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Abstracts

Session 1: Interaction patterns and support for learning in the primary English classroom

Carolyn Leslie (PhD)

Many children around the world today learn English in foreign language (EFL) settings, where learners study English for a mere one or two hours a week, and where there are few opportunities to use the language outside the classroom. Consequently, it is imperative that class time is wisely spent to optimize learning. The use of peer oral interaction activities with both adults and children has been shown to lead to improved learning (Long, 1996; Oliver, 2009), and the present study attempts to answer two research questions: (a) How do primary EFL learners support their partners' language production during oral interaction?; (b) How do interaction patterns influence primary EFL learners' support of their partners' language production during oral interaction?

Learners in two 4th year classes worked in pairs to complete 3 spot-the-difference tasks. A total of 18 pairs were recorded, and recordings were subsequently transcribed. Storch's model of interaction patterns (2002) was used to classify learner interaction and data were then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively in an effort to answer both research questions.

Qualitative analysis showed the many ways in which learners in 4th year classes were able to mutually support language production using strategies contemplated by both a cognitive and sociocultural theoretical framework. Interaction patterns were

shown to change over time. In task 1, the most common interaction pattern was expert/novice, where learners engaged with each other's ideas, but where one learner had more control over the task. By task 3 however, all interaction patterns were collaborative, which has been shown in previous studies to be most conducive to language learning (Storch, 2002). However, a third of students in tasks 1 and 2 exhibited passive parallel interaction patterns, characterised by a lack of engagement with each other's contributions. Further analysis showed how the support provided differed depending on the interaction pattern of the dyads concerned. Although empirical research is extremely rewarding, it is not without constraints. Gaining access to classrooms is a challenge, and transcribing and analysing recordings is time consuming and demanding. However, classroom-based studies are essential, as they take into account the situated nature of learning.

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Session 2: Communicative versus linguistic competence: the case of primary school students with Portuguese as an Additional Language

Adriana Ramos and Chrysi Rapanta (PhD)

It is common that students with a native language different than the one used in the formal curriculum are treated as cases requiring a “special” treatment, often translated in extra-curricular hours of linguistic assistance, or even in their exclusion from activities requiring a good use of the formally taught language. This phenomenon is especially evident in Portugal due to the strong migration movements since the late '60s. Especially in primary school, the lack of programmes specialised in children with Portuguese as an Additional Language (PLA) has called for our attention.

The object of this study is the communicative competence of children with PLA, inserted in the Portuguese primary school environment, with the goal of showing how a language that is not perfectly spoken, from a grammatical and syntactic point of view, is not a barrier in these children's interaction both with their Portuguese peers and their teachers. Adopting the ethnomethodological paradigm, the observation of ten children with PLA was performed during their performance of communicative activities in the classroom and during playtime.

The conversational analysis of a large corpus of interactions collected during two years from two different schools allowed the identification of some of the devices mobilized in the conversations of the children with PLA. Some of the communication devices identified were: (a) the categorization devices used by students in the construction of institutional identities of the school members; (b) the conversational organization of turns' alteration in interactions both with peers and the teachers; (c) the effective coordination of intelligible actions, such as textual understanding or the use of laughter as a communicative device. It is concluded that based on

the observed communicative phenomena, children with PLA can participate effectively in formal and informal contexts of interaction. In addition, it is argued how, from an ethnomethodological perspective, it could be possible to promote some reflections on the organization of talk-in-interaction within the plurilingual environment of the Portuguese public school.

Session 3: Multiliteracies for intercultural learning in the English language classroom: action research in the basic education context

Shabnam Gulamhussen

Globalisation has become a salient feature of present-day societies, promoting encounters, interactions, and exchange of ideas across geographies. While allowing people to experience economic, social, academic, and cultural enrichment opportunities, globalisation has brought along questions about engaging with diversity and living with 'the other'. Since language underlies all encounters and communication, foreign language educators have been urged to shift from a linguistic focus to an intercultural one. An intercultural focus aims at empowering learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop intercultural communicative competence and become active participants in the global world as intercultural mediators.

How can teachers help learners to become intercultural mediators? Considering the multiple modes of communication and meaning-making tools young people engage with in their social activities, I propose to conduct action research on an experience of promoting intercultural learning in the English language classroom based on a pedagogy of multiliteracies. This is an approach grounded on sociocultural theory that enables understanding cultural diversity and supports culturally relevant and meaningful learning experiences.

My study will attempt to address the following main research question: How can intercultural learning be enacted in the English language classroom? From this general question, the following sub-questions emerge: (a) What kind of content, materials, activities and assessment practices support intercultural learning? (b) How do students engage with intercultural materials? (c) What is the role of the teacher in promoting intercultural learning? and (d) What do students have to say about their

experience of engaging with intercultural learning materials and tasks?

Taking an interpretive research approach, I will collect data from a single classroom at the 3rd cycle basic education level (students aged 13-15) through classroom observation, students' work and reflections, the teacher-researcher's reflective journal and a focus group interview. I hope the study will allow for the linking of theoretical perspectives and classroom practice and bring insights into the ways the research process can reshape the language teacher's role as an educator for intercultural learning.

Session 4: Learning a language, knowing the world. Virtual interactions in the classroom

Rita Zurrapa

With the promotion of virtual interactions in the classroom with other countries, I propose to increase students' awareness of other cultures, enhance their curiosity for knowledge, develop their language and digital skills, while using the English language in real context.

There is a lack of research on the impact of virtual interactions in young students' learning, compared to the number of studies in the field of Higher Education. Thus this proposal of an action investigation, that will help me to strengthen my knowledge, improve my practices, promote unique learning opportunities to my students, and leave a testimony to teachers that are looking for active and differentiated teaching methodologies. The research proposal is to explore the impact of live online events with different countries on my students and how these interactions open up their horizons, whilst promoting real context situations that require the English language use. These digital interaction moments may be an opportunity to develop students' linguistic and intercultural competences.

The sample group of students are from a school that is integrated in the Programme for Priority Intervention Educational Areas (TEIP) and has joined the Autonomy Project (Projecto de Autonomia e Flexibilidade Curricular) with a plan for school innovation that aims at implementing innovative solutions to prevent early school dropout and to improve students learning. In this school about 40% students have social benefits, due to low income of their families and family neglect. Many students express low self-esteem and have no expectations for their future life. The interest for this research has started with a class that has moved on to secondary school. They participated in several online interactions with students from other countries using the English language and their increasing interest in the subject was unequivocal, they also

developed critical thinking, and became active participants in the life of the school and community.

As perceived challenges we can already foresee: the limited technological equipment (old equipment and weak Wi-Fi); some parents not allowing their children to participate or lack of response to the invitation; and the ongoing pandemic situation that prevents students to work more actively in groups and improve their collaboration skills.

Session 5: The intercultural dimension of English as a foreign language: a survey of teachers of English in primary education in Portugal

Sandie Mourão (PhD)

The intercultural dimension of foreign language (FL) learning aims to develop intercultural speakers, or mediators, who see others beyond a particular ascribed identity and instead as individuals with qualities to be discovered (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002: 9). This has resulted in the expansion of the basic aim of language education, a communicative competence, to include an intercultural competence (IC) (cf Byram 1997). No clear consensus exists with regard to a definition of IC, (Spitzberg & Changon, 2009), nevertheless, according to Driscoll & Simpson (2015) the most widely used and accepted framework referred to in primary FL education is Byram's model (1997) of five *savoirs*, which encompasses the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes required to interact with the Other, to decenter and respect other cultures. Primary FL learning is considered to be judiciously positioned (Doyé, 1999) to cultivate attitudes of openness and curiosity towards others, as well as reinforce children's knowledge and understanding of own cultures.

European studies have shown that teachers' beliefs about language learning and unquestioned teaching routines can hinder the successful inclusion of IC (cf LACE 2007). Teachers are seen as confident in their knowledge of the target culture, but reticent about the affective and the pragmatic dimensions of IC (Breka & Petravić 2015; LACE 2007). This paper presents the initial results of an online survey developed with the objective of collecting the perceptions of teachers of English to children in primary education in Portugal (pre-school to grade 6) regarding IC. Open and closed questions were designed to collect information regarding the following parameters: EFL teaching objectives, practices and resources; personal beliefs about IC through EFL; approaches to IC in EFL including topics, practices, assessment and challenges. The survey

was completed by 182 teachers and results suggest that the respondents are fairly confident about including the IC dimension in their teaching. Nevertheless, actual described practices suggest a misunderstanding of concepts and learning objectives. I will share some of the results, discuss the challenges I faced in designing the survey and make reference to a professional development course (in design) to overcome some of these misunderstandings.

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Session 6: A plurilingual approach to ESL for adult immigrants in the context of language instruction for newcomers to Ontario, Canada

Svetlana Volkova

The aim of this PhD work is to provide a holistic look at the possibility of implementing a plurilingual approach in English language education within a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) educational environment in Ontario, Canada, with a focus on its practical benefits and current limitations within the LINC institutional system. The majority of newcomers in Canada have an L1 other than English or French. Theoretical international and Canadian local research is in support of plurilingual approaches for language education (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009; Cummins, 2007; Piccardo, 2013) and emerging research on pluralistic approaches in language education has also highlighted its multiple benefits. However, provincial language settlement programs, such as LINC, are mainly following English only policies. This demonstrates the need for change in the practical implementation of a language teaching approach and a change of perception of all stakeholders involved. For the scope of the study, we will be looking at new immigrants with an L1 that is different from English.

This research will answer the following question: "How can a plurilingual approach be implemented within a LINC context, taking into consideration the program's specific outcome and current limitations? With sub-questions:

- What are the limitations of a plurilingual approach within LINC program?
- How do stakeholders' attitudes' and beliefs' impact on a plurilingual approach within LINC program?
- What strategies could be used to implement a plurilingual approach within LINC?
- How does a plurilingual approach support intercultural competence development within a LINC program?

Using a case study of four LINC classes, its teachers and its students, I intend to investigate the practical

outcomes and changes in students' and teachers' attitudes towards language learning, as well as contribute with developing resources to support improved practices. For my data collection tools, I intend to survey LINC teachers and use pre- and post- implementation questionnaire (including in learner's L1), as well as follow up interviews and class observations.

My hypothesis is that my research will demonstrate a significant gap between theory and the practical application of a plurilingual approach in LINC education in Ontario, Canada. It will also provide practical suggestions on how to close this gap and demonstrate the outcome of plurilingual approach in these LINC classes. Nevertheless, despite a plurilingual approach being seen as beneficial by the majority of stakeholders involved, I expect some resistance, or lack of understanding, around its practical implementation from the teachers and student participants.

I believe the results of my research can be useful for the improvement of the current educational system on different levels, but specifically for adult language support services. Language teachers might find the outcomes useful, as it will provide practical suggestions in relation to their everyday practices. Finally, I am hoping to contribute to a general perspective shift with respect to using non-official Canadian languages in adult ESL programs in the Ontario education environment.

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Session 7: Plurilingual and intercultural communicative competences for humanitarian aid personnel in disaster response

Tatevik Hambaryan

Regardless of their nature, all disasters are comprised of the main five stages: preparedness, mitigation, prevention, response and recovery (UNISDR). The disaster response phase is the one in the framework of which my research will be carried out, since the nature of disasters in the twenty-first century proves that it is an arena where language and cultural misunderstanding between the host population and responders may be generated. Humanitarian aid personnel are people for whom mastering more than one foreign language and displaying adequate level of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is an essential requirement, since the challenges arising due to those two competencies in emergency situations may be a matter of life and death.

Taking this into consideration, this research highlights the importance of establishing a strong link between foreign language and intercultural communication training to empower personnel with plurilingual and intercultural communicative competences. The study offers a didactic model for humanitarian aid personnel training by intertwining Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and ICC through a plurilingual approach established by European Centre of Modern Languages.

In practical terms, this research expects to highlight a critical need for change in relation to foreign language didactics and training of humanitarian aid personnel. We expect to show the crucial role of plurilingual and intercultural communicative competencies in disaster response scenarios. After raising this awareness, we will be able to demonstrate, in practice, how to develop those competencies. We will design teaching modules and pilot these with our target group, namely doctors. For LSP, the English language will be included, while German will be selected as the second foreign language.

Beyond medical personnel context, this research will have possible implications for other practitioners as well. The model may be used for diverse languages and diverse humanitarian aid branches, adapting the LSP component to a particular language and target group (e.g. English/Spanish for humanitarian nurses, German/English for emergency workers, etc.).

Disaster response provides a window into multiple contexts that allow researchers to highlight plurilingual and intercultural communication problems. As global citizens, we should cooperate to prepare for the challenges and upcoming disasters and crises together and respond to them with more meaningful and impactful efforts.

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Session 8: Investigating the efficacy of a ‘fluid’ approach in the teaching of Sardinian as a foreign language

Michele Broccia

It is undoubtable that today minority languages are running the risk of extinction. They have to cope with risks coming from outside and from inside the cultures where they are spoken. The former come from nation-state languages, the latter from a lack of interest in their own people. The disappearance of a minority language represents a negative loss not only for its speakers and their community, but also for humanity. Communities would slowly be dispossessed by their tools to express their identity; humanity would reduce its cultural and linguistic biodiversity. For some of these languages, like Sardinian, due to the lack of a unique variety, the issues are even more complicated.

The teaching of second languages in the world is dominated by colonial languages such as English, Spanish, French and others. Teaching a minority language as a second language can be key to prevent its slow oblivion. The lack of pedagogical approaches specifically designed and tested for the teaching of a minority language, such as Sardinian, could represent a challenge. Researching and testing on new approaches to make its learning interesting can attract new speakers and help revive its use. An approach relying on the natural expression of minority language values and on a spontaneous connection between oral and written discourse.

The approach that will be designed and tested, through a quasi-experimental research design and a focus group, is called ‘fluid’ due to its characteristic of being flexible, adapted to the usually spoken context of a minority language, to the absence of a textbook as predominant pedagogical material and to the way the coursebook is replaced. The main goal will be to ascertain if an innovative pedagogical approach, more humanistic and direct, can help making the teaching learning process of Sardinian as

a second language more effective than a traditional language teaching approach. Will its humanistic and communicative nature, requiring a different posture from the part of the educator, lead to a richer learning from the part of the adult students? Will new students be attracted to learn a minority language through a new approach?

Session 9: Developing skills for the 21st century: towards a version of task-based approach suitable for the development of Portuguese as a Foreign Language around the world

Catarina Castro (PhD)

As contacts between cultures keep growing and the demands for second language learning keep rising, there is an increasing need for well-trained foreign language teachers able to prepare interculturally competent language speakers, with a view to ensuring the well-functioning of today's culturally diverse democracies.

To this end, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBL) is becoming increasingly known for its distinct edge in creating an advantageous and motivating language learning environment. However, despite considerable theoretical and empirical support for TBL, there are few research-based examples of its appropriateness for school contexts, and the great potential of this action-oriented approach is being underexploited. In this respect, a number of teacher factors have been found to challenge the adoption of TBL, including previous beliefs about effective pedagogy, as well as a lack of teaching expertise in task-based approaches, namely among in-service teachers of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL), for whom TBL is a relatively recent innovation, despite being generally recommended in the national curriculum.

Nevertheless, when teachers' beliefs are acknowledged and addressed, there is evidence to suggest that new understandings can be established successfully, highlighting the importance of adequate in-service training and continued teacher support. Furthermore, several authors have claimed the desirability of confronting theoretical discourses with the local realities of schooling and teacher education.

Based on the aforementioned, this study investigates the beliefs, practices and training needs

of in-service PFL teachers, working abroad for Instituto Camões. Data will be collected through an online survey and focus groups with a sample of target teachers, with a view to preparing a six-month intervention programme set out to give PFL teachers the opportunity to reflect critically and experiment with TBL in their classrooms.

The significance of this study lies in analysing the suitability of TBL for PFL learning in different school contexts and to derive suggestions for a feasible version.

Session 10: The use of authentic oral materials and oral communication strategies for the development of language learning in higher education: a case study

Lucia Claro

The main hypothesis of this study is that the knowledge of oral communication skills and the use of makerspaces (an active methodology of practical character that empowers students) combined with the use of oral authentic materials (e.g. movies, TV series, songs, YouTube videos, and documentaries) would contribute to the development of student's oral skills (listening and speaking) by encouraging them to get immersed in the language.

The study addresses mainly these two research questions: how the knowledge of oral communication strategies and the use of authentic oral materials can contribute to students' oral skills, and how a makerspace where students are able to watch/listen and discuss authentic oral materials can be relevant to the development of students' oral skills.

A case study will be conducted focusing on language undergraduate students of a public Portuguese university. The data for the study will be obtained through the use of mixed methods: quantitative, in the form of questionnaires answered by undergraduate students, and qualitative, in the form of interviews with four undergraduate students and authentic oral material testing (these four students will be exposed to authentic oral materials and oral activities adapted to their interests and their effectiveness will be analyzed based on the perspective of these students). The thesis intends to show how authentic oral materials based on students' interests can promote real oral interactions improving students' vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency.

Makerspaces are usually applied to primary education, nevertheless, in this study, we want to

show how it can also be relevant to create makerspaces in higher education, giving students the opportunity to participate in creative and meaningful activities related to oral materials. Despite the limitations imposed by a case study based on students' perspectives, the results can contribute to show how the use of authentic oral materials and the creation of makerspaces to improve oral skills could be useful strategies to revolutionize language learning in higher education.