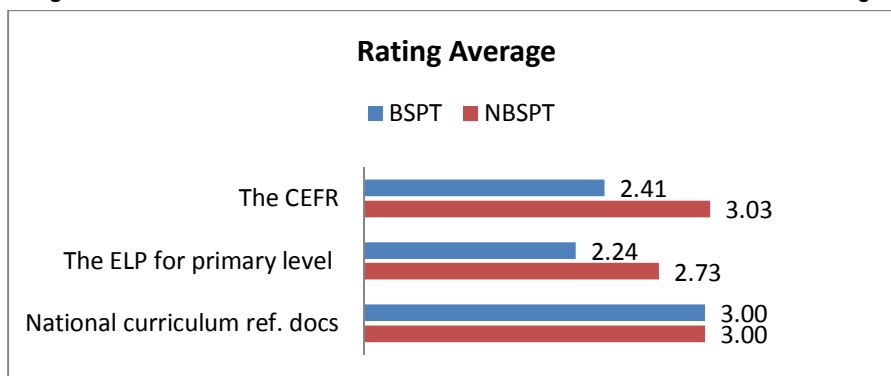
Bilingual Teachers' Actual Practice (Part D of the Questionnaire)

In Part D, which aimed at collecting data on the frequency of planning for and use of assessment strategies and tools in the teaching practice of the BSPT and NBSPT, subjects had to rate the frequency of a number of actions regarding questions 18 and 19 (Q18-Q19), on a scale, where 1 – *Never* 2 – *Seldom* 3 – *Often;* and 4 – *Very Often*.

In Q18 most actions (8 out of 12) are frequently carried out by both groups, notably catering for children's growth in the design of assessment tasks, using formative and summative assessment strategies to support overall learning progress, collecting and interpreting evidence on learning and identifying what learners already know, which got an average rating round 3.40. Conversely, guiding learners into using portfolios or reflecting on learning goals and success criteria, using self-assessment and peer assessment are seldom used by both groups as the average rating is below 3.

Figure 10 – Q18 – *How Often Do You Plan to …?*

Rating Average

■ BSPT   ■ NBSPT

	BSPT	NBSPT
take into account learners' cognitive,…	3.35	3.3
use formative & summative assessment…	3.35	3.42
collect and interpret evidence about…	3.41	3.39
build learner autonomy including the…	3.35	3.21
guide learners in using portfolios (e.g.…	2.29	3.61
articulate assessment needs and goals…	3.00	3.21
guide learner reflection on learning goals…	2.88	2.82
	2.94	2.91
identify what your learners already know	3.41	3.42
use correction strategies…	3.24	3.33
act on assessment evidence	3.24	3.27

The average rating scores over 3 in Q19 show that both groups ask themselves the necessary questions when devising their assessment procedures. This may demonstrate teacher awareness of assessment criteria. However, the 2.88 average rating score in the question "Is the weight given to language and content balanced?" seems to suggest that they reflect on the weighting of language and content when they devise their assessment tasks or tests.

Figure 11 – Q19 – *How Often Do You Ask Yourself these Questions When Devising Assessment Procedures (e.g. Assessment Tasks, Tests)?*

Rating Average

■ BSPT ■ NBSPT

Question	BSPT	NBSPT
Does the assessment procedure assess/test what it is supposed to assess/test?	3.29	3.36
Does it discriminate between different levels of learner performance?	3.18	3.06
Does it provide immediate constructive feedback?	3.24	3.27
Is the effect of the assessment procedure positive or negative?	3.06	3.12
Does it take into account the learners' characteristics and their developmental stages?	3.12	3.30
For a test, does it test a representative sample of items taught?	3.65	3.52
For a test, does it include a variety of testing techniques?	3.24	3.36
Does it test language and content together or separately?	3.24	3.36
Is the weight given to language and content balanced?	2.88	3.52
Are my marking criteria relevant and effective?	3.29	3.52

When it comes down to what these teachers plan and do (Q20), the rating averages are below 3 in most items (14 out of a total of 16). Establishing and showing learner goals, providing oral/written formative feedback and adjusting assessment strategies/tools are the only items rated over 3 in both groups. It is interesting to see that goal setting is more used by the BSPT group (3.24) than the NBSP group (3.00) and also that the BSPT are the only group supplementing this Assessment for Learning strategy with assessing the learning by means of success criteria focusing on what learners can achieve (3.00).

Figure 12 – Q20 – *How Often Do You Use the Following Assessment Strategies/Tools?*

Rating Average

■ BSPT ■ NBSPT

Strategy/Tool	BSPT	NBSPT
Varied assessment strategies/tools, especially non-threatening informal ones	3.41	2.97
Assessment tasks	3.06	2.82
Progress tests	3.06	2.70
Observation records with progress categories	2.47	3.06
End of the term/year report cards or learner reports with progress categories	2,59	3.27
Keeping a learning diary/journal to record simple reflections	1.82	2.27
Training learners to use vocabulary lists; picture vocabulary books	2.59	2.79
Portfolios (e.g. the ELP)	1.82	2.42
Establishing learner goals and writing them on the board	3.24	3.00
Assessing the learning by means of success criteria focusing on what they can achieve	3.00	2.58
Self-assessment (e.g. K-W-L charts)	2.35	2.48
Self-correction (e.g. keep an 'X-FILE' of mistakes)	1.88	2.21
Peer assessment and peer correction	2.35	2.45
Reformulating or recasting	2.71	2.76
Deliberately ignoring error	1,65	2.12
Providing oral/written formative feedback and adjusting assessment strategies/tools	3.24	3.27

Conclusion

To conclude the analysis of the questionnaire, a comparison can be made as to the similarities and differences of results in both groups – the BSPT and the NBSPT. Accordingly, there seems

to be a mismatch between the views, knowledge, planning and practice on the part of both groups of teachers on the topic of assessment.

Both groups of subjects have a positive and supporting view on learning, teaching and assessment and this is more soundly demonstrated by the BSTP group. However, neither of the groups value assessment as highly as learning and teaching.

The confidence values are generally higher in the NBSPT group, notably as regards language reference documents such as the CEFR.

The assessment planning and practice of both groups does not seem to be consistent with their views and confidence levels as regards, for example the types of assessment and what they imply in the actual classroom.

All in all, the attempt to compare both groups surveyed was relevant to understand that there are more similarities than differences as regards their assessment beliefs, knowledge and practice. In sum, it reinforced the need to devise a framework for assessment which may contribute to increase teacher knowledge of assessment and foster good, related planning and practice.

Notes

[1] ISCED stands for International Standard Classification of Education.

[2] More information on the former pilot project available at <http://www.dge.mec.pt/ensino-bilingue-precoce-no-1o-ciclo-do-ensino-basico> and on the current programme available at <http://www.dge.mec.pt/programa-escolas-bilinguesbilingual-schools-programme> [Accessed 05/05/2017]

[3] Ministério da Educação e Ciência. *Metas Curriculares de Inglês do Ensino Básico - 1.º, 2.º e 3.º Ciclos* (targeting years 3 to 9). 2015. Available at <http://www.dge.mec.pt/ingles> [Accessed 05/05/2017]

[4] *Assessment for Learning in EBE/CLIL: a learning-oriented approach to assessing English language skills and curriculum content at early primary level.* Retrieved from <https://run.unl.pt/handle/10362/17973> [Accessed 05/05/2017]

[5] The MIME is an online platform managed by the Ministry of Education and Science available at <http://mime.gepe.min-edu.pt/> whereby anyone who wishes to do research in Portuguese schools has to submit their research proposal for approval. Further information is available at www.dge.mec.pt.

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Appendix 1a – Questionnaire (Portuguese Version)

Foco: Avaliação em contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB

Destinatários: Professores especialistas (de Inglês) e professores generalistas (de conteúdos curriculares) de 1.º CEB que lecionam num contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL do 1.º CEB

Este questionário é parte integrante de um trabalho de projeto do mestrado em Didática do Inglês, da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, intitulado *ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING IN EBE/CLIL: a learning-oriented approach to assessing English language skills and curriculum content at Early Primary level* (AVALIAÇÃO PARA A APRENDIZAGEM EM EBP/CLIL: uma abordagem orientada para a aprendizagem na avaliação de capacidades linguísticas em Inglês e de conteúdos curriculares no 1.º ciclo do ensino básico).

Se é professor especialista de Inglês e/ou professor generalista, num contexto de aprendizagem de ensino bilingue precoce (EBP) ou de *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (*CLIL*), no 1.º ciclo do ensino básico (CEB), o seu *feedback* é importante para a minha investigação, uma vez que gostaria de perceber como vê e usa a avaliação na sua prática letiva, tendo em vista a conceção de orientações práticas para a avaliação de conteúdos curriculares e de língua inglesa junto de alunos do 1.º CEB, que possam vir a ser úteis neste contexto de trabalho.

O questionário divide-se em 4 partes (A, B, C e D), compreendendo um total de 20 questões de resposta fechada, incidindo nos seguintes domínios: os seus dados profissionais (Parte A); a sua visão sobre aprendizagem, ensino e avaliação (Parte B); o seu grau de confiança sobre o tema da avaliação (Parte C); e a sua prática de avaliação (Parte D).

Agradeço desde já a sua disponibilidade em despender 20 minutos do seu tempo para refletir sobre avaliação num contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB e completar este questionário da forma mais honesta possível, respondendo a todas as questões. O anonimato das suas respostas estará completamente salvaguardado.

Obrigad@

Questionário

Parte A – Os seus dados profissionais num contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB. Por favor responda às questões assinalando UMA única opção. Poderá assinalar mais do que uma opção nas questões 6 e 7.
1. Ensina num contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB que utiliza o Inglês como língua adicional?   Sim ☐   Não ☐   *Se a sua resposta foi "Não", por favor pressione "seguinte" para terminar a sua participação. Obrigad@.*
2. É professor generalista do 1.º CEB ou especialista de língua inglesa?   Professor generalista ☐   Professor especialista ☐   Ambos ☐
3. Há quanto tempo leciona num contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB que usa o Inglês como língua adicional?   1-3 anos ☐   3+ anos ☐   *Se assinalou a opção "3+ anos", por favor indique o número de anos* ☐
4. Que idade tem?   23-30 ☐   31-40 ☐   41-50 ☐   51-65 ☐   65+ ☐
5. Ensina numa escola pública ou privada?   Escola pública ☐   Escola privada ☐   Ambas ☐
6. Que anos de escolaridade do 1.º CEB leciona no ano letivo de 2013-2014?   1.º ano ☐   2.º ano ☐   3.º ano ☐   4.º ano ☐
7. Quais os conteúdos do currículo ensinados em Inglês?   *Estudo do Meio* ☐   *Expressões* ☐   TIC ☐   Educação para a Cidadania ☐   Matemática ☐   Outro ☐ Qual? _____
8. Fez ou está atualmente a fazer formação contínua em algum tipo de oferta de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB?   Sim ☐   Não ☐

Parte B – A sua visão, enquanto professor, sobre a aprendizagem, o ensino e a avaliação em contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB. Numa escala de 1 – 4, onde 1 – *Discordo totalmente*; 2 – *Discordo*; 3 – *Concordo*; e 4 – *Concordo totalmente*, por favor assinale o seu grau de concordância relativamente às seguintes afirmações:				
9. Na minha prática letiva, valorizo mais...	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
a aprendizagem				
o ensino				
a avaliação				
10. A aprendizagem pressupõe que os alunos…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
sejam envolvidos na planificação das aulas				
estejam conscientes dos objetivos de aprendizagem				
pensem sobre a aprendizagem e organizem a sua aprendizagem				
se autocorrijam e corrijam os seus pares				
se autoavaliem e avaliem os seus pares				
11. O ensino pressupõe que os professores…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
orientem os alunos para se tornarem mais autónomos e motivados				
encorajem os alunos a pensar sobre a forma como aprendem e sobre o que aprendem				
criem oportunidades de aprendizagem e avaliação, de forma integrada				
12. A avaliação…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
pode monitorizar e apoiar o progresso, o desempenho e os resultados das aprendizagens, dando *feedback* dos mesmos aos alunos				
aumenta a motivação dos alunos				
refere-se sobretudo à certificação das aprendizagens dos alunos				
é importante para mim, enquanto professor, para conhecer o progresso, o desempenho e os resultados dos meus alunos, bem como para planificar trabalho futuro				
melhora a aprendizagem e o ensino				
é irrelevante para a aprendizagem dos alunos e para o trabalho do professor				
13. Podem aprender com a avaliação…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
os alunos				
os professores				
a comunidade educativa				
14. Podem avaliar…	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
o aluno (através de autoavaliação)				

os outros alunos (através de heteroavaliação)				
o professor especialista de língua				
o professor generalista				
o professor especialista de língua e o professor generalista separadamente				
o professor especialista de língua e o professor generalista em conjunto				

Parte C – O seu grau de confiança enquanto professor sobre o tema da avaliação em contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB. Numa escala de 1 – 4, onde 1 – *Nada confiante*; 2 – *Pouco confiante*; 3 – *Confiante*; e 4 – *Muito confiante*, por favor assinale o seu grau de confiança relativamente às seguintes opções de resposta:

15. Qual o seu grau de confiança quando avalia…?	1	2	3	4
as *language skills – listening, speaking, reading* e *writing*				
a consciência intercultural				
os conteúdos curriculares através do Inglês				
as capacidades de aprendizagem dos alunos (*learning skills*)				
o comportamento/atitudes dos alunos				
16. Qual o seu grau de confiança sobre os seguintes tipos de avaliação?	1	2	3	4
Avaliação formativa				
Avaliação para a aprendizagem (*AfL – Assessment for Learning*)				
Avaliação orientada para a aprendizagem (*LoA - Learning-oriented Assessment*)				
Avaliação por portefólio (*portfolio assessment*)				
Auto e heteroavaliação				
Avaliação baseada em tarefas (*task-based assessment*)				
Avaliação sumativa				
Avaliação da aprendizagem (*AoL - Assessment of Learning*)				
17. Qual o seu grau de confiança relativamente…	1	2	3	4
ao *Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para as Línguas: Aprendizagem, Ensino e Avaliação* (QECR)				
ao *Portefólio Europeu de Línguas* (PEL), designadamente *O meu primeiro Portefólio Europeu de Línguas* destinado aos alunos dos 6 aos 10 anos de idade				
aos documentos curriculares de referência nacionais (por exemplo, programas; metas curriculares; orientações programáticas para o ensino de Inglês no 1.º CEB; currículo através do Inglês)				

Parte D – A periodicidade com que planifica e utiliza estratégias e instrumentos de avaliação na sua prática letiva em contexto de aprendizagem de EBP/CLIL no 1.º CEB. Numa escala de 1 – 4, onde 1 – *Nunca*; 2 – *Raramente*; 3 – *Frequentemente;* e 4 – *Muito frequentemente*, por favor assinale a periocidade das seguintes ações:				
18. Com que periodicidade planifica…?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
tomando em consideração o desenvolvimento cognitivo, social, emocional e físico dos alunos na conceção de tarefas de avaliação apropriadas				
utilizando estratégias de avaliação formativa e sumativa para apoiar o desenvolvimento da aprendizagem de conteúdos, de língua e das capacidades de aprendizagem (*learning skills*)				
recolhendo e interpretando evidências sobre a aprendizagem dos seus alunos				
desenvolvendo a autonomia do aluno, incluindo a sua capacidade de melhor gerir a aprendizagem				
direcionando os alunos para a utilização de abordagens baseadas no portefólio (por exemplo, o PEL), como instrumento para fomentar a avaliação				
articulando necessidades e objetivos de avaliação com instrumentos de avaliação que lhes sejam correspondentes				
direcionando a reflexão do aluno sobre objetivos de aprendizagem e critérios de sucesso				
usando a autoavaliação e a heteroavaliação				
identificando o que os seus alunos já sabem				
usando estratégias de correção				
agindo perante evidências de avaliação				
19. Quando desenvolve um determinado procedimento de avaliação (por exemplo, testes ou tarefas de avaliação), com que periodicidade coloca a si mesmo as seguintes questões?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
O procedimento de avaliação avalia/testa o que é suposto avaliar/testar?				
O procedimento de avaliação discrimina níveis de desempenho dos alunos?				
O procedimento de avaliação permite dar *feedback* construtivo de forma imediata?				
Os efeitos ou consequências desse procedimento de avaliação são positivos ou negativos?				
O procedimento de avaliação tem em conta as características dos alunos, bem como as suas fases de desenvolvimento cognitivo, emocional e social?				
No caso de o procedimento de avaliação ser um teste, este inclui uma amostra representativa de itens lecionados?				

No caso de o procedimento de avaliação ser um teste, este inclui uma variedade de técnicas de testagem?				
No caso de o procedimento de avaliação ser um teste, este testa a língua e o conteúdo em conjunto ou separadamente?				
É atribuído um peso equilibrado à língua e ao conteúdo?				
Os meus critérios de correção são relevantes e eficazes?				
20. Com que periodicidade utiliza as seguintes estratégias/instrumentos de avaliação?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Uma variedade de estratégias/instrumentos de avaliação, especialmente de tipo informal e "não ameaçador" (por exemplo, mostra de trabalhos de turma em *Estudo do Meio* – "como funciona o sistema digestivo")				
Tarefas de avaliação				
Testes				
Registos de observação (listas de verificação, grelhas de observação, escalas de classificação), com categorias distintas para ilustrar, por exemplo, o progresso em *listening, reading, writing, speaking*, na consciência intercultural, nos conteúdos, nas capacidades de aprendizagem e no comportamento/atitudes				
Registos de avaliação de final de período/ano letivo, ou relatórios do aluno, com categorias distintas para ilustrar, por exemplo, o progresso em *listening, reading, writing, speaking*, na consciência intercultural, nos conteúdos, nas capacidades de aprendizagem e no comportamento/atitudes				
Manutenção de um diário de aprendizagem para os alunos registarem reflexões simples				
Treino dos alunos na utilização de listas de vocabulário; livros com vocabulário/ imagens				
Portefólios, como por exemplo o PEL				
Definição de objetivos de aprendizagem claros, simples e atingíveis e escrita dos mesmos no quadro no início de cada aula				
Avaliação da aprendizagem, através de critérios de sucesso focados no que os alunos conseguiram aprender no final de cada aula (por exemplo, um poster de parede intitulado "Sucesso na Aprendizagem" com critérios de sucesso; *smiley faces; suns and clouds; stars*)				
Autoavaliação (por exemplo, através de *K-W-L charts*, tabelas de avaliação onde os alunos podem fornecer exemplos sobre o que sabem (*What I know*), o que querem vir a saber (*what I want to know*) e o que aprenderam (*what I've learned*)				

Autocorreção (por exemplo, através da manutenção de um *X-FILE*, ou ficheiro secreto dos erros cometidos pelos alunos nos trabalhos escritos e com a correção correspondente)				
Heteroavaliação e hétero-correção (por exemplo, atribuição de trabalho escrito aos alunos e, após a finalização do primeiro *draft*, pedir-lhes que trabalhem em pares para ver se conseguem detetar alguns erros cometidos pelo seu par)				
Reformulação dos erros dos alunos, através de um foco limitado nas técnicas de correção diretas				
Não correção, proposta, dos erros dos alunos				
Feedback oral/escrito na aula e ajustamento de estratégias/instrumentos de avaliação				

Fim do questionário. Por favor, pressione "concluído" para submeter as suas respostas. Obrigad@ pela sua colaboração.

Bilingual Schools Project teachers' collector link <https://pt.surveymonkey.com/r/Q2TLG2B>

Teachers from other Schools collector link <https://pt.surveymonkey.com/r/VTSR6VK>

Nota: o questionário foi conduzido em português.

Appendix 1b – Questionnaire – English Version

Focus: Assessment in an EBE/CLIL learning context at early primary level

Target respondents: (English) specialist teachers and (content) generalist teachers teaching in an EBE/CLIL learning context at early primary level

This questionnaire is part of a Master's research project in English language teaching at Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa entitled *ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING IN EBE/CLIL: a Learning-Oriented Approach to Assessing English Language Skills and Curriculum Content at Early Primary Level*.

If you are an English teacher or a content teacher teaching in an Early Bilingual Education (EBE) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) context at early primary level, your feedback is important to my research as I would like to understand how you view and use assessment in your teaching practice so as to devise practical guidelines for assessing young learners in curriculum content and English language which can become a useful tool for this working context.

There are 4 parts (A, B, C and D) to this questionnaire and a total of 20 closed questions on the following topics: your professional data (Part A); your view on learning, teaching and assessment (Part B); your degree of confidence on the topic of assessment (Part C); and your assessment practice (part D).

I would be grateful if you took 20 minutes to reflect upon your views and uses of assessment in an EBE/CLIL learning context at early primary level and be as honest as you can as you complete this questionnaire by answering all questions.

Thank you

Questionnaire

Part A – Your professional data as a teacher in an EBE/CLIL setting at early primary level.
Please answer the questions by ticking ONE option. You may tick more than one answer option in questions 6 and 7.

1. Do you teach at early primary level in an EBE/CLIL learning context which uses English as an additional language?

Yes ☐ No ☐ *If your answer is "no", please press "next" to finish here. Thank you.*

2. Are you a content teacher or a language teacher?

Content teacher ☐ Language teacher ☐ Both ☐

3. How long have you been teaching at early primary level in an EBE/CLIL learning context which uses English as an additional language?

1-3 years ☐ 3+ years ☐ *If you ticked "3+ years", please state the number of years* ☐

4. How old are you?

23-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ 65+ ☐

5. Do you teach at a state or private school?

State school ☐ Private school ☐ Both ☐

6. What early primary school years are you teaching in school year 2013-2014?

Year 1 ☐ Year 2 ☐ Year 3 ☐ Year 4 ☐

7. What curriculum content is taught through the medium of English?

Estudo do Meio (Science, History and Geography) ☐ *Expressões* (Self-Expression skills) ☐ ICT ☐

Citizenship Education ☐ Mathematics ☐ Other ☐. Which? _____

8. Have you undergone or are you currently undergoing in-service training on any EBE/CLIL type provision at early primary level?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Part B – Your view as a teacher about learning, teaching and assessment in an EBE/CLIL setting at early primary level. Please rate the following statements according to your degree of agreement on a scale of 1-4, where 1 – *Strongly Disagree*; 2 – *Disagree*; 3 – *Agree;* and 4 – *Totally Agree.*

9. In my teaching practice what I most value is …	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
learning				
teaching				
assessment				

10. Learning is about having learners …	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
be involved in the planning of the lessons				

	1	2	3	4
be aware of learning goals				
think about learning and organise their learning				
self- and peer correct				
self- and peer assess				
11. Teaching is about teachers …	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
guiding learners to become autonomous and motivated				
encouraging learners to think about how they learn and what they learn				
providing learning and assessment opportunities in an integrated way				
12. Assessment …	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
can monitor and aid learners' progress, performance and achievement by providing feedback				
enhances learner motivation				
is mostly about certification of learners' learning				
is important for myself as a teacher to know my learners' progress, performance and achievement and to plan future work				
improves teaching and learning				
is irrelevant to the work of the teacher and learners' learning				
13. The following can learn from assessment …	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
learners				
teachers				
the educational community				
14. The following can assess …	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
the learner (self-assessment)				
other learners (peer assessment)				
the language teacher				
the content teacher				
the language and the content teacher separately				
the language and the content teacher together				
Part C – Your degree of confidence as a teacher on the topic of assessment in an EBE/CLIL setting at primary level. Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 – *Not Confident at all*; 2 – *Not very Confident* 3 – *Confident;* and 4 – *Very Confident.*				
15. How confident do you feel when you assess your learners'…?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
language skills – listening; speaking; reading and writing				
intercultural awareness				

	1	2	3	4
curriculum content through English				
learning skills				
behaviour/attitude				
16. How confident do you feel regarding the following types of assessment?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Formative assessment				
Assessment *for* learning				
Learning-oriented assessment				
Portfolio assessment				
Self- and peer assessment				
Task-based assessment				
Summative assessment				
Assessment *of* learning				
17. How confident do you feel when you come across the following?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)				
The European Language Portfolio (ELP) for primary level targeting 6-10 year-old learners				
National curriculum reference documents (e.g. Syllabi; Curriculum learning outcomes; Curriculum through English; Guidelines for teaching English in 1st cycle)				
Part D – Your frequency of planning for and use of assessment strategies and tools in your teaching practice in an EBE/CLIL setting at primary level. Please rate the frequency of the following actions on a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 – *Never* 2 – *Seldom* 3 – *Often;* and 4 – *Very Often*.				
18. How often do you plan to …?	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
take into account students' cognitive, social, emotional and physical development in order to design appropriate tasks for assessment				
use formative and summative assessment strategies to support content, language and learning skills development				
collect and interpret evidence about your learners' learning				
build learner autonomy including the capacity to better manage learning				
guide learners in using portfolios (e.g. the ELP) as a tool for assessment				
articulate assessment needs and goals with related assessment tools				
guide learner reflection on learning goals and success criteria				
use self-assessment and/or peer assessment				
identify what your learners already know				
use correction strategies				
act on assessment evidence				

19. How often do you ask yourself these questions when devising assessment procedures (e.g. assessment tasks, tests)?	1	2	3	4
Does the assessment procedure assess/test what it is supposed to assess/test?				
Does it discriminate between different levels of learner performance?				
Does it provide immediate constructive feedback?				
Is the effect or consequence of the assessment procedure positive or negative?				
Does it take into account the learners' characteristics and their cognitive, emotional and social developmental stages?				
For a test, does it test a representative sample of items taught?				
For a test, does it include a variety of testing techniques?				
Does it test language and content together or separately?				
Is the weight given to language and content balanced?				
Are my marking criteria relevant and effective?				
20. How often do you use the following assessment strategies/tools?	1	2	3	4
Varied assessment strategies/tools, especially non-threatening informal ones (e.g. Science class work displays – "how the digestive System works)				
Assessment tasks				
Progress tests				
Observation records (checklists, grids, rating scales) with categories such as progress in listening, reading, writing, speaking, intercultural awareness, content, learning skills and behaviour/attitudes				
End of the term/year report cards or learner reports with categories such as progress in listening, reading, writing, speaking, intercultural awareness, content, learning skills and behavior				
Keeping a learning diary/journal to record simple reflections				
Training learners to use vocabulary lists; picture vocabulary books				
Portfolios (e.g. the ELP)				
Establishing clear, simple and achievable learner goals and writing them on the board at the beginning of each lesson				
Assessing the learning by means of success criteria focusing on what they can achieve at the end of each lesson (e.g. a wall display "Success in learning" with can do statements; smiley faces; suns and clouds; stars)				
Self-assessment (e.g. K-W-L charts whereby learners can provide examples of what they know (*What I know*), what they want to know (*what I want to know*), what they have learned (*what I've learned*)				
Self-correction (e.g. keep an 'X-FILE' of the mistakes they make in their written work with the corresponding correction)				

Peer assessment and peer correction (e.g. set students written work and after completing the first draft, ask them to work in pairs and see if they can spot any mistakes in their partner's work)				
Reformulating or recasting, with a limited focus on direct correction techniques				
Deliberately ignoring error				
Providing oral/written formative feedback in class and adjusting assessment strategies/tools				

End of questionnaire. Please press "finished" to submit your answers Thank you.

Bilingual Schools Project teachers' collector link <https://pt.surveymonkey.com/r/Q2TLG2B>

Teachers from other Schools collector link <https://pt.surveymonkey.com/r/VTSR6VK>

Note: the questionnaire was conducted in Portuguese.

Illustrating the Intercultural in Portuguese Secondary School Foreign Language (FL) Classrooms

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Abstract | This article reports on a small-scale action research project developed in the context of the practicum of a Teacher Education Masters course at the Faculty of Letters, the University of Porto. The project was focussed on the importance of visual stimuli in the foreign language teaching classroom (English and Spanish), within the context of an intercultural approach. Different strategies, activities and materials were employed with the general aim of helping the learners to develop their critical cultural awareness. The learners played a central role, participating actively, by bringing into the classroom their own knowledge of the world. Simultaneously, the role of the teacher was not without importance in this action research project, presenting herself as an example of a cultural mediator.

Key words| Interculturality, intercultural competence, images, foreign language teaching

Introduction

This article is based on an action research project which formed the basis of the final report conducted within the Masters in English and Spanish Teaching in 3rd Cycle of Basic and Secondary Education, a second cycle, post-graduate course offered by the Faculty of Letters, the University of Porto. The article is primarily the result of an exercise in reflection on the teaching practice, which took place in the academic year 2014/2015, carried out by the student teacher (Carla Ulisses), supported by her Faculty teaching practice supervisor (Nicolas Hurst). The action research project and teaching practice final report were intended to confirm the importance of an intercultural approach in the foreign language classroom and the relevance that images, as a teaching resource, can have within an intercultural approach to the FL teaching-learning process.

Theoretical Background

The globalized world in which we live is in a state of constant flux, an important element of which is ever-increasing approximation and contacts among a range of different cultures; the need for these cultures to relate to each other is self-evident and presents a challenge:

> If foreign language and culture teaching intends to prepare learners for the future, it needs to contribute to promoting learners' acquisition of the attitudes and skills required for interacting with people from differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It needs to present learners with opportunities to acquire plurilingual and multicultural competence. (Manjarrés 143)

We live, then, in an increasingly multicultural society, where much of what we experience is 'different' or 'unknown', a socio-cultural context capable of fostering situations of tension and conflict. It then becomes "indispensable to achieve real communication, an

understanding through mutual knowledge to reduce culture shock and prevent conflicts" (Oliveras 11).[1]

Intercultural communication, according to Byram et al. (2002), embraces five key elements or 'Savoirs': **Savoir être**: to do with attitudes and values, curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about own society, to experience and evaluate other cultural perspectives, to be tolerant and empathetic; **Savoir apprendre**: the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction, to be inquisitive yet polite; **Savoir s'engager**: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries, to have a sensitive and balanced outlook; **Savoirs**: knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in your own and in another's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction, to be aware of national definitions of geographical and symbolic space, known as *Landeskunde* in German; **Savoir comprendre**: the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from your own community. At the most basic level, we are referring to having and/or developing an approach that recognizes respect for human dignity and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for all social interaction. We believe that this posture should be transversal and should be actively promoted in the teaching of any foreign language.

The school and specifically the foreign language classroom, being spaces where cultures intersect, become privileged places where the teaching/learning of cultural perspectives should be emphasized (see The European Commission report on 'Language Teaching and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms', 2015). This same concern with the cultural aspects is echoed in the documents governing teaching practice in our schools, in which intercultural competence is presented as one of the objectives to be achieved. For example, the learning objectives described for 'basic education' cycle in Portugal, published by the Ministry of

Education and Science in July, 2015, identify numerous categories and sub-categories of items under the heading of 'Intercultural Domain'.

In light of these considerations, it is relevant to mention that the school where this project was developed (*Escola Secundária Aurélia de Sousa*) has enshrined in its official policy the objectives of 'inclusion, responsibility and humanism'. These objectives are in harmony with the permanent spirit of open-mindedness required to face the challenges of the 21st century, and are consecrated in two defining principles: citizenship education and consistently high levels of achievement and quality. With this context, it was not unnatural that the school gave its full support to this action research project.

In addition, the two groups of learners who participated in this project showed, right from the beginning, a very positive attitude. The English language group consisted of 22 learners from the 11th grade. According to the CEFR classification these learners were at the level B2.2. They had a positive approach to learning English, seeing it as a useful survival tool in the current technological era and as value-added for their futures. A relatively homogeneous group, they were curious about the cultures of English-speaking communities. Given the initial class observations and feedback from the class teacher, they were identified as being responsive to visual stimuli. The Spanish language group consisted of 28 learners from the 9th grade; their CEFR level was A2.2. The majority of the group were curious and motivated to learn the Spanish language and about its culture(s). Within these 'restrictions' the decision was taken to work with these learners at developing their intercultural competence, by means of images.

Thanks largely to technological developments in the last 50 years, we live in a world in which images and visual information increasingly dominate our lives and the young, more so than anyone, are experts when it comes to accessing, sharing, processing and communicating with images. Moreover, the use of images to develop a cultural awareness becomes particularly attractive for teachers as they are able to make use of a resource that is already familiar to them:

> [t]he power of images as an ELT resource has long been recognised, especially in specific areas, such as the teaching of vocabulary, but this undeniably useful 'power' can also be harnessed for a more diverse range of teaching/learning activities; for example, speaking or writing activities might benefit from the use of various different visual forms, such as art, photographs, advertisements, web--based and learner-generated images. (Hurst 22)

In this light, in this action research project, images occupied a prominent role as a teaching resource for the development of intercultural competences among the students who took part in the student teacher's assigned classes.

So that images can be at the service of intercultural approach in the foreign language teaching classroom, it is necessary for learners to develop their visual literacy as the "[v]isual language is not . . . transparent and universally understood; it is culturally specific . . . . Consequently different values and meanings are attached . . ." (Kress and Van Leeuwen 4). This means they will have to develop strategies and skills including observation, interpretation and cultural critical consciousness that, in a systematic way, then let them look at the images and talk about what kind of message they convey.

The Action Research Project

In practice, the action research project was organized in three cycles (each supervised) spread throughout the school year 2013/14 and were realized through the application of three taught units within which it was intended to develop intercultural competence through the use of images.

We began with the zero cycle where, through direct observation and the application of a questionnaire, it was possible to elaborate an initial diagnosis of the learning context. Thus, we found that the students had a lack of knowledge in relation to cultural aspects alongside the fact that these aspects were not always addressed in the classroom from an intercultural perspective. It was also found that in addressing these and other issues (of a more linguistic nature), visual aids, in particular images, were rarely employed.

Similarly, the questionnaire results came to show that for a significant part of students, cultural aspects were important in learning a language, despite their difficulty in defining them, consolidating the idea that this would be an area of student interest and that it should be treated in the classroom more explicitly and frequently, including through an intercultural approach. The question which arose then was whether we could fix upon images as a resource to develop intercultural competence and the second part of the survey served to prove the interest of students in this feature as a means to improve their learning. The zero cycle also made it possible to define and test the approach that would be followed in the subsequent cycles and which constituted the 'backbone' of the lesson plans that were developed and executed; this according to Ponce de Léon (252) should include:

1) Reflection by the students on their own culture and cultural behaviours;

2) Presentation of aspects of cultural behaviour from the target culture(s) and contrast with the students' culture(s);

3) Communicative or complex activities which put into practice and encourage assimilation of target culture behaviours.

With respect to the subsequent cycles, there follows a summary of the work undertaken as well as analysis and interpretation of the data resulting from the implementation of the action research project with the two target groups (Spanish and English), also making reference to the instruments used for data collection.

The First Cycle

Starting with the first cycle with the Spanish language group, it should be mentioned that the classes that were specific to this project were based around a theme that was not part of the usual Spanish programme for the term, the Spanish mentor having challenged her student teachers to develop their own teaching materials. The proposed theme was "Christmas in the Spanish speaking world". Given that this teaching unit would naturally have strong cultural

content focus it presented an optimal opportunity to work with intercultural aspects, based on the use of images. The timing of this unit, immediately preceding the Christmas holidays, contributed equally to giving "an emphasis to the instrumental value of the language since the new linguistic content could be learned, recycled, strengthened and systematized with the objective of discovering and carrying out a variety of tasks about a topic the learners find stimulating" (Estaire 7).

In the first lesson, the learners were organized into groups as they entered the room and each group was randomly given an image, representing the Spanish speaking country for which they would be responsible for throughout the unit. A PowerPoint presentation with images on the topic was employed to activate the learners' existing knowledge about their own culture and any information they had acquired in previous Spanish classes. Thus, the learners were able to exchange opinions and debate the various representations presented in a critical and constructive manner and from this point onwards compare cultural realities, promoting "reflection on their culture and on the target culture" (Ponce de León 249).

In the second lesson, the focus was on grammatical content, which, while contextualised and integrated into the theme of the unit, had less relevance in terms of the objectives of this action research project.

The third lesson consisted of the realisation of the task, namely making posters using images and small texts which represented the Christmas 'traditions' of each of the countries previously identified. This task constituted an opportunity for the learners to develop their creative and organizational abilities as well as involving them in negotiating as group members. The lesson ended with group oral presentations of their posters which allowed for further sharing of ideas and information among the learners. The student teachers were also able to directly observe during this phase how the impact of cultural contents through the use of images can have on the construction of understanding and attitudes among the learners.

Concluding, through the use of authentic materials and varied activities, promoting collaborative group work, it was possible to include each of the learners in tasks which called for

a personal and affective involvement as well as foreign language development and a different way to think about their own culture and the cultures of others. This certainly contributed to a development for a greater intercultural awareness among the learners.

In the first cycle of Spanish the more important instruments in data collection were direct observation, the work done by the students and self-assessment questionnaire, delivered at the end of the teaching unit.

From the start we noted the importance that the images had throughout this teaching unit, as a motivational resource, for student involvement in the activities proposed, for knowledge activation and as a discussion catalyst and consequently a source of momentum. Being representative of diverse cultural realities, the images constituted a stimulus source and provoked various emotions; these reactions stimulate, as Busto and Bedoya affirm: "creativity and the capacity to imagine, leading in turn to a positive relationship between the target language and the group in class" (4).

The production and presentation of posters, with information on the customs of various countries, each represented by a student, allowed them to adopt a truly intercultural approach with the students acting as cultural mediators, between their own culture and the target culture(s). When you put yourself in the shoes of the Other, it "contributes to the appreciation of cultural diversity" and "the education of citizens and democratic citizens, respectful of diversity and aware of their cultural identity and that of others" (Tato 224-5).

Concerning the first cycle of English, the action research project was applied within the teaching unit designated "Diversity Matters", itself within the larger theme of "Multiculturalism", whose principal objectives are referred to explicitly in the national programme for the 11th grade, namely with respect to the socio-cultural and intercultural dimension identified for the teaching--learning of English (Moreira et al., 2001-2003). Reference should also be made here that images played a key role as a learning instrument in all of the lessons, hoping to assist the learners in being more conscious of the importance of the socio-cultural and intercultural

dimensions of learning a foreign language and also in the construction of their own identities, being themselves agents of interculturality.

The first lesson focussed on cultural diversity. Various images were used to help the learners develop a thematic framework and allow them to predict elements of the topic in question. As Harmer states, "[t]his use of pictures is very powerful and has the advantage of engaging the students in the task to follow" (135-6). In addition, the images assist the learners in activating their previously acquired knowledge and also develop their abilities to reflect critically and interact with their peers. In this way, the learners become more conscious of the Anglo-American context in relation to this topic and by using strategies requiring comparison with their own cultural contexts can construct new understandings and new attitudes.

What followed was a listening task preceded by the visualization of two images of adolescents. The learners were asked to speculate about the origins of the adolescents, to interact orally with their classmates, to participate with their individual feelings, thoughts and opinions, recognizing these as having value in the teaching-learning process. The activity resulted in the 'deconstruction' of the images allowing the learners to challenge their own pre--conceived ideas and interpretations. After listening to the two adolescents give their 'testimonies' about living in multicultural communities, the learners answered some questions aimed at helping them to construct a deeper understanding of the topic.

In the second lesson, in much the same way as occurred in the teaching unit of the first cycle of Spanish, the focus was on grammatical content, not as directly relevant to the execution of this action research project.

The third lesson in this unit had as its primary objective the realization of a simulation type activity, namely a role play. As Harmer has pointed out: "Many students derive great benefit from simulation and role play. Students 'simulate' a real-life encounter . . . as if they were doing so in the real world, either as themselves . . . or taking on the role of a character different from themselves or with thoughts and feelings they do not necessarily share" (276).

The lesson started with the viewing of a video clip called "Diversified We Grow"[2] produced by 'Cultural Infusion' whose main purpose was to make connections with the topic dealt with in the previous lessons and also prepare the learners for the subsequent activities. A pre-speaking session served to clarify the 'rules' of the role play and provide a framework for the activity. Thus, the learners worked with their coursebooks where a series of arguments (for and against) about multiculturalism were presented.

In turn, the learners received a role card on which was described a situation and the 'position' they had to assume in that situation. Even though these positions did not necessarily correspond to their true position, the learners had to persuade their classmates that their opinion was indeed correct. Thus, this unit served as an example of how, as well as focusing improving our learners' linguistic capacities, we may also help them grow as informed citizens, being both aware and critical of our world.

In the first cycle of English, with regard to the collection of data, similar strategies were employed as in the case of Spanish. Through direct observation it was possible to determine, right from the outset, the difficulty the students had in 'reading' images in order to understand what those images represented, beyond the obvious. There is no doubt that this difficulty is frequently the result of preconceived ideas and stereotypes that need to be deconstructed. This "[g]iven the digital age in which we live, it is important that we begin to study these images with a critical eye to develop visual literacy in class" (Goldstein 19).

As regards the role-play activity, this was particularly interesting, taking into account the reaction of the students, since for many of them it involved leaving their comfort zones, having to adopt postures that did not coincide with theirs, thereby increasing their awareness of these postures, their preparedness to communicate with others, their tolerance of diversity and their ability to face day-to-day problems that could be encountered in a foreign country; using an experiential approach to encourage their observation, perception and awareness of the subtleties of different cultural behaviours (Byram et al.).

The Second Cycle

The theme which was under consideration in the second cycle of Spanish of this action research project was "Do Good without Looking at Who". This teaching unit consisted of a series of three 50 minute lessons and dealt with concepts related to social problems, social solidarity (and their public reporting), the expression of desires and relationships of cause and effect.

Within this teaching unit, the aim of continuing the development of the learners' intercultural competence remained central. In fact, in the Cervantes Institute's curriculum (1997), in the chapter on intercultural competences and attitudes, we find the affirmation that:

> Intercultural competence means in a way, an extension of the social personality of the student . . . and intercultural awareness, i.e., knowledge, perception and understanding of the similarities and differences between their world of origin and the communities of Spain and Spanish-speaking countries, in all its diversity and free of stereotypes. (Instituto Cervantes)

With respect to the lessons themselves, they followed a 'classic' task-based framework in which, during the first two and at the beginning of the third lesson, the learners were presented with a series of preliminary tasks which would enable them to achieve the final task: writing a letter to denounce a social problem.

Once again, teaching materials included images (in this case, cartoons and photographs) with the aim of drawing the learners' attention to social problems, NGOs and famous personalities who play a role in seeking solutions to these problems; thus, it was hoped to foster a sense of solidarity, tolerance and respect with regard to other cultures (in this case, the Spanish and Hispano-American) with which we, in Portugal, share many common concerns.

The first class focussed on activating the learners' existing knowledge; this was achieved through the description of photographs that depicted an actual social problem which their classmate tried to identify. The aim here was to simultaneously develop oral interaction

among the learners and also develop their abilities to negotiate, deduce, collaborate as well as their visual literacy (Corbett).

In this lesson, the learners were also informed as to their final task, providing them with further contextualization and a reason for the following activity: a listening. This approach took into account the words of Watkins: "native speakers always have a reason for listening to something. . . . This reason for listening needs to be replicated in the classroom" (65). This listening consisted of an interview with Fernando Alonso, the Spanish Formula One driver, who is also a 'Goodwill Ambassador' for the United Nations. It permitted the learners to encounter important ideas related to the theme of this unit through the use of varied and authentic materials which had a clear intercultural perspective and which required the learners to obtain information important for the realization of their language learning tasks.

Later in the lesson, the learners were asked to adopt a position similar to that of Fernando Alonso and they should reflect and speculate as to possible solutions to the social problems depicted in the photographs they had earlier described, under the heading of "Ideas to Change the World". Their suggestions were then discussed in open class, giving rise to a moment of contextualised debate and sharing which was very important for their intercultural learning. To finish the lesson, the learners were asked to identify a local (community or school) social problem they thought should be solved and provide a photograph which might document this issue. In this way, the intention was to promote a deeper understanding of social problems and a reflection on possible solutions in addition to creating a personalised and affective connection with the problems of others (that might also be theirs), in the world around them.

The second lesson was principally concerned with grammatical content; the cultural contents dealt with in the first lesson served as a starting point for their contextualization, the presentation materials employed were cartoons:

The intercultural approach to language learning must offer students tools that can facilitate observation, analysis, interpretation and understanding of cultural differences as necessary steps for

the acquisition of intercultural competence. All this can be achieved through activities in which the formal aspects of language are integrated as well as cultural and facilitate the development of the necessary skills. In this regard, the cartoon is revealed as an ideal instrument for this purpose because it meets both requirements. (Alonso Abal 36)

Furthermore, according to the same author, the cartoon reflects an ideology and a way of seeing the world that is more or less subliminal:

Thereby constituting an especially interesting material for students to observe and interpret the cultural and sociocultural keys to the community they wish to access, overcoming and neutralizing filters and stereotypes and, in the process, activating a body of knowledge, attitudes and procedures strategically that allow them to get closer to the Hispanic cultures. (Alonso Abal 58)

The last lesson of this teaching unit had as its main aim the fulfilment of their final task: writing a letter. The learners, having already been challenged to propose action in relation to social problems that they had noticed in their day-to-day routines, in their communities, were asked to individually express in writing their ideas. The hope is that these learners can develop their intercultural competence sufficiently so as to become better informed citizens, more aware and more critical of our multicultural world, and, in a certain way, help them become 'better' people for the rest of their lives.

In the second cycle of Spanish, in line with what occurred in the first cycle, the same data collection techniques were employed. Here again, through direct observation, we could confirm the importance of images in this teaching unit, on the one hand because they represent aspects that characterize a culture and on the other hand, to be realistic, since they also include negative or problematic aspects of this culture. Because the images addressed issues of a certain universal nature, it provided the students with the opportunity to reflect and discuss their own culture and the culture of the "Other", inviting them to build a new perspective and appropriate behaviour when in contact with members of other cultural communities.

Moreover, having to carry out a written assignment meant that students would use the linguistic and cultural content covered in previous lessons giving voice to their interpretation of the world around them, making them more aware of that world. In this sense, this activity was certainly an opportunity for the growth of this group of students as potential intercultural agents and contributed to the development of their skills in observation, analysis, interpretation and understanding, taking into account the fact that one of the principle aims of the FL classroom should nowadays include providing opportunities for acting as responsible, cosmopolitan citizens, without implying the loss of cultural or ideological roots (Guilherme, "English as a Global Language and Education for Cosmopolitan Citizenship").

The second cycle of English in this action research project consisted of three lessons of 50 minutes each, included in the general theme of "Work Trends", which is explicitly stated as being part of the socio-cultural and intercultural dimension referred to in the national programme for the 11th grade (Moreira et al., 2001-2013). The development of the learners' visual literacy, through the use of images as teaching materials, once again assumed a central role in the entire teaching-learning process helping the learners to identify ideas, concepts and words.

The main topic that was covered in the first lesson was new tendencies in the world of work and the workplace. The intention was for the learners to reflect on and discuss these topics making use of some projected images which helped them activate their previous knowledge and then negotiate and construct new ideas and opinions related to any eventual meanings they could discern in the images. To paraphrase Harmer (135-6), images may assume a critical importance in the teaching-learning process since they can be used in many different ways, for example, the promotion of moments of discussion, simply because they can stimulate the asking of so many questions. These activities were important in helping the learners become more aware of how the world of work is evolving, not only from a global perspective but also from a local one.

The second lesson, following the indications of the teaching practice mentor, was dedicated to grammatical contents, and as such not so relevant to the action research project. The third lesson, however, had as its main aim the realization of a role play type activity.

The learners were initially asked to watch a video clip, a report related to the topic, and to obtain information that would be useful for the oral interaction in pairs that was to follow. As Harmer has suggested:

> Seeing language in use: one of the main advantages of video is that students do not just hear language, they see it too. This greatly aids comprehension, since for example, general meaning and moods are often conveyed through expression, gesture . . . and other visual clues; Cross-cultural awareness: video uniquely allows students a look at situations far beyond their classrooms. (282)

Before the actual role play, the learners were given some orientation as to the 'rules' of the activity and also some additional input as to main topics to be included. The interactions were prompted by the use of cards with photographs showing different workplaces, the main idea being that they should discuss their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of the locations. As a follow-up activity, the learners shared their opinions and conclusions in open class, highlighting the different types of argument and language employed. All members of the class had the opportunity to express their opinions on each other's input without forgetting the boundaries of mutual respect and comprehension of difference:

> An intercultural dimension involves learners in sharing their knowledge with each other and discussing their opinions. There need to be agreed rules for such discussions based on an understanding of human rights and respect for others. Learners thus learn as much from each other as from the teacher, comparing their own cultural context with the unfamiliar contexts to which language learning introduces them. (Byram et al. 26)

The key here is that learning depends not only on individuals but also on interaction with others, without which it is unlikely that the learners will become reflective and critical cultural mediators with a sense of individual responsibility in relation to their own learning.

In the second cycle of English, through direct observation, we were able to immediately see the change in the students' posture; more specifically, with regard to the interpretation of the images. If the first class worked with this group, we encountered an almost total lack of interest in image analysis (no doubt we were facing an inexperienced group at this level), in this later class, they immediately began to deconstruct the images, with various interpretations as to what was referred to across a range of possibilities, exchanging views, debating ideas and creating new interpretations.

Regarding the role-play, here also the stance adopted by the students diverged from that observed in the first cycle, showing a large openness, actively assuming the role that they had been proposed by their teacher, and even if volunteering to come to the front of the class in order to defend "their" new opinions.

No doubt here we can accommodate the premise that characterizes the intercultural approach, according to which we must engage our students in sharing their knowledge and discussing their views, thereby building their knowledge, learning as much from each other as from the teacher, comparing their own cultural context with the new contexts presented in the teaching-learning process.

The questionnaire delivered at the end of the second cycle to the two groups was prepared based on what had been presented in the zero cycle, but now had as its aim: to comprehend to what extent the degree of importance attributed to cultural aspects in learning a foreign language varied, as well as judging the degree of importance attached to images as a teaching resource in the service of Interculturalism, throughout this action research project.

With respect to the first element, the most significant results were obtained from Question Five, which referred to the degree of importance attributed to the use of images in the understanding of the content and acquisition of knowledge: 93% of the Spanish group and 91% of the English group agreed.

As much for the percentages reported here, as from the direct observation in the classroom, it became obvious that the systematic use of images in the classroom was a winning

bet, leading to a higher level of consciousness with regard to the importance of this procedure in the teaching-learning among the students themselves. Just such a position is advocated by Goldstein: "I believe that we have to re-interpret the role of images in the foreign language classroom and ensure that images become more visible and more influential within our work" (23).

We may also highlight Question Nine which made it possible, with regard to the Spanish group, confirm the interest that students had shown since the beginning of this project in the importance of comparing and contrasting cultures. Regarding the English group considered that this comparison, on the one hand helped them to be aware of their own culture and on the other hand, allowed them to respect differences and be more tolerant, thus being able to achieve several of the key objectives of an intercultural approach.

This project attempted to develop and put into practice, in all the classes that fell within this action research project, "a set of methodological proposals for foreign language teaching aimed at encouraging student reflection on their own culture and the target culture" (Ponce de Léon 249). In this context, also relevant to this discussion are the results from Question Thirteen; these show that 93% of the Spanish students and 87% of the English students considered that their understanding of Portuguese culture had been modified over the academic year: a gratifyingly strong indication of the success of the intercultural approach employed. The use of authentic materials, in this case the incorporation of images as a teaching tool, in this process of increasing awareness of change provided the opportunity for the students to experience a contextualized and meaningful learning experience.

Conclusion

This action research project showed the relevance that the study of cultural traits has for students, not only those aspects that relate to the target culture, but also those which identify their own culture. The awareness of this fact led the students through a process of reflection and comparison, to develop strategies that included critical observation, sharing opinions and interpretations, all grounded on the principle of an understanding for human rights and respect

for others. As a result, these students were able to develop skills that will allow them to interact with people from other cultures, from the standpoint of the deconstruction of prejudices, of understanding and acceptance that other people/cultures may be the carriers of different perspectives, values and behaviours; this with the certainty, however, that this interaction and these differences give rise to personal enrichment, as human beings. Also through this project, the importance of the images, as a teaching resource, became evident given their capacity to promote the development of intercultural skills, challenging concepts, stimulating debate and the sharing of ideas, challenging generalizations or stereotypes, leading students to decentralize and rediscover themselves.

The action research process involved permanent reflection on the part of the student teacher, leading to an awareness that the intercultural dimension of learning extends beyond the classroom and is relevant to the concept of education being an ongoing, lifelong phenomenon. In this sense, the training of teachers based on an intercultural approach could be a winning bet, but one which requires new educational guidelines, with the objective of "constructing spirits that are open to cultural difference and healthy human co-habitation . . . in a world that is certainly subject to an explosion of diversity" (Carneiro qtd. in Bizarro and Braga 68). FL education is uniquely placed in the school curriculum to fulfil this role and would do well to embrace the challenge of contributing as effectively as possible to shaping the vision that young people have of their world, to helping them become 'critical intercultural citizens' (Guilherme, "The Intercultural Dimension of Citizenship Education in Portugal").

Notes

[1] All non-English quotations translated by these authors.

[2] The video-clip "Diversified We Grow" is available at the 'Escola Virtual' website, published by Porto Editora.

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APPENDIX

<div align="center">

Questionário

</div>

Caro(a) aluno(a)

Tens em mãos um questionário que gostaria que preenchesses visto que será uma peça fundamental para o meu projeto de investigação – ação.

O questionário é anónimo e as respostas confidenciais, pelo que não deves escrever o teu nome em nenhuma parte do mesmo. Salientamos que não há respostas corretas ou incorretas.

As línguas da minha família

1. A minha família é

a. Monolingue (indica a língua) _____

b. Bilingue (indica as línguas) _____

c. Multilingue (indica as línguas) _____

Sobre o meu processo de aprendizagem

2. Eu aprendo melhor quando (escolhe duas respostas)

a. Há imagens a acompanhar o texto

b. Represento papéis

c. Tomo parte em jogos

d. Vejo as palavras escritas

e. Vejo palavras e imagens

3. Compreendo melhor um texto escrito quando (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. O conteúdo do texto me interessa

    b. Tomo nota das palavras que considero importantes para a compreensão do conteúdo

    c. Alguém me explica as palavras desconhecidas

    d. Alguém me orienta a leitura através de exercícios

    e. Vem acompanhado de imagens que ilustram o texto

4. Compreendo melhor um texto falado ou gravado quando (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. Tenho a oportunidade de ouvir a gravação várias vezes

    b. Ouço primeiro uma pessoa a falar/apresentar o texto e depois tenho hipótese de ouvir a gravação

    c. Tomo notas

    d. Posso falar com alguém sobre o texto

    e. Posso mostrar/identificar imagens sobre aquilo que entendi

5. Consigo aprender melhor as palavras quando (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. As escrevo várias vezes

    b. Me recordo de situações em que as ouvi

    c. Tomo nota de grupos de palavras relacionadas com um tema

    d. As utilizo numa conversa ou num pequeno texto

    e. As associo a uma/várias imagens

6. As minhas atividades preferidas são (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. Ler textos

    b. Ouvir: histórias, diálogos, canções,…

    c. Participar em debates, simulações, role-play

    d. Visualizar imagens

    e. Visualizar/ouvir vídeos

7. Os meus materiais preferidos são (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. Canções/músicas

    b. Filmes/vídeos

    c. Gravações/transcrições auditivas

    d. Imagens e fotos/ilustrações

    e. Textos/diálogos

Eu, a língua inglesa e a cultura

8. A língua inglesa é

    a. Muito fácil de aprender

    b. Relativamente fácil de aprender

    c. Difícil de aprender

9. O que consideras mais importante nas aulas de Inglês? (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. Aprender vocabulário

    b. Escrever textos

    c. Realizar exercícios de gramática

    d. Descobrir a cultura, os costumes, as tradições e as pessoas de países onde se fala inglês

    e. Falar com os colegas em inglês

10. Dos conceitos apresentados em seguida assinala aqueles que associas a cultura? (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. Geografia

    b. Política

    c. Educação

    d. Meios de comunicação (TV, rádio, jornais, revistas)

e. Religião

f. Personalidades e acontecimentos sociais e históricos

g. Literatura

h. Música

i. Cinema

j. Família

k. Tradições

11. É importante comparar a nossa cultura com a de outros países nas aulas de inglês porque (escolhe duas respostas)

a. Nos ajuda a ter consciência da nossa própria cultura e da dos outros

b. Nos permite respeitar as diferenças e ser mais tolerantes

c. Nos dá a possibilidade de desenvolver a nossa oralidade

d. Nos possibilita perceber as diferenças gramaticais entre a língua portuguesa e a língua inglesa

e. Nos permite ultrapassar ideias feitas sobre outras culturas

12. Consideras importante estudar temas de cultura nas aulas de Inglês?

a. Muito importante

b. Importante

c. Normal

d. Pouco importante

e. Nada importante

Obrigada pela tua colaboração!

Questionário

Caro(a) aluno(a)

Tens em mãos um questionário que gostaria que preenchesses visto que será uma peça fundamental para o meu projeto de investigação – ação.

O questionário é anónimo e as respostas confidenciais, pelo que não deves escrever o teu nome em nenhuma parte do mesmo. Salientamos que não há respostas corretas ou incorretas.

Sobre o meu processo de aprendizagem

1. Eu aprendi melhor quando (escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não havia imagens

    b. Havia imagens

2. Compreendi melhor um texto escrito quando (escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não vinha acompanhado de imagens que ilustravam o texto

    b. Vinha acompanhado de imagens que ilustravam o texto

3. Compreendi melhor um texto falado ou gravado quando (escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não pude mostrar/identificar imagens sobre aquilo que entendi

    b. Pude mostrar/identificar imagens sobre aquilo que entendi

4. Consegui aprender melhor as palavras quando (escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não as associei a uma/várias imagens

    b. As associei a uma/várias imagens

5. Que grau de importância atribuis ao uso das imagens na compreensão dos conteúdos e aquisição de conhecimentos? (Escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Nada importante

    b. Pouco importante

    c. Normal

    d. Importante

    e. Muito importante

Eu, a língua inglesa e a cultura

6. Os temas apresentados em língua inglesa foram: (Escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Difíceis de aprender

    b. Relativamente fáceis de aprender

    c. Muito fáceis de aprender

7. Consideraste importante descobrir a cultura, os costumes, as tradições e as pessoas de países onde se fala inglês? (escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não

    b. Talvez

    c. Sim

8. Das áreas apresentadas em seguida assinala as que consideras fundamentais para uma cultura: (Escolhe duas respostas)

Geografia		Acontecimentos sociais e históricos	
Política		Literatura	
Educação		Música	
Meios de Comunicação		Cinema	
Religião		Família	
Personalidades		Tradições	

9. Foi importante comparar a nossa cultura com a de outros países nas aulas de inglês porque: (escolhe duas respostas)

    a. Nos ajudou a ter consciência da nossa própria cultura e da dos outros

    b. Nos permitiu respeitar as diferenças e ser mais tolerantes

    c. Nos deu a possibilidade de desenvolver a nossa oralidade

    d. Nos possibilitou perceber as diferenças gramaticais entre a língua portuguesa e a língua inglesa

    e. Nos permitiu ultrapassar ideias feitas sobre outras culturas

10. Consideraste importante estudar temas de cultura nas aulas de inglês? (Escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Nada importante

    b. Pouco importante

    c. Normal

    d. Importante

    e. Muito importante

11. O teu entendimento sobre a cultura inglesa mudou ao longo deste ano letivo depois de tudo o que aprendeste? (Escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não. Nada mudou.

    b. Sim. Um Pouco.

    c. Sim. Mudou muito.

12. Se a resposta foi positiva, justifica dizendo porquê e como mudou o teu entendimento sobre a cultura inglesa.

_____

_____

13. O teu entendimento sobre a cultura portuguesa mudou ao longo deste ano letivo depois de tudo o que aprendeste? (Escolhe uma resposta)

    a. Não. Nada mudou.

    b. Sim. Um Pouco.

    c. Sim. Mudou muito.

14. Se a resposta foi positiva, justifica dizendo porquê e como mudou o teu entendimento sobre a cultura portuguesa.

_____

_____

Obrigada pela tua colaboração!

Foreign Language Education in the 21st
European Context: Exploring New Directions
in Intercultural and Plurilingual Approaches
Using Anzaldúa's Border Epistemology

Patrícia LOBO
| CETAPS

Abstract | This article considers the reformulation of foreign language classes as spaces of cultural politics, dynamic social activism and holistic education, in order to enable schools, teachers and students to set the foundation for a more inclusive society. It starts by recognizing some of the challenges of the 21st century European context, addressing the need to explore new directions in the intercultural and plurilingual approaches in Foreign Language Education. Using Cultural Studies as a starting point, it will be argued that Gloria Anzaldúa´s cultural, feminist, queer and linguistic concepts, with a focus on the crossing of different borders, the forging of relational strategies between groups, and a holistic view of the world, can contribute to current debates on interculturalism and plurilingualism, providing an alternative framework for educational practices that empower students from diverse backgrounds with self-knowledge and tolerance towards alterity.

Key words | Anzaldúa, migration, foreign language education, interculturalism, plurilingualism

Introduction

The Eurozone has never been as pressured as now to start a reformulation of its educational practices, rethinking Eurocentric beliefs that fail to respond to some current problems. While cities become huge contact-zones[1] (Pratt, 1992) and third spaces[2] (Bhabha, 1994), and multicultural and hybrid identities[3] emerge as a norm rather than an exception, Europe is also facing an unparalleled migratory influx and cultural clash, consequently attempting to integrate into the school system a growing number of refugee and migrant children and youngsters, who are often marginalized and translated as culturally "other". The recent experience with mass migration has brought forward a sense of urgency in debating the multiple differences and similarities between natives and newcomers. With such an accelerated change of global migration patterns, the ethnic diversity of western school population increases and intercultural[4] relations has become a pressing issue for teachers and students.

After decades of debates on the interrelation of postcoloniality, racism, identity politics, and multiculturalism, Eurocentrism is still naturalized as common sense and often goes unnoticed (Shohat and Stam, 2014). The difficulty in coping with students´ multicultural, multilingual and hybrid realities in European schools is a reflection of how society is still unprepared to set a balance between its own identity and the migrants´ identities[5]: on the one hand, the mere adoption of non-eurocentric curricula in schools, without the promotion of intercultural education, leads to feelings of "white guilt" among students of the dominant culture (Dilg, 2003); on the other hand, with the lack of a plurilingual[6] approach, students from backgrounds of different languages are unlikely to succeed in an educational system designed by and for the dominant society several decades ago, in a very different European context. The inability to find means to migrants´ positive integration in the school system, as well as the failure to reach a balance between native and refugee/migrant identities during compulsory school years puts both the dominant and the minority groups in a vicious relationship, insofar as students become adults unprepared to negotiate with alterity, perpetuating social instability.

Recent Challenges of Foreign Language Education

Schools represent the most powerful instrument for shaping the development of future generations of citizens, thus one of the challenges of the 21st century is the reformulation of education policies and curricula towards practices that enable "the development of a society with models of peaceful coexistence and multilateral cooperation across nationality, race, gender and religion" (Gomez-Peña 70). In the light of the current refugee/migrant context, European schools are often the only place where migrant children and youngsters share a daily experience with dominant groups, being side by side for some hours in a learning environment. In this context, Foreign Language Education (FLE) assumes great importance: first, when receiving refugee/migrant children and youngsters, one of the first measures of European educational systems is to provide native language lessons, so that newcomers are able to function in the host school environment and society, and which are often the first monitored contact these students have with the new culture; second, while integrated in a specific school level, refugee/migrant students attend foreign language classes together with native peers, which frequently become one of the few school subjects in which both groups feel equal and connected, as foreigners to the language being taught.

Traditional approaches to cultural diversity, such as multiculturalism, have been considered as non-adequate to 21st century societies, characterized by an unprecedented and ever-growing heterogeneity in terms of ethnicity, culture, language or religion. In recent decades, several scholars have been developing valuable research on interculturalism and plurilingualism in FLE, recognizing the transformative role this subject can have in promoting skills and competences for a critical citizenship so that different groups can "live together-in-difference" (Ang 141). However, in practical terms, foreign language classes seem to be mainly addressing the need for an immediate functional communicative competence through the learning of vocabulary and linguistic structures, consequently neglecting an intercultural and a plurilingual approach: on the one hand, some foreign language programs still fail to acknowledge that language conveys attitudes and values, which can either reinforce social roles

and power relations among different groups, leading to models based on stratification, or encourage tolerance for alterity and the acquisition of mediation skills and different ways of perceiving reality (Trudgill, 2012); on the other hand, most foreign language teachers are not undertaking the role of transformative intellectuals (Guilherme, 2002) by providing meaningful intercultural learning, which will promote critical thinking about cultures, consequently contributing to a more tolerant society and the acceptance of alterity.

Interculturalism and Plurilinguism in the 21st Century European Context

In the last decades, both the Council of Europe and scholars from a wide range of disciplines have asserted interculturalism as critical to the reconstruction of a social and cultural model that corresponds to the idiosyncrasies of a fast-changing world and provides individuals with models of living within culturally diverse societies, acknowledging human rights and dignity, as well as fundamental freedoms (for example, Novinger, 2001; Opatija, Declaration 2003; Council of Europe, 2008; Council of Europe, 2012; Flynn, 2014; Demenchonok, 2014). Skills for intercultural dialogue are identified as being essential for a free, tolerant, inclusive society, with models of equality and solidarity among different groups. These skills and competences are to be transmitted and supported by policies, authorities, the media, religious communities and education professionals.

In this context, Intercultural Education has been addressed in recent years and applied to different school levels within a multidisciplinary approach (see Gundara, 2000; Keast, 2007; or UNESCO, 2013). FLE scholars have been widely contributing to this debate, not only through publications of the Council of Europe, acknowledging the urgency of an intercultural approach in 21st century European schools, but also through research studies, exploring the cultural politics of foreign language classes, with examples of practices, activities and materials that may be used with intercultural objectives, in order to provide students with valuable insights about the target languages and cultures, teaching them skills of interpreting and (re)negotiating otherness (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002; Sercu, 2006;Byram and Fleming, 2009; Corbett, 2010;

Matos, 2012; Guilherme, 2013; Risager, 2014; Byram, 2014; Zhu, 2015; Jenkins and Wang, 2016; *inter alia*). Several approaches to intercultural education use postcolonial concepts of in--between spaces of languages and cultures, for example accounting for language classes as a third space (Maniotes, 2005; Gutierrez, 2008; Kramsch, 2009; Witte, 2014), insofar as language, rather than a mere identitary space, can become a third space of cultural identity negotiation, an area for cultural examination and reflection, struggle and transformation, as well as a tool of resistance (Ashcroft, 2009). Moreover, teachers are believed to be in position to act as intercultural mediators (Sercu, 2006; Kohlar, 2015) and transformative intellectuals (Guilherme, 2002), using foreign languages as a bridge to help their students to understand a multiplicity of realities, promoting values of tolerance towards alterity, as well as harmonious forms of social integration[7] and social stability at micro and macro levels.

In the current context of cultural super diversity (Vertovec, 2007; Jørgensen et al., 2011; Cogo, 2012), recent studies also consider the need for a multilingual education, or even a plurilingual education, as languages not only coexist, but also interact and interrelate, equally contributing to the communicative competence of the speakers and their success in the educational systems and society (Gogolin and Neumann, 2009; Vollmer, 2009; Council of Europe, 2009; Makoni and Pennycook, 2012; Cook, 2013; Jenkins, 2015; Garton and Kubota, 2015; Menken, 2015). "School failure and failure of school" (Gogolin 241) are believed to be interrelated, as Eurocentric perspectives tend to dominate the school curricula and institutional racism is inherent to a myriad of school policies (Lambert and Morgan, 2010; Harris, 2013; Stamou et al., 2014; Hall, 2014), for example through monolingual or ethnic practices that contribute to higher school dropout rates among minorities and lead to racial self-consciousness (Landsman and Lewis, 2006; Gillborn, 2008; Little, 2010; American Psychological Association, 2012). For some scholars, matters of interculturalism and plurilingualism are, therefore, interconnected as far as recent studies on FLE are concerned, and both areas can provide the framework for a desirable preparation of youngsters for life as critical citizens (Vollmer, 2009). Moreover, some scholars state that the hybridity that characterizes this century encourages

other forms of literacy based on translingual practices, common inside communities but still avoided in classrooms, which should be incorporated in FLE practices (Pennycook, 2007; Gutierrez, 2008; Canagarajah, 2013; García and Wei, 2014; Kalocsai, 2014; Creese and Blackledge, 2015).

Though valuable research has been developed in terms of interculturalism and plurilingualism in FLE, there are several reasons why this framework should be further explored and different perspectives promoted. First, in practical terms, the aforementioned concepts have not been translated into educators' practices within western multi-ethnic school contexts, for example due to the lack of specific measures promoting intercultural relations, language policies, failure to interrelate the different school subjects, little cooperation among language teachers, outdated teaching practices, lack of training and information about recent studies, the perception of languages as isolated from communities, or even an unwillingness to see the world through the language-culture of the other (see Vollmer, 2009; Fonseca-Greber, 2010; Baker, 2015); consequently, it is necessary to find new ways of bridging scholars´ work and real school contexts. Second, the unexpected migratory configurations European societies are enduring bring added pressure upon school populations in terms of integrating migrant/refugee newcomers, who represent not only significantly different cultural and linguistic paradigms, but also opposite perceptions of sexuality, gender, religion or acceptable social behavior. Third, guidelines for specific hybrid practices in FLE are still limited and are not applied, though they may be used with specific aims and reflect a bourgeoning reality. Fourth, the intercultural and plurilingual approach to FLE fail to incorporate a holistic perspective of the world, which would enable students to achieve self-awareness, providing them with a sense of belonging to a wider social and planetary context; such sense of interrelation could also contribute to the prevention and regulation of students´ misbehavior, as well as to the resolution of conflicts within the class.

Exploring New Directions in FLE Using Anzaldúa´s Border Epistemology

Even though scholars have been widely quoting and applying postcolonial concepts to their research on FLE, this article asserts a deeper contribution of Cultural Studies, reframing FLE

using the concepts of the cultural theorist and social activist Gloria Anzaldúa, which are based on an intercultural, plurilingual, hybrid and holistic experience and perspective of the world.

With a clear purpose of reflexive and critical citizenship and social activism, Anzaldúa´s Border Epistemology (1981-2004) focuses on the crossing of different borders - geographic, cultural, linguistic, class, sexual, gender, religious and spiritual borders, embracing hybrid configurations, especially in terms of culture, language, placement and gender. Though Anzaldúa´s writings have already been explored within the fields of Literature, Culture, Ethnic Studies, Linguistics, Gender Studies and Post-Colonialism (for example, Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994; Alarcón, 2002; Keating, 2005; Castillo, 2006; Cantú, 2011; Mignolo, 2012; Lobo, 2015), as well as in publications within the field of Education and Pedagogy (Fránquiz and Salazar, 2004; Fránquiz, Salazar and DeNicolo, 2004; Walsh and Townsin, 2015), they have not yet been applied to FLE, with the purpose of generating new practices to be implemented in classrooms, in order to cultivate spaces of social activism and critical citizenship, where alliances between different groups are learnt to be built halfway, as Anzaldúa claims in the preface of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987): "today we ask to be met halfway" (n. pag.).

Though Anzaldúa´s most known and discussed concepts are part of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, the author´s early concept of El Mundo Zurdo (1981), the concepts on the basis of Path of *Conocimiento* (2002), and the concepts of New Tribalism (2000), Nos/otras (2002) and Spiritual Activism (2002), as well as writings from her unpublished work available in the archive *Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers 1942-2004* (University of Texas at Austin), also concentrate on the forging of relational tactics between groups, exploring the interconnection of the self and the other, and relating one´s actions with the planet context, in a clear holistic view of the world. Taking this framework into account, the main question addressed by FLE would be: how can foreign language classes become spaces of cultural politics and dynamic social activism, helping to foster a more inclusive European society? The application of this framework to the intercultural and plurilingual approaches in FLE could promote practices to empower students from diverse backgrounds with skills to negotiate

alterity, enabling them to cross different borders - may they be of place, culture, language, class, sexuality, gender, religion or others. Such practices would emphasize self-awareness and self-change as means to social change, compelling students to forge relational tactics and alliances with other groups.

Moreover, reframing FLE using Anzaldúa´s Border Epistemology would necessarily take into account the incorporation of hybrid configurations into classes. Spaces of translingualism could therefore be explored with specific pedagogical objectives, to forge ways of bridging the migrant students´ communities and the host society, creating a sense of equality and social justice. The possible pedagogical applications of these hybrid language practices, common inside students´ communities, would acknowledge students´ multilingual lives and the different levels of interaction among the languages they use. Students with hybrid identities could be used as mediators between opposing groups during classes, bridging different experiences, not only in what cultures and languages are concerned, but also in terms of religion, gender or other experiences. In this context, language teachers would be taking on a role of both social activists and intercultural mediators, and promoters of critical thinking, reflection and self- awareness about students´ own place in the world, developing lesson plans with the aim to encourage different border crossings and affinity tactics, underlining the interdependence of every group as part of the planet and their responsibility and contribution to the global context.

In fact, in both form and content, Anzaldúa´s work uses language as means to social activism and intercultural mediation. The author employs examples of plurilinguism and translingualism to underline that language is like a border: on the one hand, it can unite or divide people, allowing or preventing empathy and social mobility; on the other hand, it is a fluid space in a constant evolution and negotiation. Living in-between the Mexican and the American realities, Anzaldúa abolishes linguistic boundaries, claiming that her linguistic hybridism is an expression of her cultural hybridism, consequently emphasizing translingual practices as intrinsic to her concept of Borderlands (1987): spaces inhabited by those whose identity is an intersection of different paradigms, potential transformational spaces, where opposites converge,

clash and transform. By decentering language from its standard varieties, Anzaldúa transforms her texts into spaces of resistance to the dominant culture, as she considers linguistic repression, which she labels linguistic terrorism (1987), an identitary repression. Furthermore, she invites her readers to experience the feeling of living among worlds, questioning pre-established cultural beliefs and perception patterns of reality.

Anzaldúa is, therefore, an intercultural mediator between her culture and that of her readers, taking on the role of the New *Mestiza* (1987), i.e. a female entity who is a product of multiple systems and inhabits opposing worlds by reason of her gender, sexuality, color, class, body, personality, spiritual belief or life experience, and who takes on a tolerant and global vision of reality. Anzaldúa also functions as a Neplantera (2002), developing skills not only of mediation, but also of action upon society, inventing relational theories and tactics as keys to personal and social liberation. These concepts can be applied to develop a different theoretical framework to FLE, in terms of teachers´ role and classroom practices, at a time when dogmatic notions of identity based on biological, historical, cultural, linguistic, religious or gender stereotypes no longer apply and are constantly evolving while interacting with diverse groups, as western societies are moving towards gigantic Borderlands.

Anzaldúa believes that the use of language not only reflects reality but also has the power to transform it, claiming a (re)appropriation of language that will enable individuals to (re)create the self and the society they aspire, as inner change is the first step to social change. When formulating Nos/otras concept (2002), the author reflected upon what she considers *desconocimientos*, the ignorance that splits people from others and from their own spirituality, the fear of the unknown which builds and maintains walls between groups, which causes and justifies different kinds of oppression. These *desconocimientos* can be gradually overcome through educational practices that use language to underline the interrelation and interdependence of different groups, with the promotion of intercultural and plurilingual skills that point out that "we are them and they are us . . . the border is a concept that is fast going obsolete and in actuality it no longer exists, it only exists as an idea" (Gloria E. Anzaldúa Papers, n. pag.).

FLE intercultural and plurilingual practices would take into account forms of New Tribalism (Anzaldúa, 2000), an affinity based approach, characterized as an alternative to both assimilation and segregation, where distinct groups cooperate, resist old narratives and create new ones, producing relational tactics that emphasize commonalities instead of differences. According to the author, New Tribalism will disrupt identity classifications imposed by the dominant culture in order to maintain its privileges, as communities will learn to work together in coalition. Nonetheless, Anzaldúa acknowledges that to achieve this transformative worldview, individuals and society will undergo a process of advances and retreats, transitional phases and the discomfort that precedes a new level of knowledge, thus formulating the Path of *Conocimiento* (2002). In the light of the current refugee/migrant context, inside European schools, both students from the host society and refugee/migrant students are now experiencing the several stages of this path, as both groups are losing their old system and trying to create a new one: when their reality falls apart they feel *El Arrebato*, they experience the discomfort of Coatlicue State; in-between systems, they find themselves in Nepantla; some already feel the need of a new system, experiencing The Call, and are trying to rebuild their identity as in Putting Coyolxauqui Together; some students continuously collide while negotiating their identity with the newcomers as in The Blow up; hopefully, both groups will be able to reach the last stage of Shifting Realities. This process is similar to that of learning a foreign language, since in FLE students also undergo (and expect) most of these stages, while confronting themselves with a different language and culture. This similarity can be explored to transform foreign language classes into spaces of intercultural citizenship and dynamic social activism, taking on concrete conscious practices leading to students´ self-awareness, while relating them to the society, to their community and ancestors, and to the next generations, in what Anzaldúa calls Spiritual Activism (2002).

Conclusion

More than ever, this century brings forward the need to teach students to think critically and to live together with alterity. Acknowledging that Anzaldúa´s Border Epistemology combines ideas

of in-betweeness, interculturality, plurilingualism, and translinguism, also providing keys to positive practices of interaction among different groups, this conceptual framework can be applied to explore new directions on interculturalism and plurilingualism in FLE, offering perspectives that can be used to help educators to solve problems the current situation presents, fostering a long term balance between native and refugee/migrant students´ identities. In order to accomplish this, foreign language classes have to be reformulated to become intercultural citizenship spaces of dynamic social activism, leading to a greater understanding of the role of each individual in society, focusing on different border crossings and using commonalities as catalysts for transformation.

Notes

[1] The term "contact zones" refers to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today (Pratt, 1992).

[2] Bhabha uses this concept to describe a space of conflict and negotiation between languages and cultures, a space characterized by hybridity (1994).

[3] In this article, hybrid identity refers to the confluence, intersection and fluidity of multiple elements - in terms of culture, ethnicity, language or gender - within an individual.

[4] Interculturalism refers to cross-cultural dialogue and interaction between cultures, involving moving beyond multiculturalism, in terms of the mere passive acceptance of cultures coexisting together.

[5] When using the concept "identity", this article takes into account the interaction of nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality, language, gender, sexuality, history, beliefs and education, following Scott and Marshall´s definition (2009).

[6] Plurilingualism is the use of several languages, even though it may not mean a perfect command of all of them: one uses linguistic knowledge and skills to communicate with others in a multinational and multicultural society, due to similarities and differences between languages and cultures.

[7] Social integration refers to the principles by which individuals are related to another in society (Scott and Marshall, 2009).

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Assessing Speaking Proficiency: A Challenge for the Portuguese EFL Teacher

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| CETAPS

Abstract | Speaking has been increasingly promoted in curricula, both nationally and internationally, as one of the major aims of foreign language teaching. However, the unique features of this skill make it the most challenging one to assess. Portuguese EFL teachers seem to be at odds with suitable assessment procedures designed to monitor students' progress. This paper examines the rationale underlying some of the core concepts on educational classroom-based assessment, including their definitions and key characteristics, as well as briefly outlining the theoretical premises of the communicative competence model designed by Canale and Swain to suggest what may be assessed. It also focuses on a new approach to language assessment – learning-oriented assessment, by highlighting its twofold potential to be the link between instruction and what is learned and to promote effective student learning. The paper concludes with two different practical examples of how to assess speaking in the classroom with a learning-oriented perspective in mind.

Key words | English as a Foreign Language, speaking, speaking proficiency, assessment, learning, learning-oriented assessment

1. Introduction

The search for more effective ways of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) gave rise to different teaching methods/approaches on both sides of the Atlantic over the past century. From those, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emerged as the one adopted by most practitioners, marking "a major paradigm shift within language teaching in the twentieth century, one whose ramifications continue to be felt today" (Rodgers and Richards 151). CLT argues for genuine communicative exchanges through activities designed to develop the students' ability to use language appropriately and meaningfully. Naturally, the importance of oral skills in language syllabuses and curricula grew and led to increasing research in this area, with the focus largely on the need to measure ability and the best way to do it.[1] Hence, considerable attention has been drawn both to assessment and the context in which it operates. However, assessment has become a popular but "sometimes misunderstood term in current educational practice" (Brown 4) and for this reason a distinction between the terms assessment and testing, which are repeatedly used interchangeably, must be made. Given its broaden nature, evaluation is consciously not addressed in this paper. It "refers to a process of systematically collecting information in order to make a judgement. Evaluation can thus concern a whole range of issues in and beyond language education: lessons, courses, programs, and skills can all be evaluated" (Cameron 222).

Testing is an administrative product-oriented procedure, usually imposed by the teacher that occurs at specific moments with the purpose of measuring second/foreign language knowledge for scoring and grading. Tests are often a norm-referenced instrument – scores are compared amongst students, used to determine individual ability or demonstrate mastery of a given skill, and offer limited information to identify areas for improvement because they tend to be "one-off" events of speaking proficiency. When a teacher gives a test, he/she is obtaining a narrow sample of the test-taker's performance in a specific domain that doesn't account for the progress made (or not) based on that performance. On the other hand, assessment is an

ongoing process-oriented approach that takes many different forms. One of these forms are tests. Thus, testing is a subset of assessment and should be seen as one of the many methods available to assess students' verbal performance. Assessment is often a criterion-referenced measurement – students' performance being compared against a set of criteria, used in educational contexts to monitor students' strengths and weaknesses. It is operated in a systematic way for the purpose of helping "teachers find out what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it" (Angelo and Cross 4). Assessments serve as tools to draw inferences that the teachers can rely on about the students' achievements, and to make the necessary adjustments in the teaching-learning environment, i.e. using assessment results to change practices which in turn assist students to improve their speaking proficiency. In a nutshell, "assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information . . . undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development" (Banta and Palomba 4), entailing careful planning, implementing and acting upon the results. Assessment goes beyond the question how much the students have learned; instead, it asks how they learned and what can be done to improve their learning.

2. The Nature of Speaking

Speaking is an interactive process performed in real-time with particular patterns and structures influenced by the participants involved, their purposes, the topic, the setting in which it takes place, and so forth. The speaker must master and mobilize an array of linguistic knowledge – vocabulary, sound system (segmental features), suprasegmental aspects like stress, intonation and rhythm and language functions – along with the kinesics and semiotics usually related to spoken language to avoid extensive hesitation or communicational breakdowns.

Speaking may be broadly characterised by the use of incomplete sentences, connected or not with conjunctions, what Luoma (12) conceives of as idea units, short turns between interlocutors, together with simple interrogative structures, manipulation of strategies for creating time to speak, such as fillers, hesitation markers and repetitions, and informal features (e.g.,

simpler syntax). Everyday L2 classroom speaking interactions – a pupil asking permission to go to the toilet or the teacher giving instructions, involve message-oriented interaction (conveying information), the main point is to make the message clear to the listener and confirm if he/she has understood it accurately.

3. Defining the Problem

Speaking has unique traits that make it the most distinctive and probably the most difficult skill to assess. Unlike writing, speaking is done spontaneously greatly restricting the possibility to plan one's discourse before processing and producing it. Thus, the teacher/assessor has to judge, in real-time, production and/or interaction related to several aspects of what is being said (range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence).[2] Furthermore, in Portugal the assessment of speaking proficiency faces a major challenge – the reluctance of Portuguese state school teachers to address it. Most students studying English at the lower levels (5th up to 9th graders) are overloaded with grammar instruction and exercises, usually done via course-books, quizzes or worksheets. Clearly, the emphasis given to linguistic competence outweighs that given to linguistic performance, which in turn hinders the students' speaking proficiency and the assessment process itself. Although this paper does not report on empirical research, my claim is grounded in my teaching experience in ten different schools for the past fourteen years, both in Lisbon and the Algarve.

4. What and How to Assess

The context in which EFL is delivered in Portuguese classrooms is broadly homogenous – the teachers are non-native speakers; the students share and speak the same first language and English is not used continuously outside the classroom. Yet, learners and teachers themselves differ in their reactions to the learning process. As regards the first group, some lack motivation whilst others welcome the opportunity to further develop their speaking ability. As for the second group, some perceive the assessment of speaking proficiency as a lofty goal whereas others

organize diversified speaking assessments that are stimulating. Thus, while it is (perhaps) utopian to think of a clear-cut formula for assessing speaking proficiency in any given class, some suggestions can be put forward. Each teacher develops his/her speaking assessment specifications with a particular set of students in mind.

Every practitioner should have a clear idea of what and how to assess in the classroom. With regard to the former, bearing in mind the objective of increasing speaking proficiency, it is appropriate to consider the influential model of Communicative Competence designed by Canale and Swain. For the authors, Communicative Competence is "the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use" (Canale and Swain 6). Later, the model was further developed by other scholars, like Savignon (8), to include a strategic and a discourse competence. This means that the teacher may decide what to assess for speaking proficiency by considering four areas of accuracy: grammatical competence – grammar rules, vocabulary and pronunciation; sociolinguistic competence – appropriateness of language use (vocabulary, register, style and politeness) in different contexts with different people; strategic competence – strategies used by the speaker/learner to compensate breakdowns or enhance communication (kinesics and circumlocution); and discourse competence – the ability to manage turn-taking and connect utterances to form a meaningful reasoning.

Naturally, the question of how to assess these competences arises. The answer is a difficult one; even amongst researchers the best way to assess students' speaking proficiency lacks consensus. I strongly advocate a holistic approach to assessment, i.e. using more than one method for assessing speaking proficiency. The collection of a variety of speech samples over time will allow the teacher to have an overall understanding about the students' linguistic performance – what he/she is or is not able to produce, yet. Classroom speaking assessments can take many forms, ranging from more simple/discrete ones like pattern drills to practise contextualised minimal pairs (for instance minimal pairs bingo), to more complex/integrative ones like social-interactive tasks (debates, role-plays and/or interviews) to practice a blend of

the aforementioned areas of accuracy. In-between there are other tasks to measure the students' speaking proficiency. Some of the possibilities are:

- Pair and/ or group tasks (e.g., doing an information gap exercise);

- Description/ Comparison tasks (e.g., the student is given one or two different objects to describe and/or compare);

- Opinion-expressing tasks (e.g., presenting a meaningful up-to-date topic to the students, for instance technology, and elicit their opinion);

- Storytelling tasks (e.g., students tell stories from their childhood using visual input – Little Red Riding Hood);

- Game-based tasks (e.g., playing a guessing game).

Considering the twofold context of the classroom – the need for a systematic assessment of the learners' progress and frequency of spontaneous oral interactions amongst students – another measurement of speaking proficiency may be observation. By observation I do not mean the perceptions teachers have of students' aptitude from every question, answer, attitude, etc., occurring day in and day out. To establish observation as a valid and reliable classroom assessment technique requires record keeping, from simple anecdotal notes to score rubrics, criteria sheets, checklists, or even a mixture of all four. The key point is making sure that assessment should reflect instruction and be meaningful for the learners.

According to Cohen, "typical classroom interactions involve teacher utterances and shorter learner responses" (279), which means that, regardless of the selected assessment method, Portuguese EFL teachers must rethink questionable practices and promote a paradigm shift in their classrooms. Effective speaking assessments hinge on extensive chunks of spoken language and on full responses from the learners, otherwise the process of assessing speaking proficiency in itself may come to a halt.

5. Aligning Assessment with Learning

Used wisely, assessment can be the most substantial stimulant for learning. However, to do so, a paradigm shift must take place. If we truly want to integrate assessment with instruction, we need to reconceptualise several well-established beliefs. As shown above, our concerns have to move from testing to learning, and therefore to the individual; and grading outcomes ought to become subsidiary to learning outcomes.

From the beginning of the 21st century onwards, a new framework has steadily gained ground in the field of educational assessment, the learning-oriented assessment approach. This innovative view of pedagogy "holds that for all assessments, whether predominantly summative or formative in function, a key aim is for them to promote productive student learning" (Carless, "Learning-Oriented Assessment: Principles, Practice and a Project"). Hence, whatever form the assessment takes it must be a means of supporting learning and, simultaneously, to acknowledge its centrality. Implementing a learning-oriented assessment approach to speaking "involves the collection and interpretation of evidence about performance so that judgments can be made about further language development" (Purpura 236) to promote knowledge. Analysing Purpura's words carefully, we conclude that evidence is the core ingredient of learning-oriented assessments. After being collected from multiple sources, evidence helps teachers to monitor students' progress, shows students' acquisition (or otherwise) of what is being taught, and provides meaningful feedback for students and teachers alike. Ideally, this broader range of information should generate a constant reanalysis from both parties. Thus, students are able to identify their weaknesses and set objectives that will lead to improvement and teachers have the opportunity to reflect upon the work developed and restructure all the necessary language instruction procedures to meet students' learning needs.

For those who may think learning-oriented assessment is complicated, Carless summarizes it in three simple principles. Bearing these principles in mind, teachers will be able to engage learners in productive assessment activities.

Principle 1: Assessment tasks should be designed to stimulate productive learning practices amongst students;

Principle 2: Assessment should involve students actively in engaging with criteria, quality, their own and/or peers' performance [*sic*];

Principle 3: Feedback should be timely and forward-looking so as to support current and future student learning. ("Learning-Oriented Assessment: Principles, Practice and a Project" 83).

Learning-oriented assessment elements are also set forth by Carless ("Learning-Oriented Assessment: Conceptual Bases and Practical Implications" 60) in schematic form:
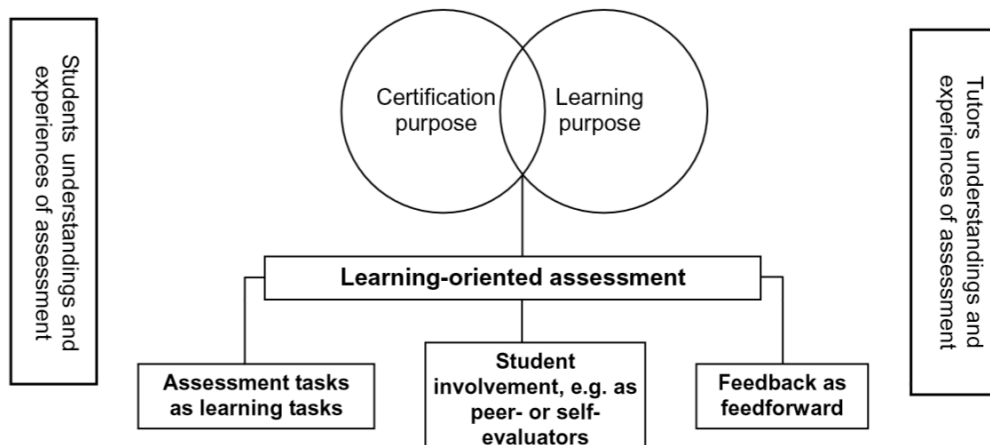

Figure 1 – Framework for Learning-Oriented Assessment

Such a framework aligns curriculum, learning and assessment with the main stakeholders. It must be interpreted as a whole and not just as a sum of the parts, a well-oiled machine whose cogs work in unison towards the same outcome – successful learning. At the centre, we have the purposes of assessment, which are envisioned as overlapping. Learning and certification interconnect with each other enhancing the learning features of assessment. To achieve their intended purposes, appropriate tasks should be designed, students have to be involved and feedback has to be significant. First, learning tasks should be conceptualised as assessment tasks and vice-versa, encompassing the anticipated learning goals by promoting interactional authenticity, a reflection of the real-world and collaborative work. Second, students must be given the opportunity to understand the criteria and standards applied to their work,

enabling them to accurately judge whether they meet these criteria and standards or not. "The conceptual rationale for peer assessment and peer feedback is that it enables students to take an active role in the management of their own learning" (Liu and Carless 280). Third, feedback must be timely, relevant and able to be acted upon by the students, i.e. functions as feedforward. If it does not help students close the gap between their expected learning outcomes and the present state, it doesn't really qualify as feedback. This should make us wonder if it is actually feedback we have been providing our students with.

Learning-oriented approaches to speaking should not be concerned only with measuring ability, but also with actual learning of pronunciation (segmental and suprasegmental aspects), vocabulary, language functions, register, turn-taking and breakdowns compensation. Thus, teachers must make sure that learning/assessment tasks represent spontaneous, real-life spoken interaction and target the speaking aspects the students are supposed to use. As a teacher guided by a learning-oriented assessment approach, I want to grasp what my students know, understand and can use with relation to every speaking subset, and employ the data collected to develop their ability, and meet individual needs. Common learning/assessment measurements related to speaking, which can take place at any phase of the learning process, include, as discussed in section 4, dialogues, interviews, role-plays, descriptions (photographs or images), giving instructions, story-telling, opinion-expressing/justifying and discussions (done through pair or group work). At times, when students are struggling with specific subsets of speaking, contextualised discrete learning/assessment activities are also valuable. Bring dictionaries to class to help with stressed syllables, play "Pronunciation Bingo" to practice vowel contrasts in words with similar pronunciation patterns, ask students to read aloud to enhance intonation and rhythm, and so forth. There is a plethora of choices.[3] Implementing a learning--oriented assessment approach to speaking proficiency means designing interesting and cognitively appealing tasks, which simultaneously foster enjoyment for learning. Besides "task design and operationalization, teachers also need to consider how assessment relates to and can help promote [speaking] acquisition" (Purpura 236).

Considering the rationale presented in this section, I believe that one of the major issues concerning speaking assessment in the current Portuguese EFL classroom is the lack of assessment literacy. By assessment literacy I mean not only having the knowledge of what assessment is and means, including its terminology; but also, having the knowledge of assessment methodologies and techniques, how to assess, how to analyse and interpret the results from the assessments, and how to apply this data to improve students' learning. Even those who are open-minded enough to embrace a change in practice do not feel comfortable going beyond what they experienced as learners themselves and now perpetuate as teachers. It is possible to implement new speaking assessment procedures in Portugal grounded in a learning-oriented approach, but for now the step forward requires a change of mentality/attitude and a significant increase in assessment literacy.

6. Practicalities

When the teacher sets out to assess the students' speaking proficiency he or she initiates a speaking assessment cycle (Figure 2), which Luoma uses to show the different stages of the process (5).
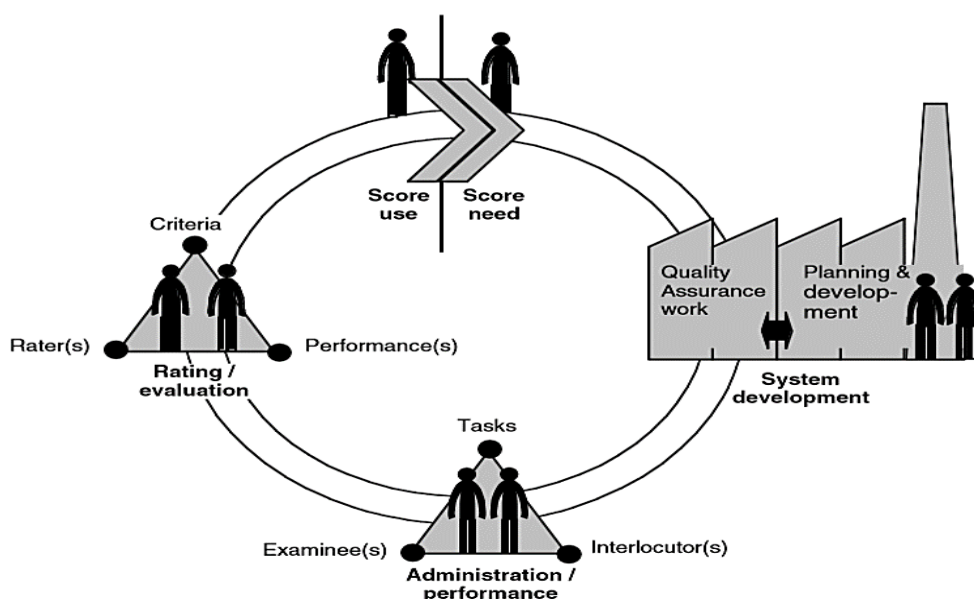

Figure 2 – Speaking Assessment Cycle

One of the examples introduced by Luoma to test speaking involves the following scenario:

There are two examinees and two testers in the testing room. Both examinees have four pictures in front of them, and they are constructing a story together. At the end of their story, one of the testers asks them a few questions and then closes the discussion off . . . . After the examinees leave, the testers quickly mark their assessments on a form . . . . (1)

Although important as a basis for working, the cycle must be looked at with caution. Luoma conceives it with a norm-referenced testing perspective in mind; therefore, for a classroom environment, it requires some adaptations. There are three key differences to take into account:

1st – the assessment developer, the interlocutor, the rater[4] and the assessment user is the teacher;

2nd – the assessment method quite often is not a test;

3rd – accordingly, there are no examinees but only students. Moreover, I also drop the terms score need/use and replace them with assessment need/use.

The constant need to assess students sets in motion the speaking assessment cycle. To address the challenge, the teacher has to think about the purpose of the assessment (learning-oriented assessment) that will guide the speaking assessment cycle thereafter. With a clear purpose in mind, the teacher moves on to step two, planning and developing quality assessment tasks and criteria that meet the anticipated learning goals. If needed, instructions are also planned and developed at this stage. Moving to stage three, the students do the assessment tasks given by the teacher, who may or may not interact with the students depending on the tasks chosen. Closely connected to stage three, at stage four the teacher assesses the students' performance against the set of criteria developed earlier. Lastly, to close the assessment cycle, the assessment results should be used by the teacher to check if the

students have achieved or not the learning goals intended for them. As argued in section 4, this last step implies timely feedback that can be acted upon by the students, especially for those whose performances show greater weaknesses.

The two examples which follow provide a practical illustration of what and how to assess speaking proficiency, based on the suggestions made in section 4, as applied to the Speaking Assessment Cycle.

Example 1

Assessment Need and Purpose: Considering the difficulty of Portuguese students in pronouncing the phonemes /ð/ and /θ/, there is a need to understand whether the students can differentiate them or not. The purpose here is twofold – to help promote students' phonic awareness about the consonant digraph {th} and to help students struggling with pronunciation.

Planning and Developing: Bearing in mind that the students are 5th graders, the task of choice should involve a known context, in this case family relationships, and have some kind of guidance. Accordingly, the students, working in pairs, ask and answer questions about the relationship of the family members in the family tree given. To follow the teacher's objective, instead of relationship terms such as mother, father, etc. (which have been taught previously), personal names are used.

Assessment Task: This is when the teacher's planning and development comes into play. The students are introduced to the task they have to carry out and start their interaction (see the task used in Appendix 1 below).

Performance Assessment: Without disturbing, commenting and interrupting the students' performance flow, the teacher assesses each pair according to the criteria planned and

developed at step two. Bearing in mind the European setting, the criteria are comprised of short descriptors of speaking proficiency, following the CEFR rationale:

Level	Pronunciation Descriptors
5	Pronounces both phonemes accurately;
4	Rarely mispronounces;
3	Substitutes /t/, /s/, /f/ for voiceless /θ/ **or** /d/, /z/, /v/ for voiced /ð/;
2	Substitutes /t/, /s/, /f/ for voiceless /θ/ **and** /d/, /z/, /v/ for voiced /ð/;
1	Is unintelligible.

Depending on the students/class assessed, another criteria item can be added:

Level	Pronunciation Descriptors	Speech Flow Descriptors
5	Pronounces both phonemes accurately;	Speaks fluently;
4	Rarely mispronounces;	Rarely hesitates;
3	Substitutes /t/, /s/, /f/ for voiceless /θ/ **or** /d/, /z/, /v/ for voiced /ð/;	Maintains flow of speech but uses repetition and/or self-correction;
2	Substitutes /t/, /s/, /f/ for voiceless /θ/ **and** /d/, /z/, /v/ for voiced /ð/;	Hesitations are frequent and disrupt the flow of speech;
1	Is unintelligible.	Speech flow so halting that little interaction is possible.

Assessment use: The cycle is completed with a careful analysis of the assessment results. The teacher uses them to understand if the students' performances meet the expected learning goals, as well as the assessment purpose. Within a reasonable period of time, the teacher tells the

students how well they did. The use of positive feedback is advisable, especially for those whose performances show a bigger gap between their expected learning outcomes and their present state. The teacher devises extra activities for this particular group in order to help overcome the students' difficulties. There are a few possibilities, but I usually give students two lists of specific words to be practised at home and, later, pronounced in class. Usually, I let these students repeat the Assessment Task.

Lists of words

/ð/			/θ/		
Father	mother	brother	Matthew	Keith	Cynthia
this	that	there	thanks	month	teeth
other	together	Netherlands	thirteen	nothing	mouth
weather			truth		

Example 2

Assessment Need and Purpose: With a class of Portuguese 9th graders in mind (B1 threshold level learners), who are expanding their English communicative skills, there is a need to simulate possible real-life situations that include different speech acts. The purpose here is to probe for the ability to combine some or all aspects of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence together.

Planning and Developing: Such an assessment purpose demands the use of some sort of social-interactive task. Considering the classroom context in which the task will take place and the speaking level of the learners, my choice is a role-play. Instead of a teacher-learner role-play, I opt for role-plays between learners. From my teaching experience, as well as in literature (O'Sullivan), there is evidence that learner acquaintanceship improves performance. I would say it also improves motivation and avoids the effect of inhibition, and greater levels of spontaneity

and fun are usually achieved. To strengthen the task's relevance, it is important to think of a scenario to which the students can easily relate. For the Portuguese setting, particularly the south of the country, the hotel receptionist + tourist scenario is appropriate. Accordingly, the students, working in pairs, are asked to take on a particular role and imagine themselves in that particular situation. Depending on the class assessed, the role-play may be more or less guided following the instructions given to the students. When planning, and developing a role-play, the teacher has to make sure that the students are familiar with role-playing, the procedure and the purpose it entails. These have to be clearly explained beforehand.

Assessment Task: This is when the teacher's planning and developing comes into play. The students are introduced to the task they have to accomplish, according to the instructions, and start their performance. If the students assessed are highly proficient the instructions are less guided and presented in general terms:

> Imagine you are a foreign tourist visiting the south of Portugal (Albufeira or Portimão). You are talking to the hotel receptionist. Find out which places are worth seeing and how to get there. You may also be interested in local restaurants.

On the other hand, if the students assessed are less proficient the instructions are more guided and presented in detail:

> Imagine you are a foreign tourist visiting the south of Portugal (Albufeira or Portimão). You are talking to the hotel receptionist. Explain the situation and ask for his/her help. You would like to know which places the receptionist recommends you to see. Ask for his opinion. Also, ask about transportation, travelling time, prices and good local restaurants to eat. Finally, tell the receptionist what you have decided to visit and how you will get there.

Performance Assessment: Without disturbing, commenting and interrupting the students' performance flow, the teacher assesses each pair according to the criteria planned and developed at step two. Bearing in mind the European setting, the criteria are comprised of short descriptors of speaking proficiency, following the CEFR rationale (see the example of an assessment grid in Appendix 2 below).

Assessment Use: The cycle is completed with a careful analysis of the assessment results. The teacher uses them to understand if the students' performances meet the expected learning goals, as well as the assessment purpose. Within a reasonable period of time, the teacher tells the students how well they did. The use of positive feedback is advisable, especially for those whose performances show a bigger gap between their expected learning outcomes and their present state. Unlike discrete tasks (example 1), which may be improved with autonomous guided practice, social-interactive tasks require a different approach. Students will not improve per se if told to repeat the task all over again, they will face the same difficulties. So, the key word here is coaching. I pair up the students with the poorer performances and sit down next to them to coach them every step of the way whenever necessary. The goal is to help the students understand how to manage turn-taking, the ability to circumlocute (afterwards, the student is told the word he did not know), and the most troublesome grammar and pronunciation errors. After this support work and peer reflection, I let these students repeat the Assessment Task.

The two examples put forward are nothing but a narrow sample of what can be done to tackle the challenge of assessing students' speaking proficiency throughout the school year, based on both the speaking assessment cycle suggested and a learning-oriented assessment approach. The rationale here is tied to section 5's explanation of the first strand of Carless's framework, where learning tasks become assessment tasks. Thus, students do not feel threatened by assessment given its similarity to the work developed in class on a daily basis. These tasks are meant to fit comfortably with the students' learning experience, matching "the teaching and learning goals of the particular class and students being assessed" (Davison and Leung 395).

Concluding Thoughts

Assessing speaking is a difficult, time-consuming and complex task, yet necessary because speaking is the core of teaching-learning interaction. The dominance of summative assessment should diminish within schools and a more comprehensive methodology should be adopted. What matters is recognising the foremost purpose of assessment – to support learning, by constituting a bridge to close the gap between teaching and learning.

Both teachers and learners in Portugal must overcome their fears and frailties regarding spoken language assessment, and embrace a new model committed to promoting learning in a more effective manner. I reiterate the added value of the learning-oriented approach to assessment as a way to reinforce the link between learning, teaching and assessment. Such an approach allows teachers to gather evidence of students' progress towards the anticipated learning outcomes, allows teachers to use the information collected to meet individual needs and provide timely feedback, encourages students to act upon their strengths and weaknesses, supports students to have an active role in their own, as well as their peers', learning, and perhaps even more important it fosters further speaking proficiency development.

Most of all "teachers need to reflect on their assessment practices and beliefs and determine how they can use assessment practices and results to improve student language learning" (Stoynoff 531).

Notes

[1] Associated with the rise of CLT is the early work on "testing" by Arthur Hughes (*Testing for Language Teachers*) and Cyril Weir (*Understanding and Developing Language Tests*). Both authors shed light on the principles of testing, the qualities that every test must have and how all the four skills can be tested by providing practical guidance to help EFL teachers design better tests. Yet, although recognizing the added value of Hughes and Weir's work, I would say that from a classroom perspective tests alone may fall short of accurately capturing the learners' (spoken) ability.

[2] These are the qualitative aspects of spoken language use described in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe 29).

[3] For further examples see Wong's *Teaching Pronunciation: Focus on English Rhythm and Intonation* and Celce-Murcia's *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*.

[4] Sometimes the interlocutor and/or rater may also be a student, depending on the task at hand – dialogues/interviews and peer assessment.

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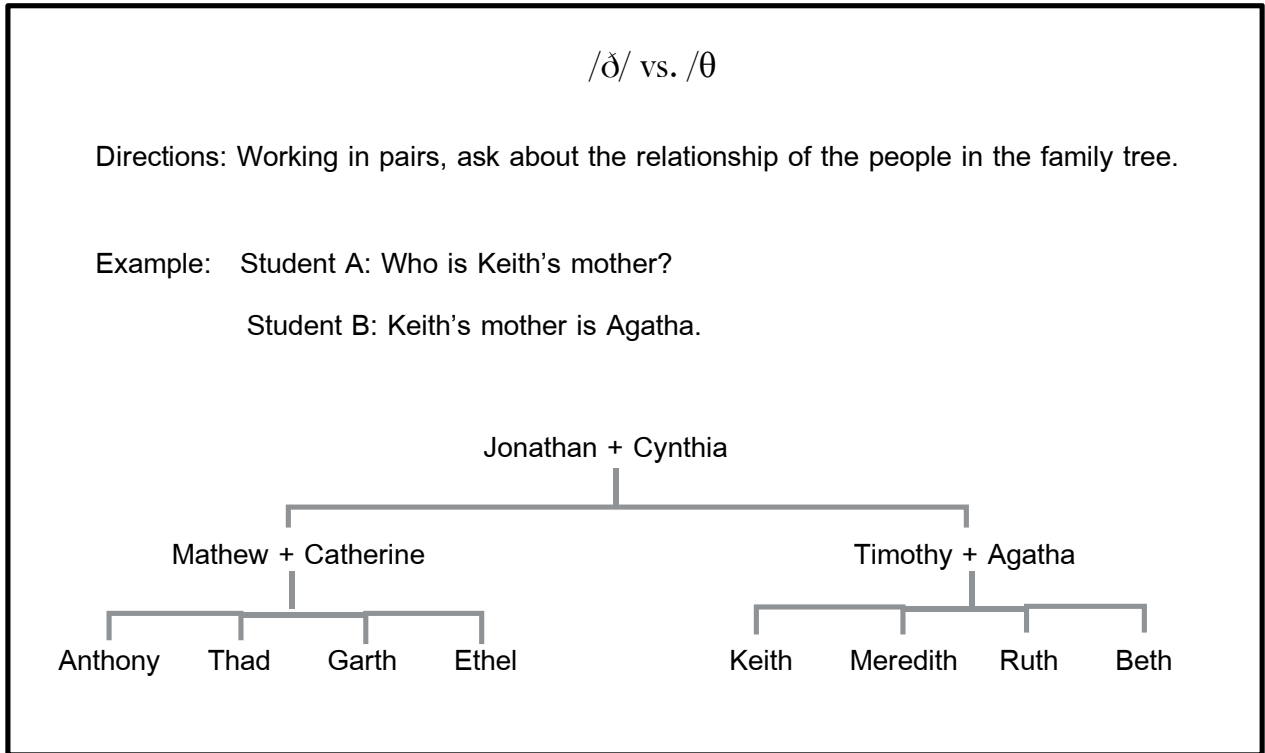Savignon, Sandra. *Interpreting Communicative Language Teaching*. London: Yale UP, 2002.

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Appendix 1 – Assessment Task

Tree[1]

/ð/ vs. /θ

Directions: Working in pairs, ask about the relationship of the people in the family tree.

Example: Student A: Who is Keith's mother?

Student B: Keith's mother is Agatha.

Jonathan + Cynthia

Mathew + Catherine   Timothy + Agatha

Anthony   Thad   Garth   Ethel   Keith   Meredith   Ruth   Beth

---

[1] From *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages* (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin 58).

Appendix 2 – Example of a Speaking Assessment Grid

Level	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Breakdown-Response	Interaction	Speech Flow
5	No mispronunciations;	Grammar accurate, only occasional minor errors[2];	Appropriate and precise to the context;	Effectively uses kinesics and circumlocution;	Interacts fittingly. No delay in answering. Is sensitive to turn-taking;	Speaks fluently;
4	Rarely mispronounces;	Few minor errors, no pattern;	Appropriate to the context. Rare lack of preciseness;	Resorts to kinesics and circumlocution easily. Not always effective;	Interacts easily. Minor delay in answering. Is usually sensitive to turn-taking;	Rarely hesitates;
3	Occasional mispronunciations, which do not interfere with understanding;	Few minor errors, no pattern. Occasional major errors[3];	Choice of words sometimes imprecise or inadequate to the context;	Resorts mostly to kinesics. Uses circumlocution with effort;	Interaction is adequate, but with long delay in answering. Difficulty in turn-taking;	Maintains flow of speech but uses repetition and/ or self-correction;
2	Often mispronounces, but intelligible with effort;	Constant major and minor errors;	Limited or inadequate to the context;	Little or no use of circumlocution. Limited use of kinesics;	Interaction limited to simple phrases. May answer illogically;	Hesitations are frequent and disrupt the flow of speech;
1	Is unintelligible.	Grammar inaccurate, except in formulaic expressions.	Lacking in vocabulary necessary to the context.	No use of strategies to compensate proficiency deficiencies.	Cannot maintain interaction. Produces irrelevant answers.	Speech flow so halting that little interaction is possible.

[2] Minor errors do not interfere with the listener's comprehension. For instance, using "that" instead of "who" (or vice-versa).

[3] Major errors interfere with the listener's comprehension. For instance, ungrammatical utterances (e.g. subject-verb agreement).

Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Cognition

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Abstract | Teaching in the 21st century is a huge challenge and every school has to cope with all the changes that occur within society and be, at the same time, an enjoyable place for the students to develop their skills to live and function in the 21st century society. This paper shows how Task-Based Learning (TBL) can be a valuable option in the foreign language classroom nowadays enabling the students to be active, interact with each other, learn by doing and develop their language knowledge through communicative tasks, replacing the traditional, teacher-centred lessons. At the same time, this article aims to show how doing tasks has advantages in terms of the cognitive development while learning a foreign language, how these tasks also affect the human brain as well as discuss the importance of bringing neuroscience and scientific evidence into the classroom context.

Key words | Task-Based Learning (TBL), tasks, foreign language learning, cognition, human brain and neuroscience

> *The classroom should not be about direct instruction. . . . Human beings **should not be passive**. When they get together, they should be **interacting** with each other. They should be **solving problems**, or they should be **making things.***
>
> (Robinson 117)

> *Indeed, one of the most demotivating factors for learners is when they have to learn something that **they cannot see the point of because it has no seeming relevance whatsoever to their lives.***
>
> (Dörnyei 63)

The lack of student motivation is one of the biggest problems many teachers face nowadays. Of course, it can be due to many factors but one of the main reasons is that sometimes students cannot see any relevance in what they learn and do not have an active involvement in their learning process. These two quotations (Robinson 117 and Dörnyei 63) give a clear overview of what happens nowadays and are a starting point to reflect on possible solutions to these problems. Therefore, it seems obvious that the traditional teacher-centred lessons no longer interest students because they do not get involved in the classroom and become demotivated. Since motivating students is one of the main goals of a teacher it would be worthwhile to understand the way students learn and work best in order to adapt planning and strategies according to students' interests, making the learning activities and lessons meaningful to them. Task-Based Learning (TBL) seems a possible option for the foreign language classroom nowadays in order to prepare students for the 21st century, enabling them to learn the language and, at the same time, acquire the skills they need to live in society nowadays. Recently, there has been much talk on project-based lessons and task-based learning in teachers' meetings, conferences and workshops which shows a general consensus that the traditional teacher-centred lessons and direct instruction have to be replaced by student-centred approaches as a way of getting the students to become active, involved and engaged in the

lesson. When talking about learning a foreign language it seems even more obvious that if students learn a language, they should put that knowledge into practice, communicate outside the classroom, in the real world. Although TBL appeared in the 1970s with the Communicative Approach, a study was carried out to analyse how authenticity and real-world tasks can be brought to the foreign language classroom nowadays through TBL (Costa). Not only did this study prove that TBL can bring authenticity to the classroom and is appropriate for this day and age but also led to further research to find scientific evidence for the benefits of TBL in terms of the cognitive development and the learning process. In fact, bringing scientific findings related to brain studies to the classroom context is essential in understanding how humans learn (Masuhara). Furthermore, the affective dimension plays also an important role in student's learning (Immordino-Yang and Damasio).

Reference to Tasks in the Official Documents of the Portuguese Educational System

To understand the cognitive effects of doing tasks (TBL) is one of the main aims of this paper. Before presenting any evidence, it is important to mention that doing tasks is something stated in the official documents that regulate the Portuguese educational system (*Metas Curriculares* and *Programas*), which correspond to the different levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), mentioning the use of communicative tasks similar to those students find in their real world. According to the *Metas Curriculares* and *Programas* of the Portuguese Ministry of Education for English and German for example, the approach suggested is based on action and doing tasks that enable students to have a central and active role in their learning process, communicating and conveying meaning. Value is also attributed to activities and tasks similar to those in the real world that allow student involvement, having the opportunity of developing himself/herself as a whole: cognitively, affectively and socially (*Ministério da Educação*, Lapa, Mota and Vilela). The teacher can choose the best strategies to put those suggestions into practice. These views are related to the ideals of Communicative Language Teaching.

Task-Based Learning (TBL)

TBL became popular after Prabhu (1987), who was working with secondary school students in India, noticed that they learned a language better if they were concentrated on doing a task or solving a problem instead of paying attention only to formal, linguistic aspects (Harmer).

Here are two definitions of TBL:

The central focus of TBL is doing tasks. The aim of the task is to create a real purpose for language use and provide a natural context for language study. Students prepare for the task, report back after the task and then study the language that arises naturally out of the task cycle and its accompanying materials. (Willis 1)

Task-based learning is a different way to learn languages. It can help the student by placing him/her in a **situation similar to the real world**, a situation where **oral communication** is essential for completing a specific task. Task-based learning has the advantage of getting the student to use **his/her skills at his/her current level** to help **develop language through its use.** It has the advantage of making the student focus on achieving a goal so that **language becomes a tool**, making the use of language a **necessity**. (Methods 3)

It is important to reinforce that a task in TBL is not a simple exercise aiming to reproduce or practice a specific formal structure as happens in the PPP framework (Presentation, Practice and Production) which is still very common nowadays and is defined by the presentation of formal structures, their controlled practice and their production towards the end of the lesson. According to Willis (1996), Skehan (1998), Ellis (2003), Nunan (2004) and Willis & Willis (2007), a task in TBL implies the pragmatic use of the language to convey meaning and achieve a final outcome by communicating. When talking about TBL is important to compare it with PPP.
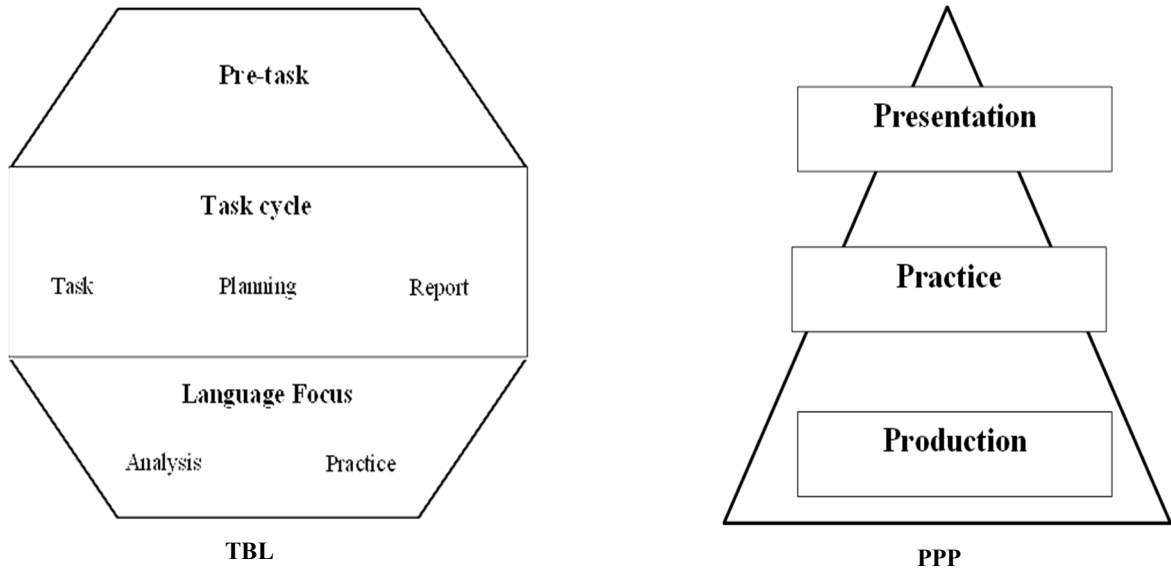
Figure 1 - Structure of TBL and PPP

PPP is related to the Audiolingualism (from the USA) and Situational Language Teaching (from the UK) in the 20th century that defend the correct use of the grammatical structures as a way of learning a language. There is a contextualised presentation of the structures, repetitions, practice and production, limiting what students can learn to that which is controlled by the teacher (Harmer). These characteristics are different from TBL since here students play a central role and the teacher doesn't control what the students learn. Although some studies on PPP proved that it isn't very efficient in terms of students' proficiency when they have to put the language knowledge into practice in different contexts, it is still used very often nowadays for two main reasons: the control that the teacher has during the lesson and in terms of assessment of learned structures which implies only a right or wrong answer (Skehan).

TBL has three stages: **pre-task**, **task cycle** and **language focus**. In the pre-task, the theme is introduced through expressions, structures and vocabulary, activating previous knowledge and the teacher explains the task and can present examples of similar tasks performed by other people. In the task cycle, the students do the task in pairs or in small groups. The teacher monitors students' performance from a distance, enabling them to use their

own knowledge avoiding asking questions to the teacher all the time. After doing the task, the students prepare and plan how they are going to present what they did, what they found out and their main conclusions. This moment is important because the students prepare carefully what they are going to present, paying attention to the language they use: formal structures, vocabulary and content. This moment enables language development (Willis). In the report stage, the teacher should praise all the positive aspects and encourage students to continue working because students' performance is not likely to be native speaker-like. In the last stage, language focus, they discuss and analyse the linguistic aspects that came up during the task. There is a focus on the form; students practise the linguistic structures that appeared within the context and in a natural way (Willis).

As mentioned above, TBL implies students' involvement and learning by doing. Therefore, it is important to focus now on what happens when doing a task in terms of the learning process (cognitive effects).

Doing Tasks and Cognition

Nowadays there is a need to link the theories of language acquisition with other areas, such as neuroscience, that offer useful and complementary information to teachers and educators of how the learning process occurs. If the association of different fields is necessary, it is also true that there is still much to be done (Masuhara).

It is in the brain that the learning process takes place through the synaptic connections between neurons. Each neuron has a cell body, dendrites, axon, myelin sheath and axon terminal. It functions as a vehicle for the circulation and information processing and it is responsible for the conversion of electrical and chemicals signals in both ways (Jensen).
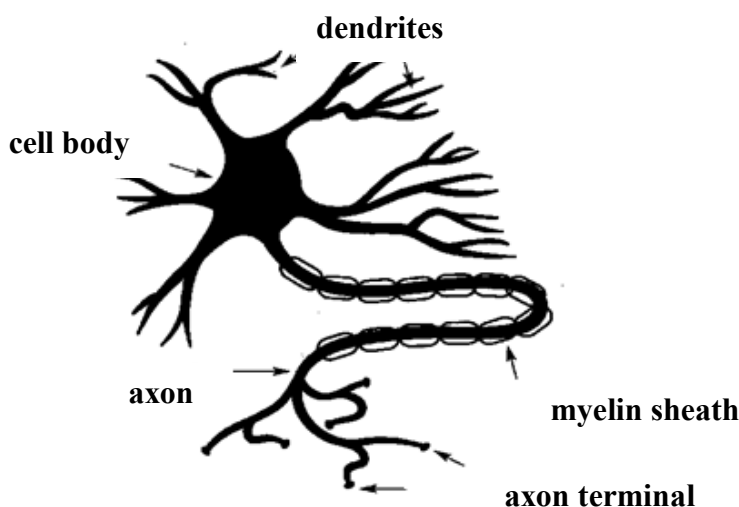
Figure 2 - Neuron (Jensen).

The axon connects to the dendrites of other neurons and conducts information as electrical stimulation and transports chemicals substances (Jensen). When a neuron is stimulated, it fires an electrical impulse to other neurons. At the same time, when there is a positive environment, the dendrites grow and branch out. The information circulates in each neuron as electrical impulses and only goes to other neuron as chemicals impulses, known as neurotransmitters, through the synaptic cleft, which is the meeting point between two neurons. The electrical message is sent from the cell body to the axon releasing chemical signals (Jensen). When there is the repetition of the same episode or information, the connections between neurons become more efficient, leading to its memorisation; when the information is new and stimulates the brain, it leads to new neuronal connections and creates enriched neurons. The difference between an enriched and an impoverished neuron is clear: there are more branches of the dendrites and more connections in an enriched neuron.
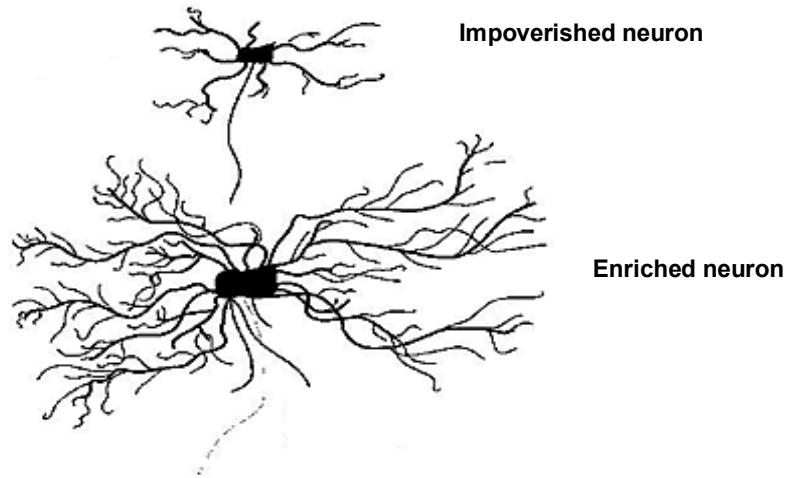
Figure 3 - Difference between an impoverished and an enriched neuron (Jensen).

Doing tasks and solving problems leads to brain development because there is a release of noradrenaline, a neurotransmitter synthesised from dopamine which is involved in stimulation, rewarding and humour mood (Wolfe) and enables dendritic growth.

According to the Information Processing Model (from the 1950s) the information that arrives through the sensory receptors and arouses the interest of the sensory memory is sent to the working memory so that it is worked and can be stored in the long-term memory. Situations that imply the releasing of adrenaline and noradrenaline by the adrenal cortex are related to a better memorisation; here emotional factors have a significant influence. Therefore, in the classroom context, emotions should play an important role and the type of activities a teacher chooses is also very important: experiences and activities that are related to learning by doing, experimenting and trial and error because they are meaningful and increase the emotional connections: "Neither learning nor recall happen in a purely rational domain, divorced from emotion, even though some of our knowledge will eventually distil into a moderately rational, unemotional form" (Immordino-Yang and Damasio 127).

In a positive environment the brain releases neurotransmitters related to pleasure: endorphin and dopamine. The same happens in the classroom context when students are doing tasks that raise their interest, which can also be in pairs or in groups (TBL).

TBL and Learning a Foreign Language in the 21st Century Society

The characteristics of TBL seem appropriate for the 21st century learners because they are "better described as doers and explorers than as reflective or thoughtful people — doers and explorers who also demonstrate the characteristic impulsiveness of youth. The DIY (Do It Yourself) and DIWO (Do It With Others) principles guide many of their actions" (Prestes 2).

> This generation seeks out a sense of the practical in what it does, and prefers that what it learns can be explored and applied. Because of this, its learning is closer to the model of "just in time" than that of "just in case" that is typical of traditional education. This generation prefers to learn what is applicable in the present, and not what may be usable in the future. (Prestes 2)

In general, students need to do, experiment, develop something by themselves. Therefore, TBL enables an active role and involvement by the learners. Students are described nowadays as digital natives and multitaskers. At the same time, they are also functional, smart, social, superfast, optimistic and with the capacity to collaborate and get involved (Boschman and Groen).

Our 21st century society, also known as the knowledge society, is defined by constant change, in a globalised world influenced by technology which affects the way people live, work and communicate. If society has changed, school needs to change too in order to prepare students for the real world. It is crucial to have student-centred classrooms instead of the traditional model in which the student has a passive role. Students need to be critical thinkers and be prepared to solve problems, collaborate and communicate. In fact, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication are the 21st century skills that teachers should implement in their lessons.

Two action research studies by Ruso and Pinto are examples of the efficiency and advantages of TBL in the foreign language classroom. The first Action Research was implemented in two English classes of the Eastern Mediterranean University (Cyprus) aiming to find solutions to the lack of students' motivation that were used to a more traditional approach.

The main conclusions were: TBL increased students' motivation and was efficient in terms of vocabulary acquisition and memorisation due to the materials chosen and the activities done. The students enjoyed the active role they had in the classroom and were involved doing the tasks. There was an increase of interaction and communication among students and an enjoyable classroom environment. The second Action Research (Pinto) was implemented in Cape Verde for a month in three schools. The students did the tasks communicating and their motivation and interaction also increased. At the same time, the focus on form happened in a natural context with real communicative situations to express meaning.

Learning in the 21st century means enabling the students to be critical thinkers, not only learning things by heart but questioning and interpreting facts and information, to have their own opinions and points of view, which is something related to the type of tasks they do in a TBL lesson. To help teachers check if their students are able to think critically there is a useful, well-documented, reference: A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, also known as Bloom's Taxonomy, which was created by a group of investigators of different universities of the United States of America led by Benjamin Bloom in 1956. In this taxonomy, usually represented in a pyramid, there are different levels, from the simplest to the most complex ones. Students' answers and performance help teachers to check if they are critical thinkers, according to each cognitive process that is mentioned for each level of the taxonomy. If students can do what is described at the top of the pyramid it means he or she is able to think critically (from Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)).

TBL enables the students to communicate, express meaning, learn by doing and experiment through trial and error to accomplish a final outcome as it happens in the real world when people communicate with each other. These ideas are related to the characteristics of the Communicative Approach: learning a language means learning to communicate and express meaning; the language is produced through trial and error; there is comprehensible pronunciation but not necessarily like a native speaker; the use of native language and translation can be used if there is a benefit for the student (Finocchiaro and Brumfit in Richard and Rodgers). Learning

by doing, which is at the heart of TBL, is also related to Constructivism (Piaget) and to Social Constructivism (and its principle advocate, Lev Vygotsky) social interaction is vitally important for cognitive development. Cooperative learning and the Zone of Proximal Development (the difference between what the student can do alone and what he can do with the help of a more experienced person: a classmate or a teacher), are two concepts of Social Constructivism and the teacher functions as a facilitator not giving the answers but helping the students to find them, "scaffolding" (Bruner, 1967).

Despite all the constraints and pressures of teaching (the national programme to follow as well as the adopted coursebook) the teacher has the autonomy to choose the strategies, activities and materials appropriate to his/her class in order to promote students' motivation and learning. A teacher should, whenever possible, choose activities and lessons that are meaningful to the students, according to their interests and motivation, this is likewise true in a TBL lesson. They should make what learners learn 'value added' so that they have the knowledge and skills to live in the 21st century society (Ellison).

> We are living in an age where the content taught in schools and the skills needed in a rapidly evolving world is a constant balancing act. If educators are to fulfil their role in society, they must reflect on what and how they teach so that they help to equip children with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to be able to live and function in society. This does not mean that we have to reinvent the wheel, it simply means that we have to make what we teach "value added". That is, make it more relevant, get more out of it. (Ellison 23)

Making the activities meaningful to the learners also means establishing aims that include the 4Cs related to CLIL (a concept derived from Content and Language Integrated Learning – CLIL – but now made use of more 'generalist' contexts): **C**ontent (contents and the way they are taught), **C**ommunication (the language of, for and through learning), **C**ulture (the knowledge the student has of himself/herself and others and what he/she can learn alone or with other classmates) and **C**ognition (aims that promote critical thinking) (Coyle, Hood and Marsh). By

doing this, learning becomes more meaningful because it integrates different areas of knowledge. The language appears naturally and there is a communicative goal to achieve a final outcome.

> As educators have long known, it is simply not enough for students to master knowledge and logical reasoning skills in the traditional academic sense. They must be able to choose among and recruit these skills and knowledge usefully outside of the structured context of a school or laboratory. (Immordino-Yang and Damasio 128)

TBL in the Foreign Language Classroom - Examples of Tasks:

When talking about TBL it is also important to know examples of activities that can be put into practice in the foreign language classroom. Willis & Willis give a clear description of different examples. It is a taxonomy based on cognitive processes, from simple to more complex tasks. The less complex tasks introduce the more complex ones.

Examples of tasks (Willis and Willis):

- **Listing:** presenting vocabulary, topics, ideas and information about a specific theme through brainstorming and fact-finding;

- **Ordering and sorting:** it implies sequencing - ordering a sequence of pictures or paragraphs in the correct order; ordering and ranking the vocabulary on a list according to different criteria; classifying: from a list of vocabulary the students put each one in the right category using tables, grids and present the advantages and disadvantages through mind maps;

- **Matching:** matching the words to the definitions or pictures to the descriptions;

- **Comparing and contrasting ideas:** compare and contrast ideas while interacting with other students and present them;

- **Problem solving:** these are more complex tasks that enable the students to solve a problem or a situation. It is better when more simple tasks related to the theme have

been done before. Therefore, it is recommended that the theme and the type of activities are appropriate to students' age and level.

- **Sharing personal experiences:** the same happens in the real world when people share stories and personal experiences. It promotes communication and fluency and develops social skills;

- **Projects and creative tasks**: these tasks enable the students to use tools, gadgets and knowledge from other areas to be creative. Examples of these tasks are: posters, portfolios, pamphlets, videos, websites, radio programmes, magazines and newspapers. As digital natives, students learn the language using technology: upload pictures, make videos and other tasks.

What makes these tasks examples of TBL is the fact that they are the centre of the lesson and students have a final outcome to accomplish and present to the other students.

Conclusion

According to the characteristics of 21st century society and learners, TBL may be a valid option for the foreign language classroom in an effort to replace the traditional teacher-centred lessons that still dominate Portuguese classrooms. TBL can help to foster advantages in terms of the cognitive development, and at the same time, it provides students with opportunities to be active and engaged in the lesson, learning by doing, using ICT tools and gadgets. Through TBL students may acquire the skills that have been identified as fundamental for 21st century society: collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking. It may also be a way to overcome and deal with students' bad behaviour, lack of attention and low motivation. Learner-centred lessons can be one of the possible ways to involve and engage students and prepare them for the real-world. At the same time, it is also true that neuroscience and other areas are crucial for

understanding language learning process and provide teachers with scientific and biological evidence to improve their work.

Note

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