

Teaching with comics to develop competences in oral interaction in the mother tongue

Ensinar com a banda desenhada para desenvolver competências em interação oral na língua materna

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Resumo:

Desde os anos 90, temos vindo a estudar o uso da banda desenhada para ensinar o Português como língua materna na escolaridade obrigatória em Portugal. Tendo em conta o facto de que, na atualidade, o processo de ensino está focado no desenvolvimento de competências, defendemos o uso da banda desenhada para desenvolver competências em compreensão na leitura e expressão/produção escrita. Mais tarde, levámos a cabo um estudo que consistia na análise do programa para o ensino do Português como língua materna centrado na presença da banda desenhada nesse documento e no papel que esta pode desempenhar no desenvolvimento de competências em comunicação oral e escrita. Recorrendo à análise documental, recolhemos informação nesse documento relativa aos dois aspetos já referidos: i) referências à banda desenhada e ii) seu contributo para o desenvolvimento de competências em comunicação oral e escrita. De seguida, os dados relativos ao segundo aspeto foram objeto de análise de conteúdo. Neste texto, apresentamos a parte dos resultados desse estudo relativa à análise da presença da banda desenhada no programa para o 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico e ao papel que esta pode desempenhar no desenvolvimento de competências em interação oral. Esses resultados permitiram-nos concluir que, embora a banda desenhada seja escassamente referida no programa, pode efetivamente contribuir para o desenvolvimento de competências em interação oral em crianças com idades compreendidas entre os 6 e os 9 ou 10 anos.

Palavras-chave: Banda desenhada; Interação oral; Competências; 1.º Ciclo do Ensino Básico; Programa.

Abstract:

Since the 90s, I have been studying the use of comics in teaching Portuguese as a mother tongue in compulsory education in Portugal. Taking into account the fact that nowadays the teaching process is centered in the development of competences, I sustained the use of comics to develop competences in reading and writing. Lately, I developed a study consisting in the analysis of the syllabus for teaching Portuguese as a mother tongue focused on the presence

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of comics in that document and the role comics may play in the development of competences in oral and written communication. Using document analysis, I gathered information from the syllabus concerning the two aspects mentioned above: i) presence of comics and ii) their contribution to the development of competences in oral and written communication. Afterwards, data concerning the second aspect afore mentioned were submitted to content analysis.

In this text, I present part of the results of this study concerning the analysis of the presence of comics in the syllabus for primary school (the first four years in the Portuguese educational system) and the role they may play in the development of competences in oral interaction. The findings allowed me to conclude that, although comics are scarcely mentioned in the syllabus, they may in fact contribute to the development of competences in oral interaction by 6-9 or 10 year-old children.

Keywords: Comics; Oral interaction; Competences; Primary school education; Syllabus.

Résumé:

Depuis les années 90, nous étudions le rôle joué par la bande dessinée dans l'enseignement du Portugais comme langue maternelle dans l'enseignement obligatoire au Portugal. Tenant compte du fait que, à présent, l'enseignement est axé sur le développement de compétences, nous avons soutenu le recours à la bande dessinée pour développer des compétences en lecture et écriture. Plus tard, nous avons mené à bout une étude correspondant à l'analyse du curriculum pour l'enseignement du Portugais comme langue maternelle axée sur la présence de la bande dessinée dans ce document et le rôle qu'elle pourrait jouer dans le développement de compétences en communication orale et écrite. En ayant recours à l'analyse documentaire, nous avons recueilli des données concernant les deux aspects mentionnés : i) présence de la bande dessinée et ii) son apport au développement de compétences en communication orale et écrite. Ensuite, les données concernant le deuxième aspect ont été soumises à l'analyse de contenu. Dans ce texte, nous présentons une partie de ces résultats concernant l'analyse de la présence de la bande dessinée dans le curriculum pour l'école primaire (correspondant aux quatre premières années de scolarité au Portugal) et du rôle qu'elle peut jouer dans le développement de compétences en interaction orale. Nous avons conclu que, malgré le fait que la bande dessinée est rarement mentionnée dans ce curriculum, elle peut en effet jouer un rôle important dans le développement de compétences en interaction orale d'enfants âgés entre 6 et 9-10 ans.

Mots-clés : Bande dessinée ; Interaction orale ; Compétences ; École primaire ; Curriculum.

1. Introduction

Since the 90s (Sá, 1995, 1996), I have been proposing the use of comics as a resource to teach and learn Portuguese as a mother tongue, namely to study the structure of the narrative texts and to develop competences in reading and writing in pupils attending compulsory education. During these years, I noticed that progressively comics moved from being forbidden to being promoted in the syllabuses to teach Portuguese as a mother tongue published in 1991 and revised several times afterwards (Departamento da Educação Básica, 2004), in 2009 (Reis, 2009) and in 2015 (Buescu *et al.*, 2015).

But nothing has really changed in what concerns their presence and use in educational contexts.



Since comics are effective in the teaching of the mother tongue, I decided to study their use to develop competences in oral and written communication taking into account the syllabus for the teaching of the mother tongue. In this text, I present the part of that study concerning the development of competences in oral communication in primary school² based on the following research questions: i) *How are comics present in the syllabus for the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue?* and ii) *How can the use of comics in the teaching of the mother tongue contribute to the development of competences in oral interaction?* The text begins with a theoretical background followed by the explanation of the methodology used in the study and the presentation and discussion of the results of the analysis and closes with some suggestions concerning the use of comics in the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue to develop competences in oral interaction by 6-9 or 10 year-old children.

2. Comics: a didactic resource to develop oral communication

Taking into account their characteristics, comics are useful to explore several aspects of languages including the mother tongue: the narrative structure, some grammar (for instance, onomatopoeias – which originate a kind of sound universe – and interjections, conjunctions and adverbs frequently used in small texts placed in the superior left corner or inferior right corner of the images, that convey temporal, spatial or logical information) (Sá, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c). Comics may also be used to develop competences in reading and writing (Sá, 2000a, 2000b, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2016).

More recently, I have been doing research on the development of competences in oral communication through the teaching of the mother tongue (Sá, 2017, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). That research made me understand that comics – as other text types/genres – may contribute to the development of competences in oral interaction, although in an indirect way. Even if they are a form of written text, the topics they deal with may be discussed orally. Such activities will involve oral interaction, therefore listening to the others and talking to take part in the discussion.

For Luna (2016)³:

- Exploring oral communication involves
 - Linguistic mechanisms (of lexical and grammatical nature),
 - Encyclopedic mechanisms (concerning knowledge),
 - Textual mechanisms (related to the structure of several text genres serving different communicative purposes);
- Developing oral comprehension involves
 - Strategies (formulating hypotheses, previewing ideas, understanding ideas, identifying main ideas, making inferences, monitoring comprehension),

² In the Portuguese educational system, primary school corresponds to the first four years.

³ This text was chosen as reference for the elaboration of the analysis categories for this study, because it resulted from a state of the art produced within a study I took part in.



- Phases (pre-listening, listening and post-listening);
- Developing oral expression involves
 - Levels (of phonetic-phonologic nature – concerning intonation –, lexical-semantic nature – related with the ability to select adequate words/phrases –, morphosyntactic nature – related with grammar – and textual nature – concerning the coherence and cohesion of the discourse).

In the study partially presented in this text, I used these characteristics of oral communication as a basis to determine if comics may be used to develop competences in oral interaction by 6-9 or 10 year-old children assuming that the topics they deal with may be discussed in the classroom.

3. The study

3.1. Methodology

As I have already mentioned, I based this part of my study in two research questions: i) *How are comics present in the syllabus for the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue?* and ii) *How can the use of comics in the teaching of the mother tongue contribute to the development of competences in oral interaction?*

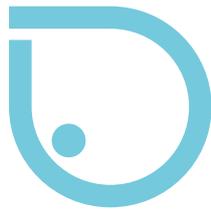
In this text, I present part of the results of this study concerning the analysis of the presence of comics in the section of the current syllabus for the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue (Buescu *et al.*, 2015) concerning primary school and the role they may play in the development of competences in oral interaction.

Firstly, I used document analysis to identify in that document statements concerning comics or the development of competences in oral communication that could be related with the use of comics to teach Portuguese as a mother tongue, even if they were not explicitly mentioned. Afterwards, those statements were submitted to content analysis (Bardin, 2000; Pardal & Correia, 2011) using categories I built on the bases of the theoretical background above presented.

Table 1 presents the categories used in this study:

Table 1 – Analysis categories

Oral communication	Linguistic mechanisms	Lexical choices Grammatical structure
	Encyclopedic mechanisms	Knowledge involved in the oral discourse
	Textual mechanisms	Structure of several text types/ genres and relation with the communicative purposes of oral discourse



Oral comprehension	Strategies	Formulating hypotheses Previewing ideas Understanding ideas Identifying main ideas Making inferences Monitoring comprehension
	Phases	Pre-listening Listening Post-listening
Oral expression	Phonetic-phonologic level	Use of intonation
	Lexical-semantic level	Selection of adequate words/ phrases
	Morphosyntactic level	Grammatical structure of the oral discourse
	Textual level	Coherence and cohesion of the discourse

Finally, I drew my conclusions from the results of the data analysis and presented some suggestions concerning the use of comics in the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue to develop competences in oral interaction by 6-9 or 10 year-old children.

3.2. Analysis of the data and discussion of the results

In this section, I will present the results of the analysis and discuss them.

3.2.1. References to comics

To begin the analysis, I scanned the part of the syllabus relevant to this study looking for explicit references to comics.

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of the references to comics:



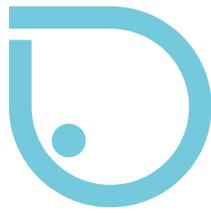
Table 2 – References to comics

Nature of the statements	Statements
<i>Aims</i> Activities ⁴	<u>RW1/RW2</u> <i>8. Reading several text genres.</i> 1. Read small narrative, informative and descriptive texts, poems and comics .
	<u>RW3</u> <i>6. Reading several text genres.</i> 1. Read narrative, informative and descriptive texts, news, letters, invitations and comics . <i>19. Writing several text genres.</i> 2. Write dialogues and subtitles for comics .
	<u>RW4</u> <i>7. Reading several text genres.</i> 1. Read narrative and descriptive texts, portraits, letters, invitations, notices, entries in encyclopaedies and dictionaries and comics . <i>21. Writing several text genres.</i> 2. Write dialogues and subtitles for comics .
Contents	<u>RW1/RW2/RW3/RW4</u> Text comprehension Narrative texts [...] [...] comics <hr/> <u>RW3/RW4</u> [...] Text production Narrative texts [...] [...] dialogues and subtitles for comics

The table above presented reveals that there are very few references to comics. In the 1st and 2nd grades, they are just related to reading. In the 3rd and 4th grades, they are related to reading and writing too.

This analysis reveals that the use of comics is not clearly recommended, since they are rarely mentioned.

⁴ In this table, I use several conventions: RW and underlining, for *Reading and Writing*; a number for the grade (e.g., 1 for 1st grade); italic for the aims; normal style for activities and the contents; a grey background to emphasize the word *comics*.



3.2.2. Developing oral interaction with comics

Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of aims and activities concerning the mechanisms in oral comprehension⁵:

Table 3 – Mechanisms of oral comprehension to be developed using comics (aims/activities)

Linguistic mechanisms
O1 <i>2. Listening to brief discourses to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 2. Identify unknown words.
O2 <i>2. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 2. Learn new words after listening to an exposé on a new subject.
O3 <i>2. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 2. Learn new words after listening to an exposé on a new subject.
Encyclopedic mechanisms
O3 <i>1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 2. Identify essential information.
O4 <i>1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Distinguish essential and secondary information. 2. Identify implicit information. 3. Distinguish facts and opinions.

Aims and activities presented in this table concern *linguistic mechanisms* (related to lexical development) and *encyclopedic mechanisms* (related to the acquisition and development of knowledge). It is worth mentioning the fact that there are no references to *textual mechanisms* in what concerns oral comprehension implicitly stating that there is no connection between oral comprehension and the use of text type/genres.

Table 4 presents the results of the analysis of contents concerning the mechanisms in oral comprehension:

⁵ In the following tables, I use several conventions: O meaning *Orality*; a number for the grade (e.g., 1 for 1st grade); italic for the aims; normal style for activities and the contents.



Table 4 – Mechanisms of oral comprehension to be developed using comics (contents)

Linguistic mechanisms
<u>O1</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: development, adequacy
<u>O2/O3</u> Comprehension and expression Vocabulary: development, adequacy, variety
<u>O4</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: variety and precision
Encyclopedic mechanisms
<u>O1/O2/O3</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential information
<u>O4</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential, secondary and implicit information Fact and opinion Key ideas
Textual mechanisms
<u>O1</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Instruction
<u>O2</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Guided expression: retelling, telling; simulation, dramatization

I found references to linguistic mechanisms (centered on vocabulary) and encyclopedic mechanisms (concerning the relevance and the reliability of information), as in aims and activities. Nevertheless, contents related to oral comprehension also refer to textual mechanisms (concerning narrative, dramatic and instructional texts), which are not mentioned in aims/activities. I assume that implicitly the syllabus is more focused on the transmission of contents than on the development of competences.

Table 5 presents the results of the analysis of aims and activities concerning the mechanisms in oral expression:



Table 5 – Mechanisms of oral expression to be developed using comics (aims/activities)

Linguistic mechanisms
<u>O1</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 3. Use vocabulary adequate to the topic and the situation.
<u>O2</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 4. Use vocabulary adequate to the topic and the situation and gradually more varied. 5. Build sentences gradually more complex.
<u>O3</u> 2. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 2. Use vocabulary more and more varied and sentence structures more and more complex. 3. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 1. Adapt the discourse to the situations of communication.
<u>O4</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 2. Use vocabulary more and more varied and precise and sentence structures more and more complex.
Encyclopedic mechanisms
<u>O3</u> 3. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 4. Make an oral presentation (more or less 3 minutes) on a given topic, eventually using ICT. 5. Make a short persuasive discourse. 6. Play specific roles in guided expression activities, taking in account the topic, getting back to the point and justifying one's opinions.
<u>O4</u> 2. <i>Using technics to register and memorize information.</i> 1. Fill grids. 3. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 2. Retell, tell and describe. 3. Inform, explain. 5. <i>Taking part in guided expression activities taking into account given rules and playing specific roles.</i> 2. Interpret different points of view. 3. Get back to the point in an interaction. 4. Justify opinions, attitudes, options. 5. Add relevant information. 6. Precise and summarize ideas.



Textual mechanisms
<u>O2</u> 4. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 4. Retell and tell. 5. Play specific roles in guided expression activities (simulation and dramatization), listening to others, waiting for one's turn to speak and taking into account the topic.
<u>O3</u> 3. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 2. Retell, tell and describe. 3. Inform, explain. 4. Make an oral presentation (more or less 3 minutes) on a given topic, eventually using ICT. 5. Make a short persuasive discourse.
<u>O4</u> 2. <i>Using technics to register and memorize information.</i> 1. Fill grids. 4. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 1. Adapt the discourse to the situations of communication and the interlocutors. 2. Inform, explain. 4. Ask questions about a presentation made by others. 5. Make an oral presentation (more or less 3 minutes) on a given topic, previously planned, eventually using ICT. 6. Make a short persuasive discourse. 7. Discuss ideas (e.g., demanded by the teacher, present arguments for and against a given opinion).

I found references to linguistic mechanisms (taking into account vocabulary and grammar and related to sentences). Curiously, these aspects were not mentioned in the recommendations concerning oral comprehension, a fact that contradicts the theoretical background of this study.

There were also references to encyclopedic mechanisms focused on the transmission of knowledge (e.g. the activity 2. *Inform, explain.*), and the taking of a position (e.g. the activity 5. i)

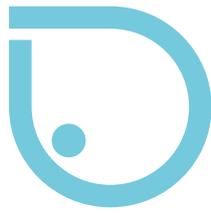
I also found references to textual mechanisms (related to narrative, descriptive, informative, explicative and especially argumentative texts), which were not mentioned for oral comprehension, as if that aspect was not relevant when one is listening to others.

Table 6 presents the results of the analysis of contents concerning the mechanisms in oral expression:



Table 6 – Mechanisms of oral expression to be developed using comics (contents)

Linguistic mechanisms
<p>O1 Comprehension and expression Vocabulary: development, adequacy Sentence</p>
<p>O2 <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: development, adequacy, variety Sentence (growing complexity)</p>
<p>O3 <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: development, adequacy, variety Essential information Structures (complexity)</p>
<p>O4 <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential, secondary and implicit information Fact and opinion Key ideas Sentence (growing complexity)</p>
Encyclopedic mechanisms
<p>O1/O2 <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential information Expression of ideas and feelings</p>
Textual mechanisms
<p>O1 <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Instruction</p>
<p>O2 <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Guided expression: retelling, telling; simulation, dramatization</p>
<p>O3 <i>Oral expression</i> Introduction to scholar genres: oral presentation; short persuasive discourse Guided expression: retelling, telling, description</p>
<p>O4 <i>Oral expression</i> Introduction to scholar genres: oral presentation; short persuasive discourse; debating ideas Guided expression: [...] viewpoints; getting back to the point; justifying opinions, attitudes and options; relevant information; summarizing ideas</p>



As it happened for the contents related to oral comprehension, here I also found references to the three types of mechanisms: linguistic, concerning vocabulary and the sentence; encyclopedic, concerning knowledge and its use in oral expression; textual, concerning several text types/genres with different communicative purposes (including argumentative texts).

Table 7 presents the results of the analysis of aims and activities concerning the strategies in oral comprehension:

Table 7 – Strategies in oral comprehension to be developed using comics (aims/activities)

Identifying main ideas
<u>O1/O2</u> 2. <i>Listening to brief discourses to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 4. Mention the essential ideas of a discourse one listened to.
<u>O3</u> 1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge. 2. Identify essential information.
<u>O4</u> 1. <i>Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Distinguish essential and secondary information. 2. <i>Using technics to register and memorize information.</i> 1. Fill grids.
Making inferences
<u>O4</u> 1. <i>Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 2. Identify implicit information. 3. Distinguish fact and opinion.
Monitoring comprehension
<u>O3</u> 1. <i>Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 3. Ask explanations about what one listened.
<u>O4</u> 2. <i>Using technics to write down and memorize information.</i> 1. Fill grids. 6. Precise and summarize ideas.

The section of the syllabus I analyzed for this text does not take into account some strategies of oral comprehension (formulating hypotheses and previewing ideas) and only refers to others in an implicit way (understanding ideas, what happens while identifying main ideas).

Table 8 presents the results of the analysis of aims and activities concerning the phases in oral comprehension:



Table 8 – Phases in oral comprehension to be developed using comics (aims/activities)

Listening
<u>O1/O2</u> <i>2. Listening to brief discourses to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 2. Identify unknown words.
<u>O3</u> <i>1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Use the context to infer the meaning of unknown words. 2. Identify essential information.
<u>O4</u> <i>1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Distinguish essential and secondary information. 2. Identify implicit information. 3. Distinguish fact and opinion.
Post-listening
<u>O1</u> <i>2. Listening to brief discourses to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 4. Mention the essential ideas in a text one listened to.
<u>O2</u> <i>2. Listening to brief discourses to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Identify unknown words. 2. Learn new words after listening to an exposé on a new subject. 3. Mention the main ideas in discourses one listened.
<u>O3</u> <i>1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Use the context to infer the meaning of unknown words. 2. Identify essential information. 3. Ask explanations about what one listened to.
<u>O4</u> <i>1. Listening to learn and gather knowledge.</i> 1. Distinguish essential and secondary information. 2. Identify implicit information. 3. Distinguish fact and opinion. <i>2. Using technics to register and memorize information.</i> 1. Fill grids.

I found no references to pre-listening, Consequently, strategies such as formulating hypotheses and previewing ideas are not mentioned either.

Table 9 presents the results of the analysis of contents concerning the strategies in oral comprehension:

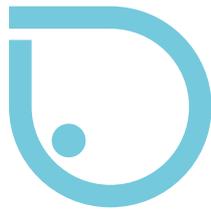


Table 9 – Strategies in oral comprehension to be developed using comics (contents)

Identifying main ideas
<u>O1/O2/O3</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential information
<u>O4</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential, secondary and implicit information Fact and opinion Key ideas
Making inferences
<u>O4</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Essential, secondary and implicit information

The references I found only concerned two strategies.

I found no explicit references to phases of oral comprehension. Nevertheless, I consider that the references to strategies such as identifying main ideas and making inferences involve the phases of listening and especially post-listening.

Table 10 presents the results of the analysis of aims and activities concerning the levels in oral expression:

Table 10 – Levels in oral expression to be developed using comics (aims and activities)

Phonetic-phonologic level
<u>O2</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 1. Talk in an audible way. 3. Use gradually the right intonation and rhythm..
<u>O3</u> 2. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 1. Talk in an audible way, articulating well and using a suitable rhythm.
<u>O4</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 1. Talk in an audible way, articulating well, using a suitable rhythm and looking at the interlocutor.
Lexical-semantic level
<u>O1</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 3. Use vocabulary adequate to the topic and the situation.



<u>O2</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 4. Use vocabulary adequate to the topic and the situation and gradually more varied.
<u>O3</u> 2. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 2. Use vocabulary more and more varied.
<u>O4</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 2. Use vocabulary more and more varied and precise.
Morphosyntactic level
<u>O2</u> 3. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 5. Build sentences gradually more complex.
<u>O3/O4</u> 2. <i>Producing a correct oral discourse.</i> 2. Use more and more complex sentences.
Textual level
<u>O2</u> 4. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 4. Retell and tell. 5. Play specific roles in guided expression activities (simulation and dramatization), listening to others, waiting for one's turn to speak and taking into account the topic.
<u>O3/O4</u> 3. <i>Producing discourses with different purposes, taking into account the situation and the interlocutor.</i> 2. Retell, tell and describe. 3. Inform, explain. 4. Make an oral presentation (more or less 3 minutes) on a given topic, eventually using ICT. 5. Make a short persuasive discourse.

I found references to all the levels. But I also observed that only some aspects are considered: intonation and rhythm, at the phonetic-phonologic level; vocabulary, at the lexical-semantic level; the sentence, at the morphosyntactic level.

Table 11 presents the results of the analysis of contents concerning the levels in oral expression:



Table 11 – Levels in oral expression to be developed using comics (contents)

Phonetic-phonologic level
<u>O1</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Articulation, intonation and rhythm
<u>O2</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Voice tone, articulation, intonation and rhythm
<u>O3</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Voice tone, articulation and rhythm ct.
Lexical-semantic level
<u>O1</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: development, adequacy
<u>O2/O3</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: development, adequacy, variety
<u>O4</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Vocabulary: variety and precision
Morphosyntactic level
<u>O1</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Sentence
<u>O2</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Sentence (growing complexity)
<u>O3/O4</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Structures (complexity)
Textual level
<u>O1</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Instruction Expression of ideas and feelings
<u>O2</u> <i>Comprehension and expression</i> Guided expression: telling, retelling; simulation, dramatization



<p><u>O3</u> <i>Oral expression</i> Introduction to scholar genres: oral presentation; short persuasive discourse Guided expression: retelling, telling, description</p>
<p><u>O4</u> <i>Oral expression</i> Introduction to scholar genres: oral presentation; short persuasive discourse; debating ideas Notice, message, invitation Guided expression: [...] viewpoints; getting back to the point; justifying opinions, attitudes and choices; pertinent information; summary of ideas</p>

Here I also found references to all the levels, limited to some aspects for some of them: vocabulary, at the lexical-semantic level; the sentence, at the morphosyntactic level.

4. Conclusions

From the analysis of this section of the syllabus dealing with the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue at primary school in Portugal and taking into account the first research question (*How are comics present in the syllabus for the teaching of Portuguese as a mother tongue?*), I concluded that comics are rarely mentioned, which means that they are not really recommended as a resource.

This analysis also revealed that, in spite of that fact and indirectly, they may be used to develop competences in oral interaction by 6-9 or 10 year-old children. Thus I answered the second research question (*How can the use of comics in the teaching of the mother tongue contribute to the development of competences in oral interaction?*).

I also identified some discrepancies concerning the way this part of the syllabus deals with the development of competences in oral communication.

This section of the document takes into account all the mechanisms involved in oral communication (linguistic, encyclopedic and textual) and all the levels of oral expression (phonetic-phonologic, lexical-semantic, morphosyntactic and textual).

Nevertheless, it only mentions certain aspects of oral comprehension: strategies such as formulating hypotheses and previewing ideas are not mentioned and, consequently, the phase of pre-listening is not taken into account, which is rather grievous for comprehension since it helps the listener to focus on important aspects of the discourse.

- I also observed other discrepancies between oral comprehension and oral expression:
- In what concerns linguistic mechanisms, grammar is almost exclusively associated to oral production; so the syllabus seems to ignore the fact that correct structuration of oral discourse is important for its adequate comprehension;
 - In what concerns textual mechanisms, more text types/genres are associated to expression than to comprehension; consequently, the syllabus seems to ignore the fact that using



a text type/genre correctly related to the purposes of the oral discourse is important for its comprehension.

5. Didactic suggestions

I close the text with some suggestions concerning activities to make it clear that comics can and must be used to develop competences in oral interaction in children attending primary school.

The pupils should be working in groups and involved in a situation of oral interaction based on the exploration of a story presented in comics dealing with a topic discussed in the classes. Each group would have:

- In what concerns oral expression,
 - To explore the story to prepare an oral presentation (eventually using PowerPoint) taking into account the several mechanisms in oral communication (linguistic, encyclopedic and textual),
 - To prepare the oral presentation minding aspects such as the intonation and articulation (phonetic-phonologic level), the adequacy of the vocabulary (lexical-semantic level), the use of morphological and syntactic structures (morphosyntactic level) and the coherence and cohesion of the discourse (textual level);
- In what concerns oral comprehension,
 - To take notes while listening to the other groups' presentations (listening);
 - After each presentation, to use those notes as a basis to ask questions to the colleagues in order to improve the comprehension of their oral discourse (post-listening);
 - To assess the performance of the other groups also taking into account the several mechanisms in oral communication (linguistic, encyclopedic and textual).

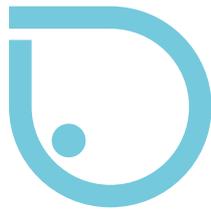
Previously, the teacher would have to explain the children what they were going to do (pre-listening).

These results are already being used in two PhD projects I am directing (with codirectors)⁶.

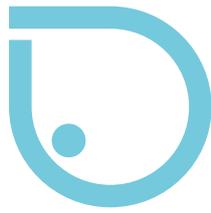
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⁶ The studies are the following ones: Ana Raquel Baltazar Martins - Comics in the development of oral communication in autistic children; Marina de Lira Pessoa Mota – *Comics in communication and education in science; development of an interactive resource*.



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